

Preliminary Roost Assessment

Project	Terry's Lodge Farm, Wrotham, Kent TN15 7ED	Date	July 2021
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Client	DHA Planning		

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Urban Edge Environmental Consulting Ltd undertook a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) at the above site on 23 June 2021. The purpose of the survey was to assess the building on site with regards to its suitability to support roosting bats. The site visit was undertaken by Tim Lees BA (Hons) MSc MCIEEM, a Senior Ecologist with eight years' professional consultancy experience, who holds a Natural England Class Licence to survey for bats (WML-CL17).

2 Site Description

- 2.1 The site is located in Wrotham, within the Sevenoaks District of Kent (Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference: TQ 58955 60598). The site comprises a barn (B1) and an agricultural access track leading from Terry's Lodge Road. Other habitats within the curtilage included bare ground, hardstanding and semi-improved neutral grassland – see Appendix I.
- 2.2 The surrounding habitat comprises a mixture of bare ground, tall ruderal vegetation and dense scrub with trees. The site is set within a rural landscape, amid mixed farmland, pockets of woodland, mature trees and hedgerows.

3 Proposed Works

- 3.1 Planning consent is being sought for a residential development on an area of previously developed agricultural land. The proposals would include the conversion of existing barn to a single residential dwelling. No proposed site plans were available at the time of writing.

4 Legislation

- 4.1 Bats and their roosts are fully protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The legislation affords all bat species European Protected Species (EPS) status and makes it an offence, among other things, to:
- ▶ Intentionally kill, injure or capture/take a bat.
 - ▶ Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection. This is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not.
 - ▶ Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection. It is unlawful to enter a roost unless properly licenced.
 - ▶ Sell, offer or expose for sale, or possess, or transport for the purpose of sale, any live or dead bat, any part of a bat, or anything derived from a bat.

5 Methodology

- 5.1 The PRA was carried out in accordance with the latest *Good Practice Guidelines* from the Bat Conservation Trust¹ as well as Natural England Standing Advice on bats². The building was subject to a physical internal inspection and an external inspection which recorded potential access points and roosting opportunities. All features observable from ground level which are potentially suitable for bats were noted and the overall suitability of the structure for roosting bats was classified with reference to Table 1.

Table 1: Potential suitability of structures/trees for roosting bats

Suitability	Roosting habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically, but do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roost features (PRF) but with none seen from the ground / using ladders or features seen with only very limited roosting potential
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (for roost type only)
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat

¹ Collins, J. (ed.) (2016): *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. 3rd Edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London.

² Available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bats-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects>

- 5.2 The inspection included a search for live animals and other signs that give an indication of past or present occupancy. In the case of bats, typical indicators include droppings (which are characteristic and are often indicative of species), signs of fur oil staining, urine splashing, characteristic odours, and accumulations of discarded prey remains. The inspections were undertaken with the aid of the following equipment: telescopic ladders, Wildlife Acoustics EM3 full spectrum bat detector to record and identify the calls of any bats which are present; CB-2 (1 million candlepower) searchlight to search dark areas for signs of bats; close-focusing binoculars to view areas inaccessible on foot; and digital camera with flash to record any evidence of bats or features suitable for use by bats.

6 Results / Evaluation

Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 6.1 B1 comprised an open double height agricultural barn built upon a block base. The barn included a steel girder frame clad in timber panelling. Gaps were present between the panels as per the design. The building incorporated a pitched, suspected corrugated asbestos panel roof with four skylights. Two small open brick extensions were located along the north-eastern aspect with a timber framed corrugated plastic roof in places. Internally the barn was used for storing construction materials and logs, but was generally uncluttered.
- 6.2 No PRFs were identified for bats and no evidence of bat use was recorded during either the external or internal inspection. Accordingly, B1 was assessed as providing Negligible suitability for roosting bats and no further survey is necessary
- 6.3 A single young ash *Fraxinus excelsior* tree was recorded adjacent to the site (T1), south of B1 – see Appendix I. The tree was considered to be of sufficient size to accommodate individual roosting bats and included a small area of flaking bark. Accordingly, T1 was assessed as providing Low suitability for roosting bats. It is anticipated that the tree will be retained and protected, and no further survey is required. However, in the event that is necessary to remove T1, this should be done using soft-felling techniques, as recommended at section 7.



Building B1 – view looking south



Building B1 (internal) – view looking south



Tree T1 – view looking north

Other Protected Habitats / Species

- 6.4 The remaining habitats identified on site were considered to be of relatively low ecological value and of negligible importance.
- 6.5 The habitats which dominate the site (buildings and bare ground) provide limited opportunities to commuting and foraging bats. However, the habitats adjacent to the site, such as the tall ruderal vegetation and dense scrub with trees may serve as a navigation route or foraging feature for bats. It is anticipated that these features will be retained and protected during the works. Further bat activity surveys are not required, but recommendations in relation to lighting during the construction and operational phase of the development should be considered, as recommended at section 7.
- 6.6 B1 and the adjacent scrub and mature trees are suitable for a variety of nesting birds. It is anticipated that none of the adjacent scrub or mature trees will be removed to facilitate the development. However, B1 will be converted to create a habitable living space. Further breeding bird surveys are not required, but precautionary measures for nesting birds are recommended at section 7.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 Building B1 was assessed as of negligible suitability for roosting bats; as such no further surveys are recommended. However, precautionary measures in relation to trees with bat roost suitability, lighting of adjacent retained habitats and the protection nesting birds are required to ensure that an offence under the relevant legislation is avoided; see Table 2 below.








Table 2: Summary of recommendations

#	Recommendations for ecological protection measures
R1	If works to fell or lop tree T1 are required, this should be done using soft-felling techniques. It is recommended that the areas of flaking bark should be removed by hand and any potential roosting features should be checked before works commence. If no bats are found felling should then proceed using section felling, then the trunk and removed limbs be left overnight, with cavities facing upwards, to allow any hidden bats present to escape. To avoid committing an offence, tree works must cease immediately if evidence of bat presence is found, while a suitably qualified ecologist is consulted.
R2	The use of external lighting should be avoided or reduced to the minimum required for its intended purpose, during both construction and operation. Where external lighting is to be provided, it will be low-level, directional lighting with minimal spill and glare, and consideration will be given to reduced hours of operation and/or a movement responsive system of control. Narrow-spectrum bulbs and light sources that emit minimal UV light, avoiding white and blue wavelengths of the spectrum should be utilised. Glass lantern covers should be used instead of plastic to filter UV light. Lighting should not be directed towards the adjacent tall ruderal vegetation and dense scrub with trees.
R3	<p>The commencement of the barn conversion, and clearance of any adjacent vegetation, should occur outside of the bird nesting season, which runs from 1 March to 30 September. It should therefore be carried out between October and February.</p> <p>Any conversion works or vegetation clearance undertaken within the bird breeding season will require a site check for nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist. This will take place no more than two days prior to works commencing. This is to ensure that no disturbance to active bird nests occurs. If a nest is found it must be cordoned off and works adjacent to the nest must be delayed until such time that the chicks have fledged from the nest. This will be supervised by a suitably qualified ecologist.</p>

Appendix I: Site Plan



Terry's Lodge Farm Wrotham Kent

-  Survey area
-  Hardstanding
-  Semi-improved neutral grassland
-  Building
-  Bare ground
-  Gate
-  Tree - low bat roost suitability



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Scale: 1:450 Created by: AD
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