

**BARN AT
LOWER BRAZACOTT FARM
BRAZACOTT
LAUNCESTON
CORNWALL
PL15 8NE**

**ECOLOGICAL
ASSESSMENT**

11 MAY 2023

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QUALITY ASSURANCE

This survey work and report has been undertaken with reference to; The publication 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists' Collins, J. (ed) 2016, 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Description	Ecological Assessment
Produced for	S Lewis
Issue	1
Report Reference	Lower Brazacott Farm Barn
Date of Survey Work	Thursday, 11 May 2023
Date of report	Monday, 15 May 2023
Author	M Pearmain
Checked & reviewed by	C Carter BSc (Hons) MCIEEM Principal Ecologist
Report validity period	12 months from date of survey

DISCLAIMER

This report provides a broad overview of the legal protection of wildlife and specifically relates to how the law is applied in England. The law applied to other countries of the United Kingdom may differ. This report does not offer formal legal advice and no liability is accepted. If legal advice is required related to wildlife issues, this should be sought from appropriate professionals.

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BRIEF SUMMARY

Brookside Ecology was commissioned by S Lewis to undertake an Ecological Assessment of a barn at Lower Brazacott Farm, Brazacott, Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 8NE. The assessment was undertaken to inform development proposals for the conversion of the building to residential in relation to the potential presence of protected species in accordance with local and national planning policy and legislative requirements.

The desk study revealed the site is within an 'impact risk zone' of statutory sites. However, this proposal does not require the planning authority to consult Natural England on potential risks to such sites.

The area is assessed as having 'high suitability for bat commuting and foraging habitat.' This would increase the probability of bat roosts being in the area.

The building was assessed as having 'low suitability for roosting bats.' A small number of bat droppings were found within the building and provides suitable conditions as a potential summer night roost site and for crevice roosting bats to be present throughout the year.

The assessment considers that proposals for the conversion of the building would have risk of negative impact on bats and their roost sites if they were present. Accordingly, it is guided by survey practice and makes recommendation for further survey work to be undertaken to determine presence or absence of bat roosts. If active roosts were found to be present, the survey work would seek to identify the species and character of the roosts as well as entry and exit points in order to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy and a European Protected Species Licence to Natural England where necessary.

As previous seasons birds nests were found to the building, nesting birds will need consideration as part of the development to avoid their disturbance whilst nesting. No other protected or notable species and habitats issues were identified.

Further Survey

One evening bat emergence surveys and a period of remote monitoring is recommended between May and August in accordance with survey guidance.

INTRODUCTION

1. Brookside Ecology was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment of a barn at Lower Brazacott Farm, Launceston at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference (OSGR) SX 2668 9104. The assessment was undertaken to inform proposals in relation to the potential presence of protected species for legislative and planning requirements

PROPOSALS

2. It is proposed the barn is converted for residential use.

OBJECTIVES

3. The purpose of this preliminary assessment is to:
 - Identify any ecological, bat or other protected or notable species issues that may impact the proposals.
 - Make preliminary recommendations for mitigation and enhancement opportunities where required.
 - Specify further survey work if required in accordance with best practice guidance.

METHODS

4. The preliminary assessment of the building was undertaken 11 May 2023 by C Carter and M Pearmain, Natural England registered bat workers.
5. A visual inspection of the interior and exterior of a building is undertaken for evidence of bat use following standard survey methodologies. The publication 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists'¹ is used for reference and guidance.
6. Several factors are taken into consideration during an assessment. These include; features present within or on the site that would support roosting bats; the potential for disturbance; lighting impacts; proximity of features to foraging habitat; connectivity to the site between it and the wider countryside.
7. A thorough examination of the exterior of a building is undertaken to search for evidence of bat use with a visual inspection of structures such as window and door lintels, gaps in walls, lead flashing, fascia boards, ridge, roof and hanging tiles where present. Underneath these features a search for evidence of droppings, staining from urine and fur oil that might indicate use by bats.
8. The internal search of a building follows a similar approach with a thorough search made of crevices in timber joints, wall sockets and gaps in walls where present. Evidence of bat droppings, urine stains plus prey residues such as fly, butterfly or moth wings and any live bats or bat carcasses that might be present.
9. Equipment available for use include close-focussing binoculars - Vistron 10 x 40, Endoscope - Scopecam, 3.8 metre extendable ladders and Clulite high powered torches.
10. The bat roosting potential of a building is assessed along with the surrounding habitat/commuting features and classified into one of the following categories:

¹ Collins, J. (ed) 2016, Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines. 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Suitability	Description of Roost Level
Negligible	Negligible feature/s likely to be used by roosting bats
Low	Structures 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).
Moderate	Structures 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).
High	Structures with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger number of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.
Roost	Known or Confirmed Roost

Table 1. Bat roosting potential of buildings/structures, adapted from Collins 2016 (Description of commuting/habitat aspects removed for simplicity)

OTHER NOTABLE SPECIES AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

11. Full consideration is given to how the development might impact other species and habitats on, and immediately surrounding the development.
12. In a development such as this the most likely wildlife that might be encountered would be nesting birds and hence a search is made for nests and faecal deposits.

DESK STUDY

13. The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was consulted to identify sites designated for their conservation or biological interest. The Natural England website was used to obtain citation details of statutory sites. A search was also undertaken for European Protected Species Licences for bats within the same radius which provides an indication of how developments are impacting on species and roosts in the area.

14. A 1 km search on NBN Atlas was undertaken to search for records of bats to ascertain their prevalence in the wider area.
15. Google satellite view was used to identify habitats of value to protected and notable species including woodland, tree lines and hedgerows, scrub, areas of grassland and waterbodies.

LIMITATIONS

16. None.

RESULTS

WEATHER

17. Clear, Dry, Recent Shower, 50% Cloud Cover, Temp 13°C, Wind speed Beaufort 2

SITE CONTEXT

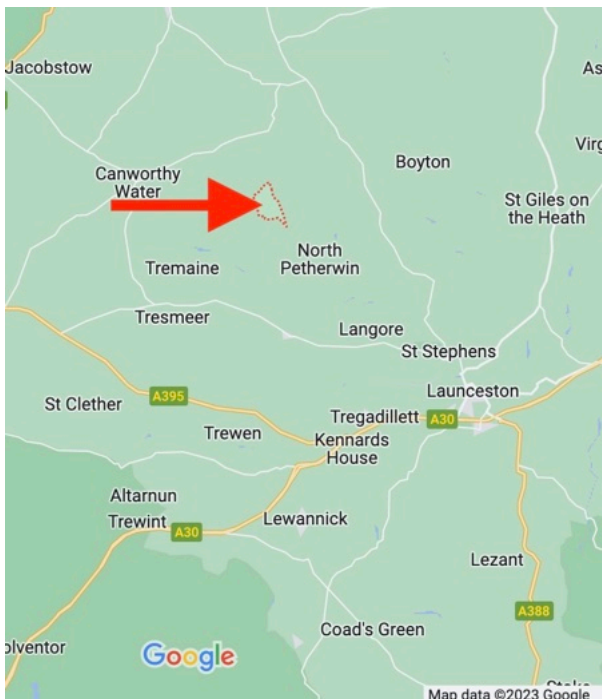


Figure 1. Red arrow indicates site location

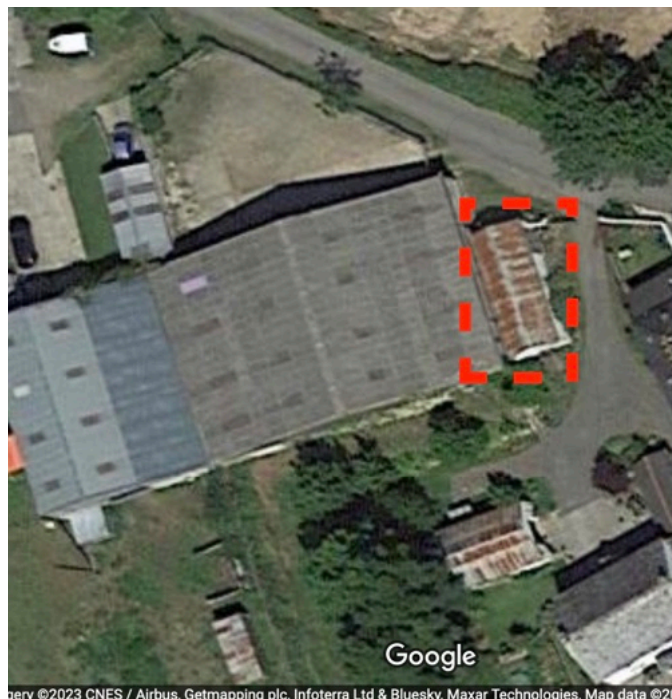


Plate 1. Google Satellite view, red area indicates building surveyed

18. The site is situated approximately 10km to the north-west of Launceston in Cornwall. It is surrounded by established agricultural and light residential development, hedge bordered fields of grassland and water courses. There would be moderate levels of light pollution in the area of the building from adjacent dwellings.

BUILDING



Plate 2. Eastern elevation of barn

19. The building (Plate 2) is a detached single storey barn of rendered concrete block and cob construction under a galvanised sheet metal roof.
20. Externally, the barn has gaps along the eaves, crenelations of the sheet roof, gable ends and above doors plus a large section of the western elevation is open to the side (Plate 5) providing easy access to wildlife such as bats and birds.
21. Internally, the barn is open to the underside of the corrugated roof with daylight visible from along the ridge. Crevices and gaps were found to the remaining cob walls (Plate 6).
22. A search of all areas found 2 bat droppings of a larger species of bat to the floor thought characteristic of Greater Horseshoe species (Plate 7).
23. The building had been used by roosting birds with a large quantity of droppings found inside. Previous seasons birds nests of Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (Plate 9)

to a timber beam and a Passerine bird species noted to a hole within the cob wall (Plate 10) were present.

SURROUNDS

24. The area around the building is comprised of hardcore drive and parking with grass verge and an adjacent agricultural building to the western elevation.



Plate 3. Southern elevation



Plate 4. Western elevation



Plate 5. Internal view open to most of the western elevation



Plate 6. Corrugated sheet roof and cob wall sections

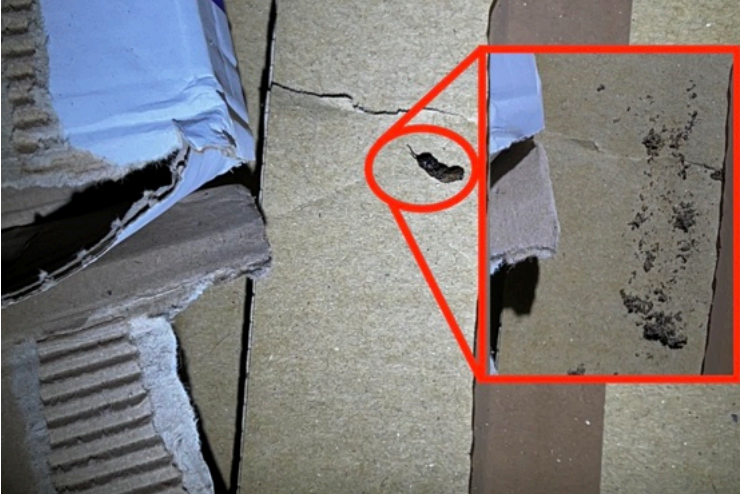


Plate 7. Bat dropping to surface



Plate 8. Further bat dropping to surface



Plate 9. Previous season Barn Swallow nest



Plate 10. Bird nesting material with cob wall hole

DESK STUDY

25. The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (Magic) website was consulted and revealed the site is not within an 'impact risk zone' of statutory sites. This proposal does not appear to require the planning authority to consult Natural England and the potential risks to such sites.
26. No statutory sites found within the search radius.
27. The search for records of European Protected Species Licences granted for bats found no licence applications.
28. A search on NBN Atlas revealed no bat records within the search radius.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

29. The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was consulted. The site is within an 'impact risk zone' of statutory sites. This proposal does not require the planning authority to consult Natural England on potential risks to such sites. The searches did not reveal further items considered pertinent to the proposed development or site.
30. The area is assessed as having 'high suitability for bat commuting and foraging habitat.' The building is in an area that provides good habitat for wildlife with adjacent natural connective features that might assist wildlife such as bats to commute between site and wider countryside. These factors would increase the probability of bat roosts being in the area.
31. The building was assessed as having 'low suitability for roosting bats.' A small number of bat droppings were found within the building, however, their number were not considered necessarily indicative of a substantial bat roost being present. The building is of substantial construction and would provide cover for bats with wall crevices where crevice roosting bats might roost unseen but the large opening to one side is considered to provide less favourable conditions for more substantial bat roosts but it does provide suitable conditions as a potential summer night roost site and for crevice roosting bats to be present throughout the year.
32. In consideration of the proposals for the conversion of the building, development works have risk of negative impact on bats and their roost sites if they were present. Accordingly, survey practice guides us to make recommendation for further survey work to be undertaken to determine presence or absence of bat roosts. If active roosts are found to be present, the survey work would seek to identify the species and character of the roosts as well as entry and exit points in order to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy and a European Protected Species Licence to Natural England where necessary.
33. The potential presence of nesting birds will need consideration as part of the development to avoid their disturbance whilst nesting. No other protected or notable species and habitats issues were identified.

FURTHER SURVEY

34. It is recommended one bat emergence survey and a period of automated monitoring are undertaken between May and August in accordance with survey practice.

LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY

35. A brief outline of relevant wildlife legislation is detailed below with a focus on that relevant to the site in question. It is not meant to be an in depth treatise of all wildlife regulations as this is not possible within the scope of this report. It is advised that individuals should seek professional legal advice if necessary.

BATS

36. All British bats are protected under both UK and EU law; The Habitats Directive, which is transposed into law in England and Wales by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitats Regulations'), as amended.

37. Regulation 41 (1) of the Regulations makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill bat(s);
- Deliberately disturb bat(s) affecting their ability to survive, breed, rear young or significantly affect local distribution or abundance;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place, whether present or not;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat roost;
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to roost sites;
- Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale or exchange, live or dead bats, or parts thereof.

38. Some rare bat species, namely Greater Horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, Lesser Horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, Barbastelle *Barbastellus barbastellus* and Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii*, are afforded greater protection under European legislation, being listed under Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive which lists species whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

BIRDS

39. All wild birds are protected under the Habitats Regulations. Under this legislation it is an offence to:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; and
- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

40. The relevant adopted policy at the national level is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as amended July 2021, which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. This emphasises the need for planning authorities to consider biological conservation and the need for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity within planning policies and decisions.