



## *Postlebury, Withiam Friary*

**Bat & Bird Inspection Report**

**Prepared for: Lewis Sheppard**

**Date: May 2023**



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### **Limitations**

Nash Ecology has prepared this Report for the sole use of Lewis Sheppard (“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 in providing its services are outlined in this Report. The work described in this Report was undertaken during April 2023 and is based on the conditions encountered and the information available during the said period of time.

Nash Ecology disclaim any undertaking or obligation to advise any person of any change in any matter affecting the Report, which may come or be brought to Nash Ecology attention after the date of the Report.

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 a residential property, namely 'Postlebury, New Lane, Witham Friary, BA11 5HD' (Figure 1). The assessment was commissioned in relation to proposals to demolish and replace the property; no designs were available at the time of reporting. As the works will be restricted to the footprint of the existing building, 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.

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.

Forty-nine species of birds are listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 as 'Species of Principal Importance for Conservation in England'.

### **1.2.3 Planning Policy Summary**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 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 is 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.

## 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 Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was consulted to identify statutory sites within 2 km. The MAGIC website was also used to review granted bat mitigation licences (EPSML) within 2 km and the past five years. In both cases, the search was based on grid reference ST 7364 4175.

### 2.2 Field Survey

#### 2.2.1 Preliminary Roost Appraisal

A Natural England-(Class 2)-licensed bat ecologist undertook a full inspection (both external and internal) of Postlebury on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023. During the survey, the surveyor inspected the property for exterior roosting locations and possible access points to the building’s interior. 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 buildings were assessed for their Bat Roost Potential (BRP), following published guidance (BCT, 2016). The BRP categories are provided in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Bat Roost Potential Categories (BCT, 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).<br><br>A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from 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 property was inspected for evidence of nesting birds by a Natural England-licensed barn owl ecologist.

**2.3 Survey Limitations**

No constraints to the aims of the survey were encountered.

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Desk-based Study

One statutory designated sites was identified within 2 km of the Site, namely Postlebury Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Postlebury Wood SSSI is a large and relatively undisturbed woodland of considerable antiquity, developed on poorly-drained Oxford Clays. The woodland supports a wide range of breeding birds. The SSSI was located c. 0.7 km to the north. Impacts arising from the proposed works are unlikely to extend beyond the Site boundaries. As such, there are no impact pathways between the Site and the SSSI.

The Site lies within Band C of the Bat Consultation Zone (BCZ) for the Mells Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC); as such, the survey also sought to ascertain potential impacts on the SAC and, more specifically, on the greater horseshoe bat – an Annex II species and primary reason for the selection of the Mells Valley SAC. The SAC is made up of several discrete sites the nearest of which is located c. 7.2 km to the north.

No historical EPSML were identified within 2 km and the past five years.

#### 3.2 Site Setting

Postlebury occupied a rural location within a largely agricultural landscape. Very few other residential properties were located in close proximity. The property was set within a residential garden. Large blocks of woodland were located in the wider landscape.

#### 3.3 Field Survey

##### 3.3.1 Preliminary Bat Roost Appraisal

Postlebury was a two-storey house with single-storey extensions to the south and east (Plates 1 & 2). The walls were constructed from stone and were in a good condition, lacking any cracks or crevices. Intact, single-glazed doors and windows were present throughout. Ivy (*Hedera helix*) was growing up northern and southern aspects. Wooden weather boarding present on the single-storey extension to the south; this boarding was damaged and included several gaps (Plate 3). The wall tops were covered by overlapping tiles that were flush. Intact wooden soffit boxes were present in the east and west. Fascia boards were present in the south and were flush with the wall.

The main roof was pitched roof with sloping and flat sections over the single-storey extensions. The pitched and sloping roofs were clad in pan tiles whilst the flat section was covered in bitumen felt. The roofs were in a good condition, lacking any raised, slipped or missing tiles. Three dormer windows were present, all of which were clad in wooden weather boards and included soffit boxes. A section of soffit box on the southernmost of the dormers was damaged and included gaps (Plate 4).



**Plate 1: Postlebury Viewed from the East**



**Plate 2: Postlebury Viewed from the West**



**Plate 3: Damaged Weather Boards**



**Plate 4: Damaged Soffit Box**



Internally, the property contained a small loft space at the apex of the main roof (Loft Space 1) and eaves loft spaces (Loft Space 2).

Loft Space 1 measured c. 15 m (L) x 2 m (W) x 1 m (H) (Plate 5). The roof was lined with plastic and coated in dense cobwebs. The gable walls were constructed from block and the floor was covered in fibreglass insulation. Three smaller loft spaces projected northwards (2 m x 1 m x 0.5 m) into the dormers. No signs of bats were recorded; however, there was extensive evidence of rats.

Loft Space 2 comprised eaves loft spaces on the first floor (15 m x 2 m x 2 m). The walls were constructed from block and the roof was lined in plastic. Cobwebs lined the roof.

**Plate 5: Loft Space 1**



**Plate 6: Loft Space 2**



Based on the presence of suitable roost features that could not be accessed for inspection coupled with the property's location within suitable habitat, Postlebury was assessed as having Moderate BRP. All of the identified potential roost features were only suitable for crevice-dwelling species of bats. As such, the property did not afford any roosting opportunities for greater horseshoe bat.

### **3.3.2 Birds**

No signs of birds were recorded within Postlebury.

## 4 ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 Roosting Bats

Postlebury was assessed as having Moderate BRP. This assessment was based on the presence of potential roost features that could not be accessed for inspection. Further survey will be required to establish whether bats are present.

All bat roosts are protected from damage by domestic law (see Section 1.2.1) and it will be necessary to establish whether bat are present prior to submitting the planning application. Indeed, if a bat roost is present and likely to be adversely affected by the works, a EPSML will be required. To inform both the planning and EPSML (if required) applications, further surveys will be required. In accordance with published guidance (BCT, 2016 & 2022), a minimum of two emergence surveys will be needed to assess the property. If bats are recorded emerging from Postlebury, a third visit will be required. Emergence surveys are seasonally constrained and can only be undertaken during the active season for bats. The surveys should be undertaken between May and August and ideally spaced apart by a minimum of two weeks.

The Site is located within Band C of the Mells Valley BCZ. The property did not afford any roosting opportunities for greater horseshoe bats. No linear features will be lost and no suitable foraging habitat will be affected. As such, it can be concluded that the development will have No Likely Significant Effect on the Mells Valley SAC.

Many bat species (including greater horseshoe bats) are photophobic and actively avoid illuminated areas. To prevent impacts on foraging and commuting bats, a sensitive lighting strategy is recommended. The sensitive lighting strategy will comprise the following broad elements (BCT, 2018):

- 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 by good design.

### 4.2 Birds

No nesting birds (or signs thereof) were recorded and no further survey or mitigation is required.

### 4.3 Opportunities for Enhancement

Appropriate opportunities for enhancement would be determined following further bat survey.

## 5 REFERENCES

BCT (2018) Bats and Lighting. Bat Conservation Trust, London

BCT (2016) Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. BCT, London

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