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# **Bat Assessment at Woodlands Farm, Ringshall, Stowmarket, Suffolk. IP14 2LY**

**On Behalf Of:**

**Ashton Design Company Ltd.**

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## **0 SUMMARY**

- 0.1 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Ashton Design Company Ltd. to undertake a bat assessment at Woodlands Farm, Ringshall, Stowmarket, Suffolk. IP14 2LY. The report is required for re-roofing as part of broader refurbishment works.
- 0.2 The survey was conducted on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022 by experienced ecologist Roger Spring BSC MCIEEM (bat survey licence number 2015-15553-CLS-CLS) and consisted of an internal and external inspection of the building, searching for potential for roosting and access for bats, as well as signs and evidence of bats. The assessment followed Natural England (English Nature) and Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Guidelines.
- 0.3 The building is a detached, period farmhouse. The north western section of the roof requires re-roofing as part of broader refurbishment works which have already commenced. The roof is pitched and tiled with peg tiles. A modern breathable membrane is present in places and it is understood that the roof was refurbished approximately 15 years ago.
- 0.4 The building is set in a rural location with low density residential housing and arable fields the dominate land use. No high-quality bat foraging habitat (woodland or rivers etc.) is present locally.
- 0.5 During the survey visit no internal or external signs or evidence of bats or bat activity were found. Opportunities for roosting were considered negligible and potential for roosting bats was also considered negligible.
- 0.6 Overall, it was considered that the risk of significant impact or harm to bats, bat roosts or local bat conservation was negligible. Therefore, further bat surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary. However, standard precautionary measures are included later in the report to minimise any residual risk of impact to bats.
- 0.7 With the recommendations followed as described, the proposed development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm or impact to bats.
- 0.8 Biodiversity enhancements are also included in the report in accordance with national planning policy.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

- 1.1.1 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Ashton Design Company Ltd. to undertake a bat assessment at Woodlands Farm, Ringshall, Stowmarket, Suffolk. IP14 2LY. The report is required for re-roofing as part of broader refurbishment works.
- 1.1.2 Bats are protected by law and some bat species, such as brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus* bat are also UK priority species. Protected and priority species are a material consideration for individual planning decisions under the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2021).
- 1.1.3 CIEEM guidelines indicate that ecological surveying typically remains valid for between 12 and 18 months.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Desk Study**

- 2.1.1 A local bat record search was conducted on behalf of Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS).
- 2.1.2 These results were then combined with the findings of the site survey, to assess the risk of ecology issues, relevant to planning, occurring on the site.

### **2.2 Study Limitations**

- 2.2.1 The site and surrounds were assessed based on their condition at the time of the survey visit.

### **2.3 Initial Site Survey**

#### *Habitats and Surroundings*

- 2.3.1 The site was visited on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022 by experienced ecologist Roger Spring BSC MCIEEM (bat survey licence number: 2015-15553-CLS-CLS) to survey for the risk of presence and the risk of impact to bats.
- 2.3.2 Equipment available for use during the survey included a ladder, high powered torch, digital camera, binoculars and a video endoscope.
- 2.3.3 The survey methods followed English Nature Bat Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature, 2004) and Bat Conservation Trust Best Practice Guidelines, therefore considerations were:
- the availability of access to roosts for bats;

- the presence and suitability of cracks, crevices, tiles, soffits, hollows, ivy growth and other places as roosts;
  - signs of bat activity or presence, such as; the bats themselves, droppings, grease marks, scratch marks, urine spatter and prey remains.
- 2.3.4 The availability of access to roosts was assessed based upon the presence of holes large enough to allow entry to bats and birds and lack of cobwebs and dirt.
- 2.3.5 The outside of the building was inspected for gaps, cavities, access points and crevices, and any signs of bats (droppings, staining, urine spatter), in accordance with Natural England (English Nature) guidelines (English Nature, 2004).
- 2.3.6 The inside of the building was then inspected for signs of bat activity and opportunities for roosts. As many crevices as could safely be accessed were checked for suitability and signs of bats.

### 3 RESULTS AND RISK

#### 3.1 Site Description & Location

- 3.1.1 The building is a detached, period farmhouse. The north western section of the roof requires re-roofing as part of broader refurbishment works which have already commenced. The roof is pitched and tiled with peg tiles. A modern breathable membrane is present in places and it is understood that the roof was refurbished approximately 15 years ago.
- 3.1.2 The building is set in a rural location with low density residential housing and arable fields the dominate land use. No high-quality bat foraging habitat (woodland or rivers etc.) is present locally.

#### 3.2 Data Search

- 3.2.1 The following information is a summary of modern, local bat records collated through SBIS (2022).

**Table 1 - Summary of local records.**

| Species            | Approximate Location        | Year |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------|
| Unknown bat        | Ringshall (200m south east) | 2004 |
| Common pipistrelle | Wattisham airbase           | 2014 |

### **3.3 Bats**

#### *Building Suitability for Bats*

- 3.3.1 The building was closely inspected internally and externally for bats, signs and evidence of bat activity, potential for roosting and access opportunities.
- 3.3.2 Externally, the roof was considered negligible for roosting bats with negligible opportunities for roosting. Gaps around the few tiles that were damaged/lifted were considered too small for roosting bats.
- 3.3.3 Internally, the space appeared dusty and dirty toward the roof and along the ridge beam indicating that bats had not been roosting along the ridge beam recently.
- 3.3.4 No internal or external signs or evidence of bats were found.

## **4 DISCUSSION OF RISK AND LEGISLATION**

### **4.1 Protected Species**

#### *Bats*

- 4.1.1 Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 and under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Some bats are also UK priority species. A summary of the offences likely to be relevant to development are:
- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take a bat;
  - Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection, whether bats are present or not;
  - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any bat;
  - Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection;
  - Deliberately disturb a bat anywhere.
- 4.1.2 Bats have been recorded locally (SBIS, 2022). However, opportunities for foraging by bats were limited by local habitats and no notable greenspace will be impacted by the proposed works. Therefore, the risk of significant impact to foraging or commuting bats was considered negligible.
- 4.1.3 The roof proposed for works was considered negligible in suitability for roosting bats with negligible opportunities for roosting. This combined with the lack of signs or evidence of bat activity meant the risk of presence or

significant impact to roosting bats was considered negligible.

4.1.4 Therefore, further bat surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.

4.1.5 However, to minimise any residual risk of impact to foraging bats, standard impact avoidance precautionary measures, detailed below, should be followed.

#### *Other Notable Species*

4.1.6 No other evidence of notable species or notable activity by wildlife (such as bird nests etc.) were found.

## **5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Precautionary Measures**

#### *Bats*

5.1.1 The site was considered unlikely to support roosting bats and the proposed development unlikely to significantly impact upon bats. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact to bats, the following precautionary measures should be undertaken:

- Works to the roof should be undertaken by hand with hand movement of tiles etc. If at any stage bats or evidence of bat activity (droppings) are discovered, works should stop and an ecologist called for advice;
- If future external lighting is installed it should be warm white LED, directed downward and ideally set on sensors sensitive to large moving objects only to prevent passing bats from switching the lights on.

### **5.2 Enhancements**

5.2.1 The following will increase the potential bat roosting opportunities on the site and enhance the ecological value of the site for local wildlife to provide a net gain in accordance with national planning policy.

- 1 x Beaumaris Woodcrete Bat Box.

5.2.2 The box should be installed high on the western gable-end of the building (just below the roofline) and should be free from obstructions and light sources.

5.2.3 Bat boxes can be purchased on-line through suppliers such as The Wildlife Shop and NHBS.

## 6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Signs or evidence of roosting bats were not identified. The risk of presence and impact to roosting bats was considered negligible. Further bat surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.
- 6.2 With the precautionary measures followed as described, it was considered that the proposed development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm or impact to bats, bat roosts, or to local bat conservation.
- 6.3 By following the biodiversity enhancements, the ecological value of the site would be increased for the benefit of local wildlife in accordance with national planning policy.

## 7 REFERENCES

- Bat Conservation Trust (2016) *Bat Surveys- Good Practise Guidelines, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.
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## 8 APPENDICES

### 8.1 Appendix 1: Figures

Figure 1: Location plan.



## 8.2 Appendix 2: Photographs

**Photograph 1: Woodlands Farm house. Yellow line indicating section of roof requiring works.**



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

**Photograph 2: Woodlands Farm house.**



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

**Photograph 3: Blocked eaves – no access for bats into loft at Woodlands Farm house.**



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

**Photograph 4: Loft space inside Woodlands Farm house. Note part breathable membrane indicating some recent roof works.**



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022