



Little Oakhill, Brewery Lane, Oakhill

Bat & Bird Scoping Report

Prepared for: Mr & Mrs Hendy

Date: January 2024



This report has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Code of Professional Conduct of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

Limitations

Nash Ecology Ltd has prepared this Report for the sole use of Mr & Mrs Hendy ("Client") in accordance with the Agreement under which our services were performed.

The conclusions and recommendations contained in this Report are based upon information provided by others and upon the assumption that all relevant information has been provided by those parties from whom it has been requested and that such information is accurate.

The methodology adopted and the sources of information used by Nash Ecology Ltd in providing its services are outlined in this Report. The work described in this Report was undertaken in January 2024 and is based on the conditions encountered and the information available during the said period of time.

Nash Ecology Ltd disclaim any undertaking or obligation to advise any person of any change in any matter affecting the Report, which may come or be brought to Nash Ecology attention after the date of the Report.

This report is considered 'valid' for up to two years from the date the walkover survey was conducted. If an application is made after this, then it is advisable to undertake an updated survey. In addition, any significant change to the project should result in consultation with an ecologist as reassessment of the ecological constraints may be required.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Scope

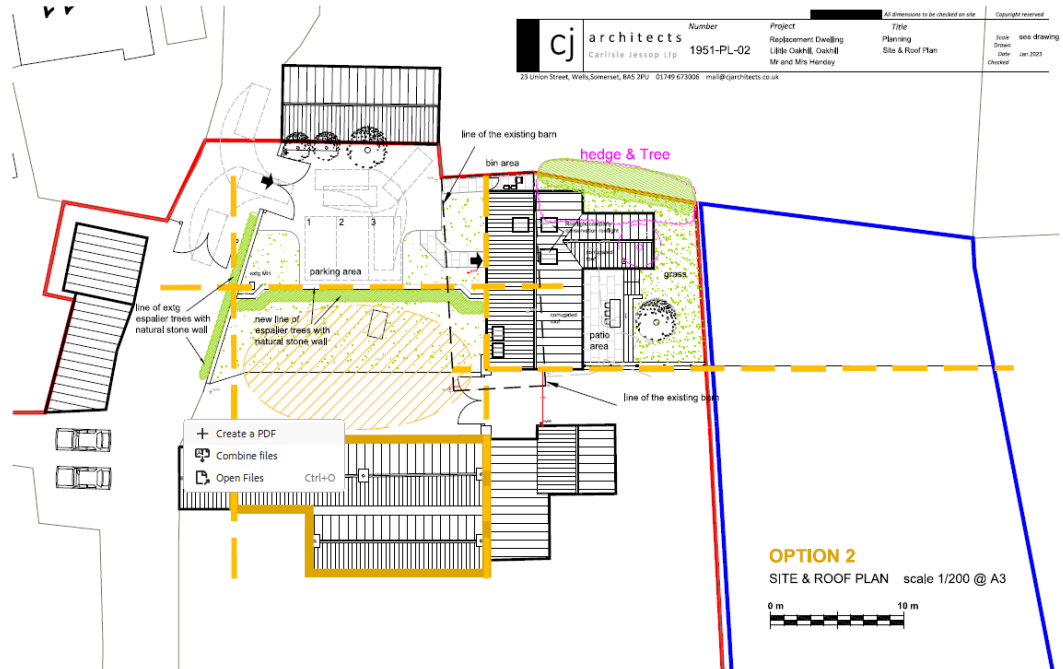
Nash Ecology Ltd was instructed to carry out a bat assessment of a barn located within the curtilage of 'Little Oakhill, Brewery Lane, Oakhill, Somerset, BA3 5AT' (Figure 1). The assessment was commissioned in relation to current proposals to convert the barn into liveable accommodation (Figure 2). The barn would be relocated slightly to the north (away from the house) and extended to the east (bare ground and amenity grassland). As the works will be restricted to the footprint of the existing building and its immediate surrounds (i.e. hard standing / bare ground / amenity grassland), the ecological receptors most likely to be encountered are bats and birds. As the proposed works have the potential to adversely affect both taxa, a targeted assessment was commissioned to ascertain whether either were present.

The remainder of this report provides methods, results and a discussion of potential impacts including, where necessary, a suitable mitigation strategy.

Figure 1: Site Location (Google Earth, 2021)



Figure 2: Proposed Development (adapted from CJ Architects, 2023)



1.2 Legislation and Planning Policy Summary

1.2.1 Summary of Legislation Pertinent to Bats

All bats are protected under Schedule 2 the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). When taken together it is illegal to:

- Deliberately disturb, capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Obstruct, damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time); and
- Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part thereof.

Seven species of bat are included on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 as 'Species of Principal Importance for Conservation in England'. These include:

- Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*);
- Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*);
- Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*);
- Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*);
- Brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*);
- Greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*); and
- Lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*).

Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 places a duty of care on competent authorities to consider biodiversity as a material consideration when discharging their normal functions.

1.2.2 Summary of Legislation Pertinent to Birds

Nesting birds are protected through their inclusion on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under the Act, it is an offence to harm a bird, its eggs or young whilst occupying a nest. For those species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a bird that is on or near an 'active' nest.

Forty-nine species of birds are listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 as 'Species of Principal Importance for Conservation in England'.

1.2.3 Planning Policy Summary

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 was considered in the preparation of this report. The NPPF specifies the obligations that the Local Authorities and the UK Government have regarding statutory designated sites and protected species under UK and international legislation and how this is to be delivered in the planning system. Protected or notable habitats and species should be considered as a material consideration in planning decisions and may therefore make some sites unsuitable for particular types of development. If the development is permitted, mitigation measures may be required to avoid or minimise impacts on certain habitats and species, or where impact is unavoidable, compensation may be required.

2 METHODS

2.1 Desk-based Study

A desk-based study was carried out to identify designated sites and biological records relating to the site. The online Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was consulted to identify statutory sites designated for bats or birds within 1 km (an appropriate distance given the minor nature of the works). The search was based on grid reference ST 630 471.

2.2 Field Survey

2.2.1 Preliminary Bat Roost Appraisal

A Natural England (Class 2) licensed bat ecologist undertook an inspection of the barn on 6th May 2019 and again on 24th January 2024 following published guidance (BCT, 2024). During the survey, the surveyor inspected the barn for exterior roosting locations and possible access points to the building’s interior. Such features were accessed and inspected for signs of use using an endoscope. An internal inspection for suitable roost locations and evidence of bat occupancy (such as droppings, urine spots, an absence of cobwebs and bats themselves) was then undertaken.

As bats are a cryptic group and often move between roosts, both within and between years, their presence is not always easy to detect. The barn was assessed for its Bat Roost Potential (BRP), following published guidance (BCT, 2016). The BRP categories are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Bat Roost Potential Categories (BCT, 2016)

Roost Potential	Description
Known or Confirmed	Confirmed signs of bat presence/ occupation (droppings, oily staining around entry points, insect remains, odour, scratching) and actual bat presence.
High	A structure or tree 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.
Moderate	A structure or tree 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 (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. 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 or hibernation). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
Negligible	No features suitable for roosting bats. Includes structures constructed from unsuitable materials e.g. prefabricated with steel and sheet material. Structure is draughty, light and cool buildings with no roosting opportunities. High levels of regular disturbance including external lighting. Building is isolated for areas of foraging habitat. In the case of trees, no potential roosting features are present, or features have no potential to support roosting

Roost Potential	Description
	bats.

2.2.2 *Birds*

Concurrent with the bat inspection, the barn was inspected for signs of nesting birds.

2.3 Survey Limitations

No constraints to the aims of the survey were noted.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Desk-based Study

No statutory designated sites were identified within 2 km.

One granted European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) was identified within 2 km. The licence (EPSM2013-5541), awarded in 2013, was located 130 m to the east and permitted the destruction of a mixed, non-breeding roost of common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and lesser horseshoe bat.

Fifteen historical records of bats comprising six species were supplied by SERC. Many of the records originated from Harridge Wood West in Nettlebridge or Downside School in Shepton Mallet. Other records originated from Oakhill, the nearest of which appeared to be associated with the EPSML described above (c. 130 m to the east). No records originated from Little Oakhill itself.

3.2 Site Context

The barn was located within a residential garden to the south of the main residence. A grilled cave entrance was located in the garden immediately to the west of the barn. Further buildings are situated immediately to the north and appeared to have been reroofed recently.

Immediately to the east of the property is an orchard beyond which is agricultural land. The wider landscape is dominated by residential dwellings in the north (Oakhill) and agricultural fields (pasture) to the south.

3.3 Preliminary Bat Roost Appraisal

The barn was a single-storey structure used for the storage of miscellaneous items (Plates 1 – 4). The walls were constructed of single-skin block: painted in the west, rendered in the south, untouched in the east and partially covered by wooden weather boards and render in the north. The walls were in a good condition lacking any cracks or crevices that could be exploited by bats. Small gaps were present between the wooden weather boards; however, these gaps were covered in a dense layer of cobwebs. Windows were present in the east, south and west. An open door was located to the east. The guttering was supported by wooden fascia boards that were offset from the wall by c. 5 cm. These features were fully inspected. The roof was pitched and clad in corrugated metal and plastic (skylight) sheeting. In addition to the windows, these eight plastic sheets allowed light into the barn.

Plate 1: The Barn (Eastern Aspect)



Plate 2: The Barn (Western Aspect)



Plate 3: The Barn (Southern Aspect)



Plate 4: The Barn (Northern Aspect)



Internally, the barn was compartmentalised with block-built walls. These c. 2 m walls did not extend to the roof allowing flight between the various rooms. The roof was directly supported by exposed wooden beams and was unlined. The skylights made it very light inside whilst the open doorway made it breezy. The exposed block walls and metal / plastic roof did not afford roosting locations other than hanging directly from the wooden beams. No signs of historical use by bats was recorded within the barn.

Plate 5: Barn Interior



Plate 6: Barn Roof



The barn lacked suitable roost features and, although access to the interior was readily available, it also lacked historical signs of use. As such, the barn was assessed as having Negligible BRP.

3.4 Birds

No signs of nesting birds, past or present, were recorded at the barn. The barn was bordered by a line of *leylandii* in the north, which could support nesting birds.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Bats

The barn was assessed as having Negligible BRP. This assessment was based on a paucity of potential roost features and environmental stability, high levels of anthropogenic disturbance and a lack of historical signs of use. No further survey is recommended to inform the works. This assessment is valid for a period of two years; if works have not begun during this period, a resurvey is recommended. In the highly unlikely event that a bat is discovered, all works would stop and Natural England would be consulted.

4.2 Birds

No signs of birds were recorded during the inspection and no further survey has been recommended. Birds could nest within the adjacent hedgerow (*leylandii*) and apple tree (which will be relocated to the orchard). To minimise the risk to nesting birds, the demolition works will be restricted to outside of the nesting period (i.e. between September and February). Where this is not possible, the vegetation will be inspected by an ecologist ahead of the works. Where an active nest is recorded, a 10 m exclusion zone will be enforced within which no work will be permitted until the young have fully fledged.

4.3 Opportunities for Enhancement

The following provides a suitable enhancement that could be incorporated within the current scheme:

- The new dwelling could be fitted with a bat box. It is recommended that woodcrete boxes are used as these are long-lasting and often come with a 25-year guarantee. The box should be attached to the southern or eastern aspects in a dark location i.e. not subject to artificial lighting. Ideally, it should be placed in an uncluttered location so that bats can easily fly in and out (www.bats.org.uk).
- It is recommended that four bird boxes are included within the scheme comprising two with a 32 mm entrance hole and two open-fronted boxes to encourage a range of birds. It is recommended that woodcrete boxes (e.g. provided by Schwegler) are utilised as these provide longer lasting nesting opportunities than wooden boxes which tend to rot quickly. The 32 mm box should be placed between 2 m and 4 m above ground level and the open fronted box should be placed lower at about 2 m and placed within vegetation/cover. Boxes should not be positioned too close to each other to prevent aggressive behaviour between neighbours. Further information is provided at www.rspb.org.uk.

5 REFERENCES

- BCT (2016) Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition. BCT, London
- BCT (2023) Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition. BCT, London
- BCT (2018) Bats and Lighting. Bat Conservation Trust, London
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004) Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough