Tilham Farm, Baltonsborough

Bat & Bird Scoping Survey Report

Prepared for: Mr Robert Peto

Date: March 2021

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Limitations

Nash Ecology Ltd has prepared this Report for the sole use of Mr Robert Peto ("Client") in accordance with the Agreement under which our services were performed.

The conclusions and recommendations contained in this Report are based upon information provided by others and upon the assumption that all relevant information has been provided by those parties from whom it has been requested and that such information is accurate.

The methodology adopted and the sources of information used by Nash Ecology Ltd in providing its services are outlined in this Report. The work described in this Report was undertaken in March 2021 and is based on the conditions encountered and the information available during the said period of time.

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This report is considered 'valid' for up to two years from the date the walkover survey was conducted. If an application is made after this, then it is advisable to undertake an updated survey. In addition, any significant change to the project should result in consultation with an ecologist as reassessment of the ecological constraints may be required.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Scope

Nash Ecology Ltd was instructed to carry out a bat and bird assessment of two agricultural sheds located within 'Tilham Farm, Baltonsborough, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8QA' (Figure 1). The assessment was commissioned in relation to current proposals to convert the buildings to either residential or mixed use. As the conversion works will be restricted to the footprint of the existing buildings and the adjacent hard standing, the ecological receptors most likely to be encountered are bats and birds. As the proposed works have the potential to adversely affect both taxa, a targeted assessment was commissioned to ascertain whether either were present.

The remainder of this report provides methods, results and a discussion of potential impacts including, where necessary, a suitable mitigation strategy.

Figure 1: Site Location (Google Earth, 2020)

1.2 Legislation and Planning Policy Summary

1.2.1 Summary of Legislation Pertinent to Bats

All bats are protected under Schedule 2 the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). When taken together it is illegal to:

- Deliberately disturb, capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Obstruct, damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time); and
- Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part thereof.

Seven species of bat are included on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 as 'Species of Principal Importance for Conservation in England'. These include:

- Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*);
- Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*);
- Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*);
- Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*);
- Brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*);
- Greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*); and
- Lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*).

Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 places a duty of care on competent authorities to consider biodiversity as a material consideration when discharging their normal functions.

1.2.2 Summary of Legislation Pertinent to Birds

Nesting birds are protected through their inclusion on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under the Act, it is an offence to harm a bird, its eggs or young whilst occupying a nest. For those species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a bird that is on or near an 'active' nest.

1.2.3 Planning Policy Summary

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 was considered in the preparation of this report. The NPPF specifies the obligations that the Local Authorities and the UK Government have regarding statutory designated sites and protected species under UK and international legislation and how this it to be delivered in the planning system. Protected or notable habitats and species should be considered as a material consideration in planning decisions and may therefore make some sites unsuitable for particular types of development. If the development is permitted, mitigation measures may be required to avoid or minimise impacts on certain habitats and species, or where impact is unavoidable, compensation may be required.

Relevant local planning policies for Mendip District Council are detailed in the following documents:

- Mendip District Local Plan (2006-2029) 2014 Part 1;
- Mendip Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP); and
- The Somerset Biodiversity Strategy 2008-2018.

Table 1 provides a summary of relevant local planning policies. For the precise wording of each specific policy please refer to the source document. This planning policy has been considered when assessing potential ecological constraints and opportunities.

Table 1: Summary of Local Planning Policy

Document	Planning Policy	Purpose
Mendip District Local Plan (2006-2029), 2014	Development Policy 5: Biodiversity and Ecological Networks	The Council will use the local planning process to protect, enhance and restore Somerset's Ecological Network within Mendip. 1. All development proposals must ensure the protection, conservation and, where possible, enhancement of internationally, nationally or locally designated natural habitat areas and species. 2. Proposals with the potential to cause adverse impacts on protected and/or priority sites, species or habitats are unlikely to be sustainable and will be resisted. Exceptions will only be made where: a) the impacts cannot be reasonably avoided, b) offsetting/compensation for the impacts can be secured, c) other considerations of public interest clearly outweigh the impacts, in line with relevant legislation. Offsets as mitigation or compensation required under criterion b) will be calculated using Somerset County Council's Biodiversity Offsetting methodology.
	Development Policy 6: Bat Protection	Planning Applications for development on sites within the Bat Consultation Zone will require a 'test of significance' under the Habitats Regulations to be carried out. Applicants must provide, with their application, all necessary information to enable compliance with the Habitats Regulations (or their successor), including any necessary survey work, reports and avoidance / mitigation measures.
Mendip Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), 2008		This plan sets out targets and goals to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity in the district including a large number of plans for particularly vulnerable species and habitats.
The Somerset Biodiversity Strategy 2008-2018		The Somerset Biodiversity Strategy and associated Local Biodiversity Action Plans-comprising Species Action Plans and Habitats Action Plans -help turn national targets into action, alongside meeting identified local biodiversity conservation priorities.

2 METHODS

2.1 Desk-based Study

A desk-based study was carried out to identify designated sites and biological records relating to the site. The online Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was consulted to identify statutory sites designated for bats within 2 km. The MAGIC website was also used to review granted bat mitigation licences (EPSML) within 2 km. The search was based on grid reference ST 560 354.

2.2 Field Survey

2.2.1 Initial Bat Inspection

A Natural England (Class 2) licensed bat ecologist undertook a full inspection (both external and internal) of the agricultural sheds on 23rd March 2021. During the survey, the surveyor inspected the buildings for exterior roosting locations and possible access points to the buildings' interiors. Such features were accessed and inspected for signs of use using an endoscope. An internal inspection for suitable roost locations and evidence of bat occupancy (such as droppings, urine spots, an absence of cobwebs and bats themselves) was then undertaken.

As bats are a cryptic group and often move between roosts, both within and between years, their presence is not always easy to detect. The building was assessed for its Bat Roost Potential (BRP), following published guidance (Collins, 2016). The BRP categories are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Bat Roost Potential Categories (Collins 2016 and Mitchell-Jones 2004)

Roost Potential	Description
Known or Confirmed	Confirmed signs of bat presence/ occupation (droppings, oily staining around entry points, insect remains, odour, scratching) and actual bat presence.
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen form the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
Negligible	No features suitable for roosting bats. Includes structures constructed from unsuitable materials e.g. prefabricated with steel and sheet material. Structure is draughty, light and cool buildings with no roosting opportunities. High levels of regular disturbance including external lighting. Building is isolated for areas of foraging habitat. In the case of trees, no

Roost Potential	Description
	potential roosting features are present, or features have no potential to support roosting bats.

2.2.2 Initial Bird Inspection

Concurrent with the bat inspection, the buildings were inspected for evidence of nesting birds by a Natural England-licensed barn owl (*Tyto alba*) ecologist.

2.3 Survey Limitations

No constraints to the aims of the survey were encountered.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Desk-based Study

No statutory designated sites were identified within 2 km.

The Site is not located within the North Somerset and Mendip Bats Consultation Zone.

No European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSML) were identified within 2 km.

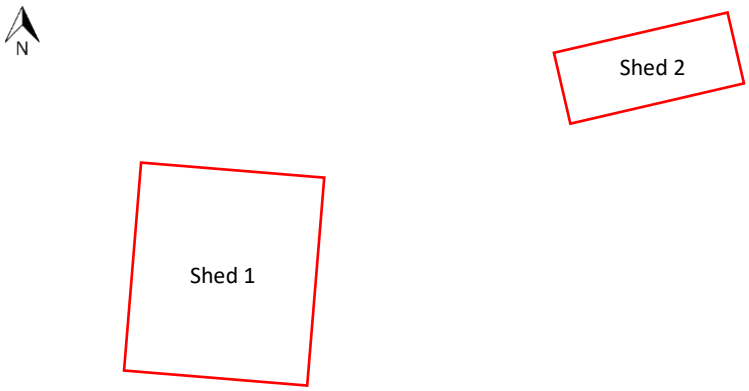
3.2 Site Context

The two agricultural sheds were located within Tilham Farm, approximately 1 km northeast of village of Baltonsborough. Tilham Farm was a working farm. The two sheds, referred to as Shed 1 and Shed 2 (Figure 2) were both used to house young cattle. Much of the surrounding land comprised improved grassland (pasture). The wider landscape was dominated agricultural land (arable and pasture) demarked by hedgerows and also high levels of immature woodland planting.

3.3 Field Survey

The relative locations of the two Sheds are shown below on Figure 2.

Figure 2: Site Layout



3.3.1 Shed 1

Shed 1 was a large, prefabricated agricultural building (Plates 1 & 2). The lower walls (up to 4 m) were constructed from block and wood; above this point they were replaced with corrugated asbestos / concrete sheets on a metal frame. The northern and western walls were constructed from slatted wood. Shed 1 was completely open from the east. The unlined roof was pitched and clad in corrugated asbestos / concrete and contained four plastic skylights (Plate 3).

The building contained young cattle at the time of survey. A small workshop was located at the building's southern end. Shed 1 was light, breezy and did not include any suitable roost locations. Overall, Shed 1 was assessed as having Negligible BRP.

Plate 1: Shed 1 Viewed from Northeast

Plate 2: Shed 1 Viewed from Southwest

Plate 3: Interior of Shed 1 Viewed from East

3.3.2 Shed 2

Shed 2 was a prefabricated cattle shed that was in use at the time of survey (Plates 4 & 5). The southern section comprised a steel frame, which supported a metal sloping roof; no walls were present. The northernmost section had block and wooden walls (forming stalls) that supported a sloping metal roof. The two sloping sections of roof were not directly connected.

Shed 2 was light, breezy and did not include any suitable roost locations. Overall, Shed 2 was assessed as having Negligible BRP.

Plate 4: Shed 2 Viewed from Southwest

Plate 5: Shed 2 Viewed from Northeast

3.3.3 Birds

No nests, past or present, were observed within either of the Sheds.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 General

Sheds 1 and 2 were assessed as having Negligible Bat Roost Potential. No suitable roost locations or signs of use by bats were recorded in either building. The proposed works will not adversely affect roosting bats and, as the works will be restricted to the existing footprints, there is no risk of habitat fragmentation.

As the Sheds are located next to suitable foraging and commuting habitat (open pasture) for photophobic bat species, care should be taken not to increase light levels. As such, a sensitive lighting strategy is recommended. The sensitive lighting strategy should comprise the following broad elements:

- No excessive lighting - use only the minimum amount required for safety;
- Minimise light spill – use short columns and direct light downwards and in towards the Site;
- Use narrow spectrum bulbs that emit minimal ultra-violet light - avoid white and blue wavelengths of the spectrum, which can attract invertebrates;
- Lights should either peak higher than 550 nm or use glass lantern covers to filter UV light;
- Avoid using reflective surfaces under lights; and
- Minimise the amount of light spill from within the buildings by good design.

No signs of birds were identified were identified in the buildings.

5 REFERENCES

Collins J. (Ed) (2016) Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition. BCT, London

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004) Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough