Leigh Ecology Ltd

Protected Species and Habitat Surveys

# Farmhouse at Dutton Park Farm,

# Lodge Lane,

# Dutton,

# Warrington.

*On behalf of Mrs. Stephanie Gleave*

## Bat Scoping Survey Report

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# 1 SUMMARY

1.1.1 The subject building is a large, two-storey farmhouse building at Dutton Park Farm, Dutton, Warrington.

1.1.2 Proposal plans include the removal of the subject building and a subsequent replacement dwelling built in its place.

1.1.3 Therefore, to facilitate the works on the building and to inform the planning application, a survey for bat species *Chiroptera* was undertaken on the 25th March 2022.

1.1.4 The building was found to be of high bat potential, due to the condition of the building throughout; the external roof features several potential entry points in the form of damaged/ displaced tiles. Bat activity surveys were undertaken previously on the adjacent barn buildings, where over 6 different species of bat were identified within.

1.1.5 Signs of nesting birds were noted within the roof space; several jackdaw and house sparrow nests were found during the survey.

1.1.6 It is therefore suggested that a set of 3 bat activity surveys be undertaken to determine the presence of bats within the building. Mitigation proposals have already been recommended and embedded within proposal plans for the site.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 A traditional brick farmhouse has been identified for replacement. A protected species survey was required, namely bat species *Chiroptera*, and nesting bird, in order to inform the planning application.

2.1.2 For development proposals requiring planning permission, the presence of protected species, and therefore the need for a survey is a material planning consideration under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Adequate surveys are therefore required to establish the presence or absence of protected species, to enable a prediction of the likely impact of the proposed development on them and their breeding site or resting places and, if necessary, to design mitigation and compensation methods.

2.1.3 For any development to proceed lawfully at a site where protected species are present, a licence issued by Natural England, under the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 2010 (as amended) may be required. Information gathered during the surveys is used to inform such a licence application.

2.1.4 The objective of the study was to identify the presence or potential presence of bat species within the building identified on-site.

2.1.5 A preliminary roost survey, consisting of an internal and external survey of the target building, was conducted on the 25th March 2022.

2.1.6 This report provides the output from the bat scoping survey.

## 2.2 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

### Bats

2.2.1 There are 17 species of bats in the UK, all of which suffered a decline in population size and distribution during the 20th century; even those species regarded to be the most common suffered a 70% decline between 1978 and 1993 (Mitchel-Jones and McLeish, 2004).

2.2.2 All species of bats are listed under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and Regulation 41 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and are therefore afforded special protection. It is an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bat;
- Intentionally damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a wild bat uses for shelter or protection; and
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

2.2.3 Bats are further protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 which make it an offence to:

- Capture or kill a bat;
- Significantly disturb a bat (in any location); and
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any bat.

2.2.4 If bats are present on a development site and, as a result of the development there is a likelihood that a roost may be damaged or destroyed, or where there is considered to be a reasonable possibility that bats occupying a roost may be significantly disturbed, or where there would be a requirement to significantly disturb a bat irrespective of its location, the development can only proceed if a European Protected Species (EPS) licence is issued by Natural England.

2.2.5 In England and Wales, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 imposes a duty on all public bodies, including local authorities to make material consideration to biodiversity conservation in the determination of all types of planning applications. The UK Biodiversity Strategy was produced in response to the convention. The strategy contains action plans for species considered to be of conservation priority at a national (under Species Action Plans (SAP) and local scale (under Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs).

2.2.6 The UKBAP lists seven bat species considered as priorities, the relevant SBAP (Cheshire) lists several bat species, Noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctule*) and Pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus Ppipistrellus* and *P. pygmaeus*).

## 2.3 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.3.1 The proposal building comprises a two-storey brick farmhouse, featuring a standard slate tile roof. An adjacent outbuilding is also to be removed. The buildings are located adjacent to previously surveyed barn buildings at Dutton Park Farm, Dutton, Warrington.

2.3.2 The buildings are located on a hard-standing yard within a rural wider area. Over 6 Differing species of bat were noted from a series of bat activity surveys focusing on the adjacent barn buildings in 2021.

2.3.3 The site grid reference is SJ 580772.

2.3.4 Mitigation proposals have already been embedded within proposal plans and should be followed throughout the development.

2.3.5 The site map shown below shows the scope of the survey and maps the position of the target buildings, which are within the red line boundaries.

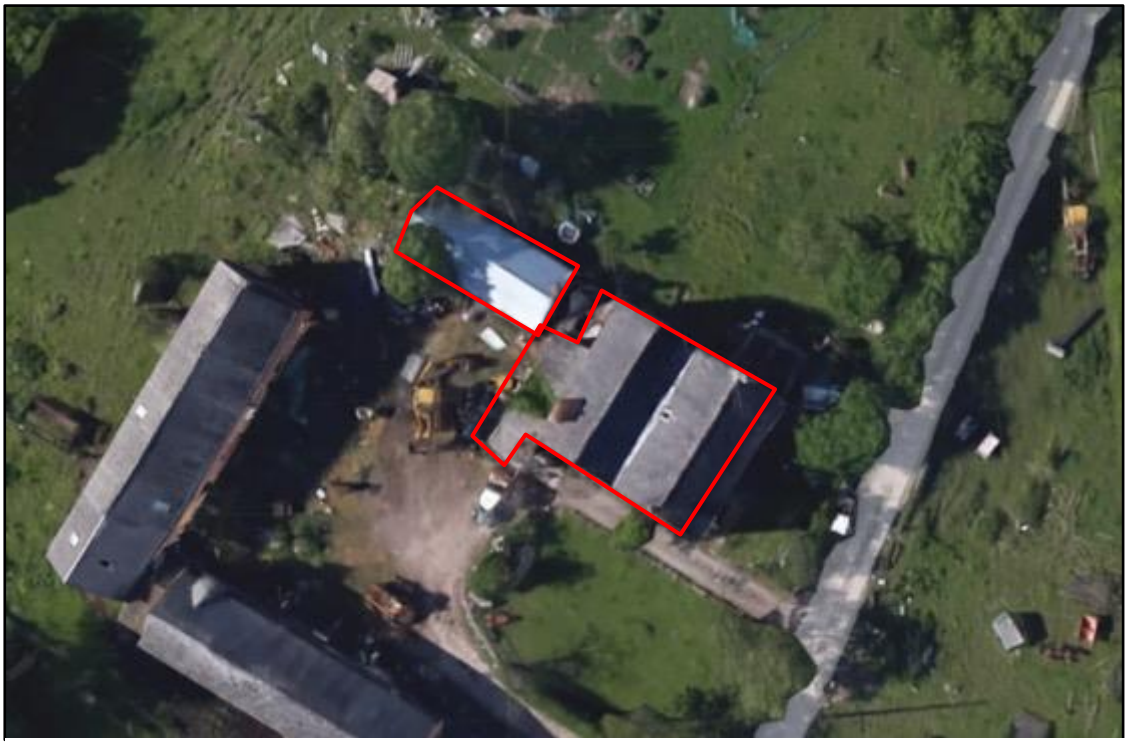

Fig 1: Site location

(Google Earth 2021)

**Fig 2**: A front view of the subject farmhouse. The roof can be seen in fair condition with several entry points along the apex.

**Fig 3**: The northern gable of the building is in good condition.

**Fig 4:** The southern gable is more conditioned than the northern face. The brick soffit of the building is damaged in parts.

Fig 5: View of the adjacent outbuilding on site. The building is in decrepit condition throughout, although no active/ancient bird nests or signs of previous bat usage was found.

**Fig 6:** An internal view of the outbuilding.

**Fig 7:** A single-storey extension on the western side of the building. Both this extension and the outbuilding feature a tin roof atop; this roof type is unsuitable for bird species and bats.

Fig 8: The internal roof space of the building. A felt lining beneath the slate tiles is in fair condition.

Fig 9: The extent of the roof space. House sparrows and jackdaw nests were identified within the roof space.

**Fig 10:** Bat droppings found within the roof space.

**Fig 11:** Feeding remains found on the second storey of the building.

# 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1.1 The internal and external roost survey was undertaken by a Natural England licensed surveyor: Roy Leigh NE licence 2015/15883-CLS and Ecologist Christian Leigh.

3.1.2 Survey methods were based-upon the standard and specification detailed in the BCTs Bat Surveys- Good Practise Guidelines (BCT, 2016). The building was inspected internally and externally on 25th March 2022.

**External Inspection**

3.1.3 The objective of the survey was to locate any signs of bat activity, for example:

- Bat droppings;
- Feeding remains;
- Grease staining/ urine marks;
- Corpses or skeletons;
- Potential access points to internal roosts.

3.1.4 The bat signs listed above are visible from the outside of the building. The following areas were searched using binoculars:

- Ground floor casing;
- Rendering;
- Any cracks/ holes in brickwork/ woodwork;
- Between wall cavities at window points;
- On external brickwork.

**Internal Inspection**

3.1.5 Bats regularly utilise specific areas within roof spaces/open roof configurations (see below), which were searched as a priority for any bat field signs:

- Dividing walls;
- Beneath hip joints and junctions;
- Staining above/ around gaps;
- Within cobwebs;
- Staining around tile gaps;
- In cavities of walls within the roof wall joints;
- Timber / wall joints.

3.1.6 The internal building survey covered all rooms, both ground and attic.

3.1.7 The surveys were undertaken using a 168-lumen flashlight and 10x42 Swarovski binoculars.

3.1.8 Ladders were used to access elevated areas with potential for bat signs.

**Survey limitations**

3.1.9 All areas of the building were fully accessible, and care was taken, therefore the survey was considered comprehensive.

# 4 RESULTS

## Internal and external inspection

4.1.1 The farmhouse building offers high bat potential, due to the suitability of the roof space and the entry points found throughout; this coupled with the knowledge that bats are present on site (information found from previous surveys) and the finding of droppings within the roof space.

4.1.2 The buildings are located on a hard standing yard within a rural area with open fields and hedgerows. The area offers ideal foraging habitat, and previous bat activity surveys have identified the adjacent barns usage as well as nearby hedgerows and woodland areas.

4.1.3 Bat droppings and feeding remains were clearly identified within the building (figure 10 and 11), as well as several jackdaw and house sparrow nests.

# 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The results of the bat scoping survey indicate that the farmhouse building offers high bat potential; the roof space is ideal, and several openings make bat entry feasible. Previous bat activity surveys undertaken on the adjacent barns found that over 6 differing species of bat were recorded.

5.2 Bat mitigation measures have been embedded into current proposal plans in the previous bat activity report for the farm complex, these mitigation proposals extend to the replacement farmhouse.

5.3 Several ancient bird nests were found among the purlins and rafters in the roof space.

5.4 Therefore, it is recommended that a further **3 bat activity** surveys be undertaken to determine the presence of roosting bats within the subject farmhouse building.

# 6 REFERENCES


Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). Bat surveys for professional ecologists: Good practice guidelines. 3rd edition. Bat Conservation Trust. London.

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