

Bat Survey of North Banks Little Hadham

On behalf of:

**Pelham Structures Ltd
Unit 4 Brices Yard
Langley Upper Green
Saffron Walden
Essex
CB11 4RT**

Prepared by:

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

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

1) Summary

As part of a planning proposal involving three outbuildings at North Banks, Standon Road, Little Hadham, Ware, Hertfordshire SG11 2DE, a site visit was conducted on 6th October 2023 to determine whether the buildings had the potential to be occupied by bats, which would be affected if any proposed development were to go ahead.



Photo 1: Southern elevation of the shed. The proposal is to demolish this building and site new dwellings on the lawn to the south

The survey buildings comprise a shed (see Photo 1), a workshop and an annexe. The shed is due for demolition whereas the other buildings are to be retained and are unaffected by the proposal. The shed is aligned E-W and has a metal sheet roof and weather-boarded walls above a block plinth. The western wall of a lean-to store with a sloping metal sheet roof is of block. The survey found that the interior of the building received daylight illumination via a window to the south, and the lean-to shed was lit by windows to the south and west. In such conditions, bats seek out dark areas or crevices in which to roost and the lack of such features in the walls and roof meant that the building was unsuitable as a roosting place for bats. The workshop had a slate and felted roof and weather-boarded walls. The roof area was accessed via a ladder and no evidence of bats was found in the loft or on items stored within the roof void. The annexe has a slate roof and pale, rendered walls. The interior has a vaulted ceiling throughout and is for residential use. Externally, there was a tight seal to the eaves and

gables and no evidence such as droppings or staining was found on the pale walls where the presence of bats would have been readily apparent.

There is no vegetation affected by this proposal that has crevices, woodpecker holes or loose bark that might offer potential roosting places for 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. 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 buildings 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 and outbuildings at North Banks, Little Hadham 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 6th October 2023. 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: TL437228.

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 buildings 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 roofs of the buildings were 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 buildings comprise a shed (see Photo 1), a workshop and an annexe. The shed is due for demolition whereas the other buildings are to be retained and are unaffected by the proposal. The shed is aligned E-W and has a metal sheet roof and weather-boarded walls above a block plinth. The western wall of a lean-to store with a sloping metal sheet roof is of block. The survey found that the interior of the building received daylight illumination via a window to the south, and the lean-to shed was lit by windows to the south and west. In such conditions, bats seek out dark areas or crevices in which to roost and the lack of such features in the walls and roof meant that the building was unsuitable as a roosting place for bats. The workshop had a slate and felted roof and weather-boarded walls. The roof area was accessed via a ladder and no evidence of bats was found in the loft or on items stored within the roof void. The annexe has a slate roof and pale, rendered walls. The interior has a vaulted ceiling throughout and is for residential use. Externally, there was a tight seal to the eaves and gables 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: The eastern and northern elevations of the shed are engulfed by Virginia Creeper



Photo 3: Western elevation



Photo 4: Looking E-W in the shed

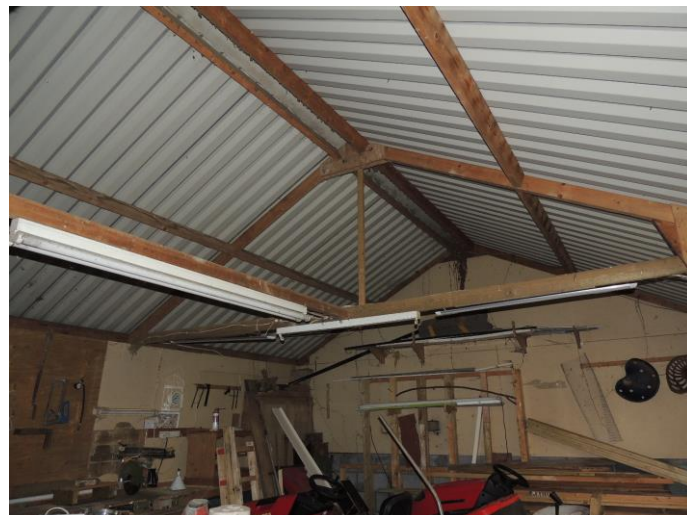


Photo 5: Looking W-E in the shed



Photo 6: The roof had no features that might be occupied by bats



Photo 7: A lean-to store is at the western end



Photo 8: The interior had no features that might be occupied by bats



Photo 9: Western elevation of the workshop



Photo 10: Eastern elevation of the workshop



Photo 11: The northern elevation of the workshop is obscured by vegetation. Note tight seal to cladding



Photo 12: Southern elevation of the workshop



Photo 13: The interior of the workshop



Photo 14: Note lack of evidence of bats in roof space



Photo 15: Note lack of evidence of bats on stored items



Photo 16: Note lack of evidence of bats on stored items



Photo 17: Northern (gabled) and western elevations of the annexe



Photo 18: The interior comprises living accommodation



Photo 19: Lean-to car port at the southern end of the building

There is no vegetation at the site that has crevices, woodpecker holes or loose bark that might offer potential roosting places for 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. 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 buildings 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) 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:



Photo 20: 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 sited on trees or buildings at site.

3: A hedgehog nesting box to be located along hedged boundary of site.

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



This example of a solitary beehive is manufactured from durable FSC timber and provides valuable habitat for bees in modern gardens. It is designed specifically to attract non-swarming bees like the Red Mason Bee, Leafcutter Bee and other solitary bees which are naturally attracted to holes in wood.

Attracting solitary bees to the garden is not only safe, but beneficial to pollination of flowers, fruit and vegetables.

Siting: Site in a visible warm place ideally oriented to face between southeast and south and to catch some sun. It is helpful to have soil nearby, and food sources such as flowers, orchards and fruit.