

Bat Survey to
Lower Deerplay Farm
Oak Lane
Triangle

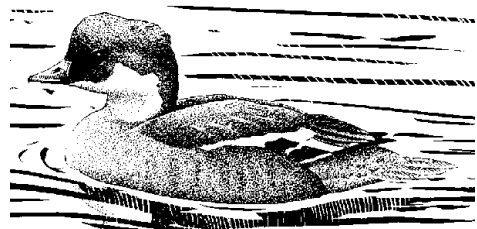
Halifax
HX6 3DT

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John Gardner

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1. Summary

- 1.1 A bat scoping and activity survey to the barn at Lower Deerplay Farm, Triangle, has been carried out to establish the likelihood of the building being used by roosting bats ahead of proposed conversion work. The survey was undertaken at the optimal time for bat occupancy and aimed to establish the presence or absence of bats using the buildings. The application seeks permission to convert the barn to residential.
- 1.2 A preliminary roost assessment survey was carried out on 28th March 2022 but determined that further survey work would be required in the form of an activity survey. The preliminary results determined that the building was of *low* interest to bats based on the condition of the building, its location and potential roost features and suggested the construction style would be more likely to result in small numbers or individual bats rather than a maternity roost. A further survey was carried out on 5th May 2022 followed by an emergence survey which resulted in no bats present on the site.
- 1.3 The building is a long, single-storey barn which is open to the rafters inside and much of the main roof along the ridge section is missing. The roof is unlined and in a poor state limiting its suitability to bats though the walls, also in poor condition and having many gaps, offer some potential. Internally, there is a dividing wall which has gaps offering bat roost potential and some of the internal walls also have suitable gaps.
- 1.4 The activity survey established that bats are not currently using the barn and the condition of the roof suggests it is unlikely that ridge dwelling species would be found. There are many gaps in the stonework, both externally and internally, that would allow bats to roost, though more likely in smaller numbers rather than a colony. The activity survey recorded noctule bats foraging high over the site, and common pipistrelle hunting along the road and pasture south of the site. This is in line with the results of a previous survey on another site in the area which suggests that common pipistrelle bats are roosting around 500m SE of the site.
- 1.5 Based on the survey results, the scoping survey and emergence survey results is considered sufficient for this site. The survey established that bats are not roosting in the building despite suitable roosting opportunities. No nesting birds were noted during the survey.
- 1.6 Potential roost sites will be lost during the works and, therefore, inclusion of permanent bat roost features should be considered.
- 1.7 There are no statutory constraints to the development of this building from the presence of bats and no further survey work is required.

2. Introduction

2.1 A bat scoping and activity survey was carried out to a barn at Lower Deerplay Farm, Oak Lane, Triangle, Halifax HX6 3DT (NGR SE041220) in accordance with the Planning Authority's request, to determine whether bats have or are using the property as a roost site.

2.2 The current proposal seeks to convert the existing barn to residential.

2.3 The survey took place at a time considered to be the optimal period for bat occupancy therefore, the survey aimed to establish the following:

- the presence or absence of bats by undertaking a scoping survey
- determine if activity surveys are required
- identify any potential roosting areas
- provide an impact assessment of the development on bats
- define mitigation proposals where required
- assess the requirement for a protected species licence.
- Assess the building for use by nesting birds

3. Methodology

3.1 The site was surveyed in accordance with BCT best practice guidelines by John Gardner, a surveyor with 40yrs field experience in searching for bats and is registered to use the Class Survey Licence WML CL20 (Level 4). The licence number is 2015-15656-CLS-CLS.

3.2 The interior and exterior of the building was inspected during daylight using torches and binoculars. All normal signs of bats were looked for including bats, dead baby bats, bat droppings, prey remains, scratching and staining of entry and exit holes.

3.3 The building was assessed for its degree of potential to support roosting bats including assessing the building design, construction, materials, and condition. This combined with an assessment of the location of the site and the surrounding habitat in terms of bat suitability allows an assessment to be made as to the potential of the building to support bats. Factors such as the proximity of good foraging areas (woodland, water bodies) and features that link the site to the wider surrounds such as linear features (hedgerows etc) were also considered.

3.4 This report sets out the findings of a daytime scoping survey and emergence survey carried out to the above site on Thursday 5th May 2022. The report highlights the ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed works and appraises the potential impacts. Appropriate actions to ensure the protection of bats are identified and mitigation measures detailed where appropriate.

4. Survey constraints

4.1 There were no constraints that would affect the overall conclusions and recommendations made herein.

5. Site Description

5.1 The site consists of a large, derelict stone barn within the site footprint of Lower Deerplay Farm at Triangle. The site occupies an exposed location at higher elevation and is surrounded by open pasture to the north and west and with pasture and woodland below to the south. The grounds of the site has limited foraging value but the site is connected to the wider landscape by linear features along Oak Lane.

Figure 1. Site location plan

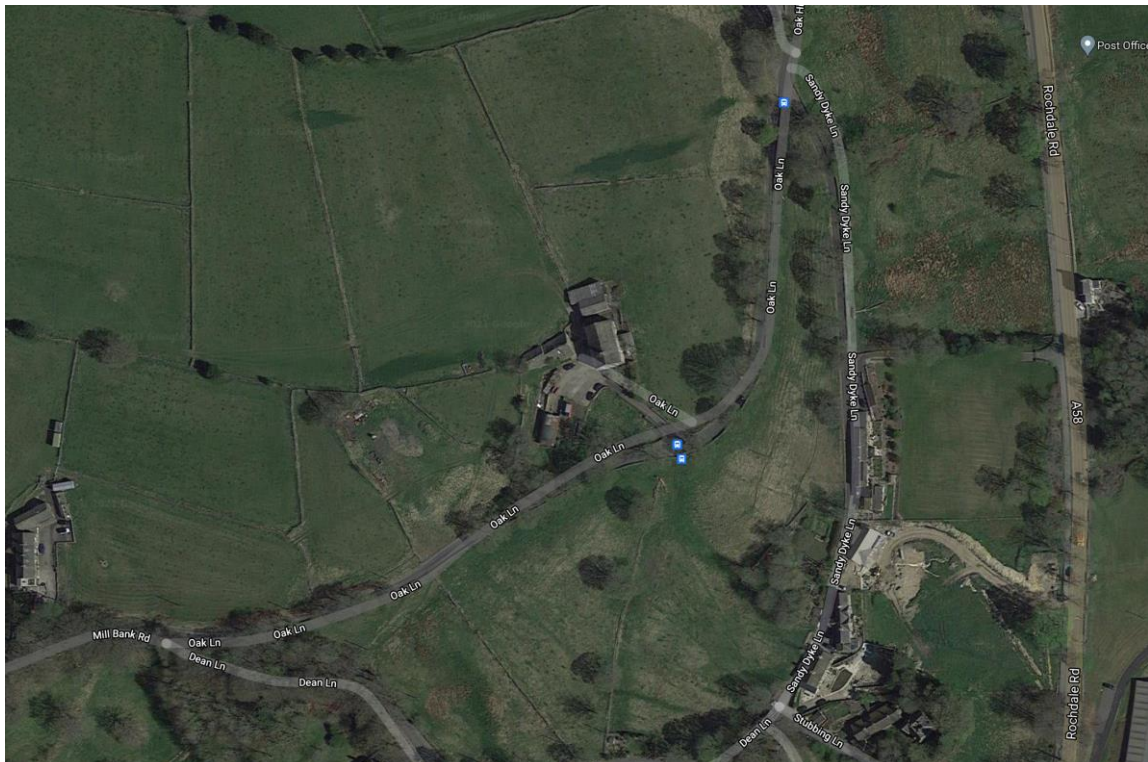
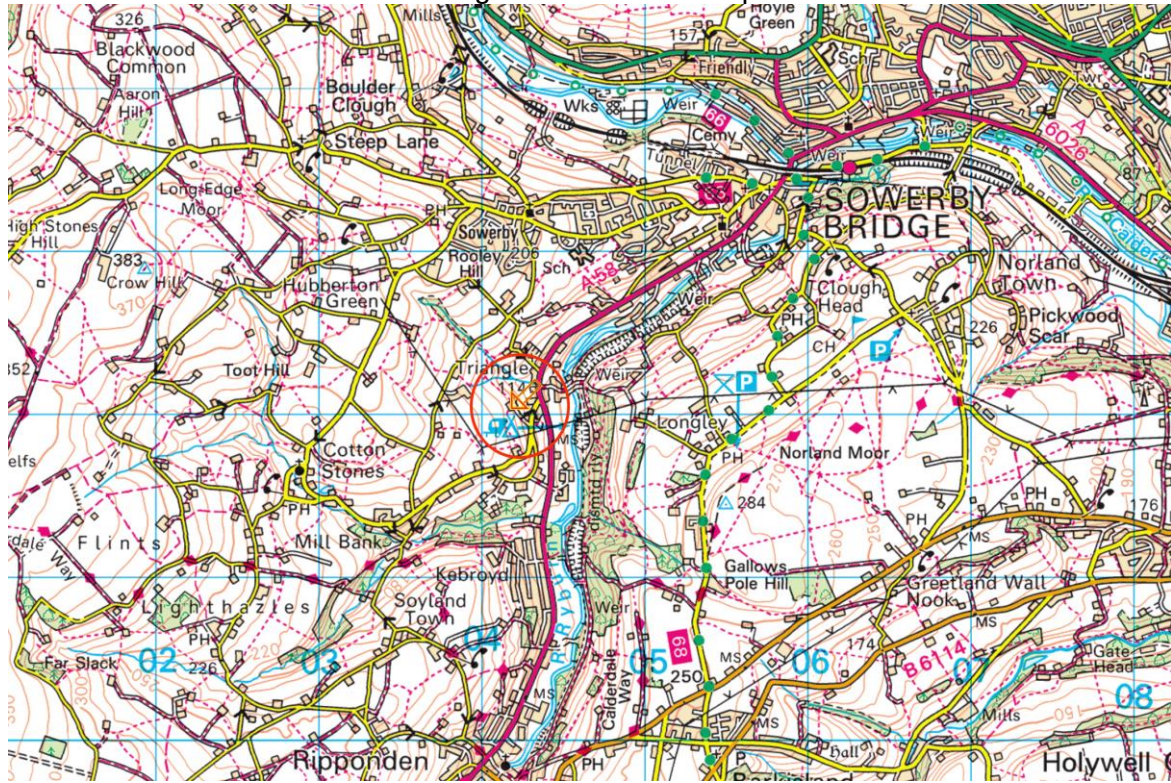


Figure 2 Aerial view of the site, surrounds and buildings surveyed

6. Desk Study

There are no current records relating directly to the site though there are records from previous surveys within 500m of the site. The zone of influence is such that there will be no impact beyond the site footprint, therefore, no new data searches have been carried out. Results of activity surveys carried out as part of this survey supersede all other records.

7. Activity surveys

- 7.1 The building has potential to support roosting bats and is considered to be of low/medium interest and, therefore, an activity survey was carried out by two experienced surveyors using both RTE and heterodyne detectors.

8. Survey results

8.1 Daylight survey

The site comprises a large, stone barn with stone roof located on a hillside above Triangle. The barn is in a poor state of repair with much of the unlined roof missing and the walls are bulging significantly and appear to be in a state of near collapse in places.

The stone roof is unlined and a large section of the ridge on the lower section of the roof has missing ridge tiles and is exposed to both water and light ingress. The ridge, although in situ in other areas, is in a poor state and has light ingress in most sections. There is no sign of use by bats and all internal ridges have a heavy covering of dust and cobwebs. The upper section of the barn has a solid floor but shows no evidence of accumulations of droppings, discarded prey remains or even scattered droppings on the cattle stalls etc. The lower section has an earthen floor which would not show droppings but would, if present, show prey remains beneath feeding perches. There was no evidence of bats using the roof.

The walls have the most potential to support roosting bats as there are many gaps caused by structural faults and missing pointing. The walls are rubble-filled but would offer roosting potential for individual or small numbers of bats. Internally, the walls offer the same potential with gaps in the stonework and, in particular, within an internal wall that creates a divide between the two sections of the barn. It was for this feature specifically, that a scoping survey undertaken in March 2022 was considered unable to rule out the use of the building by bats.

There are no external features such as fascia or soffits present, and the windows are mostly missing. Internally, there are several large medieval timbers which have large mortice joints, though most had a covering of cobwebs.

8.2 Emergence survey

Although the building did not show evidence of roosting bats, there are enough potential sites to require at least one activity survey to be carried out. This was undertaken on the evening of 5th May 2022 in excellent conditions. The daytime temperatures had reached as high as 18°C and at the time of the survey, were still 14.5°C and with no breeze.

Two surveyors were sufficient to cover the building be based at the west and east elevations and using a combination of RTE and heterodyne detectors. Frequent visits inside the building were made to establish if brown long-eared or whiskered bats were present. The survey took place from 60 minutes prior to sunset until 90 minutes after sunset. Sunset was recorded as 20:43.

No bats were recorded emerging from the building and no bats were recorded inside the building. The first bat recorded was a noctule bat which flew high over the site and travelled from a NE direction. Other noctules were recorded and observed coming from the same direction during the survey as well as hunting over the site.

No other bats were recorded on site, but common pipistrelle was recorded hunting along the trees that line the south side of Oak Lane. Common pipistrelle has been recorded along Oak Lane during previous surveys in the area (notably the Triangle Pub southeast of the survey site).

The activity survey does suggest that bats are not currently using the site as a roost, either as a colony or individuals.

9. Interpretation and analysis

The scoping survey results determined that there are potential roost sites within the structure of the building given the poor state of the stonework. The roof, while present on much of the building, is unlined and has large missing sections along the ridges and does not appear to be being used by ridge dwelling species. Being unlined, the roost potential is limited to individuals roosting beneath the stone tiles rather than maternity roosts which often use the gap between the tiles and the roofing felt. No bat activity was recorded inside the barn during the frequent inspections and brown long-eared bats, had they been present, would certainly have been recorded during their pre-emergence flights.

No bats were recorded emerging from the site but bat activity close to the site and weather conditions suggest that had bats been present, they are highly likely to have emerged and that the absence of bats emerging is not regarded as a 'snapshot'. The temperatures were reasonably high over the previous three days and exceptionally warm weather throughout early to mid-April meant that bats were back in summer roosts in good numbers and earlier than usual. No bats were recorded on site during the survey other than noctules passing over the site.

The overall results of the survey suggest that bats are not currently using this building on the site, but precautionary measures have been suggested to limit or mitigate against harming bats.

Although swallows were present during the survey, no swallows were observed entering the barn or roosting in the barn. Only one swallow nest was noted, and this was old and inactive. No barn owls or evidence thereof was noted.

10. Impact assessment

The proposed development is unlikely to disturb roosting bats and will not result in a reduction of foraging and will not fragment habitat. Although bats are not considered to be roosting in the building, the building has value to wildlife in terms of roosting and nesting sites and as such, the project is regarded as having a limited ecological impact. Inclusion of permanent roosting features and bird nesting features will provide some compensation.

11. Mitigation measures

The building has some interest to bats though no bats were recorded using the site during the survey and, consequently, there are no requirements for an EPS licence. Some loss of potential roosting sites will occur and therefore, inclusion of an integral bat roosting feature on the west elevation will increase the site's ability to support maternity roosts of bats. Permanent roost

features such as a Schwegler universal summer roost 1FTH or bat wall system 3FE placed high up (above 4m) or at eaves level, should be installed.

As bats are highly mobile and are transient creatures which can turn up at any time, the following precautionary measures should be observed by contractors

- Contractors to be made aware of the possibility of bats being present and to proceed with caution when removing tiles and stonework
- All roofing tiles to be removed by hand by lifting rather than dragging while be vigilant and checking for the presence of bats
- Gaps in stonework should be inspected before being filled with mortar to avoid entombing bats
- A check for nesting birds should be made before work commences and if there are active nests, then work must not commence until the birds have fledged.
- A permanent roosting feature (as described above) should be incorporated into the building
- If at any time bats are found during the works, all work in that area should cease until advice has been sought from a qualified ecologist.

12. Conclusion

The scoping and emergence survey concluded that the building that bats are currently not roosting in the building and, therefore, there will be no direct impact to bats from the proposed works. The conversion will result in some loss of potential bat roosting features but will gain others when the roof is replaced and lined. A permanent roost feature has been suggested been suggested along with precautionary measures to ensure no harm to bats or nesting birds. No further survey work is required.

Appendix 1: site photographs





north elevation (damaged roof)



east elevation



south elevation



roof interior (west section)



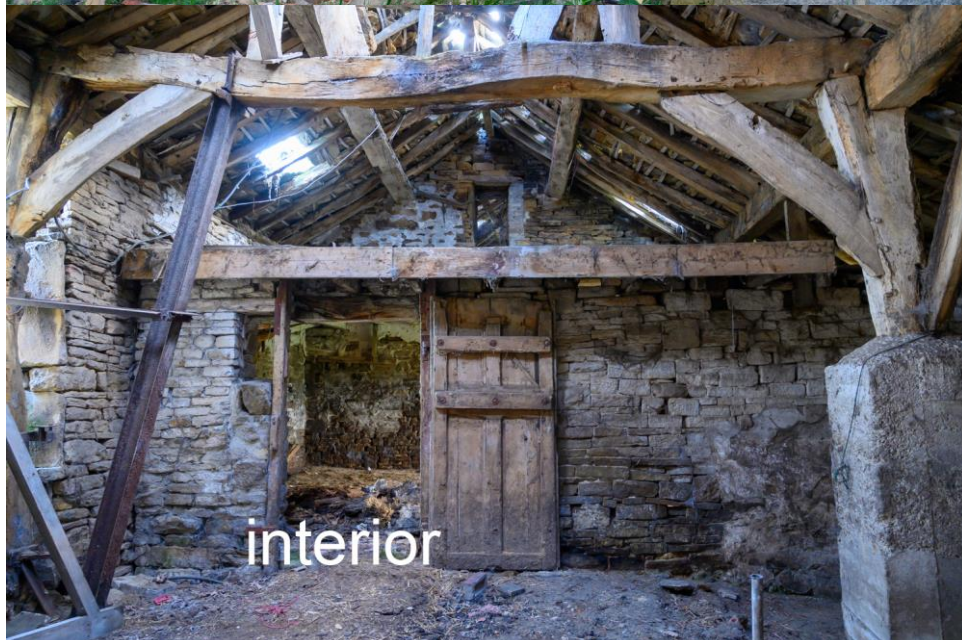
south elevation



permanent access to interior
(for bats and birds)



south wall



interior



roof interior

