



Greenwood Environmental

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## **Preliminary Bat and Bird Assessment of site of proposed development at The Grain Store, Winslow Road, Granborough, MK18 3NQ**

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Prepared for: Chris Millard  
The Latch House  
Forest Road  
Hanslope  
MK19 7DE

Greenwood Environmental  
Grebe Cottage, 12 Milton Road, Willen Village, Milton Keynes MK15 9AD  
Tel: 01908 663853

E-mail: [hilary1246@gmail.com](mailto:hilary1246@gmail.com)

Website: [www.greenwood-env-ecology.com](http://www.greenwood-env-ecology.com)

Greenwood Environmental is the Trading name of Dr Hilary J. Denny MCIEEM CEnv



## Contents

Limitations .....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
1.1. Background .....	6
1.2. Site description .....	6
2. Planning and legislation .....	7
2.1. Legislation .....	7
2.2. Planning policies .....	8
3. Methods .....	8
3.1. Survey methodology .....	8
4.1. Site description .....	9
4.2. Bats .....	9
4.3. Birds .....	10
5. Conclusions and Recommendations .....	13
5.1 Designated nature conservation sites .....	13
5.2 Bats .....	13
5.3 Birds ... ..	14
6. References .....	15

## Figures

Figure 1 Map of the area with the position of the site indicated. ....	6
------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

## Table

Photographs of the site .....	11
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## Limitations

Ecological surveys can only assess a site at a particular time. This evidence can be used to draw conclusions as to the likely presence or absence of species (animals and plants), population sizes or use of the site by animals. However, any such study represents a snapshot in time; it is neither definitive nor complete. Seasonality and weather conditions influence survey results. Every effort will be taken to provide an accurate assessment of the situation pertaining to the site and subject at the time of the study, but no liability can be assumed for omissions or changes after the survey has taken place. No responsibility will be accepted for any use of or reliance on the contents of a report by any third party.

Validation	Signature	Date
Signatory: Dr Hilary J. Denny MCIEEM CEnv Senior Ecological Consultant Greenwood Environmental		05.12.20



## Executive Summary

### ***Purpose of the report***

The bat and bird survey was carried out by Dr Hilary J Denny MCIEEM CEnv, for the client Chris Millard, The Latch House, Forest Road, Hanslope, MK19 7DE. The site comprises a small area of unmanaged land around a large metal barn and two derelict stable blocks.

It is proposed to convert to provide office facilities and additional living accommodation on site. The commercial part would require the demolition of the stable blocks.

This report covers details and recommendations following a survey and assessment of the site for bats and nesting birds.

### ***Context of the development***

The study site is located at The Grain Store, Winslow Road, Granborough, MK18 3NQ (O.S. SP 76553 25934). The site is located on the northern side of the village of Granborough (Figure 1). The site is surrounded by roads and mainly arable fields, with trees and hedgerows on field boundaries. Claydon Brook runs east-west and is located approx. 425m north of the site. The area surveyed comprises an approximately 0.5 Ha, roughly rectangular site, which comprises buildings, neglected grassland, a scatter of ruderal plants (weeds) and bare ground. The site is bounded by wire fence, agricultural hedge and thick Leyland cypress hedges. The site is adjacent to the main road running north-south between Granborough and Winslow.

### ***Methods***

The stable blocks were inspected inside and out for evidence for the presence or use by bats and nesting birds.

### ***Key issues***

The grain store is a large, modern metal storage unit with very low potential for both bats and nesting birds. The stable blocks are both derelict, single storey buildings. One is timber framed and clad, but mainly open to the sides now. The other is older and of brick and corrugated asbestos construction. There is no evidence that bats have used the stable blocks currently or in the past.

There is potential for birds to nest in vegetation on site. There is no potential for owls, but the stables have been used by nesting swallows and blackbirds. The boundary vegetation may be used by other nesting birds.

### ***Further surveys required***

No further surveys are recommended in advance of planning application. However, it may be necessary to undertake a nesting bird survey prior to construction work commencing, if site clearance is to take place during the bird nesting season (March – August inclusive).

### ***Conclusions***

The site has low potential for bats and while sparrows and swallows have nested within it, no active nests were found at the time of the survey.



There are no statutory or non-statutory sites of importance for nature conservation on or close to the site. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts on are anticipated on any of them.

A range of recommendations are made to compensation for the loss of habitat and negative impacts including avoiding noise and disturbance to bats and nesting birds during construction and the erection of bird and bat boxes, post-construction.

Providing the recommendations are implemented, it is our view that there are no further constraints on the proposed works with regard to bats and nesting birds.

I confirm that the information provided in this document is truthful and accurate at the time of completion.

**Consulting Ecologist: Hilary J. Denny BSc PhD MCIEEM CEnv**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hilary J. Denny". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Date: 05/12/20**



## Introduction

### 1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. The survey was carried out by Dr Hilary J Denny MCIEEM CEnv, for the client Chris Millard, The Latch House, Forest Road, Hanslope, MK19 7DE. The site comprises a small area of unmanaged land around a large metal barn and two derelict stable blocks.
- 1.1.2. It is proposed to provide office facilities and additional living accommodation on site. The commercial part would require the demolition of the stable blocks.
- 1.1.3. The purpose of this report is to survey the barn and stables for the presence of bats. The report will form part of a planning application. Our report also aims to highlight any further ecological surveys that may be required and provide information required in order to develop appropriate mitigation or compensation measures.

### 1.2. Site description

- 1.2.1. The study site is located at The Grain Store, Winslow Road, Granborough, MK18 3NQ (O.S. SP 76553 25934). The site is located on the northern side of the village of Granborough (Figure 1). The site is surrounded by roads and mainly arable fields, with trees and hedgerows on field boundaries. Claydon Brook runs east-west and is located approx. 425m north of the site.

**Figure 1** Map of the area with the position of the site indicated. (Ordnance Survey @ Crown Copyright. All rights reserved licence number 100048215)





- 1.2.2. The area surveyed comprises an approximately 0.5 Ha, roughly rectangular site, which comprises buildings, neglected grassland, a scatter of ruderal plants (weeds) and bare ground. The site is bounded by wire fence, agricultural hedge and thick Leyland cypress hedges. The site is adjacent to the main road running north-south between Granborough and Winslow.
- 1.2.3. There are no statutory or non-statutory site of importance for nature conservation within 5km of the site. The Priority Habitats identified locally is a small area of deciduous woodland over 1km away to the NW. Therefore, the proposed residential development is sufficiently distant and separated from these sites for the proposals not to impact on these habitats or species they support.
- 1.2.4. Pipistrelle bats (*sensu latu*) have been recorded in Granborough in recent years and there are also records of natterer and Bechstein's bats within 5km of the site.

## 2. Planning and legislation

### 2.1. Legislation

- 2.1.1. The following information provides a very brief summary of the relevant wildlife legislation, directives and policies. It is not intended to be taken as definitive or complete, and so should not be taken as a comprehensive or accurate statement of current wildlife legislation.
- 2.1.2. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 makes it an offence to possess, disturb or sell any of the animals listed in Schedule 5. It is also an offence to damage or disturb the places used for their shelter or protection, which includes setts, breeding ponds and breeding or hibernation roosts, but also includes such sites as temporary bat roosts in cracks or loose bark on trees. Badgers, great crested newts and bats are covered by this legislation.
- 2.1.3. Bats are also protected under the Conservation Regulations 1994. Bats, their roosts and resting places are protected from damage and disturbance, but their adjacent habitat is not, although it could be argued that activity that degrades their foraging areas or flight routes may be disturbing to bats, or damage their breeding sites and resting places. Any activities that damage or disturb these animals and these key places need to be licensed.
- 2.1.4. Most bird species are protected, and so are all birds' nests during the breeding season whatever the species. It is an offence to damage a nest or disturb it to such an extent that the nest is abandoned.



## **2.2. Planning policies**

- 2.2.1. This report is prepared with reference to the revised National Planning Policy Framework 2018. The NPPF places much emphasis on sustainable development, and states that this gives rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles, such as 'improving biodiversity'. The specific policies within the Framework which relate to biodiversity tend to reaffirm the protection previously afforded through PPS9 to designated sites, priority habitats and priority species, ancient woodland and veteran trees.
- 2.2.2. Within the Framework, more emphasis is placed on ecological networks than in previous PPS9, requiring their creation rather than simply maintenance and repair. The Framework also states that the planning system should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible, and contribute to the Government's commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity. However, the Framework refers to the need to maintain biodiversity and the protection of priority species, presumably those listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, which includes bats.

## **3. Methods**

### **3.1. Survey methodology**

- 3.1.1. The survey was carried on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The weather was cool and showery with light winds. The weather over the preceding week had been characterised by some rainfall and morning frost, the ground was damp at the time of the survey. The temperature at the start of the survey was 9° C and 9° C at the end.
- 3.1.2. The survey comprised:
- a daytime visit to the site and assessment of the barn for bat roosts
  - survey of site for evidence of breeding birds
- 3.1.3. Any buildings, trees, vegetation or other relevant structures were searched for evidence of use by barn owls and other birds: signs included nesting sites, feathers, droppings and pellets.
- 3.1.4. Relevant structures on or adjacent to the site were also searched, both internally and externally for signs of use by bats, including piles of droppings, greasy marks or streaks of urine staining adjacent to potential entry points and discarded insect remains.
- 3.1.5. Given the time of year, neither emergence/activity surveys nor endoscope investigations were carried out to avoid disturbing hibernating bats.
- 3.1.6. The information in this report is based on a single visit to the site in daylight and hence it is possible that the presence of bats may have been missed.



## 4. Results

### 4.1. Site description

- 4.1.1. The Grain Store is an existing, large, modern metal barn. It has no potential for use by bats (Photo 1).
- 4.1.2. There are two derelict stable blocks (Photo 2).
- 4.1.3. Block one, is the remains of a single storey timber framed building, which has had most of the side panels, doors and windows removed (Photos 3 - 5).
- 4.1.4. Block two, is a single storey brick and breeze block rectangular building with a corrugated asbestos roof supported on wooden joists (Photo 6 – 8). The floor of the block is concrete (Photo 7). The doors and window frames are in a poor state of repair with lots of rot (Photo 8). The guttering is falling away from the building.
- 4.1.5. None of the walls or roofs are lined or insulated. There is some rendering on the west side of block two (Photos 7 & 2).
- 4.1.6. The two blocks are set within a small grassy enclosure, which is partially enclosed by a defunct wire fence (Photos 2 & 3). There are some piles of rubble and demolition material to the north of block one (Photo 9).
- 4.1.7. The area between the stable block enclosure and the grain store is loose mineral ballast type material, which forms a rough yard for parking and movement by plant and vehicles (Photo 1).
- 4.1.8. To the north and west of the grain store is an area of neglected grassland, which grades into tall ruderal vegetation to the west (Photo 10). The areas immediately adjacent to the grain store, which were presumably disturbed when it was constructed, are characterized by an ephemeral ruderal community of plants (Photo 11).
- 4.1.9. The northern boundary is mainly post and wire with a stretch of tall Leyland cypress hedge nearest to the site entrance (Photos 10 and 12).
- 4.1.10. The rest of the boundaries are agricultural hedge, comprising a mixture of ash, blackthorn, hawthorn, elm, dogwood and bramble (Photos 10 & 11). The hedge along the eastern boundary by the road has been cut to about 2m in height (Photo 9), and has a drainage ditch running along it by the road. The hedge running along the southern boundary is unmanaged with no ditch (Photo 11).
- 4.1.11. There is a spotlight on the east front of the grain store, above the main entrance (Photo 1).



## **4.2. Bats**

- 4.2.1. There was no evidence of bats in any of the buildings.
- 4.2.2. There are no small enclosed spaces where the walls or roofs have been lined or insulated. The crevices in the rotten wood were inspected but there was no evidence for the presence of bats. No droppings, urine stains, polishing, greasy marks or insect remains were found anywhere.
- 4.2.3. Any small gaps within wood or between wooden beams and the walls were found to be dusty and cobwebby.
- 4.2.4. The buildings are close to the road and so are likely to be lit by car headlights at night
- 4.2.5. There are no large trees on site that have features suitable for use by bats as a roost or resting place. The ash tree on the western boundary has ivy, but this is not old growth; there is no matrix of stems that could be used for bats to shelter. The tree is also well away from any areas likely to be physically disturbed by construction work.

## **4.3. Birds**

- 4.3.1. The location and construction of the buildings makes them unsuitable for owls. There were several old swallow nests in the stables, but no evidence of recent use. There is a blackbird nest in the southern end of the brick stable, resting on top of some lumbar stored there (Photo 8).
- 4.3.2. The boundary hedges offer good nest sites opportunities for blackbirds, dunnock and other garden birds.
- 4.3.3. The ash tree showed no obvious evidence of nests, but may well house nests of robins or tits in small holes and crevices.



**Table 1 Photos of the site**



Photo 1 East elevation of the grain store



Photo 2 Stable blocks within derelict enclosure



Photo 3 Block 1 remains of timber framed stable block. Overgrown enclosure foreground.



Photo 4 Interior of Block 1, with side panels removed



Photo 5 swallow nest above light fitting



Photo 6 Block 2 brick, corrugated asbestos stable block. Note rotten window frames and collapsing guttering.



Photo 7 Interior of Block 2



Photo 8 Blackbird nest on lumbar in the south end of the brick stable block.



Photo 9 Demolition rubble next to main entrance. Low managed hedge on eastern boundary by road also visible.



Photo 10 View to west of neglected neutral grassland grading into tall ruderal vegetation. Agricultural hedge with standard ash tree on western boundary. Note wire & post fence [rt]



Photo 11 Ephemeral ruderal vegetation on south side of site between grain store and agricultural hedge.



Photo 12 Leylandii hedge on north boundary by entrance. Provides some



## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

### 5.1. Designated nature conservation sites

5.1.1. Due to the nature of the proposed development and the distance between the site and any statutory or non-statutory sites of international, national or local importance in the local area, no impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposed development and as such, no recommendations are made in relation to these sites.

### 5.2. Bats

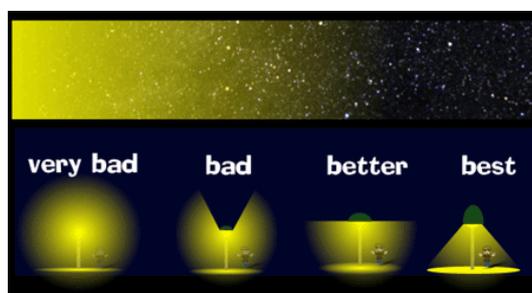
5.2.1. The survey was limited in extent due to the time of year. Any local bats would be expected to be hibernating and so inactive. Also, any disturbance to hibernating bats may harm them. Therefore, the survey was limited to an external and internal inspection.

5.2.2. Nevertheless, it is considered highly unlikely that there are bat roosts or resting places on site. Therefore, no further bat surveys are deemed necessary.

5.2.3. However, there are large and/or senescent trees and buildings in the neighbourhood have the potential to support bat roosts, which are protected by wildlife law, and there are bats that occur in the locality, which are likely to use the southern boundary as a flight route between parts of their foraging range. Therefore, construction work may impact negatively on local bat populations in the short term.

5.2.4. **Action:** In order to avoid affecting the behaviour of local bat populations, it is recommended that in the short term no construction work is undertaken with the aid of flood lighting, or earlier than 1 hour after sunrise or 1 hour before sunset.

5.2.5. **Action:** In the long term, negative impacts could be avoided by ensuring that lighting (street lighting, flood lights, security lights etc.) is of a design, location and use that avoids unnecessary light spill onto adjacent habitats, especially hedges and trees along the boundaries. Low-level lighting should be adopted where possible and hoods or cowls should be used to avoid upward spread of light.



Hood design is crucial to limiting light spill



Bollard lighting is bat friendly



5.2.6. **Action:** Another beneficial enhancement would be to erect three bat boxes on site. Suitable sites include around the trunk of the ash tree (at least 4m up) or near the eaves of buildings. (Possible source: <https://www.nhbs.com/improved-crevice-bat-box?bkfno=187782>).

- Place them either in a groups round three sides of a mature tree.
- Or, under the eaves/gables to protect them from bad weather.
- Ensure at least 20-30 feet of clear flight space around the bat house and easy access to cover e.g. hedge, trees etc.
- The existing retained large trees would be a good place – OR
- Around the corners of new buildings would be a good place, e.g. high up on side walls, which face out onto the adjacent line of trees.

### 5.3. Birds

5.3.1. **Birds:** The site, provides potential nest sites for a range of bird species. Many of these habitats will be retained. However, some small loss of habitat, especially those house sparrows and swallows is inevitable. Furthermore, active bird's nests are legally protected from harm.

5.3.2. **Action:** Therefore, any vegetation clearance or demolition on site should take place outside the bird nesting season (i.e. undertaken between September and February inclusive). Should it prove impossible to adhere to these timings, an appropriately experienced ecologist should undertake a nesting bird survey immediately prior to vegetation clearance commencing. The ecologist should identify active nests and provide mitigation guidance, which must be implemented in full. The ecologist should be present on site at all times when vegetation clearance is underway. Active birds' nests must be protected until nesting is finished, which can cause significant delays and rescheduling of planned works.

5.3.3. **Action:** It would also be beneficial to install nest boxes for these species:

- 1 x house sparrow terrace: <https://www.nhbs.com/cedarplus-triple-sparrow-house?bkfno=193072>
- Sparrow terraces, are best erected on or within walls, near to the eaves, also not facing south.
- Examples available from: [http://www.nhbs.com/species\\_specific\\_bird\\_boxes\\_eqcat\\_430.html](http://www.nhbs.com/species_specific_bird_boxes_eqcat_430.html)



Schwegler sparrow terrace fitted externally and integral to the wall

5.3.4. **Action:** If possible four swallow cups should be erected inside a building which allows easy access for the birds via an open door or window, such as a garage or outhouse.



- Possible source: [https://www.birdfood.co.uk/swallow-nest-box?utm\\_source=google\\_shopping&gclid](https://www.birdfood.co.uk/swallow-nest-box?utm_source=google_shopping&gclid)
- Alternatively, though not ideal, erect four house-martin cups under the eaves of a building externally. Possible source: [https://www.birdfood.co.uk/house-martin-nest-double?utm\\_source=google\\_shopping&gclid](https://www.birdfood.co.uk/house-martin-nest-double?utm_source=google_shopping&gclid)



Swallow nest cup



House martin double cup

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