

Bat Emergence Survey Report
Wigton Heath Farm, Alwoodley

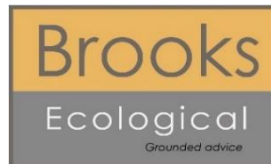
Park Lane Homes

Report Reference: ER-6208-02

13/06/2022

Report Title:	Bat Survey Report Wigton Heath Farm, Alwoodley
Report Reference:	ER-6208-02
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Summary Statement

Dedicated survey of the red-brick farm buildings (ref. Buildings 1–5) has demonstrated the likely absence of roosting bats. Proposals therefore present little risk of impacting upon bats or their roosts and no further survey is recommended.

An active barn owl nest has been confirmed in Building 1. Appropriate mitigation will be required to ensure works do not impact on an active nest, and to ensure barn owl can continue to nest on or around the Site following development.

Introduction

1. Subsequent to recommendations set out in the Bat Roost Suitability Assessment (ER-6208-01A), Brooks Ecological was commissioned to carry out a detailed Bat Emergence Survey at Wigton Heath Farm, Manor House Lane, Alwoodley (grid reference SE 324 410).
2. Survey was required on a series of connected red-brick barns, which were assessed as providing features of low bat roost suitability; see Figure 1 below.
3. In accordance with current best practice guidelines, buildings of low suitability need a single evening emergence or dawn re-entry survey in order to confirm the presence or likely absence of roosting bats.

Figure 1 Context plan showing buildings subject to Bat Roost Suitability Assessment (Buildings 1–6) and their roost suitability.



Method

4. Brooks Ecological specialises in bat surveys ranging from individual buildings through to complex sites requiring numerous visits with large teams. In terms of the survey effort, number of personnel, and number of visits required to be able to properly evaluate the building(s) use by bats, we refer to the Bat Conservation Trust Survey Good Practice Guidelines (2016). However, these guidelines are not prescriptive, and we approach each site individually as required using our professional judgement and significant experience base.
5. In this case, a single visit with a team of six surveyors was deemed necessary to fully evaluate the potential use of the Site for roosting.
6. Survey was carried out with surveyors positioned around the building to cover all aspects where bats could potentially emerge or return, and to establish activity levels around the Site.
7. The surveyors, using heterodyne detectors and an Anabat Scout recording device, were in place at least 15 minutes before sunset and left once all species of bat would be expected to have left a roost and patterns of activity within the Site had been appraised. Conditions and dates are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Survey conditions.

Date	Survey Type	Temp. Start/End	Weather
09/06/2022	Emergence	16°C/15°C	Dry. Full cloud cover. Gentle breeze (B1). Humid. Mod/High Invertebrate Activity.

8. The survey was directed by Christopher Shaw BSc (Hons) MCIEEM. Chris has over 10 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys in a professional capacity and is registered to use the Class Survey Licence WML CL18 (Bat Survey Level 2) and Bat Mitigation Class Licence WML CL21 Annex B.

Box 1 *Bat roosts*

Bats roost in buildings and trees in different locations depending upon time of year and environmental factors such as position of the sun, and proximity to heat sources and feeding grounds. The following roost types are commonly referred to:

Transitional roosts

Bats frequently gather early in the season (March to April) before dispersing to summer roosts. Bats can be found in high numbers in these roosts for a very short period. Transitional roosts can also be found shortly before hibernation in August to October when bats (depending upon species) can gather in roosts not used earlier in the season.

Maternity roosts

These are among the most important roosts and are normally occupied from May to August. Depending on the species involved, some maternity roosts can contain a very significant proportion of the local population.

Summer (non-breeding) roosts

Small groups of non-breeding female and male bats can gather in these roosts, or bats from a local population may choose to roost individually. There are normally a large number of suitable locations for summer non-breeding roosts and these may be routinely used or used only on an occasional basis. Irregularly used summer roosts can be very hard to find without unreasonable survey effort.

Mating roosts

Around September bats will gather in roosts to mate; these are often in different locations than summer or breeding roosts.

Hibernation roosts

As bats in hibernation roosts are highly vulnerable to disturbance and bats can be present in large numbers, these are considered to be among the most important bat roosts. Many species of bat roost in large and nationally important hibernation roosts associated with underground sites, many of which are well known and protected. However, the most common bat in the UK (the common pipistrelle) is largely unaccounted for in winter but thought to disperse and roost individually or in small groups in thermally stable cracks and crevices in thick walls or trees.

Box 2 *Legal background*

Bats are afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and amendments, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010). Under these Acts it is an offence, among others, to recklessly kill, injure, or disturb bats. It is also an offence to destroy or obstruct a roost, even if bats are not in occupancy at the time of the action.

There are no defences against contravention of the Habitats Regulations (2010), which means that it is important for detailed and well-designed bat surveys to be carried out prior to carrying out activities that may impact upon bat roosts, such as demolition of buildings or removal of trees.

Where bats are found within a potential development site, a license from Natural England may need to be secured if works that could otherwise contravene legislation are to be carried out. These licences are only issued where Natural England is satisfied that works are unavoidable and would not have a negative impact on the favourable conservation status of bats. A Natural England license requires that the potential development site has full planning permission and that bats were a material consideration of the planning permission.

Survey Results

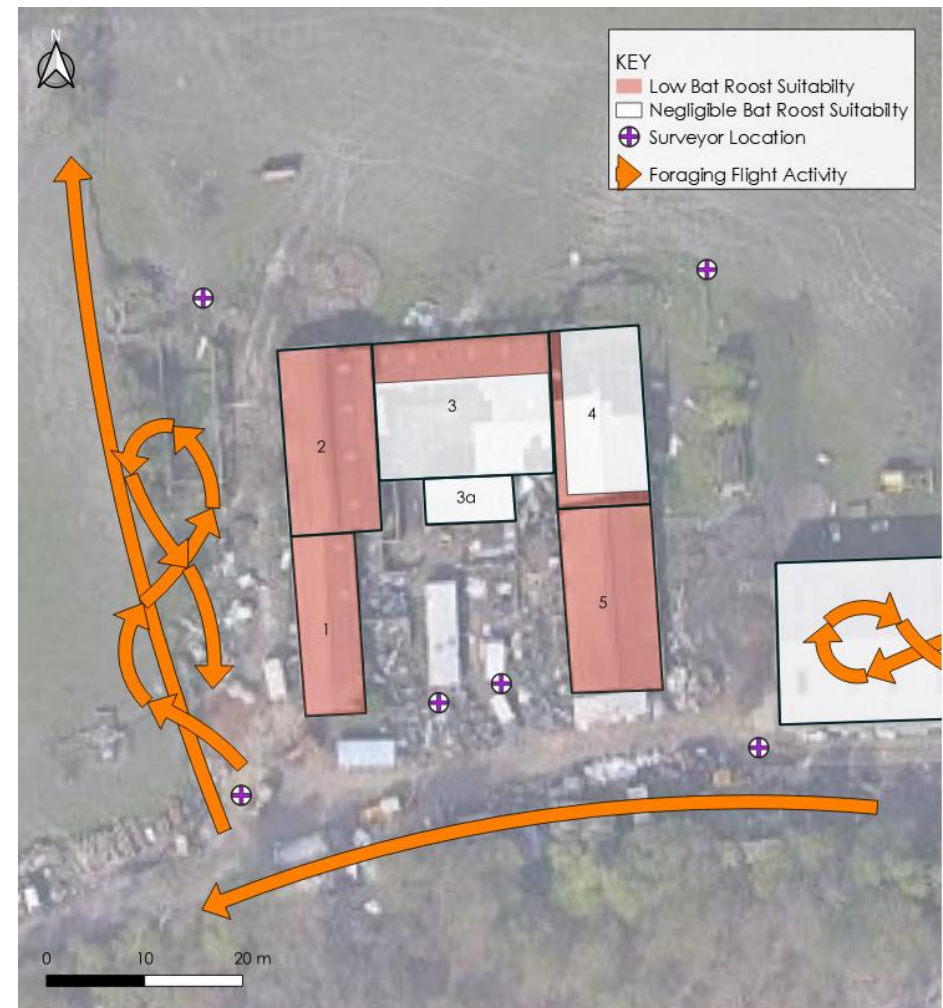
Bat Emergence – 9th June 2022 (sunset 21:34)

9. This survey encompassed Buildings 1–5, with surveyors positioned so as to cover all features with bat roost suitability.
10. Bat activity commenced at around 22:00, 26 minutes after sunset, with faint registrations being logged from woodland to the south. By around 22:10, small numbers of bats (all common pipistrelle) were observed foraging along the woodland edge, occasionally flying into the large shed (Building 6) to the east to forage, and along the fractured hedgerow to the west. No more than two or three bats were observed in flight at any one time; however, commuting activity suggests that over the course of the evening, at least 10 individuals were active around the Site.
11. At least six bats flying northwards along the hedgerow (west) continued off-Site and were not recorded again, suggesting this hedgerow has a minor function as a commuting corridor as well as a foraging resource.
12. At around 22:33, a noctule flew into the Site from the east, following the woodland edge. This remained on-Site foraging along the woodland edge until the end of the survey.
13. No roosts were identified, or suspected, within the surveyed buildings.

Barn owl

14. Prior to the Emergence survey commencing, a brief inspection of Building 1 was undertaken. This revealed the presence of an active barn owl nest with a clutch of five eggs. Upon finding the nest, the surveyor promptly exited and did not re-enter the building. Any further internal inspections of this building will either be carried out by a Barn Owl Licensed Ecologist, or timed to avoid the barn owl nesting season.
15. Two adult barn owls were then regularly seen flying in and around Buildings 1 and 2 over the course of the survey, with Building 1 used for nesting and Building 2 as a perch/roost.

Figure 2 Summary of bat activity observed during emergence survey.



Conclusion & Recommendations

16. Survey has demonstrated a likely absence of roosting within on-Site buildings and, as such, works present little risk of impacting upon bats or their roosts.

Standard precaution

17. Although no evidence of roosting has been found and likely absence of roosting has been concluded, it must be noted that bats frequently move between roost sites, can be very casual in their choice of roosting location, and can turn up unexpectedly at any time.
18. On this basis the developer should always be mindful of bats as a potential constraint and have a protocol in place should any bats be seen or suspected during works: works should stop, a suitably licensed ecologist consulted, and their advice followed.

Enhancement

19. The NPPF puts emphasis on development delivering biodiversity enhancement, above and beyond mitigating or compensating for any impacts. Proposals could therefore introduce new roosting opportunities onto the Site.

Barn owl

20. An active barn owl nest has been identified in Building 1.
21. Barn owls are listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), which means that adults and their young are protected from intentional or reckless disturbance at, on, or near an 'active' nest.
22. Mitigation will need to be put in place to ensure proposals do not risk causing an offence by disturbing these birds whilst actively nesting. This could be achieved by either (i) timing the works so that they do not commence during the main barn owl nesting season, which typically runs from March to August, or (ii) fitting exclusion to the open windows/doorways of Building 1 at the end of the current breeding season, to prevent birds from nesting within this building in subsequent season(s).
23. In either case, a replacement nest box should be erected somewhere nearby, either on a suitable mature tree, building or mounted on a pole, so that these birds can continue to nest here in the future.

References

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