

UPDATE BAT, BIRD & NEWT ASSESSMENT 2023

**STABLES AT PUMP LANE
LONG NEWNTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

CTM WILDLIFE

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Executive summary	4.2	Setting & plot
	4.3	Stables
1 Introduction	4.4	Bats
	4.5	Birds
2 Objectives/Scope	4.6	Newts
3 Methodology	5	Conclusions
3.1 Personnel	5.1	Proposed works
3.2 Historical information	5.2	Bats
3.3 Day survey	5.3	Birds
3.4 Constraints	5.3	Newts
4 Results		Appendix 1: Bat legislation
4.1 Pre-existing information		

<u>Version</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	To inform the planning application	20 th December 2023
2	Updated plans	21 st December 2023

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This report assesses the ecological impact of the proposed work based on wildlife legislation, policy and good practice. It is an independent assessment and not a statement of support or otherwise to the proposal for the site.

Disclaimer: While all reasonable effort has been made to ensure that the following information is correct and up to date it should not be relied upon as a definitive guide to wildlife and wildlife law. The exact requirements and habits of wildlife can vary and not be fully understood. Surveys and assessments can be restricted snap shots in time and space, and based on the commissioned work. Any conclusions and recommendations are made here in good faith. Also, the implementation of law can vary. Those needing to limit impacts and their risk should consult the original legislation and/or a lawyer conversant with wildlife law. No responsibility is accepted to any third party for the whole or part of the contents of this report.

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STABLES AT PUMP LANE LONG NEWNTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Proposal

- To demolish the stables and build a house (retaining some brick sheds).

Surveys

- A day-time search survey and assessment was undertaken updating a similar survey in 2019.

Bats

- A bat was located in a crevice between a rafter and wall on the exterior of the building.
- A characterisation survey will be required to confirm the species, type of roost and suitable mitigation.

Birds

- Birds have nested in the stables in the past – standard measures to avoid harm to nesting birds and guidance on providing bird nesting boxes are given.

Great crested newts

- Great crested newts are currently not a material consideration, but they do occur in the surrounding countryside – as a precaution it is recommended that the ground vegetation on the plot is kept cut until the start of the proposed works.

1 INTRODUCTION

The surveyed plot is some small stables in a field off Pump Lane in the village of Long Newnton.

Planning permission was granted in 2019 to convert the stables into a dwelling (19/03761/FUL).

The approved plans were changed in 2022 (22/00731/FUL & 22/02138/FUL).

It is understood that the owner proposes to:

- *Renew the planning permission with a fresh planning application for the demolition of the stables and building of a house.*

A bat and bird daytime survey was undertaken for the planning application in 2019¹. Evidence of nesting birds but not bats were found at that time.

It is understood that the Local Planning Authority has requested an update of that survey and to also consider great crested newts.

2 OBJECTIVES/SCOPE

- *To assess the current status of bats & birds at the building & consider any risk to great crested newts*
- *To determine any implications to the proposal.*

Figure 1. Location – grid reference ST 9115 9201



¹ AD Ecology. 2019. Protected Species Survey. Stables, The Priory, long Newnton, Gloucestershire

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Personnel

The survey was by Colin Menendez BSc (Hons) MCIEEM CEnv. Colin has 30+ years' experience as a professional ecologist and 20+ years' experience carrying out development-related bat surveys. His Natural England licences include a Class 2 Bat Survey Licence, Bat Low Impact Class Licence, Barn Owl Survey Class Licence and Class 1 Great Crested Newt Survey Licence.

3.2 Historic information

The protected species survey report in 2019 by AD Ecology was referred to.

3.3 Day survey

A standard day-time search survey was undertaken on 9th November 2023.

This was a systematic search of the exterior and interior of the building for bats and signs of bats. Signs would include bat droppings, urine drops and feeding remains for example. Equipment: high-powered torch, close-focusing binoculars, ladder & endoscope. Conditions: showers, patchy - full cloud, gentle - moderate breeze & cool 9 °C.

The building was also checked for old bird nests and signs of owls.

Maps were referred to locate local ponds and the plot assessed for its suitability for great crested newts – surveying ponds was outside the scope of this survey.

3.4 Constraints

The inspection of structures as bat roosts can be problematic. Roosting places can be unseen and bats can roost in crevices with no or few outward signs of their presence.

The survey was in late autumn when animals may not be present, active or evident.

Survey by an experienced licensed ecologist helps reduce constraints.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Pre-existing information

The previous survey in July 2019 found:

- No bats and no signs of bats, and it was concluded that the building had a negligible potential for roosting bats &
- Evidence of previous nesting pigeon and swallow (one old nest) within the stables.

4.2 Setting & plot

The plot is the stables with a concrete hardstanding and grassy gravel to the front. It is in the edge of a grass field on Pump Lane off the busy Tetbury – Malmesbury road. Though not part of the survey and November, the field looked likely to be improved grassland and there were several mature trees in it.

The surrounding land is the small dispersed village within agricultural land with a mix of mainly arable and improved pasture. In the vicinity of the plot there are groups and lines of trees (including along the lane) and then the land opens out to the farmland. There is a sizable wood 560 m to the south (Figure 1).

The plot is not a ‘priority habitat’ as defined in the Natural England and the Commission for Rural Communities Act 2006 and no invasive non-native plants were noted.

Figure 2 Setting (Google Earth)



Photo 1 Adjacent field / habitat



Photo 2 Adjacent lane / habitat



4.3 Stables

The stables are an L-shaped row of single-storey stalls and storerooms with an open lean-to at one end. The walls are a mix of brick, blockwork, stone and horizontal weatherboards. The roofs are twin-pitched and capped with slates over sarking boards with a narrow gap between. The building is described in detail in the original 2019 report – refer to that report for more information.

The building looked unchanged since 2019 except the gravel had started to vegetate. The building was in relatively good condition, doors and windows closed, and the interior disused and empty.

Photo 3 Stables (Nov 2023)



Photo 4 Stables (Nov 2023)



Photo 5 Interior (Nov 2023)



Photo 6 Interior (Nov 2023)



Photo 7 Roof (Nov 2023)



4.4 Bats

No signs of bats were found inside the building but there was **a bat located in a crevice on the underside of the lean-to**. The bat was squeezed between a sawn timber rafter and the stone wall of the adjacent store room. The bat was too deeply embedded and angled to be certain what species it was. It was a small vesper bat, possibly a pipistrelle, but this is not certain. There were no accessible droppings to collect and identify the species by DNA analysis (there were inaccessible droppings within the crevice).

Figure 3 Location of bat (highlighted in yellow)

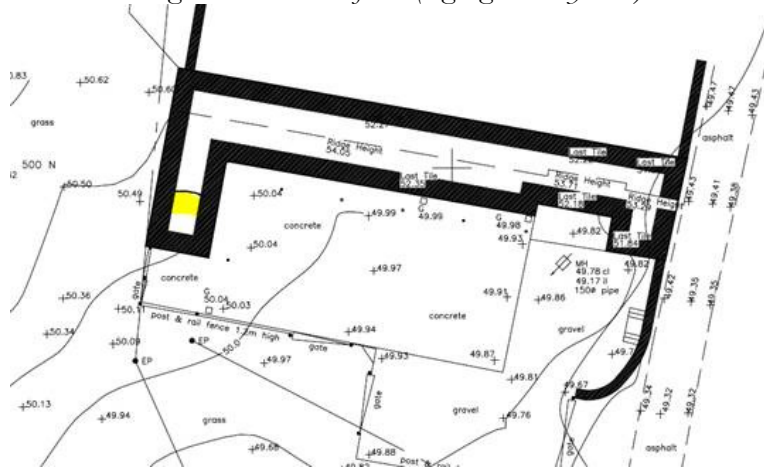
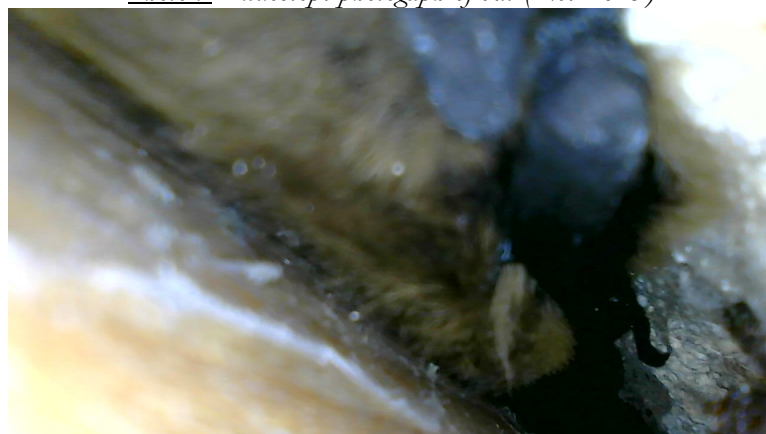


Photo 8 Location of bat (Nov 2023)



Photo 9 Endoscope photograph of bat (Nov 2023)



4.5 Birds

The following **former / old bird nests were found inside the building**: (1) a medium-sized twig nest, (2) a medium-sized grass nest, (3) grass nesting material within the underside of the roof ridge (typical of house sparrows) & (4) a swallow nest. There was a rotten dead bird on the floor (blackbird?).

4.6 Great crested newts

The small plot is building, hardstanding and sparsely vegetated gravel. It has a negligible potential to support a resident population of great crested newts even if they occur close by.

There were no ponds on the plot and none seen on the surrounding land. Two ponds were located on maps within 500 m: (1) one 300 m to the east a couple of fields away & (2) one 500 m to the north next to the church.

Great crested newts are known to occur in the locality. The surveyor has previously found them: (1) 1.3 km to the east & (2) 2.6 km to the south-west.

The ecologist's assessment is that **great crested newts are not a material consideration**. For the avoidance of doubt, Natural England's rapid risk assessment has been applied to the plot, on the basis that individual newts are unlikely to occur on the plot and be disturbed, obstructed or harmed, but that the land will be changed. The result is "Green: Offence Highly Unlikely"

Figure 4 Rapid great crested newt risk assessment

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged	0.001
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
		Maximum: 0.001
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

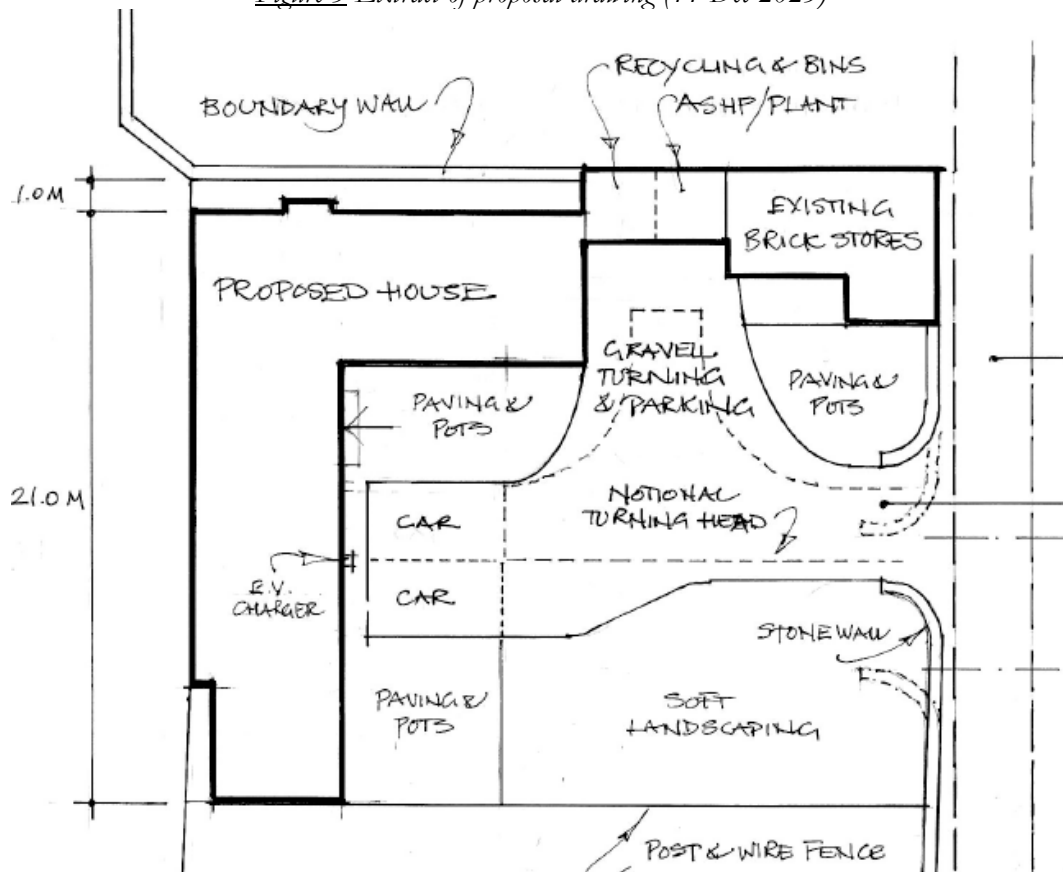
4. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Proposed works

The owner proposes to:

- Renew the planning permission with a fresh planning application for the demolition of the stables and building of a two-storey dwelling, with the retention of the brick store rooms.

Figure 3 Extract of proposal drawing (11 Dec 2023)



5.2 Bats

5.2.1 Roosts

- A roosting bat was found using the stables.

5.2.2 Legal considerations

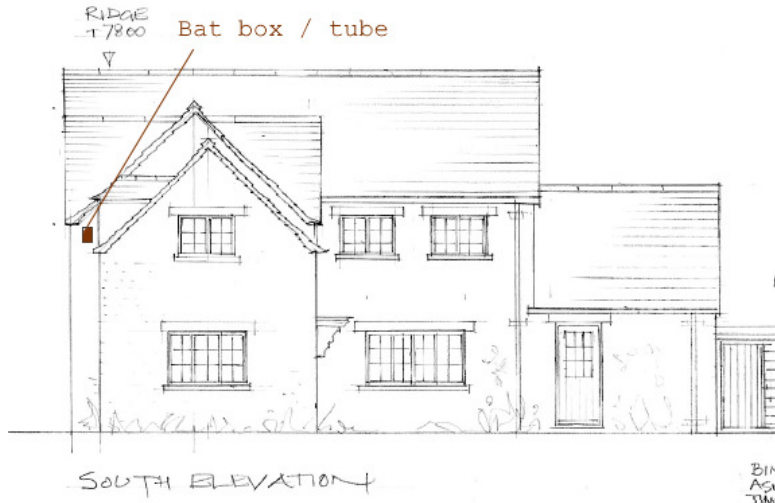
All species of British bat and their roosts are protected by law (Appendix 1).

5.2.3 Impact

- The proposal will destroy the bat roost.

4.6.1 Mitigation

It is not possible to fully assess the impact of the proposal on bat populations and advise on proportionate mitigation without knowing the type of bat and roost. In the interim, on the basis that the existing roost / bat is an external crevice-roosting bat in a small gap, it is considered likely that the roost is a day and / or transitional roost for example, and that as a minimum bat boxes / tubes are likely to be required at the external walls of the house in an unlit, warm location with direct flying access to the countryside. By way of example:



5.2.4 Further survey

- In accordance with standard survey guidelines used by the statutory authorities **further bat survey will be required** both for the assessment of the planning application and for any licence application to enable the destruction of the bat roost if permitted.

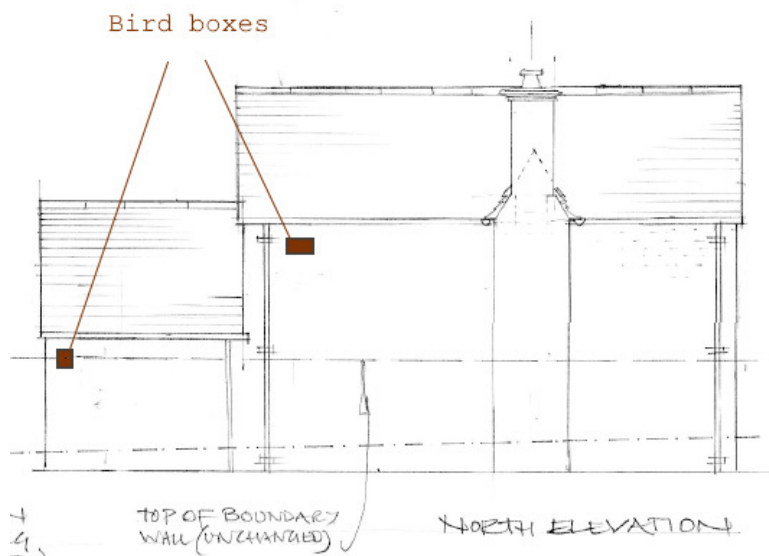
Roost characterisation surveys to confirm the species, size and type of roost are required. With the existing information it is likely that two to three night-time bat surveys will be required within May to September with the optimum time being May to August. In addition to identifying the species as a minimum the survey work will be to identify (rule out) any midsummer maternity roost. A January / February hibernation survey visit is also advisable.

5.3 Birds

Birds have nested in the building in the past.

It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to damage or destroy the nests of breeding birds.

- As a standard precaution – **if the start of the proposed work is during the nesting season (which is typically March – August) – check for nests first and delay / change the work if an occupied nest is found.**
- **Provision of nest boxes for house sparrows and garden birds is suggested** as compensation / enhancement. Vivara Pro WoodStone House Sparrow Nest Box and Vivara Pro Build-In Half Open Nest Box or Build-in Open Nest Box for example. Fit out-of-the-sun



4.7 Great crested newts

- Great crested newts are assessed to not be a material consideration – though as a precaution it is advised to keep the plot cut and to not allow the ground vegetation to become long and thatched ahead of the proposed works.

Appendix 1.

- Brief summary of relevant legislation in the UK -

Bats

There is considerable evidence that all species of bat in Britain have declined significantly this century, particularly since the 1960s. The reasons for the decline include: loss of suitable roost sites, loss of feeding habitat, reduced availability of insect prey through pesticide use and mortality resulting from the use of highly toxic timber treatment chemicals in house roosts.

All species of British bat are listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. As well as giving full protection from intentional and deliberate killing, injuring, disturbing and taking of bats, the cited legislation protects bat breeding and resting places (roosts) from damage, destruction and preventing access to such places. The legislation regarding roosts applies irrespective of whether the bats are present or not. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 added the word “reckless” to existing protection against “intentional and deliberate” actions.

The law requires that reasonable effort be made to ensure that any actions, plans or projects do not detrimentally affect bats or their roosts. Proposed developments that affect bats or bat roosts may require a licence from Natural England. Allow at least 30 days for a licence application to be determined.