Preliminary Ecological Assessment

Date: March 2019

Report compiled by D. V. Leach. M.C.I.E.E.M
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Executive Summary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Background</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Aims of Survey</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Site Description</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 Methodology</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Desk Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Site Survey</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Results</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Desk Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Site Survey</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0 Conclusion</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Assessment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Limitations</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Recommendations</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Enhancements</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0 Appendices</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Legislation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B References</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Photographs</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Aerial Image of the Site</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Proposed plans</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.0 Executive summary.

- A survey was commissioned to check for the presence or potential for bats and other protected species or habitats that would be affected by proposals to demolish three modern barns and build two new dwellings on the site.
- The area in general provided moderate foraging and commuting habitats for bats.
- A walk over survey and building inspection was undertaken in March 2019.
- The barns were of modern construction and had insignificant potential for bats due to a lack of roosting features.
- No signs of bats, barn owls or other protected species were found in the buildings or on the site.
- A single nest, probably a collard doves nest, was found in barn 1
- No other signs of protected species were found on site.
- There were no areas of natural grassland on or adjacent to the site.
- Once detailed plans are produced an ecologist will produce a site enhancement plan which will include features for bats, birds and insects designed into the buildings.
2.0 Introduction.

2.1 Background.

Client: Mr. Haskett

Property Surveyed: Church Farm
Stoke Trister
Wincanton
Somerset
BA9 9PG

Grid reference: ST 73676 28660

Dates of Survey: 26th March 2019

Lead Surveyor: David Leach BSc. (Hon), CBIol. M.S.B., M.C I.E.E.M.
(Natural England WML CL18 & CL21 registered bat worker).

2.2 Aims of the Survey.

- An ecological survey was commissioned to check for the presence or potential for bats and other protected species that would be affected by proposals to demolish three modern barns and to build two residential dwellings on the site. This report is to accompany an outline planning application.

2.3 Site Description.

- The site is found in a rural setting in the small village of Stoke Trister, 2.5 km west of Wincanton, Somerset.
- There are a few residential and agricultural properties within 500m of the site.
- There surrounding area is mainly cultivated field with some grazed pasture. The nearest wooded area is 1.6m to the east.
- The general habitats in the area provided moderate foraging and commuting habitats for bats.
3.0 Methodology

3.1 Desk Study
- The Magic.gov web site was accessed to determine whether there were any nature reserves or protected areas local to the site that would be affected by the proposed works.
- If signs or potential for protected species was found then a data search may be undertaken to look for records of protected species in the area around the site.

3.2 Site Survey
The external and internal areas of any building or structure on site were inspected following guidelines set out in the BCT Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 3rd edn. Collins. J (2016) and the JNCC Bat Workers’ Manual (Mitchell-Jones A. J). The presence of bats or signs of bats and possible entry points into buildings was looked for.

External signs of bats or potential use by bats were looked for. These included:-
- Bat droppings on walls, floors, and window cills and in covered areas such as porches.
- Gaps in the woodwork of the eaves, soffits, fascias etc. and behind barge boards.
- Gaps in the brickwork and between door and window frames.
- Gaps around lead flashing and loose, slipped or missing hanging and roof tiles.
- Urine stains or grease marks around any gaps mentioned above.

All accessible areas of any internal space were carefully inspected for bats (live or dead) or signs of bats such as droppings, urine stains, signs of feeding such as moth wings, etc. Cobwebs which indicate no or infrequent use by bats were also looked for. Equipment available included 3.8m telescopic ladder, Leica 8x42 binoculars, digital camera, head torch and Clulite CB2 high powered torches, See snake inspection camera.

The bat roosting potential of buildings was assessed according to the scale negligible, low, moderate or high:

**Negligible:** This category describes buildings of a simple structure where all structural features can easily be surveyed with a visual inspection or investigated with an endoscope. For example a simple wooden garden shed, a corrugated iron barn or precast concrete modular garage may fit this category.
**Low:** This category is used to describe simple structure buildings that have very few potential bat roosting features but all areas cannot be surveyed visually or investigated with an endoscope.

**Moderate:** This category is used to describe buildings that have some potential to support roosting bats, but is considered to be less than ideal in some way. Some but not all modern industrial and agricultural buildings may fit this category if they are of a simple structure with single layer walls and unlined roof areas.

**High:** This category is used to describe buildings with multiple internal and external structural features suitable for roosting bats. Most brick built dwelling houses and timber or stone barns will be covered by this category. Features that may be used by bats are e.g. loft spaces and other smaller roof voids, gaps between overlapping clay tiles, gaps in-between the tiles or slates and the roofing felt, cavities under ridge tiles, under soffits fascia and barge boards, by the brickwork of chimney stacks, under lead flashing, inside cavities of flat roofs, under wall hanging tiles, behind wooden cladding or other wooden structures, inside cavity walls or other smaller wall cavities, in gaps and cracks of stone walls and inside wooden beam mortise and tenon joints.

**Confirmed:** This category is used where evidence of bats such as live or dead bats or bat droppings are present, or where there are records of a bat roost in the building within the last 5 years.

The site was surveyed for other protected species following recognized guidelines, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC), Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) and Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

The survey was carried out by David Leach an experienced ecological surveyor who is a Natural England WML CL18 registered bat worker, a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and a Chartered Biologist.

David Leach is a Registered Consultant under the new Bat Mitigation Class Licence - WML-CL1 & CL21 annex B, C &D.
4.0 Results.
4.1 Desk Study

- The works are small scale and will not affect any designated sites within 1km of the site.
- A local biological records center data search has not been carried out at this stage but will be required if protected species or habitats are be affected by the proposed works.
- The nearest pond was at a spring 475m to the north east.

4.2 Site Survey

Weather for initial survey

Dry and sunny at 12:30
The external temperature was 14°C.

4.2.1 Habitat.

- The site consisted of three large modern barns surrounded by concrete yards.
- There are no areas of grass or natural vegetation on the site. There were three small trees/shrubs (ash and elderberry) near the buildings. The trees were small and had no potential roosting features for bats.
- Barn 1 was open fronted and constructed with a metal frame, with the lower section of the walls being concrete block and the upper section being metal box sheeting. The roof was cement fibre/asbestos with some clear skylights.
- Barn 2 was open fronted and constructed with a concrete frame, with the lower section of the walls being concrete block and the upper section being metal box sheeting. The roof was cement fibre/asbestos with some clear skylights.
- Barn 3 was open fronted and constructed with a metal frame, with the walls being concrete block and the upper section being open. The roof was cement fibre/asbestos with some clear skylights.

4.2.2 Protected species and habitats.

Bats

- No signs of bats were found in any of the barns which were too light and draughty to provide suitable bat roosting habitat.
- The few trees on site were small and had no potential roosting features for bats.
- There were no large trees near the site that will be impacted by the proposed works.
**Birds**
- A nest was seen in barn 1 and it is likely it was built by a pair of collard doves seen in the barn.
- No signs of nesting birds were found in barns 2 and 3.
- There were no signs of roosting barn owls in the barns.

**Badgers, reptiles, great crested newts, dormice.**
- No signs of other protected species or habitats suitable to support protected species were found on the site.

**Habitats**
- There are no natural areas of vegetation or grassland on or adjacent to the site.
5.0 Conclusion.

5.1 Assessment.

- The proposed works are small scale and will not significantly affect designated sites in the area.
- There were no important habitats on site or nearby.
- The barns to be demolished had insignificant potential for bats due to a lack of roosting features.
- A single bird’s nest (probably a collard dove’s nest) was seen in barn 1.
- No other signs of protected species were found on site.
- The proposals to demolish the barns and build new dwellings on the site are unlikely to impact any protected species or habitat.

5.2 Limitations of the survey.

- Bats such as crevice dwelling bats are often difficult to detect and external signs of bats are can be washed away by wind and rain and so are not present. In addition bats often move between roosts during and between seasons and so numbers can fluctuate during the year.
- A survey of this type only provides a snapshot of what was found at the time of the survey and it is sometimes necessary to carry out a number of surveys to show the presence or absence of bats or other protected species.
- In the event of a bat or other protected species is found during the proposed works must stop and David Leach or Natural England contacted for advice on how to proceed.
- This survey is valid for 12 months and should be updated if conditions on the site change or if protected species or signs of protected species are found on the site in the future.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Bats

- No further surveys are recommended.

5.3.2 Birds

- Birds’ nests, when occupied or being built, receive legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is highly advisable to undertake clearance of potential bird nesting habitat (such as hedges, scrub, trees, suitable outbuildings etc.)
outside the bird nesting season, which is generally seen as extending from March to the end of August, although may extend longer depending on local conditions. If there is absolutely no alternative to doing the work in during this period then a thorough, careful and quiet examination of the affected area must be carried out by a qualified ecologist before clearance starts. If occupied nests are present then work must stop in that area, a suitable (approximately 5m) stand-off maintained, and clearance can only recommence once the nest becomes unoccupied of its own accord.

5.4 Enhancements

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and paragraph 118 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that ‘Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’. Section 40(3) of the same Act also states that ‘conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat’.

In accordance with the above, measures will be implemented to enhance the biodiversity and will include:

5.4.1 Bats.

- Installing suitable bat tiles or boxes into the design of the new buildings.
- Extra care will be taken to ensure that external lights are kept to a minimum and will not illuminate the bat access points or flight paths used by foraging or commuting bats. The light will be aimed to illuminate only the immediate area required by using as sharp a downward angle as possible. A shield or hood will be used to control or restrict the area to be lit and limit “light spillage” on the site.

5.4.2 Birds.

- A 1SP Schwegler Sparrow Terrace will be fitted under the eaves of the north facing wall of the a building
- Schwegler house martin nest cups and swift nest boxes will be fixed under the eaves of the new buildings.

Once full plans for the new buildings have been produced an ecologist should be consulted to advise on the number, location and design of enhancement features.
6.0 Appendices
A. Legislation (a brief summary only. Please refer to full text of legislation or policy for full details).

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way (CroW) Act 2000, all bats have legal protection. In addition any structure which shows signs of use by bats either currently or in the past, for shelter or protection, is classed as a bat roost and both the roost and any bats using it are protected by law which makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill or injure or take any bat.
- Intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy any bat roost and to obstruct access to that roost.
- Intentionally or recklessly to disturb any bat using a structure as a roost.

Protection is also afforded to bats under the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994 (the Habitats Regulations) Amended 2007

Addition IV lists all bats

Regulation 39 makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately kill or capture a bat.
- Deliberately disturb a bat.
- Damage or destroy a resting place or breeding site of any bat.

If any proposed development would result in the otherwise illegal acts above, a licence must be obtained from Natural England prior to any work being carried out. A licence will only be granted if there is no satisfactory alternative and the authorised action will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) also protects all reptiles from killing, injury and sale.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) makes it an offence to damage or destroy the nests of birds of breeding birds (with the exception of certain pest species). The bird nesting season is generally defined as being between mid-February and August inclusive although nesting outside of the period is not unusual if conditions are favorable.
B. References


- **English Nature 2004.** *Bat Mitigation Guidelines.*


- **Natural England and Countryside Council for Wales, 2007.** *Disturbance and protected species: understanding and applying the law in England and Wales.* – A view from Natural England and the Countryside Council for Wales. United Kingdom

Appendix C. Photographs

Plate 1. South east view of the bars 1 & 2 and the concrete yard in front of the buildings.

Plate 2. Interior of barn 1.
Plate 3. Interior of barn 1.

Plate 4. Interior of barn 2.
Plate 5. Interior of barn 2.

Plate 6. Barn 3 from the south west.
Plate 7. Interior of barn 3.

Plate 8. View of the habitat to the north west of barn 2.
Plate 9. View of the site looking from the south west corner looking to the rear of barn 1.

Plate 10. View from the west corner of the site looking east to barn 3.
Appendix D Aerial image of the site.
Appendix E. Proposed plans.
David Leach BSc (Hons) C Biol. MSB MCIEEM. David is a professional ecologist with over forty years’ research and fieldwork experience in many aspects of ecology and for the past ten years in environmental consultancy work.

David is an experienced bat surveyor with competency in activity surveys, bat roost assessments, daytime surveys for bat field signs, assessments of trees as potential bat roosts and the production of reports providing advice on best practice, mitigation and compensation works relating to bats as may be required.

David also has experience in surveying for birds, reptiles, amphibians, Barn Owls and Badgers and also carries out extended Phase 1 habitat surveys, BREEAM and Code for Sustainable Homes assessments.

David holds a Natural England licence to disturb bats for the purposes of science and education or conservation and is a Registered Consultant for the Bat Low Impact Class Licence. David and has been involved in obtaining many Protected Species Licences to permit development works affecting bats and also closing down badger setts.

David Leach BSc. (Hons), C.Biol., M.S.B., M.C.I.E.E.M.

Disclaimer.
All reasonable effort has been made to provide accurate information at the time of the survey. However weather conditions and the timing of surveys can affect the results. Some species or signs of that species will only be visible at certain times of the year e.g. the nesting season for birds is usually between March and September. The absence of certain species or signs of use at the time of a survey does not mean that they are not present at other times of the year and does not imply that a species might not use the site at some time in the future.

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