

Preliminary Visual Assessment for bats and breeding birds
15 Cherry Meadow, Cheriton Fitzpaine, Crediton, Devon
August 2022

A report by

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Natural England licence no: 2016-24281-CLS-CLS

Report details

Site address:	15 Cherry Meadow, Cheriton Fitzpaine, Crediton, EX17 4JX
Grid reference:	SS873062
Survey date:	4 th August 2022
Surveyors:	Colin Hicks BSc (Hons), MCIEEM (Natural England licence no: 2015-15857-CLS-CLS)
Report date:	28 th September 2022
Report author:	Michael Sanders BSc (Hons)
Report checked by:	Colin Hicks BSc (Hons), MCIEEM
Report Reference:	WOR-3229

Declaration of compliance

BS 42020:2013

This study has been undertaken in accordance with British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity, Code of practice for planning and development.

Code of Professional Conduct

The information which we have prepared is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

Validity of survey data and report

The findings of this report are valid for 12 months from the date of survey. If work has not commenced within this period, an updated survey by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required.

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Non-technical summary

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete a preliminary visual assessment for bats and breeding birds of 15 Cherry Meadow, Cheriton Fitzpaine, Crediton, EX17 4JX. The building will be the subject of a planning application.

Prior to works commencing, a survey has been commissioned to ensure that the proposed works do not adversely affect bats and breeding birds. The survey will:

- Identify the past and/or current use of the site by bats and breeding birds;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development on bats and breeding birds;
- Provide a basis upon which to propose further survey work or mitigation, should they be affected by the development.

The survey was completed on 4th August 2022 with an air temperature of 18°C, F2 NW wind, 20% cloud cover.

Assessment for bats

Gaps at the north gable barge boards had bat droppings below them (~5). From this survey alone, it is not possible to be confident that bats will not be impacted by the proposed works. In line with guidelines (Collins, 2016), further surveys are required to characterise the use of the building by roosting bats. At least two surveys are recommended, comprising a dusk emergence survey and, dependent on the outcome of this, one dawn re-entry or a further dusk emergence survey. Three surveyors are required to cover the building. These surveys can only be completed in the optimal bat survey period, May to September inclusive (with at least one survey between May and August inclusive).

Any mitigation, should it be required, will be formulated once the results of this additional survey work is known.

Assessment for breeding birds

No further survey work or mitigation is required or recommended for nesting birds.

Biodiversity enhancement

Simple biodiversity enhancement is recommended in section 6.

1. Introduction

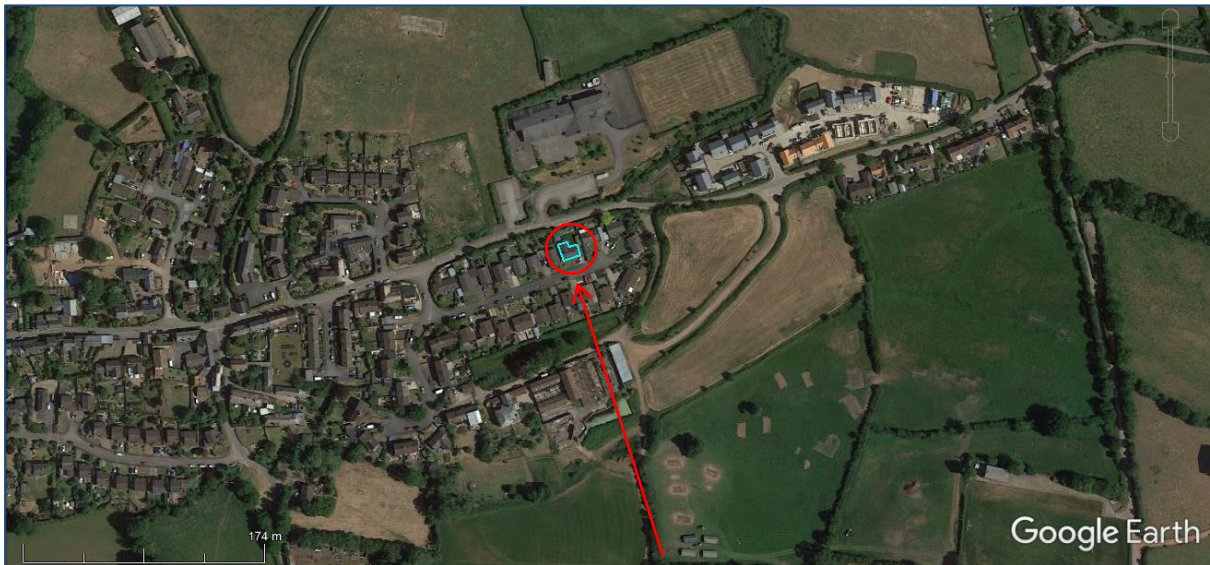
Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete a preliminary visual assessment for bats and breeding birds of 15 Cherry Meadow, Cheriton Fitzpaine, Crediton.

This survey has been prepared in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's "Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines" (Collins, 2016).

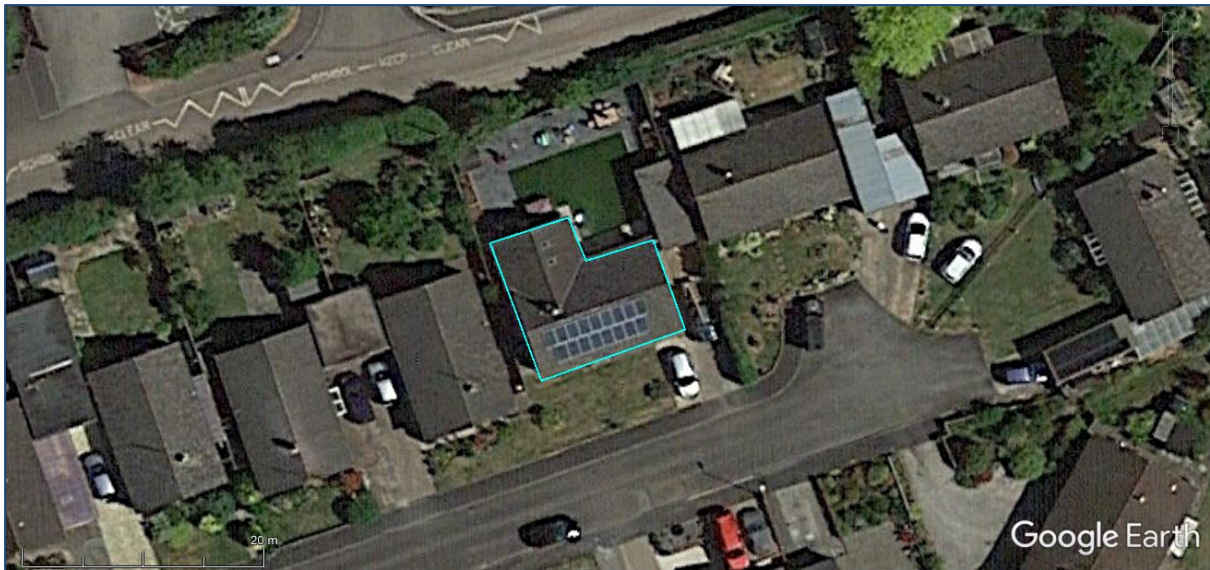
1.1. Site description

The building is set in a residential location, in the village of Cheriton Fitzpaine, 6.5km north-east of the town of Crediton in Mid Devon (Plan 1). The property is surrounded by other dwellings and gardens interspersed with vegetation.

The immediate residential environment is likely to be well-lit at night. Semi-natural habitats to the north and west comprise agricultural farmland. Well-managed hedgerows provide connectivity out to scattered areas of woodland and associated water courses in the wider landscape, which provides potential for foraging and commuting bats, including light-averse bats.



Plan 1. The location of the building surveyed.



Plan 2. The building surveyed at this site (blue line)

1.2. Proposed works

The building will be the subject of a planning application.

1.3. Survey aims

To ensure that the proposed development does not adversely affect bats and breeding birds, the survey will:

- Identify the past and/or current use of the site by bats and breeding birds;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development on bats and breeding birds;
- Provide a basis upon which to propose further survey work or mitigation, should they be affected by the development.

2. Methods

2.1. Bat roost assessment

All areas of the buildings were carefully examined internally and externally for signs of use by bats, with the aid of torches, by a suitable qualified and licenced ecologist. This included a search for bat droppings, feeding remains, urine stains and polished/scratched woodwork. A search was also made for individual bats, as well as potential access points and cavities capable of providing a roosting space for bats.

This survey method complies with guidelines produced by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2016).

The survey was completed on 4th August 2022 with an air temperature of 18°C, F2 NW wind, 20% cloud cover.

A data search was not considered appropriate due to the highly mobile nature of bats. It is assumed that all species of bat that are present in Devon could be active within the vicinity which includes Barbastelle, Serotine, Noctule, Lesser Horseshoe, Greater Horseshoe, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Nathusius Pipistrelle (very rare), Whiskered, Brandt's, Natterer's, Daubenton's, Brown Long-eared and possibly Grey Long-eared.

It is very unlikely when considering the location and structure being assessed that a data search would provide further meaningful information.

2.2. Breeding birds

The buildings and associated areas were searched for evidence of nesting bird species.

2.3. Surveyors

The survey was completed by Colin Hicks MCIEEM, Natural England licence no: 2015-15857-CLS-CLS with 14 years of bat survey experience.

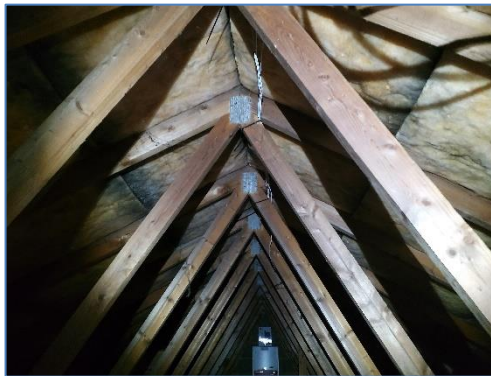
3. Results

3.1. Bat roost description

The structure surveyed is a detached, single storey, gable and valley roofed dwelling. The walls are rendered block. The dwelling roof is timber framed and covered in concrete interlocking tiles with a membrane to the underside. The void is approximately 1.8 metres high at the ridge, with fibreglass insulation on the floor. Roof and ridge tiles, together with soffit, are well seated and sealed. Gaps at the north gable barge boards had bat droppings below them (~5).



Building exterior – south elevation



Main roof void



Northern gable

3.2. Breeding birds

No evidence of breeding birds was found.

4. Assessment

4.1. Survey constraints

The survey was completed at a suitable time for the inspection of buildings and structures for bat roosts (Collins, 2016), and areas to be searched had not been cleaned/swept prior to survey. All areas of the building were accessible, and a full and complete initial assessment was made.

4.2. Assessment for bats

Gaps at the north gable barge boards had bat droppings below them (~5).

From this survey alone, it is not possible to be confident that bats will not be impacted by the proposed works. In line with guidelines (Collins, 2016), further surveys are required to characterise the use of the building by roosting bats.

4.3. Assessment for breeding birds

No evidence of breeding birds was found. The proposed development can proceed with negligible risk to nesting birds.

4.4. Legislation

Bats

Bat species and their breeding or resting places (roosts) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. They are identified as European Protected Species. Under these laws it is an offence to:

- capture, kill, disturb or injure bats (on purpose or by not taking enough care);
- damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (even accidentally);
- obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places (on purpose or by not taking enough care); or
- possess, sell, control or transport live or dead bats, or parts of them.

Seven species of bat are listed as being of principal importance, in the Secretary of State's opinion, for the purposes of conserving biodiversity. Under section 41 (England) of the NERC Act (2006) there is a need for these species to be taken into consideration by a public body when performing any of its functions with a view to conserving biodiversity.

These are Barbastelle, Bechstein's, Noctule, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, Greater Horseshoe and Lesser Horseshoe and are the subject of National and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

Activities that can affect bats include (from GOV.UK):

- renovating, converting or demolishing a building

- cutting down or removing branches from a mature tree
- repairing or replacing a roof
- repointing brickwork
- insulating or converting a loft
- installing lighting in a roost, or outside if it lights up the entrance to the roost
- removing commuting habitats such as hedgerows, watercourses or woodland
- changing or removing their foraging areas
- using insecticide
- treating timber

Breeding birds

All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from being killed, injured or captured whilst their nests and eggs are protected from being damaged, destroyed or taken. Birds which are listed under Schedule 1 of the Act are given additional protection against disturbance.

Fifty-nine species of bird are listed as species “of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity”.

5. Recommendations and mitigation

5.1. Roosting bats

Further surveys will be required to determine if bats are present in the building, and if so, to fully characterise the roosts, and determine the significance and scale of impacts associated with the proposed works.

In line with guidelines (Collins, 2016), at least two surveys are recommended, comprising a dusk emergence survey and, dependent on the outcome of this, one dawn re-entry or a further dusk emergence survey. Three surveyors are required to cover the building. These surveys can only be completed in the optimal bat survey period, May to September inclusive (with at least one survey between May and August inclusive).

Any mitigation, should it be required, will be formulated once the results of this additional survey work is known.

5.2. Breeding birds

No further survey work or mitigation is required or recommended for nesting birds.

6. Biodiversity enhancement

In line with the Environment Act 2021, the majority of Local Planning Authorities (LPA) are now requiring suitable enhancements for wildlife within minor developments, with the aim of securing net gain. Although applying a measurable net gain does not apply to permitted development, change of use, or alterations to buildings and housing extensions, the LPA will likely seek proportionate enhancements for wildlife from these developments. Depending upon the LPA's requirements, this might include bat box/brick/tubes, bird box/bricks and bee bricks. If structurally inappropriate to the design, the use of alternative, but equivalent, wildlife features is possible.

Creating new habitats, enhancing existing habitats or providing new wildlife features, can all contribute towards biodiversity enhancement, and helping to rebuild habitat networks in the wider area improves ecological resilience and adaptation to climate change.

Enhancements are additional to any measures necessary to deal with potential impacts on site, as they are an opportunity to provide new benefits for biodiversity as a consequence of the proposals being implemented.

For this development, we recommend:

- One bat box/brick/tube;
- One bird box/brick;
- One bee brick.

6.1. Bats

Bat box/brick/tubes could be fitted on a south or west facing aspect. Where practicable, on developments where only roof works are being carried out, enhancement could be a Schwegler 1FF bat box, a Beaumaris Woodstone Bat box (Figure 1), or similar. These boxes are designed to be installed on the external walls of buildings.



Figure 1. Schwegler 1FF bat box (left) and Beaumaris bat Box (right)

For new extensions or rebuilds, enhancement could comprise a Green & Blue Bat Block bat brick or similar (Figure 2). These boxes are designed to be recessed into the external walls of buildings and can be rendered over.



Figure 2. Green & Blue Bat Block bat brick

Where fitting enhancement to the building is not practicable, new roosting opportunities could be created for bats using a 2F Schwegler Bat Box (Figure 3). Bat Boxes should be secured to trees or untreated wooden posts (the base of the posts may be treated) at least 3 metres above the ground,



Figure 3. 2F Schwegler bat box.

6.2. Bird Boxes

New nesting opportunities could be provided for birds on the Site, through the provision of bird nesting boxes: this could include a Sparrow Terrace (Figure 4) fitted to the northern or eastern aspect of any new build. This terrace has been designed to help redress the balance of falling House Sparrow numbers. The current UK population of 6 million pairs is half what it was in 1980 and this is thought to be due to habitat destruction and lack of suitable nesting spaces. Sparrows are social birds and like to nest in company.

This House Sparrow Nest Box is manufactured from WoodStone - a mix of concrete and FSC wood fibres. This material is strong and highly insulating which helps to provide a thermally stable environment within the box. It also protects against damage from predators such as cats, woodpeckers and squirrels. It has two breeding chambers making it particularly suitable for house sparrows as they prefer to nest in colonies.

The House Sparrow Nest Box can be integrated into the masonry of a new build or fixed onto an external wall of a conversion using strong screws and wall plugs (not included). If possible, it should be positioned near to vegetation and at a minimum of 2m above ground (taken from NHBS website).



Figure 4. Sparrow Terrace

6.3. Invertebrates

Where practicable, an invertebrate brick (Figure 5) could be fitted 1 to 2 metres above ground level on the southern side of a build. These attract solitary bees, wasps and other invertebrates.



Figure 5. A bee brick

7. References

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (3rd edition). The Bat Survey Trust, London. ISBN-13 978-1-872745-96-1

Environmental Act 2021: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>