

# **Bat & Owl Survey of White House Farm Barn Henley**

**On behalf of:**

**Hollins Architects  
4a Market Hill  
Framlingham  
Suffolk  
IP13 9BA**

**Prepared by:**

**John Dobson B.Sc  
Essex Mammal Surveys**

**December 2021**

## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>1 Summary</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2 Introduction</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>3 Legislation and planning policy relating to bats &amp; barn owls in the UK</b> | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>4 Methods</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>5 Results</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>6 Discussion</b>   | <b>11</b> |
| <b>7 Recommendations for reasonable biodiversity enhancements</b>                   | <b>12</b> |

**John Dobson  
Essex Mammal Surveys  
148 Main Road  
Danbury  
Essex  
CM3 4DT**

## 1) Summary

In January 2017, as part of a planning proposal involving several outbuildings at White House Farm, Ashbocking Road, Henley, Ipswich, Suffolk IP6 0SA, a site visit was undertaken to determine whether the site had been used by bats and barn owls. At that time, the survey found no evidence of protected species at the site and the report concluded that: *‘therefore it is considered that the proposal for this site will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population.’*



**Photo 1:** Looking towards the eastern elevation of the barn

Following a lapse of nearly five years, a second survey was conducted to see if bats and barn owls had colonised the site during the intervening period. The survey building is a 5-bay barn with an unlined slate and part corrugated tin roof, with a block-built, single-storey former farrowing shed with a corrugated asbestos roof abutting it on the north-eastern side. The buildings are aligned approximately NE-SW. The survey found that the interior of the farrowing shed was used for storage, with a shallow-pitched, corrugated asbestos roof lined with plasterboard. The interior had no cavities that might be occupied by roosting bats and this building was considered to have **negligible** potential as a roosting place for bats.

The interior of the barn received daylight illumination (and draughts and rain) via an open door on the south-eastern side, a missing section to the north-western elevation, windows in both gable walls and gaps in the wall cladding. At each end of the barn is a mezzanine floor

that takes up two bays. These floors were inspected from a ladder and found to have no evidence of bats. With machine cut beams to the roof and walls, there was a lack of crevices around the mortise joints in the wall plates and tie beams and no cavities that might offer potential roosting places for bats. No evidence of their presence was found in this building, which was considered to have **negligible** potential as a roosting place for bats.

There is no vegetation affected by the proposal that has loose bark, crevices or woodpecker holes that might offer potential roosting places for bats. **No** evidence of their presence was found at this site.

The buildings receive regular disturbance and have a lack of suitable nesting and roosting sites which means that they are unsuitable for occupation by barn owls. **No** evidence of this species was found.

The lack of potential roosting places and absence of any evidence of the presence of bats means that **no** further surveys are required for these buildings.

Since no evidence of bats was found, a European Protected Species Licence will **not** be required for this project.

Although no evidence of bats was found in the buildings, it is probable that bats from nearby roosts will forage over the site and along the tree-lined lane at the front of the farm. This behaviour would be expected to continue after the completion of the building work and therefore it is considered that the proposal for this site will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population.

Please note that this survey records the status of the buildings at the time of the survey. However, if more than a year were to elapse before the start of the building work, it is considered unlikely, due to the lack of potential roosting places, that bats would colonise the site during the intervening period.

## **2) Introduction**

Essex Mammal Surveys were requested to carry out a survey of two adjoining outbuildings at White House Farm, Henley to investigate for signs indicating the presence of barn owls, bat colonies and their roosts. The identification of protected species is vital in the proposed development of a site to comply with existing legislation and also allows any work that may otherwise be detrimental to bats to be appropriately scheduled. John Dobson, a bat worker and trainer licensed by Natural England (Licence No. 2015-15258-CLS-CLS) and author of *Mammals of Essex* (Essex Field Club, 2014), carried out the survey on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021. John Dobson has been elected a Fellow of the British Naturalists' Association and received the David Bellamy Award for natural history in 2015. The site is located at Grid Reference: TM165521.

This report has been compiled in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Survey Guidelines for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*.

However, the first page of all three editions includes the following: *The guidelines should be interpreted and adapted on a case-by-case basis according to site-specific factors and the professional judgement of an experienced ecologist. Where examples are used in the guidelines, they are descriptive rather than prescriptive.*

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

John Dobson has extensive experience of barn owl nest sites and pellets, having collected pellets from a site at Canewdon for 24 consecutive months during 1995-1997. The data from this study formed part of the total of 6,950 pellets analysed for prey items, the results of which were published in *The Mammals of Essex* (Lopinga Books, 1999). Most recently, in September 2011, in the company of a licensed bird ringer, five barn owl nest sites were visited on Foulness and 277 pellets recovered for analysis. The results of this research were published in the *Essex Naturalist* in 2015. Pellets collected ranged from recent, black, shiny examples, through shades of grey to crumbling, dusty examples of greater age.

### **3) Legislation and planning policy relating to bats & barn owls in the UK**

All bat species in Britain are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through inclusion on Schedule 5. They are also protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (which were issued under the European Communities Act 1972), through inclusion on Schedule 2. From January 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 these Regulations were consolidated into the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU exit) Regulations 2019.

European protected animal species and their breeding sites or resting places are protected under Regulation 39. It is an offence for anyone to deliberately capture, injure or kill any such animal or to deliberately take or destroy their eggs. It is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding or resting place of such an animal. It is also an offence to have in one's possession or control, any live or dead European protected species.

The threshold above which a person will commit the offence of deliberately disturbing a wild animal of a European protected species has been raised. Now, a person will commit an offence only if he deliberately disturbs such animals in a way as to be likely significantly to affect (a) the ability of any significant groups of animals of that species to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young, or (b) the local distribution of abundance of that species. However, please note that the existing offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended which cover obstruction of places used for shelter or protection (for example, a bat roost), disturbance and sale still apply to European protected species.

This legislation provides defences so that necessary operations may be carried out in places used by bats, provided the appropriate Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (in England this is Natural England) is notified and allowed a reasonable time to advise on whether the proposed operation should be carried out and, if so, the approach to be used. The UK is a signatory to the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe, set up under the Bonn Convention. The Fundamental Obligations of Article III of this Agreement require the

protection of all bats and their habitats, including the identification and protection from damage or disturbance of important feeding areas for bats.

Paragraph 98 of Circular 06/2005 states that *‘the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat’*.

Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 (NPPF) states that *‘the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by ....minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity....’*

Since August 2007, building development that affects bats or their roosts needs a Protected Species Licence under The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 administered in England by Natural England.

Schedule 12, paragraph 13 of the CROW Act (2000) makes an offence under Section 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) an arrestable offence. As a result, the police gain additional power to aid the investigation and enforcement of the legislation protecting bats.

The barn owl is protected under Schedule 1 and Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is therefore an offence to injure, kill or capture the bird, to disturb nesting birds, to take eggs, and to release captive owls into the wild without a licence. The barn owl is also recognised by the UK Biodiversity Group as a “Species of Conservation Concern”.

## **4) Methods**

### **4.1 Buildings survey**

The exterior surfaces of the buildings were examined for any signs of use as bat roosts, such as the presence of droppings on walls, windows or staining around roost entrances. The use of a crevice by a colony of bats produces droppings on brickwork and adjacent surfaces close to the crevice, together with an accumulation of droppings beneath the roost entrance. However, upon examination, many surfaces will have one or two droppings, randomly placed, caused by bats seeking out new roost sites.

The internal survey was conducted using a powerful torch. The roofs of the buildings were searched for evidence of roosting, the floor areas for droppings and the beams for crevices and staining indicative of the presence of roosting bats. An Xtend & Climb Pro Ladder and a ProVision 300 endoscope were available to inspect crevices in brickwork and around beams.

### **4.2 Barn owls**

The buildings were inspected for roof voids and cavities that might form potential nesting sites. The floor areas of the buildings were searched for feathers, nest debris and pellets – the remains of small mammals and other prey items that are regurgitated from a perch. Where owls are present, there is usually splashing of excreta on beams and floors as this is expelled whilst perching.

## 5) Results

### 5.1 Building survey

The survey building is a 5-bay barn with an unlined slate and part corrugated tin roof, with a block-built, single-storey former farrowing shed with a corrugated asbestos roof abutting it on the north-eastern side. The buildings are aligned approximately NE-SW. The survey found that the interior of the farrowing shed was used for storage, with a shallow-pitched, corrugated asbestos roof lined with plasterboard. The interior had no cavities that might be occupied by roosting bats and this building was considered to have **negligible** potential as a roosting place for bats.

The interior of the barn received daylight illumination (and draughts and rain) via an open door on the south-eastern side, a missing section to the north-western elevation, windows in both gable walls and gaps in the wall cladding. At each end of the barn is a mezzanine floor that takes up two bays. These floors were inspected from a ladder and found to have no evidence of bats. With machine cut beams to the roof and walls, there was a lack of crevices around the mortise joints in the wall plates and tie beams and no cavities that might offer potential roosting places for bats. No evidence of their presence was found in this building, which was considered to have **negligible** potential as a roosting place for bats.



**Photo 2:** North-eastern end of former farrowing shed



**Photo 3:** Interior of former farrowing shed



**Photo 4:** South-western end elevation of barn, north-western side (note gaps in walls) and, at far end, south-western end of farrowing shed



**Photo 5:** Looking north-eastwards in barn



**Photo 6:** Looking south-westwards in barn. Note gaps in wall





**Photo 7:** North-western side



**Photo 8:** South-western elevation



**Photo 9:** Note lack of evidence of bats on mezzanine floor



**Photo 10:** Note lack of evidence of bats on mezzanine floor



**Photo 11:** Note lack of evidence of bats on mezzanine floor



**Photo 12:** Note lack of evidence of bats on mezzanine floor



**Photo 13:** Note lack of evidence of bats on mezzanine floor

There is no vegetation affected by the proposal that has loose bark, crevices or woodpecker holes that might offer potential roosting places for bats.

**No** evidence of the presence of bats was found at this site.

### **5.2 Barn owls**

The buildings receives regular disturbance and have a lack of suitable nesting and roosting sites which means that they are unsuitable for occupation by barn owls. **No** evidence of this species was found.

## **6) Discussion**

Bats are inquisitive, highly mobile animals, which constantly investigate their surroundings, evaluating good feeding areas and potential roosting opportunities. Where suitable habitat such as woodland, woodland edge or sheltered pasture occurs, bats will travel up to several kilometres to take advantage of this resource. To reach favoured sites, small bats will follow linear landscape features such as hedgerows, streams and lanes etc. The absence of such features can make an otherwise suitable site inaccessible to bats. In addition, new roosts will become established in such areas - examples being the rapid colonisation of artificial roost boxes placed in conifer forests or the occupation of new houses by nursery colonies of pipistrelle bats within a year or two of their completion.

Since no evidence of bats was found, a European Protected Species Licence will **not** be required for this project.

Although no evidence of roosting bats was found in the buildings, it is probable that bats from nearby roosts will forage over the site and along the tree-lined lane at the front of the farm. This behaviour would be expected to continue after the completion of the building

work and therefore it is considered that the proposal for this site will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population.

Please note that this survey records the status of the buildings at the time of the survey. However, if more than a year were to elapse before the start of the building work, it is considered unlikely, due to the lack of potential roosting places, that bats would colonise the site during the intervening period.

## 7) Recommendations for reasonable biodiversity enhancements

**1:** It is recommended that the existing gaps along the site boundaries are retained to allow hedgehogs and common toads to forage across the site as, potentially, at present. However if boundary fences are to be introduced, see below:



**Photo 14:** Hedgehog pathway at base of fence

Hedgehogs travel around **one mile** every night through our parks and gardens in their quest to find enough food and a mate. If you have an enclosed garden this can prevent hedgehogs from dispersing throughout their territory. It is now known that one of the main reasons why hedgehogs are declining in Britain is because our fences and walls are becoming more and more secure, reducing the amount of land available to them. Developers can make their life a little easier by removing the barriers within their control – for example, by making holes in or under our garden fences and walls for them to pass through.

**A gap 13cm by 13cm is sufficient for any hedgehog to pass through. This will be too small for nearly all pets.**

Alternatively:

- Remove a brick from the bottom of the wall
- Cut a small hole in your fence if there are no gaps
- Dig a channel underneath your wall, fence or gate

**2:** Two bird nesting boxes to be sited on buildings or trees at the site.

**3:** A Hedgehog nesting box to be sited at base of a boundary hedge.

**4:** Two solitary bee hives to be erected at the site.



**Photo 15:** Solitary bee hive

This solitary beehive is manufactured from durable FSC timber (other designs are available) and provides valuable habitat for bees in modern gardens. It is designed specifically to attract non-swarming bees like the Red Mason Bee, Leafcutter Bee and other solitary bees which are naturally attracted to holes in wood.

Attracting solitary bees to the garden is not only safe, but beneficial to pollination of flowers, fruit and vegetables.

**Siting:** Site in a visible warm place ideally oriented to face between southeast and south and to catch some sun. It is helpful to have soil nearby, and food sources such as flowers, orchards and fruit.