

Bat Survey of Oakwood Outbuilding Berden

On behalf of:

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1) Summary

In December 2016, as part of a planning proposal involving an outbuilding at Oakwood, Park Green, Berden, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 1BA, a site visit was conducted to determine whether the building had been used by bats. At that time, no evidence of bats was found and the report concluded that: ‘...therefore it is considered that the planning proposal for this site will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population.’



Photo 1: South-western corner of the building which is almost entirely engulfed by ivy.
Access to the inside is via the gap in the centre of the picture

Following a lapse of seven years, a second survey was undertaken on 29th December 2023 to see if bats had colonised the building during the intervening period. The results of this follow-up survey confirmed the results of the earlier inspection and found no evidence of bats at the site.

The survey found that the building was a block built, single-storey former livestock shed with a sloping, corrugated asbestos roof. The interior was divided into two sections separated by a block partition. There were large cracks in both the partition wall and an external wall, perhaps caused by the weight of ivy that extended up to two metres from the building. No evidence of the presence of bats was found on the walls and floor of the building or on items stored within it.

There is no vegetation affected by the project that has crevices, loose bark or woodpecker holes that might be colonised by bats. **No** evidence of their presence was found at this site.

The lack of potential roosting places and absence of any evidence of the presence of bats means that **no** further surveys are required for this building. The building was considered to have **negligible potential** as a roosting place for bats.

Since there was no evidence of bats at the site, a European Protected Species Licence will **not** be required for this project.

Although no evidence of bats was found, it is probable that bats will forage across this site and along the tree-lined lane to the north. This behaviour would be expected to continue after any building work has been completed and therefore it is considered that the planning proposal for this site will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population.

Please note that this survey records the status of the building at the time of the survey. However, if more than a year were to elapse before the start of the building work, it is considered unlikely, due to the condition of the building and the extent of the ivy, that bats would colonise the site during the intervening period.

2) Introduction

Essex Mammal Surveys were requested to carry out a survey of an outbuilding at Oakwood, Berden to investigate for signs indicating the presence of bat colonies and their roosts. The identification of protected species is vital in the proposed development of a site to comply with existing legislation and also allows any work that may otherwise be detrimental to bats to be appropriately scheduled. John Dobson, a bat worker and trainer licensed by Natural England (Licence No. 2015-15258-CLS-CLS), and author of *Mammals of Essex* (Essex Field Club, 2014) carried out the survey on 29th December 2023. John Dobson has been elected a Fellow of the British Naturalists' Association and received the David Bellamy Award for natural history in 2015. The site is located at Grid Reference: TL465287.

This report has been compiled in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Survey Guidelines for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*.

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

However, the first page of all four editions includes the following: *The guidelines should be interpreted and adapted on a case-by-case basis according to site-specific factors and the professional judgement of an experienced ecologist. Where examples are used in the guidelines, they are descriptive rather than prescriptive.*

3) Legislation and planning policy relating to bats in the UK

All bat species in Britain are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through inclusion on Schedule 5. They are also protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats

&c.) Regulations 1994 (which were issued under the European Communities Act 1972), through inclusion on Schedule 2. From January 31st 2020 these Regulations were consolidated into the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU exit) Regulations 2019.

European protected animal species and their breeding sites or resting places are protected under Regulation 39. It is an offence for anyone to deliberately capture, injure or kill any such animal or to deliberately take or destroy their eggs. It is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding or resting place of such an animal. It is also an offence to have in one's possession or control, any live or dead European protected species.

The threshold above which a person will commit the offence of deliberately disturbing a wild animal of a European protected species has been raised. Now, a person will commit an offence only if he deliberately disturbs such animals in a way as to be likely significantly to affect (a) the ability of any significant groups of animals of that species to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young, or (b) the local distribution of abundance of that species. However, please note that the existing offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended which cover obstruction of places used for shelter or protection (for example, a bat roost), disturbance and sale still apply to European protected species.

This legislation provides defences so that necessary operations may be carried out in places used by bats, provided the appropriate Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (in England this is Natural England) is notified and allowed a reasonable time to advise on whether the proposed operation should be carried out and, if so, the approach to be used. The UK is a signatory to the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe, set up under the Bonn Convention. The Fundamental Obligations of Article III of this Agreement require the protection of all bats and their habitats, including the identification and protection from damage or disturbance of important feeding areas for bats.

Paragraph 98 of Circular 06/2005 states that '*the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat*'.

Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 (NPPF) states that '*the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by ...minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity....*'

Since August 2007, building development that affects bats or their roosts needs a Protected Species Licence under The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 administered in England by Natural England.

4) Methods

The exterior surfaces of the building were examined for any signs of use as bat roosts, such as the presence of droppings on walls, windows or staining around roost entrances. The use of a crevice by a colony of bats produces droppings on brickwork and adjacent surfaces close to the crevice, together with an accumulation of droppings beneath the roost entrance.

However, upon examination, many surfaces will have one or two droppings, randomly placed, caused by bats seeking out new roost sites.

The internal survey was conducted using a powerful torch. The roof of the building was searched for evidence of roosting, the floor areas for droppings and the beams for crevices and staining indicative of the presence of roosting bats. An Xtend & Climb Pro Ladder and a ProVision 300 endoscope were available to inspect crevices in brickwork and around beams.

5) Results

The survey found that the building was a block built, single-storey former livestock shed with a sloping corrugated asbestos roof. The interior was aligned approximately NE-SW and divided into two sections separated by a block partition. There were large cracks in both the partition wall and an external wall, perhaps caused by the weight of ivy that extended up to two metres from the building. No evidence of the presence of bats was found on the walls and floor of the building or on items stored within it.

The building is engulfed by ivy on three sides and by impenetrable ivy and scrubby bushes to the north-west.



Photo 2: Looking north-westwards in the building



Photo 3: Note Ivy growing into the building



Photo 4: Interior of the building. Note lack of features that might be occupied by bats



Photo 5: Interior of the building



Photo 6: The south-eastern elevation



Photo 7: Interior of the building. Note lack of features that might be occupied by bats



Photo 8: Interior of the building



Photo 9: Interior of the building



Photo 10: South-eastern elevation at north-eastern end



Photo 11: Interior of the building at north-eastern end



Photo 12: North-eastern elevation



Photo 13: South-western elevation



Photo 14: The north-western elevation is obscured by Ivy

There is no vegetation affected by the project that has crevices, loose bark or woodpecker holes that might be colonised by bats.

No evidence of their presence was found at this site.

6) Discussion

Bats are inquisitive, highly mobile animals, which constantly investigate their surroundings, evaluating good feeding areas and potential roosting opportunities. Where suitable habitat such as woodland, woodland edge or sheltered pasture occurs, bats will travel up to several kilometres to take advantage of this resource. To reach favoured sites, small bats will follow linear landscape features such as hedgerows, streams and lanes etc. The absence of such features can make an otherwise suitable site inaccessible to bats. In addition, new roosts will become established in such areas - examples being the rapid colonisation of artificial roost

boxes placed in conifer forests or the occupation of new houses by nursery colonies of pipistrelle bats within a year or two of their completion.

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Please note that this survey records the status of the building at the time of the survey. However, if more than a year were to elapse before the start of the building work, it is considered unlikely, due to the condition of the building and the extent of the ivy, that bats would colonise the site during the intervening period.

7) Review of existing records of bats in the area

Since the early 1980s, the Essex Bat Group has monitored the status and distribution of bats in this area. Records occurring within a 2km radius of the site are as follows:

The pipistrelle has recently been separated by DNA and sound analysis into two distinct species – the common and soprano pipistrelle.

TL466275	12 Sep 2007	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL469275	12 Sep 2007	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL465275	16 Aug 2006	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL469298	08 Jul 1999	Pipistrelle roost in house
TL465275	26 Aug 2006	Soprano Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL474276	15 Aug 2008	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL460275	15 Aug 2008	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL475275	26 Aug 2006	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL467275	25 Jul 2008	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL475276	12 Sep 2007	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL482299	03 Oct 2007	Brown Long-eared Bat roost in house
TL467296	03 Mar 2006	Brown Long-eared Bat found by member of public
TL467296	06 Mar 2016	Brown Long-eared Bat found by member of public
TL484268	12 Sep 2007	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL485268	12 Sep 2007	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging
TL485275	26 Aug 2006	Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging

8) Recommendations for reasonable biodiversity enhancements

1: It is recommended that the existing gaps along the site boundaries are retained to allow hedgehogs and common toads to forage across the site as, potentially, at present. However if any boundary fences are to be introduced, see below:



Photo 15: Hedgehog pathway at base of fence

A gap 13cm by 13cm is sufficient for any hedgehog to pass through. This will be too small for nearly all pets.

Hedgehogs travel around **one mile** every night through our parks and gardens in their quest to find enough food and a mate. If you have an enclosed garden this can prevent hedgehogs from dispersing throughout their territory. It is now known that one of the main reasons why hedgehogs are declining in Britain is because our fences and walls are becoming more and more secure, reducing the amount of land available to them. Developers can make their life a little easier by removing the barriers within their control – for example, by making holes in or under our garden fences and walls for them to pass through.

Alternatively:

- Remove a brick from the bottom of the wall
- Cut a small hole in your fence if there are no gaps
- Dig a channel underneath your wall, fence or gate

2: Two bird nesting boxes to be sited on trees or buildings at Oakwood.

3: A Hedgehog nesting box to be sited at base of a boundary hedge.

4: Two solitary bee hives to be erected at the site.

A range of designs are commercially available, but they may be manufactured from durable FSC timber and provide valuable habitat for bees in modern gardens. They are designed specifically to attract non-swarming bees like the Red Mason Bee, Leafcutter Bee and other solitary bees which are naturally attracted to holes in wood.

Attracting solitary bees to the garden is not only safe, but beneficial to pollination of flowers, fruit and vegetables.



Photo 16: Solitary bee hive

Siting: Site in a visible warm place ideally oriented to face between southeast and south and to catch some sun. It is helpful to have soil nearby, and food sources such as flowers, orchards and fruit.