



Bat Emergence Survey

The Granary, Gibbs Hill, Nettlestead, Maidstone, Kent ME18 5HT

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Executive summary

Arbtech Consulting Ltd was commissioned by Ms Virginia Gillece to undertake a bat Emergence surveys at The Granary, Gibbs Hill, Nettlestead, Maidstone, Kent ME18 5HT. The survey was completed on 17th May 2021. The aim of the assessment was to confirm the presence/likely-absence of a bat roost and to provide a current status on all survey features. This includes providing evidence for species, numbers and levels of activity, to identify any entrance and egress points, and to gain an understanding of the activity of bats using the site in the local landscape.

- This report is prepared in support of a planning application with Maidstone Borough Council:
 - The conversion of redundant agricultural buildings into residential dwellings with associated landscaping.

Recommendations

Ref	Recommendations / Mitigation
B1 + B2 (stables)	<p>In the unlikely event that bats are unexpectedly found during any stage of the development, work should stop immediately, and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted to seek further advice.</p> <p>Bat enhancements are recommended for the developed site.</p>

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1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Arbtech Consulting Ltd was commissioned by Ms Virginia Gillece to undertake a bat Emergence surveys at The Granary, Gibbs Hill, Nettlestead, Maidstone, Kent ME18 5HT. The survey was completed on 17th May 2021. The assessment is informed by the Bat Conservation Trust publication *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, J. (Ed) 2016). These surveys were completed following recommendations made in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Survey report (Corylus Ecology, 2020).

1.2 Site Context

The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 6824 5266 and measures ~870m². The site contains two disused stable blocks in a small grass area.

1.3 Scope of the report

This report provides a description of the bat activity observed and recorded during each survey. The aim of the assessment was to characterise any roosts present including species, number of individuals, number and location of roost access points, and to gain an understanding of how bats use the site.

Robust data has been collected, following good practice guidelines, to inform an assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed development on bats, and inform mitigation and enhancements. This report provides information on constraints to the proposals as a result of roosting bats, and summarises any mitigation required to achieve planning permission, and statutory consent to comply with wildlife legislation.

To achieve the aims of the assessment, the following steps have been taken:

- A desk study has been carried out - please refer to the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Survey report (Arbtech Consulting, 2020)
- Field survey(s) has been undertaken, including an external survey and internal inspection.
- An outline of likely impacts on any known roosts has been provided, based on current development proposals.
- Recommendations for further survey and assessment have been made, along with advice on the requirements of a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) application if appropriate.

A survey plan is presented in Appendix 1 showing the location of each surveyor and the bat activity observed and recorded during each survey, proposed plans in Appendix 2, and a summary of relevant legislation is presented in Appendix 3.

1.4 Project Description

- This report is prepared in support of a planning application with Maidstone Borough Council:
 - The conversion of redundant agricultural buildings into residential dwellings with associated landscaping.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desk Study methodology

The desk study included a 2km radius review of statutory and non-statutory designated sites, Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats and granted EPSML records for bats held on Magic database. An assessment of the surrounding landscape structure was also completed using aerial images from Google Earth and OS maps.

Existing bat records relating to the site and a surrounding 2km radius are required to conform to national guidelines. The data search is confidential information that is not suitable for public release and was analysed and summarised in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) survey (Corylus Ecology, 2020).

2.2 Site Survey methodology

The survey methods were informed by the recommendations presented in Preliminary Ecological Assessment Survey report (Arbtech, November 2018). This survey identified the following survey requirements in line with best practice:

Table 1: Recommended surveys

Ref	Survey assessment conclusions (with justification)	Foreseen impacts	Recommendations
Site buildings (B1 + B2)	The building has “low habitat value” (Collins, 2016) for supporting roosting bats.	As the proposals include the renovation of these buildings, any bat roosts present may be destroyed. This could result in death, injury or disturbance of bats.	One bat emergence or re-entry surveys are required during the active bat season (May – September) to confirm presence or likely-absence of a bat roost in the building. Both of the surveys should be completed during the optimal survey period mid-May to August inclusive. Sub-optimal: early May and September. One of these surveys must be a dawn re-entry survey. Five surveyors are required to provide full coverage of the buildings. If bat roosts are confirmed in the building, one additional survey will be required to inform a European protected species mitigation Licence application to Natural England once planning permission has been granted.

The surveys involved surveyors positioned around the building ensuring that all elevations and roof sections with suitable roosting features could be clearly observed. Particular attention was paid to the areas of the building identified as providing suitable access points to bat roosts. The location of each surveyor during each survey is shown in Appendix 1. Each surveyor was assigned an area of the building to observe for the duration of the survey. Surveyors used heterodyne and frequency division bat detectors, and Wildlife Acoustics EM3+ and Echo Meter Touch detectors connected to iPads. Bat echolocation calls recorded during the surveys were analysed using Wildlife Acoustics sound analysis software Kaleidoscope V3.1.7 when required. The Echo Meter Touch includes an auto ID function for bat species, however this is not 100% accurate and further post-survey sound analysis is often required to confirm species that could not be identified by the auto ID software during the survey. Surveyors also used head torches, survey record sheets and pens/pencils for recording all activity observed during the surveys. Each surveyor was also provided with a hand held radio for communication between surveyors to assist with confirming ambiguous bat activity e.g. a bat emergence or a bat passing over the building.

In accordance with the latest bat survey guidelines (Collins, J. 2016) dusk emergence surveys commenced 15 minutes before sunset and continued for 1½ - 2 hours after sunset – depending upon bat activity and surveyor visibility. Dawn re-entry surveys commenced 2 hours before sunrise and continued until 15 minutes after sunrise.

Surveys were completed during optimal weather conditions i.e. when temperatures were above 10°C, with no rain or strong winds, as these adverse weather conditions can impact upon bat emergence and foraging behaviour.

2.3 Surveyors

The lead surveyor is Craig Williams BSc, MSc, DIC (Natural England Protected Species Licence Numbers: [Bats] (2018-33540-CLS-CLS) and was assisted by experienced surveyors with several years of bat survey experience each. Five total surveyors were used to provide sufficient cover of the buildings during the survey. The designated position of each surveyor during each survey is detailed in the tables in Section 3.1 below, and shown on the plan in Appendix 1.

2.4 Limitations

These surveys follow best practice guidance to confirm presence/likely-absence of roosting bats and where present, characterise the roost. However, this information is collected at finite dates and times, and provides an indication of the conditions on site only. The use of the building, and the site as a whole by bats, at all times cannot be established based on this information.

There were no specific limitations to the survey.

3.0 Results and Evaluation

3.1 Survey Results

The results of each survey are provided in the tables below.

Table 2: Survey results

Date	17/05/21	
Start and End Times	20:31 – 22:16 Sunset: 20:46	
Weather Conditions	Start: Temp: 9°C Relative Humidity: 91% Cloud Cover: 90% Wind: 6kmph Rain: None	End: Temp: 8°C Relative Humidity: 90% Cloud Cover: 100% Wind: 6kmph Rain: None
Surveyor (position) As shown in Appendix 1	Helen Worlock – Bat surveyor of 7 years’ experience (Position 1 –observing the northern and western elevations/roof of B1) Mark Taroni – Bat surveyor of 6 years’ experience (Position 2 –observing the southern and eastern elevations/roof of B1) Drew Bodey – Bat surveyor of 10+ years’ experience (Position 3 –observing the southern elevations/roof of B1+B2) Narin Aker – Bat surveyor of 6 years’ experience (Position 3 –observing the southern and western elevations/roof of B2) Craig Williams - Natural England Bat Licence Number: 2018-33540-CLS-CLS (Position4 – observing the northern and eastern elevations/roof of B2)	
Building Reference`	Surveyor Position	Notes/observations:
B1	1	Common pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>) was heard but not seen at 21:05. They were then observed to fly over B1 and along the path at 21:08, 21:26 and 21:33. A <i>Myotis</i> sp.bat was heard at 21:33.
B1	2	A soprano pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>) was first heard but not seen at 20:47, and again at 20:57. Common pipistrelles were seen in the grass courtyard south of the buildings at 21:02, 21:05, 21:08 and constantly between 21:18 and 21:50.
B1 + B2	3	A soprano pipistrelle was first heard but not seen at 20:57. Common pipistrelles were then seen in the grass courtyard at 21:02, 21:05, 21:1 and constantly between 21:26 and 21:50.

B2	4	A soprano pipistrelle was first observed coming from the south at 20:57. Common pipistrelles were then seen in the grass courtyard at 21:02, 21:04, 21:08, 21:18, 21:20 and 21:37.
B2	5	A noctule (<i>Nyctalus Noctula</i>) was distantly heard at 21:15. Common pipistrelles were observed flying along the path and over B2 at 21:17, 21:22, 21:27, 21:34, 21:39 and 21:40. A <i>Myotis</i> sp. bat was heard at 21:33.

4.0 Conclusions, Impacts and Recommendations

4.1 Informative guidelines

When bat roosts are present, the bat surveys undertaken at a site facilitate the characterisation of the roost type. This allows for appropriate mitigation and compensation to be designed to inform a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) application to Natural England.

The definitions of bat roost types are provided below, taken from the *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* (English Nature, 2004) and the Bat Conservation Trust publication *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, J. (Ed) 2016).

Day roost: a place where individual bats, or small groups of males, rest or shelter in the day but are rarely found by night in the summer.

Night roost: a place where bats rest or shelter in the night but are rarely found in the day. May be used by a single individual on occasion or it could be used regularly by the whole colony.

Feeding roost: a place where individual bats or a few individuals rest or feed during the night but are rarely present by day.

Transitional / occasional roost: used by a few individuals or occasionally small groups for generally short periods of time on waking from hibernation or in the period prior to hibernation.

Swarming site: where large numbers of males and females gather during late summer to autumn. Appear to be important mating sites

Mating sites: sites where mating takes place from later summer and can continue through winter.

Maternity roost: where female bats give birth and raise their young to independence.

Hibernation roost: where bats may be found individually or together during winter. They have a constant cool temperature and high humidity. Sites where hibernating bats have been confirmed by appropriate survey effort should be classed as 'hibernation confirmed'.

Satellite roost: an alternative roost found in close proximity to the main nursery colony used by a few individual breeding females to small groups of breeding females throughout the breeding season.

Other: roost types are interchangeable and not always easy to classify according to the nuances of certain species.

The surveys undertaken to date in and around B1 + B2 provide sufficient information to inform a planning application. A European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) **will not be required** to enable the proposed works to be lawfully undertaken. Appropriate justification for this assessment is provided in Section 3 of this report.

4.2 Evaluation

The following recommendations are provided taking the desk-based assessment and site survey results into account.

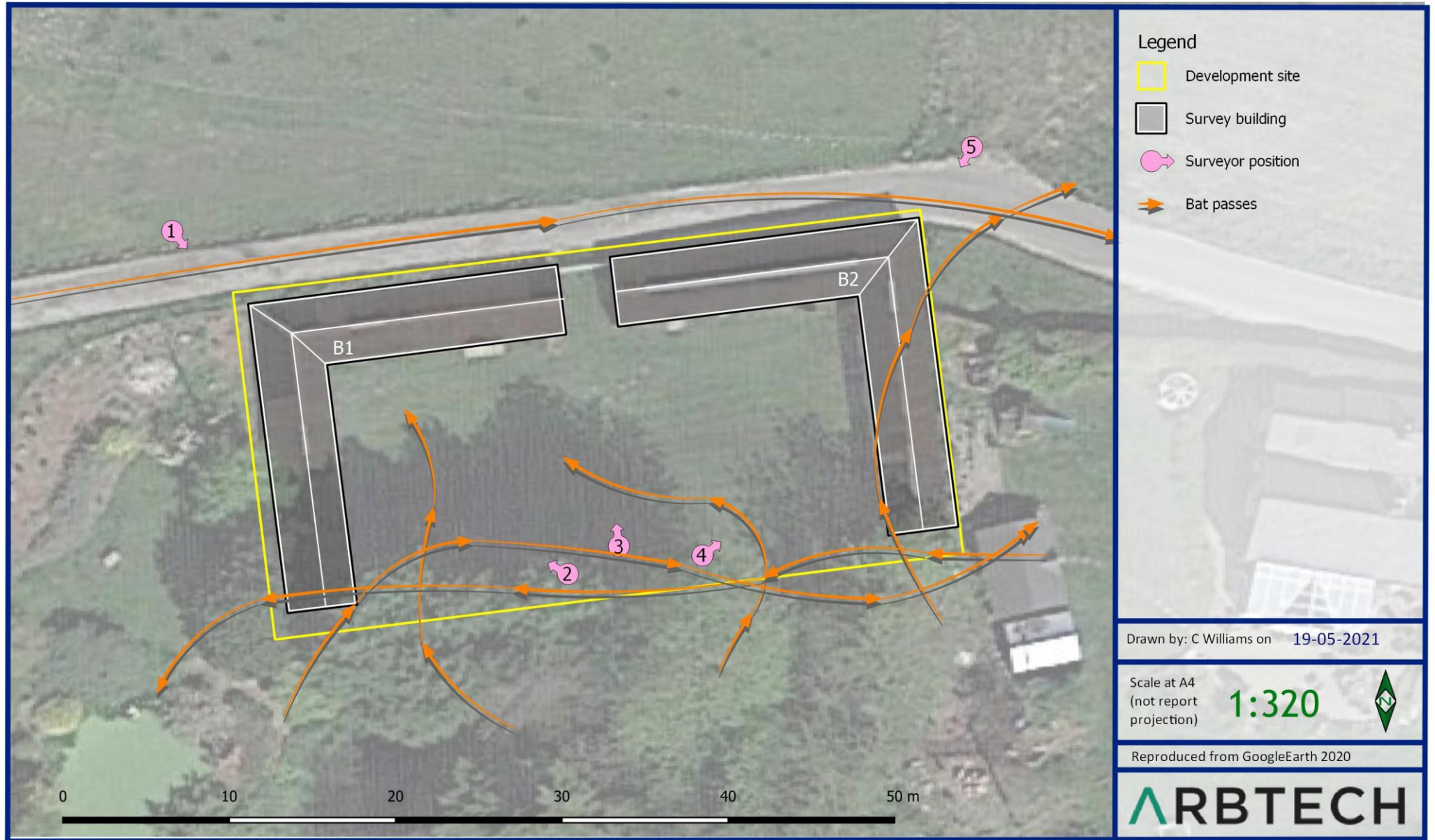
Table 5: Evaluation of buildings on site

Ref	Survey conclusions	Foreseen impacts	Recommendations / Mitigation	Enhancements The Local Planning Authority has a duty to ask for enhancements under the NPPF (July 2018)
B1 + B2 (Stables)	<p>No roosts confirmed.</p> <p>The bats observed soon after their emergence times began, indicating a nearby roost. They likely came from farm buildings to the south of the survey site.</p>	<p>No bat roost confirmed in B1 or B2.</p> <p>Bats are very unlikely to be roosting within B1 or B2 and as such, there are not anticipated to be any impacts on bats as a result of the proposed works.</p>	<p>In the unlikely event that bats are unexpectedly found during any stage of the development, work should stop immediately, and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted to seek further advice.</p>	<p>The developed site can be enhanced for the bat species observed to be foraging and commuting across the site during the surveys by installing of a minimum of two bat boxes on mature trees around the site boundaries/new buildings</p> <p>e.g.</p> <p>2x woodcrete crevice bat boxes.</p> <p>Bat boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing south or south-westerly with a clear flight path to and from the entrance.</p> <p>Bat boxes should also be positioned away from any artificial light sources.</p> <p>No new lighting should be installed near or directed towards the trees at the southern end of the site, where the bats commuted from at the start of the survey.</p>

5.0 Bibliography

- Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists —Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- Garland & Markham (2008) Is important bat foraging and commuting habitat legally protected?
- Google Earth (2021)
- Magic database (2019) <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.

Appendix 1: Survey Plan



Appendix 2: Proposed Site Plan

None received at the time of writing.

Appendix 3: Legislation and Planning Policy related to bats

LEGAL PROTECTION

All species of bat are fully protected under *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017* through their inclusion on Schedule 2.

Regulation 43: Protection of certain wild animals - offences

(1) A person is guilty of an offence if they:

- (a) Deliberately captures, injures or kills any wild animal of a European protected species,
- (b) Deliberately disturbs wild animals of any such species,
- (c) Deliberately takes or destroys the eggs of such an animal, or
- (d) Damages or destroys a breeding site or resting place of such an animal,

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1) (b), disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely—

- (a) To impair their ability:
 - (i) To survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
 - (ii) In the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
- (b) To affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

Bats are also protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended 01.04.1996)* 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

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (ENGLAND)

National Planning Policy Framework 2017

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development. The Framework specifies the need for protection of designated sites and priority habitats and species. An emphasis is also made on the need for ecological infrastructure through protection, restoration and re-creation. The protection and recovery of priority species (considered likely to be those listed as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species) is also listed as a requirement of planning policy.

In determining a planning application, planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by ensuring that: designated sites are protected from harm; there is appropriate mitigation or compensation where significant harm cannot be avoided; opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments are encouraged; and planning permission is refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including aged or veteran trees and also ancient woodland.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Biodiversity Duty

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. This is commonly referred to as the 'biodiversity duty'.

Section 41 of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of 'principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity'. This list is intended to assist decision makers such as public bodies in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act. Under the Act these habitats and species are regarded as a material consideration in determining planning applications. A developer must show that their protection has been adequately addressed within a development proposal.

Effect on development works:

A European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence issued by Natural England will be required for works likely 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). The licence is to allow derogation from the relevant legislation but also to enable appropriate mitigation measures to be put in place and their efficiency/success to be monitored. 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 the continued usage of such areas is crucial to maintaining the integrity and long-term viability of a bat roost (Garland & Markham, 2008).

There are 17 species of bat breeding in England and Natural England issues licences under Regulation 55 of the Habitats Regulations to allow you to work within the law.

Licences are issued for specific purposes stated in the Regulations, if the following three tests are met:

- The purpose of the work meets one of those listed in the Habitats Regulations (see below);
- That there is no satisfactory alternative;
- That the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status (FCS) in their natural range

The Habitats Regulations permits licences to be issued for a specific set of purposes including:

- ***include preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of over-riding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment;***
- scientific and educational purposes,
- ringing or marking
- conserving wild animals

Development works fall under the first purpose and Natural England issues bat mitigation licences for developments.