




Preliminary Bat Roost Inspection Report
Failand Hill Farm
Wandering Ewe
October 2023
IES/2023/126/Version 1.0

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QUALITY ASSURANCE

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Purpose

This report identifies the likelihood of use of the site by bats and provides an assessment of the likely importance of the site for this group. It is designed to inform the development and identifies any further survey work required to allow the development to proceed.

Methodology

An external inspection was carried out in accordance with the methodology outlined in the Bat Conservation Trust's manual *Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines (2023)*. A full internal inspection could not be completed due to health and safety concerns.

Key Issues

The building has negligible suitability to support roosting bats.

A breeding bird check for active nests will be required only if suitable habitat is to be removed between March and August.

Legal obligations

All bats are protected under the Habitats Regulations 2017, and under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and it is an offence to kill, disturb or injure them, or to damage or destroy their breeding or resting places. It is also an offence to obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places.

Conclusions

The desk study and survey work identified the site as being of negligible suitability to support roosting bats.

No further surveys are required in order to determine presence or likely absence of use by bats for the purposes of determining a planning application.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 IES Consulting were instructed by Wandering Ewe to undertake a bat inspection survey at Failand Hill Farm, Failand, North Somerset, BS8 3TY and centred on Grid Reference ST511727. A site location plan can be seen in Figure 1.

1.1.2 The aim of this survey was to determine the use of the site by bats, to determine the existence and location of any valuable areas for bats and to identify the presence or likely absence of bats on the site.

1.1.3 The purpose of this report is to:

- § Identify the use/likely use of the site by bats;
- § Inform masterplanning to allow significant ecological effects to be avoided/minimised wherever possible;
- § Recommend general bat mitigation/compensation measures if required; and
- § Assess what further survey work - if any - is required.

1.1.4 This report was authored by Daisy-Mae Bradley-White (BSc) who has a year of experience in ecological surveying, including bat survey work and Tilly Tilbrook (MSc CEcol MCIEEM) who has over 22 years' experience of ecological surveying.

1.2 Site Description

1.2.1 The site is comprised of a barn building, surrounded by countryside. A woodland is located within 100m to the west and 600m to the east.

1.3 Development Proposals

1.3.1 It is proposed to convert the eastern end of the barn into a residential dwelling. The remainder of the barn will be retained for the current usage.

2 PLANNING POLICY, LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

2.1 Planning Policy

2.1.1 A review of planning policy was undertaken to inform this report, and this is summarised below. Full details of the planning policy relevant to the site can be found in Appendix A.

National Policy

§ National Planning Policy Framework (September 2023) - this document is a material consideration in planning decisions, and states that planning policies and decisions should provide net gains for biodiversity.

Local Policy

§ The North Somerset Local Plan - Policy CS4 seeks to ensure that new development is designed to maximise benefits to biodiversity.

§ The North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC Supplementary Planning Document (adopted January 2018) covers guidance for development with respect to the bat populations which form the SAC.

2.2 Legislation

2.2.1 The following legislation has been taken into account when preparing this report, and full details are given in Appendix A.

§ The Environment Act 2021 - this provides clear statutory targets for recovery in four priority areas: air quality; biodiversity; water and waste. It includes a target to reverse the decline in species abundance by 2030, and provides a legal framework for mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain on development sites, which will come into force in 2023.

§ The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) - this provides protection for European Protected Species and European Protected Sites.

§ The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 - this extends the duties of public bodies in relation to biodiversity. It establishes the Section 41 species and habitats of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity, which need to be taken into account by a public body when performing any of its functions.

- § The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 - this act places a duty on Government departments and the National Assembly for Wales to have regard for the conservation of biodiversity, and to maintain lists of species and habitats for which conservation steps should be taken or promoted, in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity. It strengthens the legal protection for species named on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and creates a new offence of reckless disturbance.
- § The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 - this act provides legal protection for wild birds, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, plants, reptiles and other amphibians and other animals, and makes it a criminal offence to kill, injure or take those species listed in the act, and to damage, obstruct or destroy their resting places, or disturb them in their resting places.

2.3 Guidance

2.3.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the following guidelines:

- § CIEEM Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing.
- § Bat Conservation Trust Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines.
- § Biodiversity Net Gain - Good Practice Principles for Development.
- § Biodiversity Net Gain - Good Practice Principles for Development Part A: A practical guide & Part B: Case Studies.
- § BS42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 The surveys were carried out on the site following the methodology outlined in the Bat Conservation Trust's manual *Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines (2023)*. Weather conditions were recorded using an Extech Mini Thermoanemometer to determine wind speed and temperature. Appendix B gives any notes and limitations to the survey work.

3.1.2 The entire site was included in the survey, and the desk study included a wider area as described in 3.2 below.

3.2 Desk Study

3.2.1 The purpose of the desk study is to review information available in the public domain. The NBN Atlas provides some species records on a creative commons licence which allows for them to be used for commercial purposes. The site and an area of 1km surrounding the site was searched for records of bats.

3.2.2 Data was obtained from the following sources on 6th October 2023:

§ NBN Atlas.

§ MAGIC

3.3 Field Survey

3.3.1 The field survey was carried out on 2nd October 2023. Internal and external inspections can be carried out year round.¹ The extent of the survey area and results of the survey can be seen on Figure 2.

3.3.2 The field survey was carried out by Tilly Tilbrook (MSc CEcol MCIEEM) who has over 22 years' experience of ecological surveying.

3.3.3 The weather conditions were 16°C with overcast cloud cover and wind between 0-1 on the Beaufort scale.

3.3.4 An internal and external inspection of the building was undertaken using a ladder, torches and close focusing binoculars to inspect the roof, eaves and any ledges on the buildings. Where appropriate, a video endoscope, and a FLIR C2 thermal imaging camera were also used.

3.3.5 Evidence of bat activity and the potential for the building to support a bat roost was searched for during the inspection survey. Any suitable roosting, foraging and commuting habitat was also recorded during the survey.

¹ Table 2.2, page 20, BCT *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines* 4th Edition 2023.

3.3.6 Evidence of bat activity is usually detected by the following signs:

- § bat droppings (these will accumulate under an established roost);
- § insect wings (from feeding);
- § oil (from fur) and urine stains;
- § scratch marks;
- § holes, apertures and other opportunities for bats to roost; and
- § actual sightings (including corpses).

3.4 Limitations and Deviation from Guidance

3.4.1 No records centre data search was undertaken due to the nature of the construction of the building. Additionally, the surveyor has worked in the area for 20 years and has excellent knowledge of the bat activity in the local area.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Desk Study

4.1.1 The data available on the meta-databases varies, and should not be considered to be an exhaustive list of species. The absence of data is not evidence of the absence of a particular species or habitat. Both the NBN and MAGIC were accessed on 6th October 2023.

4.1.2 Table 2 below gives details of any European protected species licence applications recorded within 1km of the site in the last ten years.

Table 2: Summary of European Protected Species licenses

License Case Reference	Species	Start Date	End Date
2017-29817-EPS-MIT	Lesser Horseshoe	12/07/2017	31/08/2028

4.1.3 A search of NBN Atlas found no records of bat species recorded within 1km of the site in the past 10 years.

4.2 Internal and External Building Inspection

4.2.1 This section should be read in conjunction with Figure 2, which shows the layout of the site and the results of the field survey.

4.2.2 The site is comprised of a barn building, surrounded by countryside. A woodland is located within 100m to the west and 600m to the east.

Internal and External Building Inspection

4.2.3 The walls are made of breeze block and stone, with steel frames and wooden cladding (Plates 1 & 4). The walls are in excellent condition, with no visible gaps or access points, including in the soffit boxes and behind the wooden cladding which is fitted tightly to the walls (Plate 3). There are no windows in the walls. The roof is made of corrugated metal and is insulated. The roof has clear roof lights, providing plenty of light inside (Plate 2). The northern elevation is a stone wall which forms the retaining wall for the kitchen garden to the north. This is in excellent condition with no gaps or missing mortar, and no suitable access points for bats (Plate 5). There is a small mezzanine area which is a storage room. Again this is very light and has no suitable features for roosting bats.

4.2.4 The building is predominantly used for storage. The building is set within a rural hamlet and is next to medium sized fields. The location is well connected to the surrounding countryside, with plenty of dark corridors providing commuting and foraging routes for bats.



Plate 1: External view of southern elevation showing the corrugated metal roof



Plate 2: Internal view of barn



Plate 3: Indicative image of cladding showing lack of gaps and good condition of soffit boxes



Plate 4: Eastern elevation showing no suitable features for bats



Plate 5: Northern elevation stone wall in good repair with no suitable features for bats

Assessment of Suitability

4.2.5 No evidence of bats using the building was found at the time of the inspection. The building is considered to be of negligible suitability to support roosting bats, in accordance with the BCT guidelines.² Although the surrounding habitats are well linked to the wider countryside, there are no access points which could provide roosting opportunities for bats and the building is well lit inside.

² Table 4.1, page 44, BCT Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition 2023.

5 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Evaluation

5.1.1 No evidence of bats using the building was found at the time of the inspection. The building is considered to be of negligible suitability to support roosting bats.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 No further surveys are required in order to determine presence or likely absence of use by bats for the purposes of determining a planning application.

5.2.2 A breeding bird check for active nests will be required only if suitable habitat is to be removed between March and August. No evidence of nesting birds was found at the time of survey.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1.1 The desk study and survey work have identified the site as being negligible suitability to support roosting bats. No further surveys are required in order to determine presence or likely absence of use by bats.

6.1.2 A breeding bird check for active nests will be required only if suitable habitat is to be removed between March and August.

6.1.3 The baseline conditions described in this report are true for the time at which the survey was undertaken. If no works are undertaken within the next year, then an update survey may need to be undertaken to ensure the baseline conditions described are accurate.

IES Consulting Ltd 2023.

7 REFERENCES

Guidance Documents - General

BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of Practice for Planning and Development. British Standards Institution.

CIEEM, CIRIA, IEAM (2016) Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development.

CIEEM (2017) Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIRIA (2019) Biodiversity Net Gain. Good Practice Principles for Development A Practical Guide.

Guidance Documents - Habitats and Species

Bat Conservation Trust (2018) Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK.

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition). Bat Conservation Trust, London.

English Nature (2023) Bat Mitigation Guidelines.

JNCC (2004) Bat Workers' Manual.

Legislation and Policy

HMSO The Environment Act 2021.

HMSO The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

HMSO The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

HMSO The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

HMSO The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

MHCLG (2019) National Planning Policy Framework.

The North Somerset Local Plan.

The North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC Supplementary Planning Document.

FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION

Figure 1: Site Location



Key:

 Site Boundary

0 100 200 m



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Client	Wandering Ewe		
Date	Oct 23	Scale	1:8,000
Drawn	MS	Job #	2023/126

FIGURE 2: PRI SURVEY

Figure 2: PRI Survey

Key:

 Site Boundary

The roof is made of corrugated metal and is insulated. The roof has clear roof lights, providing plenty of light inside.

The walls are made of breeze block and stone, with steel frames and wooden cladding. The walls are in excellent condition, with no visible gaps or access points. There are no windows in the walls.

The building is predominantly used for storage. The building is set within a rural hamlet and is next to medium sized fields. The location is well connected to the surrounding countryside, with plenty of dark corridors providing commuting and foraging routes for bats.



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APPENDIX A: POLICY AND LEGISLATION

POLICY

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (September 2023) - this document is a material consideration in planning decisions, and states that planning policies and decisions should provide net gains for biodiversity. The overarching environmental objective is to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy. Paragraph 170 d) states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

Local Policy

The following policies are applicable to the site:

North Somerset Core Strategy Policy CS4: Nature Conservation

North Somerset contains outstanding wildlife habitats and species. These include limestone grasslands, traditional orchards, wetlands, rhynes, commons, hedgerows, ancient woodlands and the Severn Estuary. Key species include rare horseshoe bats, otters, wildfowl and wading birds, slow-worms and water voles.

The biodiversity of North Somerset will be maintained and enhanced by:

- 1) seeking to meet local and national Biodiversity Action Plan targets taking account of climate change and the need for habitats and species to adapt to it;
- 2) seeking to ensure that new development is designed to maximise benefits to biodiversity, incorporating, safeguarding and enhancing natural habitats and features and adding to them where possible, particularly networks of habitats. A net loss of biodiversity interest should be avoided, and a net gain achieved where possible.
- 3) seeking to protect, connect and enhance important habitats, particularly designated sites, ancient woodlands and veteran trees;
- 4) promoting the enhancement of existing and provision of new green infrastructure of value to wildlife;
- 5) promoting native tree planting and well targeted woodland creation, and encouraging retention of trees, with a view to enhancing biodiversity.

The North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC Supplementary Planning Document

Technical Guidance

Introduction

The North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC is designated under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, which is transposed into UK law under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) ('Habitat Regulations'). This means that the populations of bats supported by this site are of international importance and therefore afforded high levels of protection, placing significant legal duties on decision-makers to prevent damage to bat roosts, feeding areas and the routes used by bats to travel between these locations.

LEGISLATION

General

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

This transposes the EU Habitats Directive into UK law, and provides protection for European Protected Species and European Protected Sites.

All bat species are covered under Schedule 2 (animals) of this legislation, and are known as European Protected Species.

You need a mitigation licence if your work will have impacts on European protected species that would otherwise be illegal, such as:

- § capturing, killing, disturbing or injuring them (on purpose or by not taking enough care)
- § damaging or destroying their breeding or resting places (even accidentally)
- § obstructing access to their resting or sheltering places (on purpose or by not taking enough care)

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

This act established Natural England, and extended the duties of public bodies in relation to biodiversity by amending the CROW Act 2000 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It established the Section 41 species and habitats of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity, which need to be taken into account by a public body when performing any of its functions. There are currently 7 bat species of principle importance:

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| § Barbastelle | § Soprano pipistrelle | § Lesser horseshoe |
| § Bechstein's | § Brown long-eared | |
| § Noctule | § Greater horseshoe | |

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

This act places a duty on Government departments and the National Assembly for Wales to have regard for the conservation of biodiversity, and to maintain lists of species and habitats for which conservation steps should be taken or promoted (those these lists have been superseded by the S41 lists of the NERC Act 2006), in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity. It amends the SSSI provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 by providing increased power for their protection and management. It strengthens the legal protection for species named on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, including changing the maximum penalty to a term of imprisonment rather than a fine, and creates a new offence of reckless disturbance. This means that if a person takes an unacceptable risk, or fails to notice an obvious risk, they will be liable.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

This act provides legal protection for wild birds, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, plants, reptiles and other amphibians and other animals, and makes it a criminal offence to kill, injure or take those species listed in the act, and to damage, obstruct or destroy their resting places, or disturb them in their resting places.

Under Schedule 5 of the Act, all species of bat (Chiroptera spp.) and their place of rest or shelter more generally known as 'roosts' are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This makes it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts. Under the law, a roost in any structure or place used for rest or shelter is protected. As bats tend to reuse roosts, the roost is fully protected whether the bats are present or not.

APPENDIX B: NOTES AND LIMITATIONS

IES Consulting staff and their sub-consultants have endeavoured to identify the presence of protected species wherever possible on site, where this falls within the agreed scope of works.

Up to date standard methodologies have been used, which are accepted by Natural England (previously English Nature) and other statutory conservation bodies. No responsibility will be accepted where these methodologies fail to identify all species on site. IES cannot take responsibility where Government, national bodies or industry subsequently modify standards.

The results of the survey and assessment work undertaken by IES Consulting were representative at the time of surveying.

IES Consulting have advised on the optimum survey season for a particular habitat/species prior to undertaking the survey work. However, IES Consulting cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy of surveys undertaken outside this period.

IES Consulting cannot accept responsibility for data collected from third parties.