

Preliminary Visual Assessment for bats and breeding birds
8 Brook Street, Bampton, Devon
September 2023

A report by

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Natural England licence no: 2022-10537-CL17-BAT

Report details

Site address: 8 Brook Street, Bampton, Devon EX16 9LY
Grid reference: SS958222
Survey date: 28th September 2023
Surveyors: Amy Palmer BSc (Hons), AMRSB, Ecologist (Natural England licence no: 2022-10537-CL17-BAT)
Report date: 8th October 2023
Report author: Amy Palmer (Hons), AMRSB
Report checked by: Colin Hicks BSc (Hons), MCIEEM
Report Reference: WOR-4049

Declaration of compliance

BS 42020:2013

This study has been undertaken in accordance with British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity, Code of practice for planning and development.

Code of Professional Conduct

The information which we have prepared is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

Validity of survey data and report

The findings of this report are valid for 12 months from the date of survey. If work has not commenced within this period, an updated survey by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required.

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Non-technical summary

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete a preliminary visual assessment for bats and breeding birds of the building at 8 Brook Street, Bampton, Devon EX16 9LY. The building will be the subject of a planning application to replace the plastic roof of the conservatory to the rear of the property.

Prior to works commencing, a survey has been commissioned to ensure that the proposed works do not adversely affect bats and breeding birds. The survey will:

- Identify the past and/or current use of the site by bats and breeding birds;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development on bats and breeding birds;
- Provide a basis upon which to propose further survey work or mitigation, should they be affected by the development.

The survey was completed on 28th September 2023 with an air temperature of 16°C, force 1 wind, and 50% cloud cover.

Assessment for bats

No bats, or evidence of bats (such as droppings), were found associated with the structures surveyed. The structure has been assessed as having negligible suitability to support roosting bats. Works can proceed with negligible risk to bats and does not require a method statement for bats or a European Protected Species licence. It should be noted that in any building, individual bats could occasionally roost or move in at any time, and recommendations are made within Section 5.

Assessment for breeding birds

No evidence of breeding birds was found in areas where proposed works will take place. The proposed development can proceed with negligible risk to nesting birds.

Biodiversity enhancement

Simple biodiversity enhancement is recommended in section 6.

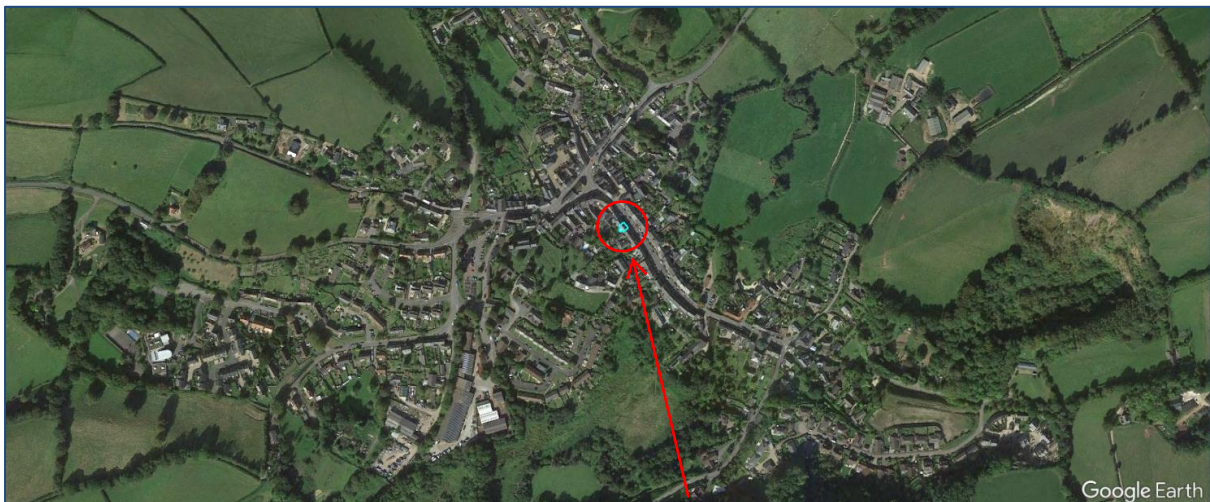
1. Introduction

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete a preliminary visual assessment for bats and breeding birds of the building at 8 Brook Street, Bampton, Devon EX16 9LY.

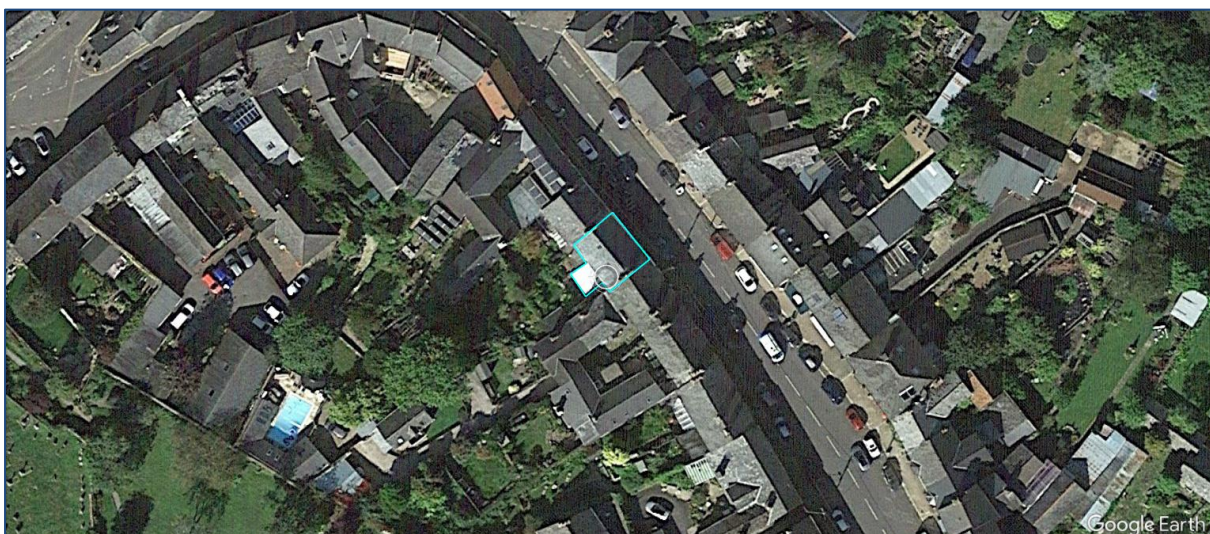
This survey has been prepared in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust’s “Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines” (Collins, 2023).

1.1. Site description

The site is located in the centre of Bampton, north-east Devon, approximately 9km north of Tiverton (Plan 1). Moderately spaced residential properties with garden plantings are to the north, west and south-east. To the south and south-east, beyond the residential area, are two areas of woodland approximately 350m from the site. Beyond this, the landscape is largely characterised by intensively managed agricultural fields and close-managed hedgerows. The surrounding countryside will be largely unlit at night and provides good quality foraging and commuting habitats for bats beyond the immediate residential area.



Plan 1. The location of the building surveyed.



Plan 2. The building surveyed at this site (blue line)

1.2. Proposed works

The building will be the subject of a planning application to replace the plastic roof of the conservatory to the rear of the property.

1.3. Survey aims

To ensure that the proposed development does not adversely affect bats and breeding birds, the survey will:

- Identify the past and/or current use of the site by bats and breeding birds;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development on bats and breeding birds;
- Provide a basis upon which to propose further survey work or mitigation, should they be affected by the development.

2. Methods

2.1. Bat roost assessment

All areas of the building were carefully examined internally and externally for signs of use by bats, with the aid of torches, by a suitable qualified and licenced ecologist. This included a search for bat droppings, feeding remains, urine stains and polished/scratched woodwork. A search was also made for individual bats, as well as potential access points and cavities capable of providing a roosting space for bats.

This survey method complies with guidelines produced by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2023).

The assessment was completed on 28th September 2023 with an air temperature of 16°C, force 1 wind, and 50% cloud cover.

As part of the assessment, it is required that the buildings are valued for their suitability to support roosting bats, irrelevant of any signs of roosting. This is due to the highly cryptic nature of bats, in particular those species that roost in crevice habitat associated with roof coverings, fascia, soffit, bargeboards, flashing, feather boarding and stonework.

Buildings are valued as follows (Collins et al, 2023):

- No suitability – No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices / suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).
- Negligible suitability - No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
- Low suitability - A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. 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 and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats).
- Moderate suitability – A structure 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.
- High suitability - A structure 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. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.

A data search was not considered appropriate due to the highly mobile nature of bats. It is assumed that all species of bat that are present in Devon could be active within the vicinity which includes Barbastelle, Serotine, Noctule, Lesser Horseshoe, Greater Horseshoe, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Nathusius Pipistrelle (very rare), Whiskered, Brandt's, Natterer's, Daubenton's, Brown Long-eared and possibly Grey Long-eared.

It is very unlikely when considering the location and structure being assessed that a data search would provide further meaningful information.

2.2. Breeding birds

The buildings and associated areas were searched for evidence of nesting bird species.

2.3. Surveyors

The survey was completed by Amy Palmer.

Amy Palmer has three years of experience carrying out ecology surveys for ecological consultancies including Western Ecology. She has 5 years of bat survey experience both with local bat groups and consultancies and holds a Level 1 Class Licence which permits the surveying of bats using artificial light.

3. Results

3.1. Bat roost description

The building surveyed is a listed, terraced dwelling. The building is stone built, with render to the rear elevation. Door and window frames are of timber construction. The main pitched roof has chimneys at either end, and is covered in slate tiles. Internally the loft of the main roof is vaulted and lined with a foil-foam insulation and boarding. Occasional gaps in association with the 1st floor wall top to the front of the building were identified. To the rear of the building, two small, single storey extensions with mono-pitched slate roofs are found, either side of the plastic roofed conservatory roof to be replaced. There are two, slightly raised tiles on the slate roofs. There were no bats, or signs that they have used the building in areas where proposed works will take place.



Exterior (front elevation)



Exterior (rear elevation)



Interior (loft space)



Interior (eave cupboard)



Tight fitting tiles with single raised tile



Holes at wall tops to front of building

3.2. Breeding birds

No evidence of breeding birds was found in areas where proposed works will take place.

4. Assessment

4.1. Survey constraints

The survey was completed at a suitable time for the inspection of buildings and structures for bat roosts (Collins, 2023), and areas to be searched had not been cleaned/swept prior to survey. All areas of these buildings were accessible, and a full and complete initial assessment was made.

It is the professional opinion of the surveying ecologist that this survey provides sufficient information in relation to bats and breeding birds to allow the decision-maker to determine the planning permission. Further survey work would not make any material difference to the information provided.

4.2. Assessment for bats

No bats, or evidence of bats (such as droppings), were found associated with the structures surveyed. The structure has been assessed as having negligible suitability to support roosting bats. Works can proceed with negligible risk to bats and does not require a method statement for bats or a European Protected Species licence.

4.3. Assessment for breeding birds

No evidence of breeding birds was found in areas where proposed works will take place. The proposed development can proceed with negligible risk to nesting birds.

4.4. Legislation

Bats

Bat species and their breeding or resting places (roosts) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. They are identified as European Protected Species. Under these laws it is an offence to:

- capture, kill, disturb or injure bats (on purpose or by not taking enough care);
- damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (even accidentally);
- obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places (on purpose or by not taking enough care); or
- possess, sell, control or transport live or dead bats, or parts of them.

Seven species of bat are listed as being of principal importance, in the Secretary of State's opinion, for the purposes of conserving biodiversity. Under section 41 (England) of the NERC Act (2006) there is a need for these species to be taken into consideration by a public body when performing any of its functions with a view to conserving biodiversity.

These are Barbastelle, Bechstein's, Noctule, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, Greater Horseshoe and Lesser Horseshoe and are the subject of National and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

Activities that can affect bats include (from GOV.UK):

- renovating, converting or demolishing a building
- cutting down or removing branches from a mature tree
- repairing or replacing a roof
- repointing brickwork
- insulating or converting a loft
- installing lighting in a roost, or outside if it lights up the entrance to the roost
- removing commuting habitats such as hedgerows, watercourses or woodland
- changing or removing their foraging areas
- using insecticide
- treating timber

Breeding birds

All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from being killed, injured or captured whilst their nests and eggs are protected from being damaged, destroyed or taken. Birds which are listed under Schedule 1 of the Act are given additional protection against disturbance.

Fifty-nine species of bird are listed as species “of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity”.

5. Recommendations and mitigation

5.1. Roosting bats

Works can proceed with negligible risk to bats and does not require a method statement for bats or a European Protected Species licence.

It should be noted that in any building, individual bats could occasionally roost or move in at any time, and we recommend the following approach:

- Prior to the start of works, all site staff will be briefed that bats can move into a building at any time and may be encountered during works.
- If bats are found unexpectedly during works, work should stop immediately and Natural England (0300 060 3900) or Western Ecology (0800 622 6828) be informed.
- Any bats found that are exposed and vulnerable should be protected from the elements and predators (particularly cats). You may need to contain the bat in a shoe box or similar sized container (with holes punched in the lid). You should not handle bats with bare hands.

5.2. Breeding birds

No evidence of breeding birds was found in areas where proposed works will take place. The proposed development can proceed with negligible risk to nesting birds.

6. Biodiversity enhancement

In line with the Environment Act 2021, the majority of Local Planning Authorities (LPA) are now requiring suitable enhancements for wildlife within minor developments, with the aim of securing net gain. Although applying a measurable net gain does not apply to permitted development, change of use, or alterations to buildings and housing extensions, the LPA will likely seek proportionate enhancements for wildlife from these developments. Depending upon the LPA's requirements, this might include bat box/brick/tubes, bird box/bricks and bee bricks. If structurally inappropriate to the design, the use of alternative, but equivalent, wildlife features is possible.

Creating new habitats, enhancing existing habitats or providing new wildlife features, can all contribute towards biodiversity enhancement, and helping to rebuild habitat networks in the wider area improves ecological resilience and adaptation to climate change.

Enhancements are additional to any measures necessary to deal with potential impacts on site, as they are an opportunity to provide new benefits for biodiversity as a consequence of the proposals being implemented.

For this development, we recommend (per residential unit):

- One bat box/brick/tube;
- One bird box/brick;
- One bee brick.

6.1. Bats

Bat box/brick/tubes could be fitted on a south or west facing aspect. Where practicable, on developments where only roof works are being carried out, enhancement could be a Schwegler 1FF bat box, a Beaumaris Woodstone Bat box (Figure 1), or similar. These boxes are designed to be installed on the external walls of buildings.

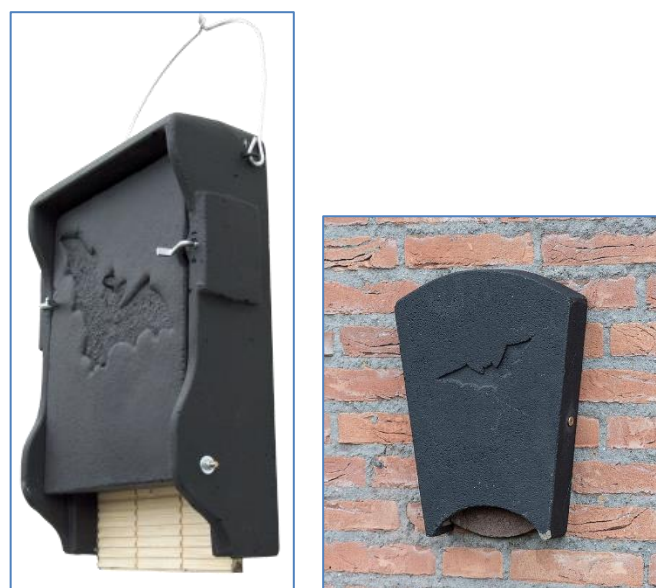


Figure 1. Schwegler 1FF bat box (left) and Beaumaris bat Box (right)

For new extensions or rebuilds, enhancement could comprise a Green & Blue Bat Block bat brick or similar (Figure 2). These boxes are designed to be recessed into the external walls of buildings and can be rendered over.



Figure 2. Green & Blue Bat Block bat brick

Where fitting enhancement to the building is not practicable, new roosting opportunities could be created for bats using a 2F Schwegler Bat Box (Figure 3). Bat Boxes should be secured to trees or untreated wooden posts (the base of the posts may be treated) at least 3 metres above the ground,



Figure 3. 2F Schwegler bat box.

6.2. Bird Boxes

New nesting opportunities could be provided for birds on the Site, through the provision of bird nesting boxes: this could include a Sparrow Terrace (Figure 4) fitted to the northern or eastern aspect of any new build. This terrace has been designed to help redress the balance of falling House Sparrow numbers. The current UK population of 6 million pairs is half what it was in 1980 and this is thought to be due to habitat destruction and lack of suitable nesting spaces. Sparrows are social birds and like to nest in company.

This House Sparrow Nest Box is manufactured from WoodStone - a mix of concrete and FSC wood fibres. This material is strong and highly insulating which helps to provide a thermally stable environment within the box. It also protects against damage from predators such as cats, woodpeckers and squirrels. It has two breeding chambers making it particularly suitable for house sparrows as they prefer to nest in colonies.

The House Sparrow Nest Box can be integrated into the masonry of a new build or fixed onto an external wall of a conversion using strong screws and wall plugs (not included). If possible, it should be positioned near to vegetation and at a minimum of 2m above ground (taken from NHBS website).



Figure 4. Sparrow Terrace

6.3. Invertebrates

Where practicable, an invertebrate brick (Figure 5) could be fitted 1 to 2 metres above ground level on the southern side of a build. These attract solitary bees, wasps and other invertebrates.



Figure 5. A bee brick

7. References

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (4th edition). The Bat Survey Trust, London. ISBN-978-1-7395126-0-6

Environmental Act 2021: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>