

Bat emergence survey  
Maerbrook, Maer Road, Exmouth, Devon  
August 2023

A report by

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(Natural England licence no: 2016-24281-CLS-CLS)

## Report details

Site address: Maerbrook, Maer Road, Exmouth, EX8 2DB  
Grid reference: SY012800  
Report date: 10<sup>th</sup> September 2023  
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Report no: WOR-3949

## 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 a European Protected Species Licence application has not been made within this period, updated surveys by a suitably qualified ecologist are likely to be required to support a licence application.

## Non-technical summary

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete a preliminary visual assessment for bats and breeding birds of Maerbrook, Maer Road, Exmouth, EX8 2DB. The building will be the subject of a planning application. The preliminary roost assessment found the building to have low suitability to support roosting bats.

A single precautionary bat emergence survey was carried out on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023 during which time no bats emerged from the building. It is reasonable to conclude that it is extremely unlikely that bats are roosting in association with this structure. Works can proceed with negligible risk to bats and does not require a method statement for bats or a European Protected Species licence.

No mitigation is required for bats. However, 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 of the report.

## Table of contents

1. Introduction .....	5
1.1. Background.....	5
1.2. Site description .....	5
1.3. Proposed works .....	6
1.4. Survey aims .....	6
2. Methods .....	7
2.1. Dusk emergence surveys.....	7
2.2. Desktop search .....	7
3. Results.....	9
3.1. Bat emergence survey .....	9
3.2. Summary of bat survey results, interpretation and evaluation .....	9
4. Assessment .....	10
4.1. Survey constraints.....	10
4.2. Assessment of potential impact on bats .....	10
4.3. Legislation.....	10
5. Recommendation and mitigation .....	12
5.1. Bats .....	12
References .....	13

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete a preliminary visual assessment for bats and breeding birds of Maerbrook, Maer Road, Exmouth, EX8 2DB. The preliminary roost assessment found the following:

“Occasional gaps are present in the roof tiles and soffit of the coach house. When viewed in the context of the surrounding habitat, the structure has been assessed as having low suitability to support roosting bats.”

A further survey was recommended. This report documents this further survey work and provides a full assessment of roosting bats. This report also provides an outline of the required mitigation to allow development associated with this structure to proceed in a lawful manner.

This survey has been prepared in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust’s “Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines” (Collins, 2016).

## 1.2. Site description

The site is situated in a small residential area, just to the south of Exmouth in Devon (Plan 1). To the north of the residential area are scattered trees and mature hedgerow providing linkage out to the wider landscape. The tree-lined Littleham Brook is 150 metres to the north of the site.

The surrounding semi-natural habitats are likely to be largely unlit at night, and provide good potential for foraging and commuting bats in the area.



Plan 1. The location of the building surveyed.



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

### 1.3. Proposed works

The building will be subject to a planning application.

### 1.4. Survey aims

The purpose of this survey is to determine, with confidence, if bats are present at the property, and if so, to provide evidence on which to base mitigation.

The survey will also determine if a European Protected Species licence will be required to allow the proposed development to proceed lawfully.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Dusk emergence surveys

These surveys consist of a sufficient number of experienced bat surveyors monitoring a built structure for bat activity.

The surveyors, including at least one licenced bat ecologist, are stationed around the building in such a way that any bat leaving or entering the structure is likely to be observed (Plan 3a). The survey normally begins 15 minutes before sunset and continues until at least 90 minutes after sunset.

In addition to surveyors, night vision aids (infrared capable camcorders - Sony FDR AX100 /700, HDR-SR12) are used in conjunction with 850nm infrared lighting rigs (Raytec variable beam IR illuminators). Full spectrum, recording bat detectors (Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro or Wildlife Acoustic Song Meter Mini Bat) are time synchronised with camera footage. Heterodyne bat detectors are also used to support full spectrum recordings. Post survey, camera footage is analysed by a suitably experienced bat surveyor.

This survey methodology complies with guidelines produced by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2016) and Interim Guidance Note: Use of night vision aids for bat emergence surveys and further comment on dawn surveys. (BCT, 2022).

Table 1. Emergence survey details

Date of each survey visit	Start and end times and time of sunset	Structure reference / location	Equipment used (include make of bat detectors and logging equipment)	Weather – (Include start and end temps, precipitation, Beaufort wind scale etc)	Comments (to include # of surveyors used for each visit):
09/08/2023	Sunset 20:45. Survey 20:30 to 22:15	Maerbrook	EMT2 Pro, Bat box	Dry, Calm, 100% cloud, start 14°C finish 12°C	2 Surveyors: Michael Sanders Yolande Knight

Table 2. Surveyor details

Michael Sanders, Natural England licence no: 2016-24281-CLS-CLS with 8 years of bat survey experience Yolande Knight PhD Natural England licence no: 2020-47431-CLS-CLS with 7 years of bat survey experience
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### 2.2. Desktop search

A biological records 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.

If a full European Protected Species licence is required for this site, a biological records search for bats will be completed with the local records centre to support the licence application.



## 3. Results

### 3.1. Bat emergence survey

During the survey no bats emerged from the structure. A pre survey check of the interior of the structure found no evidence of bats.

Weather conditions were good for bat activity and bats were present in the vicinity of the site. The first bat call recorded was a common pipistrelle at 20:54 passing from the west of the site. Occasional common pipistrelle passes were recorded until the end of the survey.

### 3.2. Summary of bat survey results, interpretation and evaluation

No bats emerged from the building during the dusk emergence survey. It is reasonable to conclude that bats are unlikely to be roosting in association with this structure.

## 4. Assessment

### 4.1. Survey constraints

The initial assessment and emergence survey were completed at an optimal time for such surveys (Collins, 2016).

All areas of the building could be readily observed during this emergence survey and all equipment functioned correctly for the period of the survey.

It is the professional opinion of the surveying ecologist that the initial bat assessment in combination with the bat emergence survey provides sufficient information in relation to bats 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 of potential impact on bats

It is extremely unlikely that bats are roosting in association with this structure. 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. 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 (as amended). 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 seven bat species 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 (from GOV.UK)

Activities that can affect bats include:

- 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

## 5. Recommendation and mitigation

### 5.1. Bats

No mitigation is required for 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) 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.

## References

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). The Bat Survey Trust, London. ISBN-13 978-1-872745-96-1

BCT (2022). Interim Guidance Note: Use of night vision aids for bat emergence surveys and further comment on dawn surveys. (May 2022). <https://cdn.bats.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Interim-guidance-note-on-NVAs-May-2022-FINAL.pdf?v=1653399882>