

Bat Survey of Wainsford Bungalow Little Bardfield

On behalf of:

**William & Mary Gardiner
10 Sawyers Yard
Mill Road
Brancaster
King's Lynn
Norfolk
PE31 8FW**

Prepared by:

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

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Contents

1 Summary	3
2 Introduction	4
3 Legislation and planning policy relating to bats in the UK	5
4 Methods	6
5 Results	6
6 Discussion	13
7 Review of existing records of bats in the area	13
8 Recommendations for reasonable biodiversity enhancements	14

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

1) Summary

In December 2019, as part of a planning proposal involving Wainsford Bungalow, Little Bardfield Road, Little Bardfield, Braintree, Essex CM7 4TW, a site visit was conducted to determine whether the building had been used by bats. At that time, the survey found no evidence of the presence of bats and the report concluded that: ‘... *therefore it is considered that the planning proposal for this site will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population.*’



Photo 1: Front (eastern) elevation. Note tight seal to roof tiles

Following a lapse of over two years, a second survey was undertaken on 11th August 2022 to see if bats had colonised the property during the intervening period. This follow-up survey confirmed the results of the first and found no evidence of bats at the site.

The survey building is a detached residential bungalow with a tile and felted roof and pale, rendered walls. The building is aligned N-S. The survey found that the roof void was accessed via a ladder in the centre of the property and found that one end of the loft had a cluttered construction, with a wooden tower to support the water tank. There was a covering of cobwebs on some of the roof beams, notably at the top of the gable walls, conditions that are usually a deterrent to colonisation by bats. No evidence of their presence was found on the floor of the loft or along the internal eaves of the building. Externally, there was a tight seal along the eaves and gables, where the overlapping roof tiles were cemented to the top of

the gable walls. There was also a tight seal to the roof tiles and no evidence such as droppings or staining was found on the pale walls where the presence of bats would have been readily apparent.

A large shed to the east of the bungalow had walls and roof of corrugated tin. The western side of the building had collapsed since the earlier survey, with the remaining part of the structure appearing to be in poor condition. The interior received daylight illumination via a missing door, conditions in which bats seek out dark areas or cavities in which to roost. The lack of such features meant that this structure was unsuitable as a roosting place for bats.

There is no vegetation affected by the project that has crevices, loose bark or woodpecker holes that might be colonised by bats. **No** evidence of their presence was found at this site.

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. The buildings were considered to have **negligible potential** as roosting places for bats.

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

Although no evidence of bats was found, it is probable that bats from nearby roosts will forage across the site and in the gardens of adjacent properties. This behaviour would be expected to continue after any building work has been completed and therefore it is considered that the planning 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 property 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 a residential property at Wainsford Bungalow, Little Bardfield to investigate for signs indicating the presence of 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 11th August 2022. 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: TL663310.

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

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

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.*

3) Legislation and planning policy relating to bats 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 31st 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 byminimising 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.

4) Methods

The exterior surfaces of the building 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 roof of the property was 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.

5) Results

The survey building is a detached residential bungalow with a tile and felted roof and pale, rendered walls. The building is aligned N-S. The survey found that the roof void was accessed via a ladder in the centre of the property and found that one end of the loft had a cluttered construction, with a wooden tower to support the water tank. There was a covering of cobwebs on some of the roof beams, notably at the top of the gable walls, conditions that are usually a deterrent to colonisation by bats. No evidence of their presence was found on the floor of the loft or along the internal eaves of the building. Externally, there was a tight seal along the eaves and gables, where the overlapping roof tiles were cemented to the top of the gable walls. There was also a tight seal to the roof tiles and no evidence such as droppings or staining was found on the pale walls where the presence of bats would have been readily apparent.



Photo 2: Northern elevation



Photo 3: Western elevation. There was a tight seal to the flat-roofed extension



Photo 4: Southern elevation



Photo 5: Note tight seal to gable wall



Photo 6: Note tight seal to roof tiles



Photo 7: Typical section of eaves showing tight seal



Photo 8: A complex tower supporting the water tank clutters one end of the loft



Photo 9: Note lack of evidence of bats on floor of loft



Photo 10: Note lack of evidence of bats on floor of loft



Photo 11: Note lack of evidence of bats on floor of loft



Photo 12: Note lack of evidence of bats on floor of loft



Photo 13: Note cobwebs at apex of gable wall

A large shed to the east of the bungalow had walls and roof of corrugated tin. The western side of the building had collapsed since the earlier survey, with the remaining part of the structure appearing to be in poor condition. The interior received daylight illumination via a missing door, conditions in which bats seek out dark areas or cavities in which to roost. The lack of such features meant that this structure was unsuitable as a roosting place for bats.



Photo 13: Eastern and northern elevations of shed



Photo 14: The interior had no features that might be occupied by bats



Photo 15: The interior of the shed had no features that might be occupied by bats



Photo 16: The roof of the shed had no features that might be occupied by bats



Photo 17: Part of the building had collapsed since the earlier survey



Photo 18: Western elevation

There is no vegetation affected by the project that has crevices, loose bark or woodpecker holes that might be colonised by bats.

No evidence of their presence was found at this site.

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 there was no evidence of bats at the site, a European Protected Species Licence will **not** be required for this project.

Although no evidence of bats was found, it is probable that bats from nearby roosts will forage across the site and in the gardens of adjacent properties. This behaviour would be expected to continue after any building work has been completed and therefore it is considered that the planning 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 property 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) Review of existing records of bats in the area

Since the early 1980s, the Essex Bat Group has monitored the status and distribution of bats in this area. Records occurring within a 2km radius of the site are as follows:

TL658307	27 Oct 2016	Brown Long-eared Bat found by member of public
TL673306	21 Sep 1996	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL663327	26 Nov 2005	Natterer's Bat found by member of public
TL661313	21 Sep 2014	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL677303	04 May 2015	Brown Long-eared Bat roost in church
TL677303	04 May 2015	Soprano Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL677303	04 May 2015	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging

8) 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:

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.



Photo 19: Hedgehog pathway at base of fence

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 erected on the trees or buildings at the site.

3: A hedgehog nesting box to be sited in a boundary hedge.

4: Two solitary bee hives to be erected on the developed site.