



RIVERDALE ECOLOGY

## Outline Method Statement

Union Farm Barn, Workhouse Road, Smallburgh, Norfolk

August 2021

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**Report For:** Mr and Mrs Auckland  
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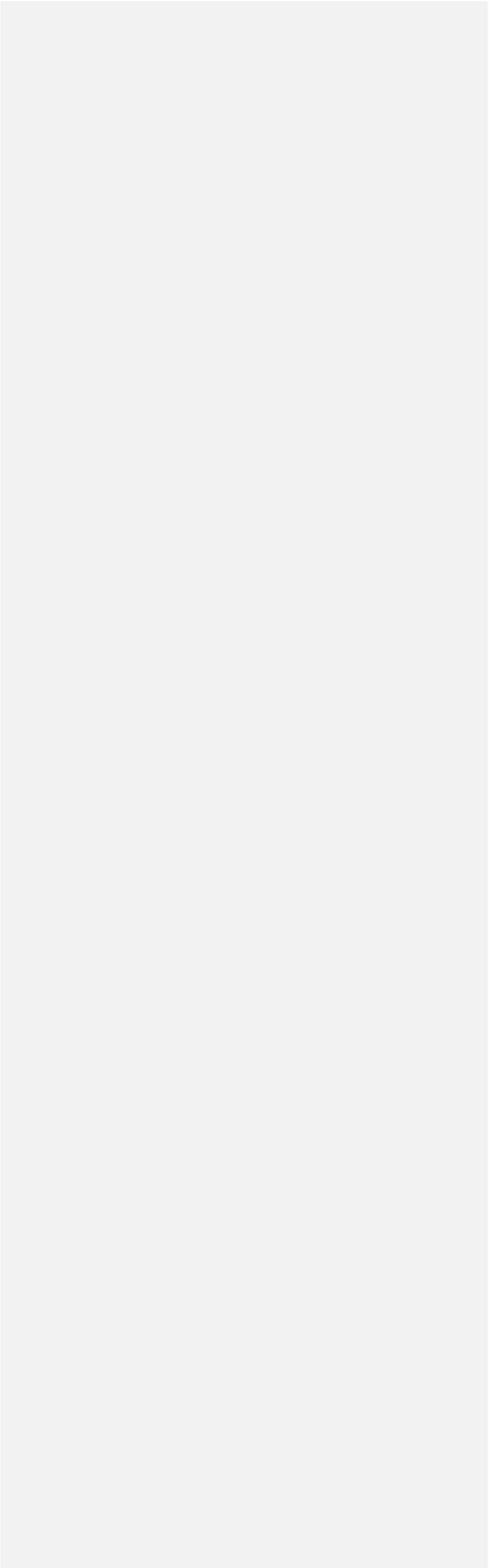
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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background to Commission

Riverdale Ecology Ltd were commissioned by Mr and Mrs Auckland to update bat survey information at Union Farm Barns and to prepare a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) License application to submit to Natural England with respect to bats at a collection of barns with planning permission for conversion to residential dwellings. The site is located at Union Farm, Workhouse Road, Smallburgh, Norfolk; situated around Ordnance Survey Grid Reference TG 32514 24172.

As part of the planning permission, two conditions relating to ecology and wildlife were placed upon the development:

Condition 4: *No development shall take place (including any demolition, ground works, or site clearance) until a method statement for bats and nesting birds has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

*The content of the method statement shall include:*

- a) Purpose and objectives for the proposed works;*
- b) Detailed design(s) and/or working method(s) necessary to achieve stated objectives (including where relevant, type and source of material to be used);*
- c) Extent and location of proposed works shown on appropriate scale maps and plans;*
- d) Timetable for implementation, demonstrating that works are aligned with the proposed phasing of construction;*
- e) Persons responsible for implementing the works;*
- f) Initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant);*
- g) Disposal of any wastes arising from works.*

*The works shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved details and timescales and shall be retained in that manner thereafter.*

Condition 5: *No works, which includes any demolition, modification or building work, to buildings identified as B1, B1A and B2 in the Preliminary Roost Assessment and Bat Activity Surveys Report by Riverdale Ecology, shall commence unless the Local Planning Authority has been provided with either:*

- h) A licence issued by Natural England pursuant to Regulation 55 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 authorising the specified activity/development to go ahead; or*
- i) A statement in writing from Natural England to the effect that it does not consider that the specified activity/development will require a licence.*

### 1.2 Scope of Report

The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed mitigation strategy for bats which will be submitted as a full method statement to Natural England in pursuit of the EPSM license required to discharge Condition 5 of the planning permission and to maintain lawful operations at the site.

It must be noted that the details of the method statement including the proposed timings are subject to change during the EPSM license process and discussion with Natural England. A degree of flexibility will be required from NNDC with regard to the discharge of the conditions as the proposed mitigation measures and or timings of work may need to be adjusted to incorporate additional measures necessary to meet the Favourable Conservation Status tests employed by Natural England for assessing the license. As such the outline method statement contains the proposed mitigation measures which will be submitted in support of the EPSM license following discharge of Condition 4.

This report has been prepared with reference to best practice as published by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2017) and to British Standard 42020:2013 (BSI, 2013). This report provides



recommendations for enhancement of the site for biodiversity in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2019) and best practice guidelines.

The survey, assessment and report were conducted and written by Danny Thomas CEcol, MCIEEM, Principal Ecologist at Riverdale Ecology Ltd. Danny has over 17 years' experience within ecological consultancy and as such is suitably qualified to undertake habitat surveys and protected species assessments. He is a Chartered Ecologist and has a BSc (Hons) in Ecology with Biology and an MSc in Environmental Sciences from the University of East Anglia. He holds current Natural England survey licences for bats and has been the Named Ecologist on a number of EPSM licences for bats including brown long-eared bat, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and Natterer's bat.

### 1.3 Summary of Bat Roost information

Roost emergence surveys were undertaken at the site on 12<sup>th</sup> May, 16<sup>th</sup> June and 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 in accordance with standard survey guidance (Bat Conservation Trust, 2016). These surveys added further information to the bat surveys undertaken in September 2018 in support of the planning application.

The surveys highlighted small numbers of common bat species roosting in the buildings listed below:

**Building 1** is a large two-story barn with a timber framed roof. The barn is principally used as a pre-emergence feeding area for brown long-eared bats but is also utilised by pipistrelles for foraging immediately after emerging from roost sites. Surveys indicate it is used as a feeding roost site for brown long-eared bats and it is highly probable that it supports occasional roosting by individual bats including 1-2 common pipistrelle bats and possible occasional roost for single Natterer's bat (no confirmation of roosting but recorded at appropriate emergence time on two out of six surveys). However, the surveys did not identify any confirmed roost locations.

**Building 1A** is a small room used for storage above the workshop adjoined to the southern end of the main barn. The building supports a brown long-eared bat summer day roost, a peak count of 6 bats emerging into the main barn through a gap in the brickwork at the apex of the dividing wall. This is not considered to be a maternity roost as no evidence of breeding was observed and video footage of the bats suggests they roost individually or in pairs at various locations and only assemble together after emergence from their roost sites into the roof space for pre-emergence flight.

**Building B2**, a small single storey barn used for building storage: Transitional roost of 7 common pipistrelle bats located under a section of roof on the northern side. Summer day roost or occasional roost for individual brown long-eared bat and common pipistrelle bats.

Plans of the site are included in Appendix 1 and Photographs are included in Appendix 2.

### 1.4 Project Overview

The development proposal is for the residential conversion of the barns into two separate dwellings.

### 1.5 Relevant Legislation and Planning Policy

The following key pieces of nature conservation legislation are relevant to this appraisal:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations);
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); and

#### **Bats**

All species of bat are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 which prohibits:

- Deliberate killing, injuring or capturing of Schedule 2 species (e.g. all bats)



- Deliberate disturbance of bat species as:
  - a) to impair their ability:
    - (i) to survive, breed, or reproduce, or to rear or nurture young;
    - (ii) to hibernate or migrate
  - b) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place
- Keeping, transporting, selling, exchanging or offering for sale whether live or dead or of any part thereof.

Bats are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 5. Under this Act, they are additionally protected from:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance (at any level)
- Intentional or reckless obstruction of access to any place of shelter or protection
- Selling, offering or exposing for sale, possession or transporting for purpose of sale.

#### **Implication for development works**

For works liable to affect a bat roost or for operations likely to result in a level of disturbance which might impair their ability to undertake those activities mentioned above (e.g. survive, breed, rear young and hibernate), a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence, issued by the relevant countryside agency (e.g. Natural England), will be required. The licence is to allow derogation from the relevant legislation and to enable appropriate mitigation measures to be put in place and their efficacy to be monitored.

Though there is no current case law the legislation may also be interpreted such that, in certain circumstances, important foraging areas and/or commuting routes can be regarded as being afforded de facto protection, for example, where it can be proven that removal of such features may have a major impact to maintaining the viability of a bat roost<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Birds**

With certain exceptions, all wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under Sections 1-8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Among other things, this makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;
- Intentionally take or destroy an egg of any wild bird;
- Sell, offer or expose for sale, have in his possession or transport for the purpose of sale any wild bird (dead or alive) or bird egg or part thereof.

Certain species of bird, for example the barn owl, black redstart, hobby, bittern and kingfisher receive additional special protection under Schedule 1 of the Act and Annex 1 of the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (2009/147/EC). This affords them protection against:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young;

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<sup>1</sup> Garland & Markham (2008) Is important bat foraging and commuting habitat legally protected? Mammal News, No. 150. The Mammal Society, Southampton.



- Intentional or reckless disturbance of dependent young of such a bird.

***Implication for development works***

Works should be planned to avoid the possibility of killing or injuring any wild bird, or damaging or destroying their nests, in order to avoid breaching the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). To reduce the likelihood of nest destruction in particular, work should be undertaken outside the main bird breeding season (March to August inclusive<sup>2</sup>). Where this is not achievable any areas of habitat suitable for birds must be thoroughly checked for nests prior to vegetation clearance.

Species of bird listed on Schedule 1 are additionally protected against disturbance during the breeding season. It will therefore be necessary to ensure that no potentially disturbing works are undertaken in the vicinity of the nest. The most effective way to avoid disturbance is to postpone works until the young have fledged. If this is not achievable, it may be possible to maintain an appropriate buffer zone or standoff around the nest.

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that this is the main breeding period. Breeding activity may occur out of this period (depending on the particular species and geographical location of the site) and as such due care and attention should be given when undertaking potentially disturbing works at any time of year.



## 2 Mitigation Strategy Proposal

### 2.1 EPSM license

All works to the roofs of Buildings B1, B1A and B2 will be covered under the EPSM license and no works to these buildings can proceed until the license has been issued and sent to North Norfolk District Council to confirm compliance with Condition 5 of the planning permission.

### 2.2 Bat Lofts

Due to the presence of brown long-eared bats, replacement bat lofts will be required to compensate for the loss of existing roost sites. The proposed design for the main barn requires the living space to be open plan and extend into the roof space and thus does not include an enclosed roof void where bats can be accommodated.

Two enclosed bat lofts will be created within the barn complex to provide suitable roost sites for brown long-eared bats. The proposed carports/garages in Building B3 and B6 are the most suitable locations to install bat lofts as the roof is sufficient size to create a sealed roof void which will meet the required dimensions for a bat loft. The approximate dimensions for the bat lofts are as follows:

Building B3: 6m (w) x 5m (l) x 2m (h)<sup>3</sup>

Building B6: 5m (w) x 6m (l) x 2m (h)

The bat lofts will be lined with Type 1F bituminous roof liner only and roof access tiles and ridge access tiles will be installed to provide bat access to the roost.

Internally, false roof beams will be installed, constructed from reclaimed roof timbers to provide more attractive roosting locations for bats. A single truss box will be installed in each loft to provide enclosed roosting space and a 'V-shaped' ridge box constructed of oak will be installed along the ridge of each barn to provide more attractive roosting sites specifically for brown long-eared bats.

### 2.3 Bat Boxes

Two bat boxes will be installed on the exterior wall of the main barn to provide additional roosting opportunities for bats in particular common pipistrelle. Schwegler 1WQ bat boxes (or equivalent in both design and longevity) will be installed on the northern and southern external walls of the main barn to provide permanent roosting opportunities with different environmental conditions due to the elevation.

### 2.4 Toolbox Talk

A toolbox talk will be delivered to the contractors prior to the commencement of the works. The talk will cover bat ecology, bats and the law, the method statement for bats, outlining the areas covered under the EPSM license and the process to follow in the event that bats, or field signs of bats are found during the works outside of the buildings covered under the EPSM license.

### 2.5 Timing of Bat Works

The FCS test for the EPSM license is likely to require the creation of the bat lofts prior to the destruction of the existing roost sites. Condition 5 of the planning permission only relates to Buildings B1, B1A and B2, where bats are roosting. As such it is reasonable to proceed with the construction of the bat lofts in Buildings B3 and B6 prior to the receipt of the EPSM licence and this work will not require protected species licensing.

Removal of roofing materials on Buildings B1, B1A and B2 will be restricted to outside the active period for bats. The EPSM license will likely require the initial roof strip to be carried out in specific windows between mid-September and

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<sup>3</sup> Height measured to central ridge beam



November or March to May. Removal of the roof in December to February will need prior approval by Natural England through the EPSM license based on the low risk of hibernating bats being present under roof tiles.

Roof stripping of all buildings will be supervised by an ecologist.

## 2.6 Materials

Type 1F bituminous roofing felt must only be used on sections of the building where bats may be present.

Excluder combs must not be used on any sections of roof (B3 and B6) where bats are to be encouraged.

## 2.1 Repointing/Repair to Brickwork

Any repointing or repair to cracks in brickwork on any building but in particular the main barn (B1) must be checked first by an ecologist with an endoscope to ensure that bats are not roosting in the crevices. Following the inspection, the gaps **must be filled within the same day** or sealed with temporary exclusion material until they can be permanently repaired.

## 2.2 Nesting Birds

Clearance of suitable nesting vegetation including scrub and ivy within the courtyard areas and on the buildings will be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (from 1<sup>st</sup> March to the 31<sup>st</sup> August, inclusive). If this is not possible a detailed inspection for nesting birds will be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 48 hours prior to removal of vegetation capable of supporting nesting birds. Any active nests found must be retained with an appropriate buffer until young birds have fledged, and the nest is no longer in use. It should be noted that the nesting bird check is only appropriate for small areas of nesting habitat. It is not effective for widescale site clearance and should be avoided when clearing habitat such as hedgerows and dense scrub; this type of large scale clearance should be undertaken outside of the nesting season.

The commencement of works to the buildings will be determined by the EPSM license. Roof stripping should be undertaken outside of the nesting season. If works to Buildings B1, B1A and B2 are delayed until the March to May window by the EPSM license restrictions, then a nesting bird check must be undertaken prior to the commencement of the roof strip. If any active nests are found, the tiles will be replaced, and the nest left in situ until the completion of nesting activity has been confirmed by the project ecologist.

It is unlikely that the buildings can be secured adequately to completely remove opportunities for nesting birds and so a nesting bird check should be carried if the works commence during the nesting season. Building activity on site is likely to deter nesting following the commencement of works, but if any nests are discovered during the construction phase, they will be retained in situ and protected via a temporary cordon until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use. No swallows were observed nesting within the barns in the 2021 nesting season and it is considered reasonably unlikely that they will nest in the barns. Opportunities highlighted in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for installation of swallow nest cups are no longer available due to the need to provide enclosed bat lofts in the two proposed car ports. Other suitable locations may be forthcoming, but it is recommended that artificial swallow nest cups are abandoned in favour of providing nest boxes for house sparrows and swifts.

At least two house sparrow terrace boxes will be installed on the exterior of the western wall of the main barn, overlooking the courtyard to the rear. Integrated boxes produced by birdbrickhouses or Schwegler would be the most appropriate option. Alternatively standard timber terrace boxes could be used in more sheltered locations.

At least one integrated house sparrow terrace will be installed in the eastern wall of the main barn, ideally in the section of wall which has collapsed and will be rebuilt.

At least two swift boxes will be installed just below the eaves on the eastern elevation of the barn, overlooking workhouse road. Integrated boxes should be installed during construction at approximately 5m above ground level and

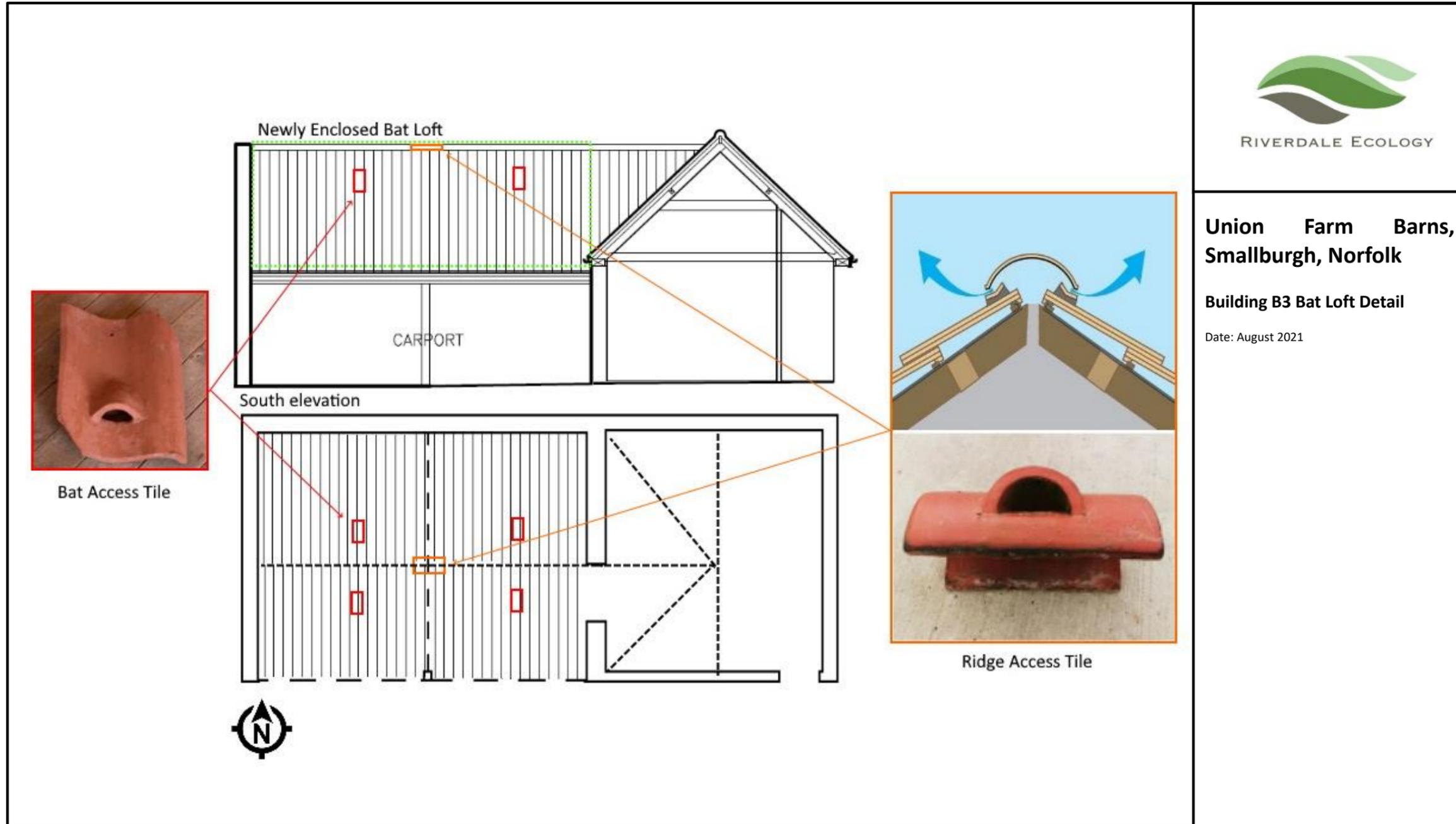


at appropriate locations advised by the project ecologist. It is recommended that swift boxes produced by birdbrickhouses (<http://www.birdbrickhouses.co.uk/brick-nesting-boxes/nesting-boxes/>) are used as they can be faced with the bricks used in construction. If the main barn is to be rendered, then Schwegler swift bricks or Ibstock swift bricks would be suitable alternatives.



## Appendix 1: Site Plans

Figure 1: Building B3 Bat Loft Detail



**Union Farm Barns,  
Smallburgh, Norfolk**

**Building B3 Bat Loft Detail**

Date: August 2021

Figure 2: Building B6 Bat Loft Detail

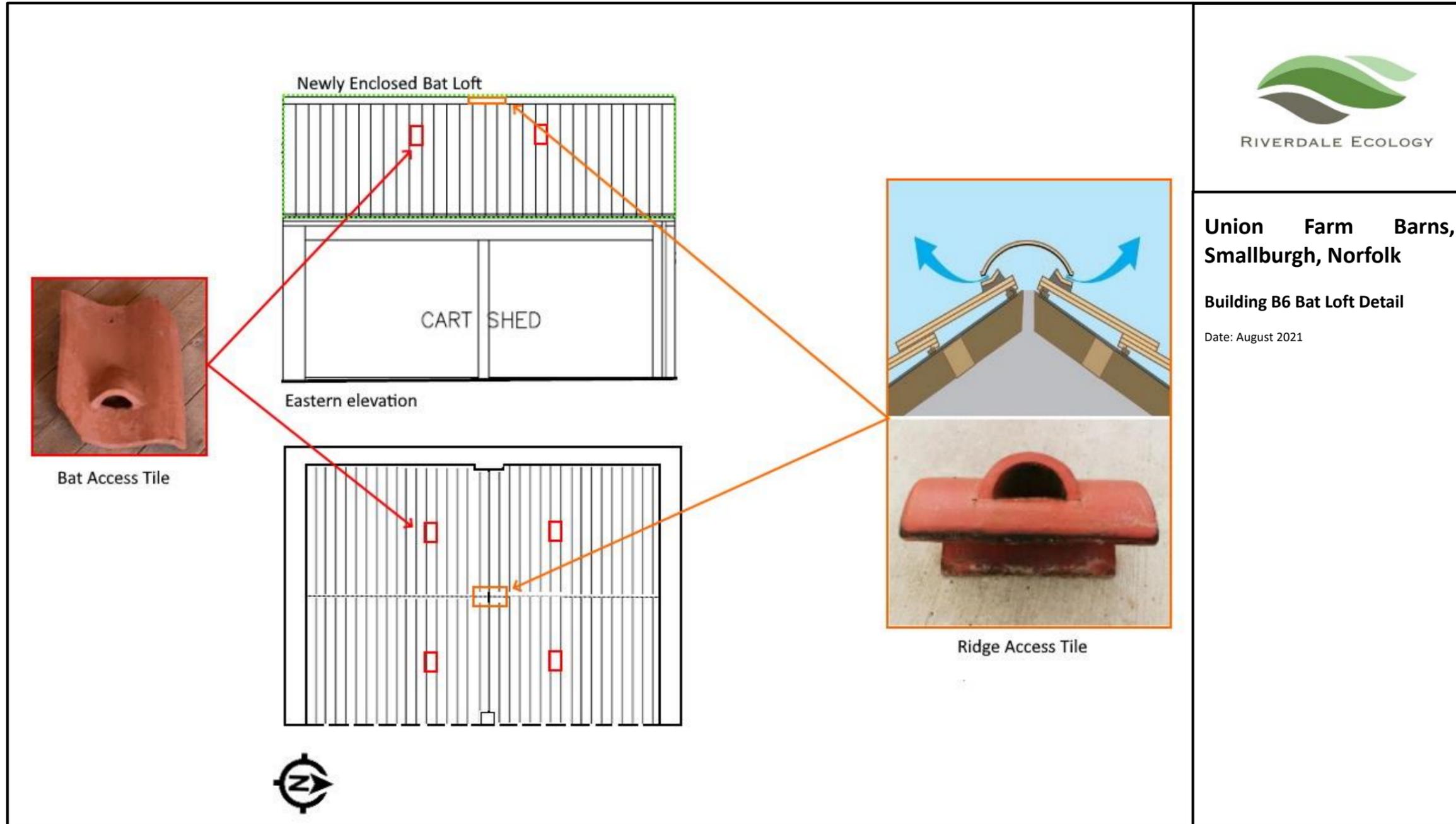


Figure 3: External Bat Box Detail

