



## BAT PRESENCE / ABSENCE SURVEY

**At**

**Eastwood House**

Princess Street

Northwich

Cheshire

CW9 7NJ

**NGR: SJ 68168 74644**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A bat scoping survey was undertaken at Eastwood House, Northwich by United Environmental Services (UES) Ltd on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The survey found the building to have low potential to support roosting bats, due to the presence of a low number of predominately external potential roosting features (PRFs), such as gaps beneath ridge tiles. As such, a single presence / absence survey was undertaken by UES on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

The objective of the presence / absence survey was to establish whether or not bats are using the building on site to roost, and if so to assess the type and importance of roosts in order to inform the planning process. The survey was carried out to recognised guidelines, timings and weather conditions, with particular reference to Natural England and Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) publications. The development proposals include the conversion and extension of the building, from one residential dwelling into three residential dwellings.

The local area is predominantly suburban and consists of industrial and linked residential dwellings and gardens, intersected by watercourses and pasture land. Pockets of moderate to high quality foraging and commuting habitat is present to the north of site along Wincham Brook. The industrial and residential areas to the south of site provide lower quality habitat.

Three species of bat were recorded during the bat presence / absence survey: common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, and a *Myotis* species. Moderate levels of bat activity were recorded to the north of site in and around the woodland and Wincham Brook, which forms the northern site boundary. Activity was also observed frequently at the south elevation, where a single soprano pipistrelle was foraging back and forth between the buildings and woodland. Common and soprano pipistrelles accounted for the majority of the activity during the survey, with *Myotis* sp. recorded to a lesser extent.

A single soprano pipistrelle was recorded emerging from beneath a raised ridge tile on the south aspect of the roof. Bat activity recorded during the survey suggest that the building is used on a casual basis as a day roost by a single soprano pipistrelle bat. The bat present is likely to be male, a non-breeding female or juvenile. The building is unlikely to be used as a maternity or hibernation roost.

**Due to the presence of roosting bats within the building, the development will need to be registered under Natural England's Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) system prior to the works taking place. A further bat presence / absence survey is to be undertaken during the peak bat survey season (May to August inclusive) to inform the BMCL application. This can only be applied for once planning permission has been granted. Natural England aim to process applications within 10 working days of receipt. The works will also have to comply with the method statement included in section 4.3.1 of this report.**

This report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 6, which provide visual representations of the survey results and statutory and planning context.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Author, surveyors and qualifications

This report is compiled and written by Bethan Beeston, UES Trainee Ecologist. Other surveyors include:

- [REDACTED] UES Managing Director. [REDACTED] is licensed by Natural England to disturb, take and handle all species of bats under licence numbers 2015-[REDACTED] (level 3) and [REDACTED] (level 4). [REDACTED] is also a registered consultant of the bat low impact class licence (RC090).

All surveyors have the knowledge, skills and experience identified within CIEEM's "Competencies for Species Survey: Bats" (2013), or were under the supervision of a surveyor with the required competencies.

## 1.2 Survey objectives

UES was commissioned in September 2023 to conduct site surveys which include the following activities:

- Conduct internal and external building inspections to look for field signs of bats
- Confirm bat presence or likely absence by conducting emergence and re-entry surveys of the building
- Assess the type and importance of the roost(s), if present
- Recommend appropriate mitigation and compensation, if applicable

## 1.3 Proposed development

The development proposals include the conversion and extension of the building, from one residential dwelling into three residential dwellings.

## 1.4 Structure of the report

This report sets out the methodology, results, and recommendations in relation to a specific bat survey. Recommendations are in line with statutory legislation and planning policy objectives.

The report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 6, which give visual representations of the survey results.



## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 General

All surveys were carried out to recognised guidelines, timings and weather conditions, with particular reference to Natural England and BCT publications (see references for further information).

The habitats on site and in the surrounding area were assessed during a walkover survey and through studying aerial photographs, in order to gauge their suitability to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats.

### 2.2 Building inspection

The building on site was subject to internal and external inspection as part of a bat scoping survey undertaken by UES on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023 which was conducted by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The building was searched both externally and internally for bat presence and features associated with bat activity, as detailed in BCT guidance (Collins, 2016).

#### 2.2.1 External inspection

The external inspection of the building was carried out from ground level using binoculars, and also using ladders and an endoscope to investigate suitable gaps. The objective of the survey was to find and record any signs of bat use, for example:

- Bat droppings
- Feeding remains
- Grease staining / urine marks
- Corpses or skeletons

The bat signs listed above are visible from the outside of a building. The following areas were searched, where present:

- Roof and ridge tiles
- Lead flashing
- Eaves
- Boxed soffits
- Fascia and barge boards
- Window sills and panes
- Walls
- Gaps under felt
- Cracks / holes in woodwork or behind cladding
- Gaps in brickwork and mortar
- Air bricks
- Grills
- Vents

#### 2.2.2 Internal inspection

The internal inspections covered all of the accessible rooms and roof spaces within the building. Bats regularly utilise specific areas within roof spaces, which were searched for any field signs of bats using high-powered torches and an endoscope, where considered necessary by the licenced ecologist. The following features were searched, where present:



- Roof beams and junctions
- Gaps under felt
- Dividing walls
- Chimney breasts
- Gaps in brickwork and mortar
- Cracks / holes in woodwork
- Floor or other surfaces on which droppings could accumulate

## 2.3 Emergence survey

Potential roost access points were identified during the building inspection. These points were covered by a surveyor during the dusk emergence period.

Bat echolocation, flight and habitat characteristics were recorded where possible, in order to determine the species. The level and type of bat activity was also recorded to establish how bats are using the site.

### 2.3.1 Equipment

BATLOGGER M bat detectors and recorders were used during the surveys. This device records bat echolocation calls across the full spectrum, with a sensitivity range of 10 –150 kHz. The integrated heterodyne live monitoring also allows the observer to hear the echolocation calls in real time, with automatic tuning. The recordings are individually time/date, GPS and temperature stamped, and are of high enough quality to produce time expansion quality sonograms.

ANABAT SCOUT bat detectors and recorders were used during the survey. This device records bat echolocation calls across the full spectrum, with a sensitivity range of 10 –150 kHz. The integrated heterodyne live monitoring also allows the observer to hear the echolocation calls in real time, with automatic tuning. The recordings are individually time/date, GPS and temperature stamped, and are of high enough quality to produce time expansion quality sonograms.

### 2.3.2 Weather conditions

*Table 1 - Weather conditions and survey timings*

| DATE     | SURVEY TYPE | TIMINGS       | SUNSET / SUNRISE | TEMP. | WIND  | RAIN | CLOUD COVER |
|----------|-------------|---------------|------------------|-------|-------|------|-------------|
| 29/09/23 | Emergence   | 18:38 – 20:23 | 18:53            | 15°C  | Still | Dry  | 10%         |

## 2.4 Survey limitations

Given that the building could be thoroughly inspected and does not have potential to support a roost of high conservation significance (i.e a maternity or hibernation roost), it was considered that a September only survey (conducted in optimal weather conditions survey) would be acceptable in this instance. Furthermore, moderate levels of bat activity and roosting



bats were recorded during the survey confirming that a September only survey did not significantly affect the findings of the survey.





## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Habitat assessment

Eastwood House is located to the northeast of Northwich within a residential area and access to the site is off Manchester Road. The habitats within the curtilage of the site comprise a residential dwelling, separate single skinned storage unit, hardstanding, woodland and Wincham Brook which forms the northern site boundary.

The immediate surrounding area (<0.5km) comprises residential and industrial areas to the south of the site, which may offer a variety of alternative roosting opportunities for bats. Trees, woodland and scrub habitats to the north will provide good foraging, commuting and roosting opportunities for bats in the local area. Furthermore, Wincham Brook which borders the site, is flanked in woodland and provides excellent connectivity to site for foraging and commuting bats.

In the wider surrounding area (<2km) the habitats are similar in composition; the landscape is a mosaic of hedge-lined fields, ponds, and blocks of mature woodland, intersected by unlit roads. Agricultural buildings within the landscape will provide bats with numerous roosting opportunities. Neumann's Flash approximately 1.2km west of the site encompasses reclaimed lime beds and provides habitats on which invertebrates, in particular moths and butterflies, can thrive. Witton Lime Beds Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located approximately 1.8km to the west of the site and is designated for its lowland calcareous grassland habitat. Connectivity between each of these habitats is good due to the presence of tree-lined and hedge-lined agricultural fields that continue throughout the landscape. These habitats will provide high-quality foraging, commuting and roosting opportunities for bats in the local area.

In summary, pockets of moderate to high quality foraging and commuting habitat is present to the immediate north of site. The industrial and residential areas to the south of site provide lower quality habitat.

### 3.2 Building inspections

#### 3.2.1 External inspection

The building on site is a two storey residential dwelling with an additional storey set into the roof. The roof is a series of connecting pitched roofs with two dormer windows to the rear elevation (Photograph 1 - 4). The roof is constructed of clay roof and ridge tiles which are well fitted for the most part, with the exception of a number of gaps where the mortar is missing under the ridge tiles (Photograph 5 & 6). The box soffits and fascia boards are a mixture of plastic and timber. The plastic sections are well maintained with no PRFs and the timber boards have some areas of flaking paint but no PRFs for bats (Photograph 7). Plastic guttering surrounds the periphery of the building. Exposed mortar surrounding the pitched roof of the dormer windows is in poor condition with some gaps, however these do not lead to the loft void and are likely superficial and too shallow for bats (Photograph 8). The walls of the building are rendered and incorporate bands of decorative redbrick. The dormer windows and porch, which encases the two storey staircase, is clad in timber weatherboarding which offers no PRFs. Timber windows and doors are present on all aspects and are generally in good condition including a large picture window to the north and a porthole window on the western aspect.





No bat droppings or other field signs of bats were found during the external building inspection.

### 3.2.2 Internal inspection

Due to the structure of the roof and the dormer windows built into the roof line, the loft space within the building is limited to a small crawl space which is accessed via a hatch on the landing. The loft space is approximately 16m in length, 1.3m wide and a maximum of 0.7m in height. It has a pitched roof structure with a breathable lining which is in good condition. The gable ends are constructed of bare breezeblock with a vent to the east which is cobwebbed and doesn't present a PRF. The floor is lined with a thick layer of rockwool insulation and is littered in 1000's of cluster flies. No access points or light ingress were evident (Photograph 9 - 11)

No bat droppings or other field signs of bats were found during the internal building inspection.

### 3.3 Emergence survey

Table 2 – Survey results

| DATE     | SURVEY TYPE | SPECIES             | NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS | ROOST LOCATION               | ACCESS POINT  | TIMINGS |
|----------|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|---|---------|
| 29/09/23 | Emergence   | Soprano pipistrelle | 1                     | Southern aspect of the roof. | Beneath a raised ridge tile; sixteen tiles in from the east aspect. | 19:16   |

### 3.4 Activity summary

Table 3 – Bat activity summary

| DATE     | SURVEY TYPE | SPECIES             | NOTES  |
|----------|-------------|---------------------|--|
| 29/09/23 | Emergence   | Common pipistrelle  | Moderate levels of bat activity were recorded to the north of site in and around the woodland.   |
|          |             | Soprano pipistrelle | Following the emergence at 19:17, the same soprano pipistrelle foraged back and forth to the south of the building for approximately 30 minutes. |
|          |             | <i>Myotis</i> sp.   | Bats were recorded from 19:50 along Wincham Brook at the northern site boundary.   |



## 4 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 Evaluation of results

The local area is predominantly suburban and consists of industrial and linked residential dwellings and gardens, intersected by watercourses and pasture land. Pockets of moderate to high quality foraging and commuting habitat is present to the north of site along Wincham Brook. The industrial and residential areas to the south of site provide lower quality habitat.

Eastwood House was assessed as having low potential to support roosting bats due to the presence of a low number of predominately external PRFs, such as gaps beneath ridge tiles. No evidence of roosting bats, such as droppings or feeding remains was found externally or internally during the building inspection.

Three species of bat were recorded during the bat presence / absence survey: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, and a *Myotis* species. Moderate levels of bat activity were recorded to the north of site in and around the woodland and Wincham Brook, which forms the northern site boundary. Activity was also observed frequently at the south elevation, where a single soprano pipistrelle was foraging back and forth between the buildings and woodland. Common and soprano pipistrelles accounted for the majority of the activity during the survey, with *Myotis* sp. recorded to a lesser extent.

A single soprano pipistrelle bat was recorded emerging from beneath a raised ridge tile on the south aspect of the roof. The roost is characterised further in section 4.2.

### 4.2 Roost assessment

Bat activity recorded during the survey suggests that the building is used on a casual basis as a day roost by a single soprano pipistrelle. The bat present is likely to be male, non-breeding female or juvenile. The building is unlikely to be used as a maternity roost.

The environmental conditions (humidity, temperature etc.) and roosting features within the building are of poor suitability to support hibernating bats. It is considered unlikely that bats are using the building for hibernation purposes.

### 4.3 Mitigation and compensation measures

#### 4.3.1 Bats

Due to the presence of roosting bats within the building, the development will need to be registered under Natural England's BMCL system prior to the works taking place. This can only be applied for once planning permission has been granted. Furthermore, a site can only be registered under the BMCL system provided the works only affect up to three 'common or widespread' bat species (as listed under each annex of the licence) and up to three 'low conservation status roosts' (feeding, day, night and transitional roosts). Moreover, it is a requirement of the licence that activity surveys have been conducted within the current and / or most recent optimal season and that a walk over survey / check must have been undertaken within the three months prior to submission of the site registration form to ensure conditions on the site have not changed. Natural England aim to process applications within 10 working days of receipt.



A full European protected species (EPS) mitigation licence is not considered necessary, due to the low number and common species of bats which will be affected by the development.

The measures below outline the mitigation and compensation measures required in order to safeguard protected species throughout the duration of development. They form a method statement which the contractors undertaking works on site must adhere to:

- The low numbers and common species of bats likely to be affected, as well as the proposed soft demolition techniques, negate the need for timing restrictions in relation to this development.
- When planning external lighting, consideration is to be given to the commuting and dispersal routes used by bats. External lighting is to be directed away from any tree lines and proposed bat box locations. See Appendix 5 –External lighting guidance for further information.
- The project ecologist will deliver a toolbox talk to the contractors responsible for the destructive works, prior to commencement. The talk will cover bat ecology, bats and the law, and what to do if bats or field signs of bats are found during the works.
- Prior to the destructive works, one Schwegler 2F (general purpose) bat box (or similar as agreed by the licenced ecologist if the specified model isn't available) will be fitted to a mature tree within the immediate vicinity of the site and within the developers ownership boundary, as specified by the onsite ecologist, and will be left *in situ* after the works have been completed on site. The bat box should be located on a southerly aspect, where it will receive the maximum amount of sunlight. It should be sited at a height of between three and six metres and away from any potential disturbance (including external lighting). Once bats have inhabited a bat box it may only be disturbed by a licensed bat ecologist
- If the site has not been registered within three months of the most recent survey visit, a walkover survey / check is required prior to the submission of the site registration form to ensure that the conditions of the site have not changed since the most recent survey.
- Prior to the start of works, the known roosting areas will be inspected by the registered consultant / ecologist. The ecologist will use an endoscope where necessary to examine inside the roost access point, in order to further confirm the presence or absence of bats and direct works accordingly.
- The known roost and other sensitive areas of the building are to be removed by hand, under the direct supervision of a licensed bat ecologist. In the event that a bat is discovered during the works, the bat will be captured by hand by the onsite ecologist and transported to the aforementioned pre-installed bat box. If the bat is harmed or emaciated, it will be taken to the nearest animal hospital or bat carer if deemed necessary by the onsite ecologist.
- UES will remain on call throughout the development in case any further advice is needed or bats are encountered. UES can be contacted directly on 01565 757788.

A further bat presence / absence survey is to be undertaken during the peak bat survey season (May to August inclusive) to inform the BMCL application. The survey will monitor the current activity on site and occupied roosting locations to direct works accordingly. Given the type of



roosting features present and the capacity for the building to only support roosts of low conservation significance, further bat presence / absence surveys to inform the planning application are not considered necessary. Further surveys would only confirm what we already know; that the site supports a roost of low conservation significance and given the type of roosting feature, is either used by single or low numbers of bats on an ad-hoc basis.



## 5 CONCLUSION

The local area is predominantly suburban and consists of industrial and linked residential dwellings and gardens, intersected by watercourses and pasture land. Pockets of moderate to high quality foraging and commuting habitat is present to the north of site along Wincham Brook. The industrial and residential areas to the south of site provide lower quality habitat. Alternative roosting opportunities are numerous within the linked residential and scattered agricultural buildings.

Eastwood House was assessed as having low potential to support roosting bats due to the presence of a low number of predominately external PRFs, such as gaps beneath ridge tiles. No evidence of roosting bats, such as droppings or feeding remains was found externally or internally during the building inspection.

A single soprano pipistrelle was recorded emerging from beneath a raised ridge tile on the south aspect of the roof. Bat activity recorded during the survey suggest that the building is used on a casual basis as a day roost by a single soprano pipistrelle bat. Due to the presence of roosting bats within the building, the development will need to be registered under Natural England's BMCL system prior to the works taking place. This can only be applied for once planning permission has been granted.



## 6 REFERENCES

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2013). *Competencies for Species Survey: Bats*.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 –Site plan





**Eastwood House, Northwich**

Site Plan



Survey boundary



Roost locations



Surveyor positions



Flight paths





## Appendix 2 –Aerial photographs





**Eastwood House, Northwich**

Close aerial photograph

— Survey boundary







**Eastwood House, Northwich**

Wide aerial photograph



Site location





## Appendix 3 –Photographs





Photograph 1 – northern aspect of the building (rear).



Photograph 2 – southern aspect of the building (front).



Photograph 3 – eastern aspect of the building.



Photograph 4 – west aspect of the building.





Photograph 5 – gaps due to missing mortar under the ridge tiles on the northern aspect.



Photograph 6 – gaps due to the missing mortar under the ridge tiles on the western aspect.



Photograph 7 – plastic box soffits are well maintained.



Photograph 8 – missing mortar at the apex of the dormer window on the rear elevation.



Photograph 9 – looking east to west across the loft space.



Photograph 10 – looking west to east across the loft space.

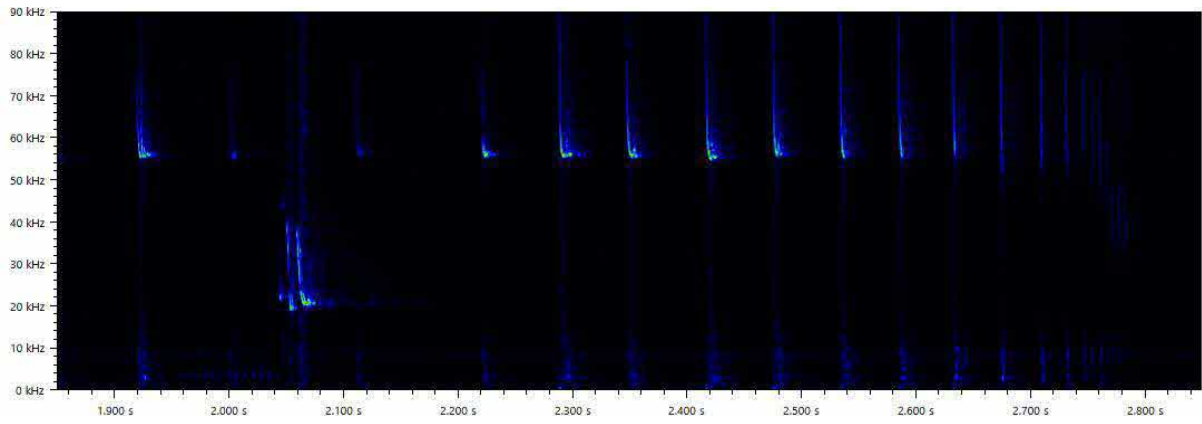




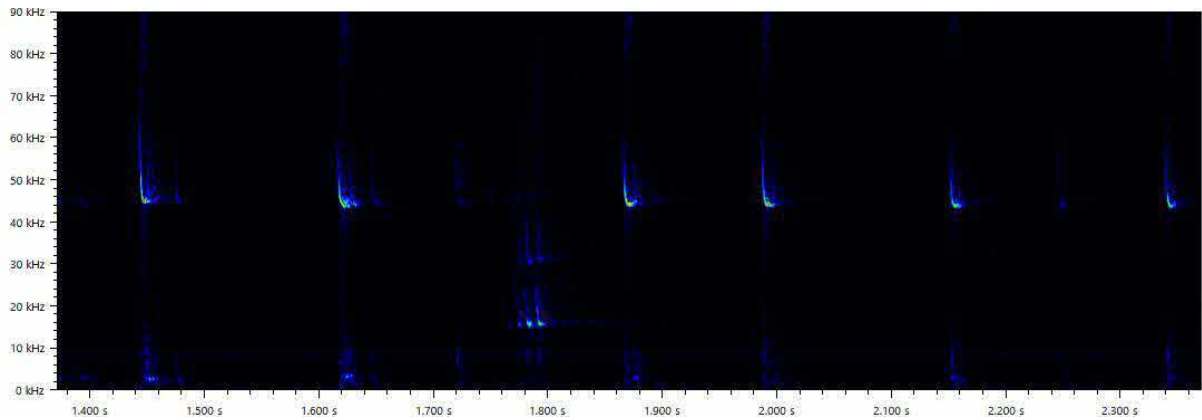
Photograph 11 – thick loft insulation and evidence of cluster flies.



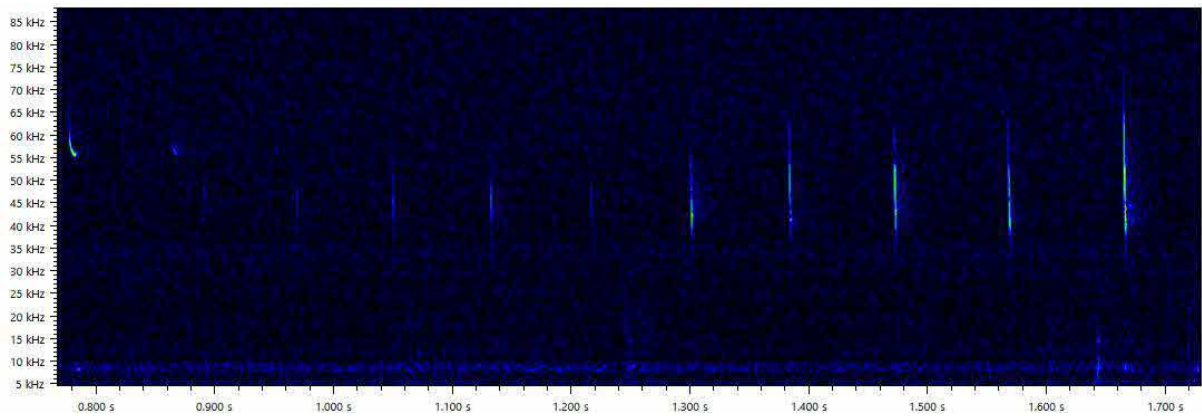
## Appendix 4 –Results



Sonogram 1 – soprano pipistrelle emergence from southern aspect of the roof at 19:17 on 29/09/23.



Sonogram 2 – common pipistrelle recorded at 19:26 on 29/09/23.



Sonogram 3 – *Myotis* sp. recorded at 19:50 on 29/09/23 foraging along Wincham Brook.



## Appendix 5 –External lighting guidance



# Lighting scheme in relation to bats

The two most important features of street and security lighting with respect to bats are:

1. The UV component. Low or zero UV installations are preferred to reduce attraction of insects to lighting and therefore to reduce the attraction of foraging bats to these areas.
2. Restriction of the area illuminated. Lighting must be shielded to maintain dark areas, particularly above lighting installations, and in many cases, land adjacent to the areas illuminated. The aim is to maintain dark commuting corridors for foraging and commuting bats. Bats avoid well lit areas, and these create barriers for flying bats between roosting and feeding areas.

UV characteristics:

## Low

- Low pressure Sodium Lamps (SOX) emit a minimal UV component.
- High pressure Sodium Lamps (SON) emit a small UV component.
- White SON, though low in UV, emit more than regular SON.

## High

- Metal Halide lamps emit more UV than SON lamps, but less than Mercury lamps
- Mercury lamps (MBF) emit a high UV component.
- Tungsten Halogen, if unfiltered, emit a high UV component
- Compact Fluorescent (CFL), if unfiltered, emit a high UV component.
- Variable
- Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) have a range of UV outputs. Variants are available with low or minimal UV output.
- Glass glazing and UV filtering lenses are recommended to reduce UV output.

## Street lighting

- Low-pressure sodium or high-pressure sodium must be used instead of mercury or metal halide lamps. LEDs must be specified as low UV. Tungsten halogen and CFL sources must have appropriate UV filtering to reduce UV to low levels.
- Lighting must be directed to where it is needed and light spillage avoided. Hoods must be used on each lamp to direct light and contain spillage. Light leakage into hedgerows and trees must be avoided.
- If possible, the times during which the lighting is on overnight must be limited to provide some dark periods. If the light is fitted with a timer this must be adjusted to reduce the amount of 'lit time' and provide dark periods.

## Security and domestic external lighting

The above recommendations concerning UV output and direction apply. In addition:

- Lighting should illuminate only ground floor areas. Light should not leak upwards to illuminate first floor and higher levels.
- Lamps of greater than 2000 lumens (150 W) must not be used.
- Movement or similar sensors must be used. They must be carefully installed and aimed, to reduce the amount of time a light is on each night.
- Light must illuminate only the immediate area required, by using as sharp a downward angle as possible. Light must not be directed at or close to bat roost access points or flight paths from the roost. A shield or hood can be used to control or restrict the area to be lit.
- Wide angle illumination must be avoided as this will be more disturbing to foraging and commuting bats as well as people and other wildlife.
- Lighting must not illuminate any bat bricks and boxes placed on buildings, trees or other nearby locations.



## Appendix 6 –Statutory and planning context

## Ecological assessments

Ecological assessments play an important part within the planning context; they include an initial assessment which highlights any specific interests of a site. From the initial site assessment, the surveyor assesses the suitability of habitats within the site to support protected species and makes recommendations for further survey works if required. The following paragraphs provide a brief interpretation of the legislative protection that is relevant to the findings of this report.

## Bats

In the United Kingdom, all species of bat and their roosts are afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the "Habitats Regulations"). The Wildlife and Countryside Act is the domestic implementation of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention) and was amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a bat
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (even if the bat is not present at the time)
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead bat, any part of a bat or anything derived from a bat

Under UK law, a bat roost is *any structure or place which any wild [bat] ... uses for shelter or protection*. As bats often reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time of the activity taking place.

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

If an activity is likely to result in any of the above offences, a licence can be applied for to derogate from the protection afforded. These licences must provide appropriate mitigation and are issued by Natural England.

A Natural England mitigation licence application requires a Mitigation Method Statement and, in many cases, a Reasoned Statement of Application. The Mitigation Method Statement contains details of the proposed mitigation works. The Reasoned Statement needs to provide a rational and reasoned justification as to why the proposed development meets the requirements of the Conservation (National Habitats & c.) regulations 1994, namely Regulations 44(2)(e), (f) or (g), and 44(3)(a).

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) provides guidance on the interpretation of the law in relation to the natural environment and development.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 lists the following bat species as species of principle importance under Section 41:

- Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*
- Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
- Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*
- Greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
- Lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

Section 40 requires every public body in the exercising of its functions 'have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity' (all biodiversity and not just section 41 species and habitats); therefore making these bats a material consideration in the planning process and requiring a detailed ecological bat survey before planning permission can be granted.

## Planning policy

National Planning Guidance is issued in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF). The most relevant section is 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Key relevant principles stated in 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment are;

- 174.** Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
  - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
  - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
  - 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;
  - e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
  - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 179.** To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity<sup>61</sup>; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation<sup>62</sup>; and
  - b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity
- 180.** When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
  - b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
  - c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons<sup>63</sup> and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
  - 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.