



HYBRID ECOLOGY LTD
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Preliminary Roost Assessment:

**Parsonage Green Farm
Cockfield
Bury St Edmunds**

On behalf of:

Mr. Beales

Prepared by:

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Report version:

Version 1:
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Summary

The buildings at Parsonage Green Farm, Cockfield (the site) were subject to a Preliminary Roost Assessment on 25th September 2023 in response to a proposal for change of use. This report supplements the Ecological Assessment provided by Eco-Planning UK (dated August 2023).

This report provides the results of a Preliminary Roost Assessment and makes recommendations for mitigation and enhancement measures in the context of the proposal, referring to planning policy and best practice guidance, where appropriate.

In accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines (BCT, 2023), the daytime survey involved external and internal inspections of all buildings (focusing on the proposed area of works) to identify evidence of, or potential for roosting bats. Bats are legally protected from killing, injury, disturbance, roost obstruction and roost destruction. Surveys are therefore required to establish any bat roosts and identify mitigation necessary to enable development to proceed lawfully.

Findings and recommendations

Despite a thorough inspection, no bat evidence (e.g. droppings) was identified inside any buildings proposed for change of use (nor any other buildings on/adjacent to the site) and no suitable crevices or voids were identified.

As there is no risk of killing, injuring bats or disturbing/destroying a roost, further surveys are not necessary and there is no requirement for a mitigation licence from Natural England.

In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during works, work will cease and an ecological will be contacted immediately for advice.

To enhance the site for bats, we recommend two bat boxes are installed on the mature oak tree on the western boundary. This would contribute to Government aims under Paragraph 174(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and Local Plan policies which encourage all development to demonstrate biodiversity net-gain.

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1.0 Introduction

Personnel

1.1 This report has been prepared by Gemma Holmes, Consultant Ecologist at Hybrid Ecology Ltd. Gemma is a qualified ecologist with 16 years' experience in professional survey work and is an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Gemma holds a level 2 licence to survey bats in the UK (Licence number 2016-27305-CLS-CLS).

Purpose/context

1.2 Hybrid Ecology Ltd. was instructed by Mr. Beales to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment at Parsonage Farm, Cockfield (grid reference TL 91467 54965) in relation to proposed change of use. The survey boundary is identified in Figure 1 and a Location Plan showing the site context is in Figure 2. This report has been written to support a planning application.

1.3 Bats (all UK species) are legally protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019, EU Exit) and Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended) from killing, injury, disturbance, roost destruction and roost obstruction. Building work can result in the destruction of/disturbance to bat roosts and trigger offences under the above legislation, in the absence of appropriate controls.

1.4 Several UK bat species are also listed on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) as Priority Species, meaning Local Planning Authorities have a duty to "conserve and protect" in their decision making, including the determination of planning applications.

1.5 The purpose of the survey was:

- a) To identify bat roost field signs and potential access points on the subject buildings such that further surveys can be advised, or bats can be confidently scoped out as appropriate;
- and
- b) To provide mitigation recommendations to ensure that the development will be carried out in accordance with wildlife legislation.

Limitations

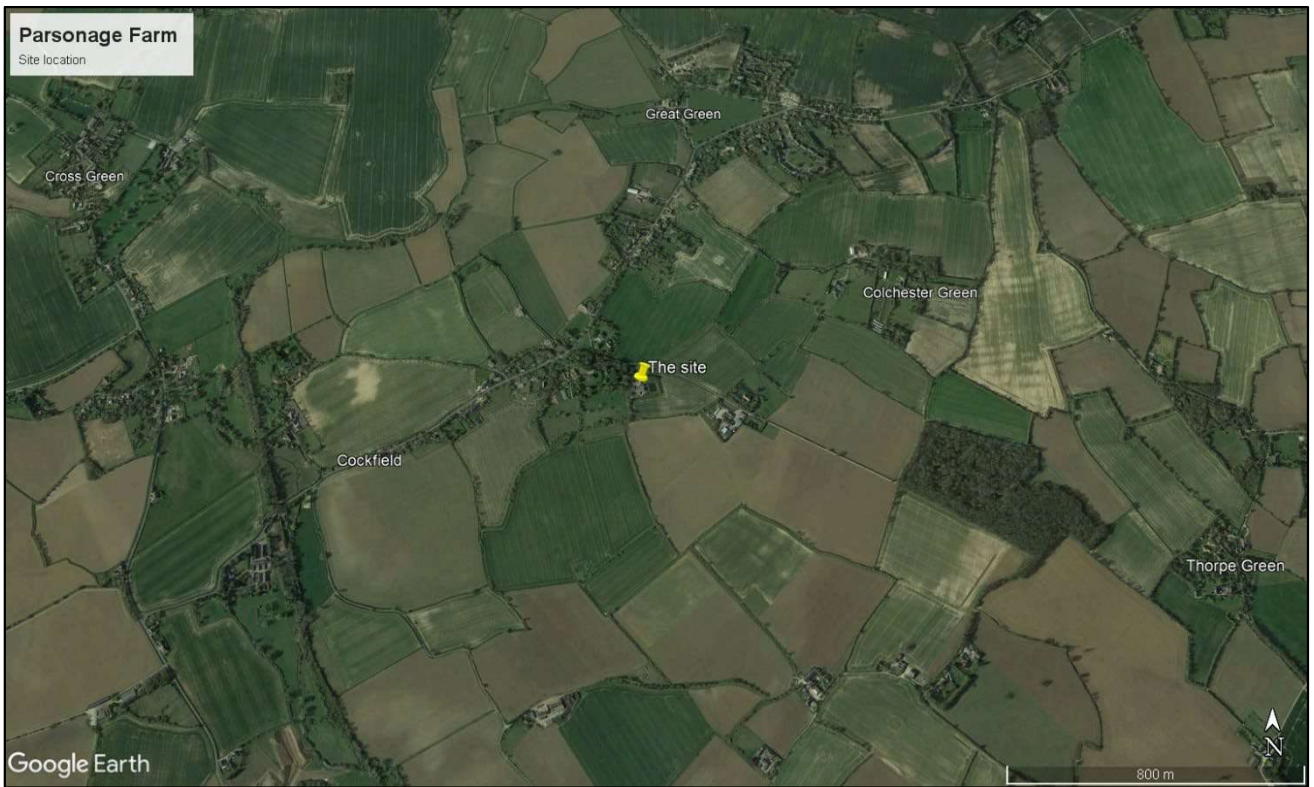
1.6 There were no limitations to the survey that would materially impact the findings and/or recommendations.

1.7 As bats are transient and highly mobile, this report is valid until October 2024, beyond which the habitats may have changed to warrant an updated survey.

Figure 1. Survey boundary



Figure 2. Site location



2.0 Planning Policy and Legislation

National Planning Policy Framework (2021) Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Note the following text has been taken directly from the National Planning Policy Framework.

Relevant policies

Paragraph 174 (d):

- Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

Paragraph 180 (d):

- Development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Legislation

Please refer to wildlife legislation here - [Environmental management : Wildlife and habitat conservation - detailed information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). The text below is a summary only and is not an interpretation of any law.

- 2.1 In the UK, all bat species and their roosts are legally protected, by both domestic and international legislation. This means you may be committing a criminal offence if you:
- Deliberately take, injure or kill a wild bat
 - Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats
 - Damage or destroy a place used by bats for breeding or resting (roosts) (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time)
 - Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost
- 2.2 A European Protected Species (EPS) licence can be issued by Natural England for scientific and research purposes (including survey work). An EPS licence can also be issued by Natural England for the disturbance of an EPS in relation to a development.
- 2.3 Licences can only be granted if there is no satisfactory alternative or if the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a Favourable Conservation Status in their natural range and can only be obtained once planning permission has been granted.

3.0 Methodology

Desktop study

- 3.1 The immediate landscape was assessed via aerial mapping (Google Earth Pro, 2020) for any significant bat-roosting and foraging habitats (woodland, water etc.) connecting to the site.
- 3.2 Multi-agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) was used to identify any European Protected Species (EPS) licences that have been granted for bats within a 5km radius of the site.

Field survey: Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 3.3 The site was visited on 25th September 2023 by Gemma Holmes, during which the buildings shown in Figure 1 were subject to internal and external inspections. In accordance with BCT, 2023, a systematic search was made to identify potential or actual bat access points and roosting places. Nature Hawke binoculars were used to carefully check the roof, cladding and walls for any defects creating access opportunities. The search included the ground, particularly beneath potential access points, where accessible. A systematic search was also made of the interior to identify potential bat access points and roosting places and to locate evidence of bats, including droppings and feeding remains. Accessible/ground-level crevices were inspected with a Clu-lite torch. The building was assigned a “bat roost suitability” based on features/evidence found, in accordance with Table 1.

Table 1. Guidelines for assessing potential suitability of development sites for bats (BCT, 2023)

Table 4.1 Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.		
Suitability	Description Roosting habitats	Commuting and foraging habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
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 ^a 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 ^b). 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. ^c	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
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 ^a 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).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
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 ^a and surrounding habitat.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

4.0 Results

Desktop study

- 4.1 Please refer to Figure 2. The site is situated in a rural location on the eastern extent of Cockfield. There is a domestic property to the north, pond and arable land to the east, arable land to the south, and a large house and grounds to the west. The closest obvious suitable bat habitat is a woodland (Bull's Wood) approximately 800 metres to the east. However this has negligible connectivity to the site.
- 4.2 There are no granted EPS licences for bats within 2km.

Field survey: Preliminary Roost Assessment

Building descriptions are provided below in Table 2, along with a map in Figure 3. Photographs are provided in Figure 4.

- 4.3 All buildings on site lack suitable voids or crevices. Despite a thorough search, no bat evidence was found. Since there is no potential for/evidence of roosting bats in any building, there is a negligible risk of an offence being committed during the works – which are restricted to minor roof works.
- 4.4 Consequently, the buildings are assigned negligible bat roost suitability (BCT, 2023) and there is no reason to carry out further survey.

Table 2. Building descriptions

Building number	Description	Bat evidence
1	Wood clad building, formerly used for storing grain, wood and for assembling products made in workshop. This building is not part of the application and will continue as farm storage.	None
2	Open cart shed, used for storing farm and woodwork machinery. This is part of change of use and will be used for painting products. The front to be covered in and asbestos roof to be replaced with modern cement fibre and insulated to building control standards.	None
3	Used as woodwork shop for over 20 years. Part of change of use. Will be used for light woodwork machining and sanding of products. Leaking asbestos roof to be replaced and insulated as shed 2.	None
4	Open, lean-to cart shed, not part of change of use. To continue as general storage.	None
5	Former pig pens used for storage of woodwork accessories. Unaffected.	None
6	Steel framed grain store, cement clad roof, with steel sheet sides. Part of change of use as main woodworking machine shop. To be equipped with an insulated lowered ceiling and insulated inner walls.	None
7	Lean-to cart shed formerly used for farm machinery storage. To continue as general storage. Unaffected.	None
8	Former pig shed. Now used as farm workshop. Unaffected.	None
9	Pole barn. Former combine and dryer shed. Now used for general storage. Not part of change of use.	None
10	4 free standing containers, formerly used for storage. Not part of change of use.	None
11	Dilapidated site hut. To be replaced by equivalent. Included in change of use plans.	None

Figure 3. Building plan showing location of mature oak tree

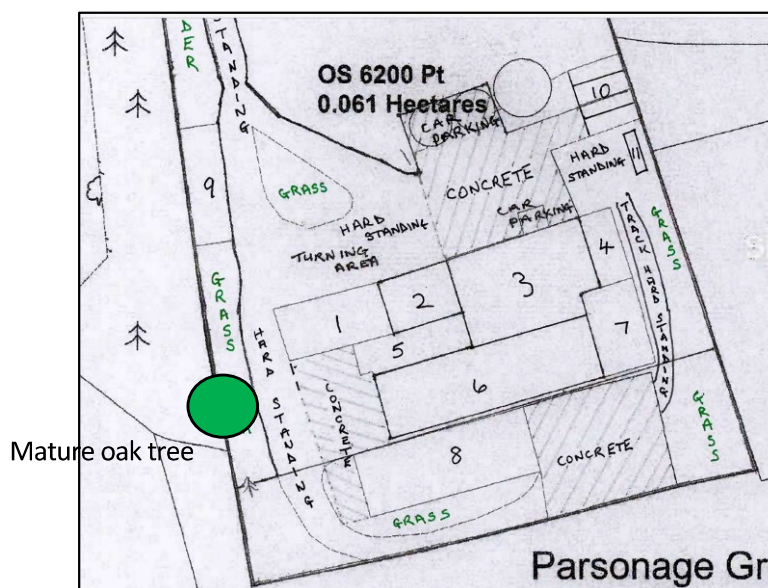


Figure 4. Photographs



a) B1, unaffected.



b) B2, proposed change of use.



c) B2 interior, proposed change of use.



d) B6, proposed change of use.



e) B8, unaffected.



f) Mature oak tree to south-west of B1, suitable for bat boxes.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 On 25th September 2023, Hybrid Ecology Ltd. conducted a Preliminary Roost Assessment at Parsonage Farm, Cockfield in relation to a change of use application.
- 5.2 The survey was carried out by Gemma Holmes, who holds a level 2 licence to survey for bats. The survey included a thorough internal and external inspection in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust 2023 Guidelines.
- 5.3 The buildings to be impacted lack suitable voids/crevices and therefore have negligible roosting opportunities. No field evidence indicating bat presence was seen internally or externally. This assessment therefore concludes likely absence.
- 5.4 As there is no risk of an offence being committed under wildlife legislation, there is no requirement for further survey or a mitigation licence from Natural England.
- 5.5 In the unlikely event that bats are encountered at any point, work will immediately cease until ecological advice has been sought and implemented.
- 5.6 It is recommended that two bat boxes are installed on the mature oak tree. Bat boxes should be installed above 3 metres and face south, south-east or south-west for maximum chance of occupation.



Individually Handmade - Specifications are in CM and approximate.
External: 43 high x 21.5 wide x 6.8 deep.
Internal: 41 x 16.5 x 1.8 crevices @ 1.
Made with small groups of crevice dwelling bat species in mind, such as pipistrelles. Approx. 4.75kg

Individually Handmade - Specifications are in CM and approximate.
External: 43 high x 21.5 wide x 6.8 deep.
Internal: 41 x 16.5 x 1.8 crevices @ 2.
Made with small groups of crevice dwelling bat species in mind, such as pipistrelles. Approx. 6.75kg

Bat boxes for trees [Home | Greenwood's Ecohabitats \(greenwoodsecohabitats.co.uk\)](http://greenwoodsecohabitats.co.uk)

- 5.7 Provided the advice in this report is followed, there is no reason the work will materially impact bats nor affect Favourable Conservation Status of bats in their natural range.

References

BCT, 2018. Bats and Artificial Lighting <https://www.bats.org.uk/news/2018/09/new-guidance-on-bats-and-lighting>

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