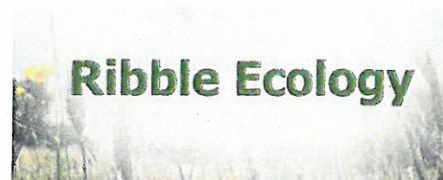


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Storage Outbuilding at Low Farm, Ribchester Road, Clayton-le-dale, Blackburn, BB1 9EE

Bat Survey, Plus Barn Owl & Breeding Bird Assessment

May 2013
RB-13-74

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A Summary

This report presents the results of a daylight survey, undertaken in May 2013, at a **storage outbuilding at Low Farm, Ribchester Road, Clayton-le-dale, Blackburn, BB1 9EE**

The work has been commissioned because the long-standing owners are seeking permission to demolish the outbuilding and construct annexe accommodation in its place, to provide additional living space for the family.

The scope of survey has primarily considered roosting and/or hibernating bats. In addition, the presence or absence of Barn owl and nesting birds has been taken into consideration.

In summary, the outcome of the daylight survey has given **no evidence of roosting bats** and an assessment that there is only localised **low potential value for lone, crevice-roosting bats**. There is also **no evidence of Barn owl or breeding birds** and there is **negligible potential** for future use by nesting birds. This indicates there are no significant constraints in relation to the proposed development.

However, to ensure that the proposed work complies with wildlife legislation and policy at all times it is still recommended that precautionary actions are implemented in respect of bats and birds. **Sections E.1 and E.2** of this report specify such actions, which can be enforced by means of one or more suitably worded planning conditions.

B Introduction

B.1 Background to proposed activity/development/works on site

The storage outbuilding is of relatively modern construction and situated north-east of the farmhouse.

The proposal will entail demolishing this building and constructing annex accommodation in its place, to provide additional accommodation for the family. As the proposal entails demolition, a bat survey of the existing structure has been deemed necessary. In addition, the presence or absence of Barn owl and nesting birds has been taken into consideration.

Hereafter within this report, the land encompassed by the red-line boundary of the planning application is termed 'the Site' or 'the Application Site'.

C Survey and site assessment

C.1 Pre-existing information on species at the survey site / in the locality.

The storage outbuilding is centred at grid reference **SD 67161 33181**

Desk study results, primarily from the NBN Gateway collation dataset, reveal that within the last 20 years the following bat species have been recorded within a 5km range of this location:

- Brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*)
- Brandt's (*Myotis brandtii*)
- Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)
- Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*)
- Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*)
- Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*)
- Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)
- Whiskered (*Myotis mystacinus*)

Ribble Ecology has not found any records of Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*), but it is judged likely that this species will also be present in relatively low numbers and/or localised distribution.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) is also present throughout rural Lancashire.

A range of birds will nest in association with buildings, including Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), House Martin (*Delichon urbica*), Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and several other garden passerine species.

C.2 Status of species, at local, county and regional levels

Common pipistrelles, Soprano pipistrelles and Brown long-eared bats are regarded as the most frequently encountered and widespread species in the area. Brown long-eared bats are typically associated with rural locations whereas pipistrelles are encountered in rural and urban settings.

C.3 Objectives of the survey

In relation to bats, the objectives of the survey have been to:

- a) Search internally and externally (by daylight) for any evidence of roosting bats.
- b) Assess the potential value of features and qualify their likelihood of use (low / medium / high potential) by roosting and/or hibernating bats.
- c) Identify the species of bat(s) associated with any roost evidence and nocturnal activity.

In relation to Barn Owl and breeding birds, the objectives have been to:

- a) Identify any evidence of current or former roosting (in the case of Barn owl), or nesting

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(by Barn owl or other breeding birds) within the outbuilding, including what nest habitat features and what access points are being used.

b) For any evidence of nests, identify the species of bird(s) that have created them.

C.4 Plan/map/photo of survey area.

An Ordnance Survey map (© Bing maps) and an aerial photograph (©Google Earth) have been labelled to show the location of the storage outbuilding (i.e. 'the Site'), as presented below. A more detailed plan of the building and its surrounds is given in **Section C.7** of this report.

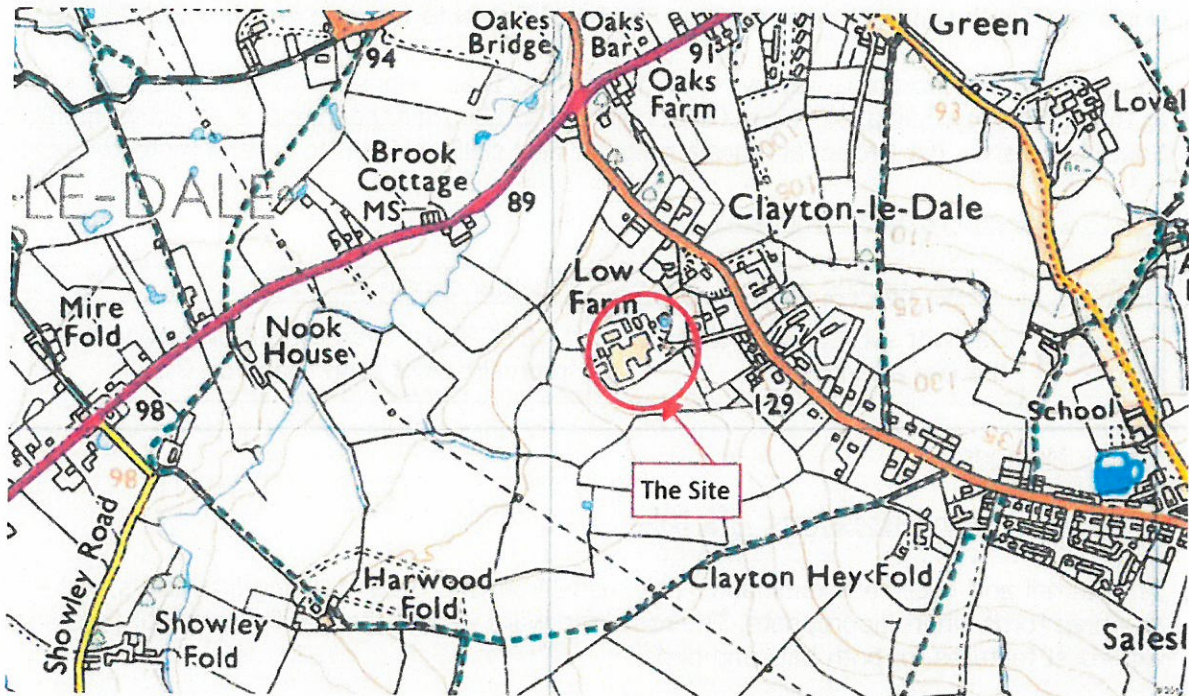


Fig. C.4.1: Location as shown on an Ordnance Survey map.



Fig. C.4.2: Aerial photograph.

C.5 Site/habitat description (relevant to bats), based on day-time visits

The outbuilding is located in a rural area, surrounded by pasture fields, with field boundary hedgerows and scattered mature trees. Nearby there are houses with mature gardens along both sides of Ribchester Road. The habitat is of good potential value for both bats and birds.

C.6 Field survey(s).

C.6.1 Personnel:

The daylight survey was undertaken by **Ms Lorna Bousfield BSc (Hons) MCIEEM** who is Principal Ecologist at Ribble Ecology and is an experienced bat worker and an active member of North and South Lancashire bat groups. (**Natural England licence number 20123140**).

Ms Bousfield was accompanied by Mr Martyn Barnes B.Sc. (Hons), who is an Assistant Ecologist at Ribble Ecology, has a degree in Conservation and Land management, is an active member of South Lancashire Bat Group, and has a range of field skills relevant to several protected species.

C.6.2 Date and weather conditions:

Date	Survey method applied	Weather conditions
07/05/13	Daylight survey, undertaken in the late afternoon.	14.0° Celsius, overcast but dry and with sunny intervals. Light wind (Beaufort 3).

C.6.3 Methods:

Daylight survey and assessment – for bats

An internal and external examination was made from the ground, using binoculars and a high-powered torch where appropriate. The roofs and walls were inspected for potential access points and roost features for both bats and birds.

In relation to roosting bats the survey entailed searching for current and/or historic evidence of bat occupation including droppings, remains of invertebrate prey, grease marks from repeated contact or passage through narrow roost accesses, and/or bats themselves.

Daylight survey and assessment – for Barn owl and other nesting birds

In respect of Barn owl the survey entailed searching for evidence of faecal splashing, old nest sites, regurgitated pellets, feathers and/or roosting barn owls themselves.

In relation to breeding birds, the survey was to detect any evidence of birds having nested in association with the building. All evidence of active nests and/or old nests was noted.

C.6.4 Equipment:

- Thermometer
- 5m long, three-section extendable ladders
- Short-focus binoculars
- Digital camera
- Clulite CB2 torch x 1

C.7 Survey results.

C.7.1 Daylight survey and assessment – location and habitats

Fig. C.7.1 (next page) shows the layout of the storage outbuilding in relation to its surroundings at Low Farm (aerial photograph courtesy of Google Earth).



Fig. C.7.1: Labelled aerial photograph of the building & its surrounds

As shown, the building is situated north-east of the farmhouse, plus north of a garage and north-east of agricultural warehouse buildings. The access track into the farm is from the south and to facilitate vehicular access into the outbuilding there is hard-standing alongside the south-west gable end and also alongside half of the south-east elevation.

Adjacent to the north-eastern gable end there is a metal storage container, but as labelled on **Fig. C.7.1**, the container shown at the north-west side of the building is no longer present.

The ground composition to the north-west and north-east of the building comprises short-mown grassland and localised neat storage of concrete slabs on one pallet adjacent to the north-west elevation. To the east, the short grassland leads to a pond, which is illustrated in **Photo. 1**. As shown, the pond is bound by a small old quarry face on its east side. There is also a small cluster of trees adjacent to its south side, making it a very enclosed and sheltered feature.



Pond

Short-mown grass

Photo. 1

The land and buildings are all very neatly kept.

There is no evidence of invasive plant species.

C.7.2 Daylight survey and assessment – for bats

The storage outbuilding is of warehouse-type construction and comprises breeze-block walls and a metal framed roof, finished with corrugated asbestos sheets. Its north-west elevation and south-west gable end are illustrated in **Photo. 2**.

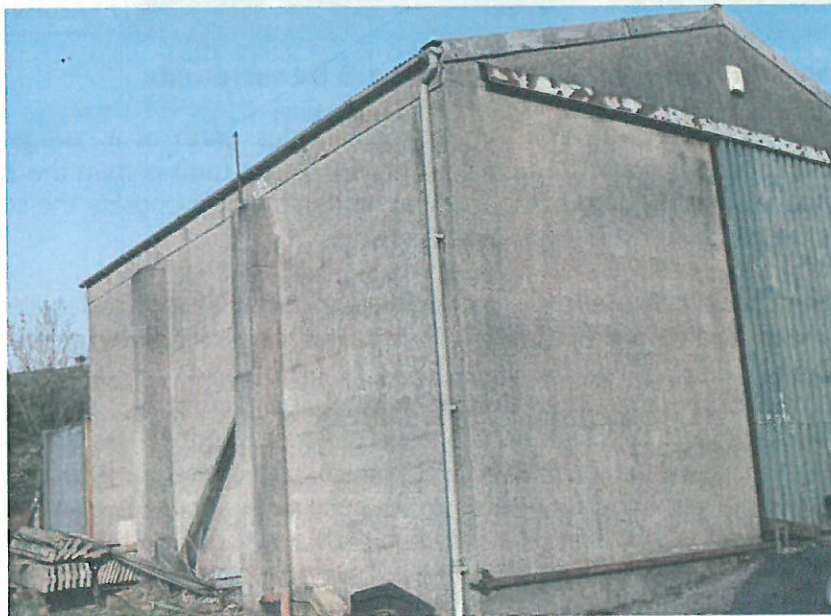


Photo. 2

As exemplified in **Photo 2**, the exterior walls are finished with a thin skim of render, which is in good condition and displays no cracks or signs of lifting, thus no potential value for bats. Internally it can be seen that the breeze-blocks are only finished with a thin coat of paint, but that all mortar is intact and there are no cracks or crevices, so they afford no potential value for bats. Further, although the blocks appear to be wide enough to have hollow cores, they are capped with slim breeze blocks along the wall-tops of the elevations and with tight mortar at the tops of the gable-ends (see **Photo. 3**). It is assessed that the walls have no potential value for roosting or hibernating bats.

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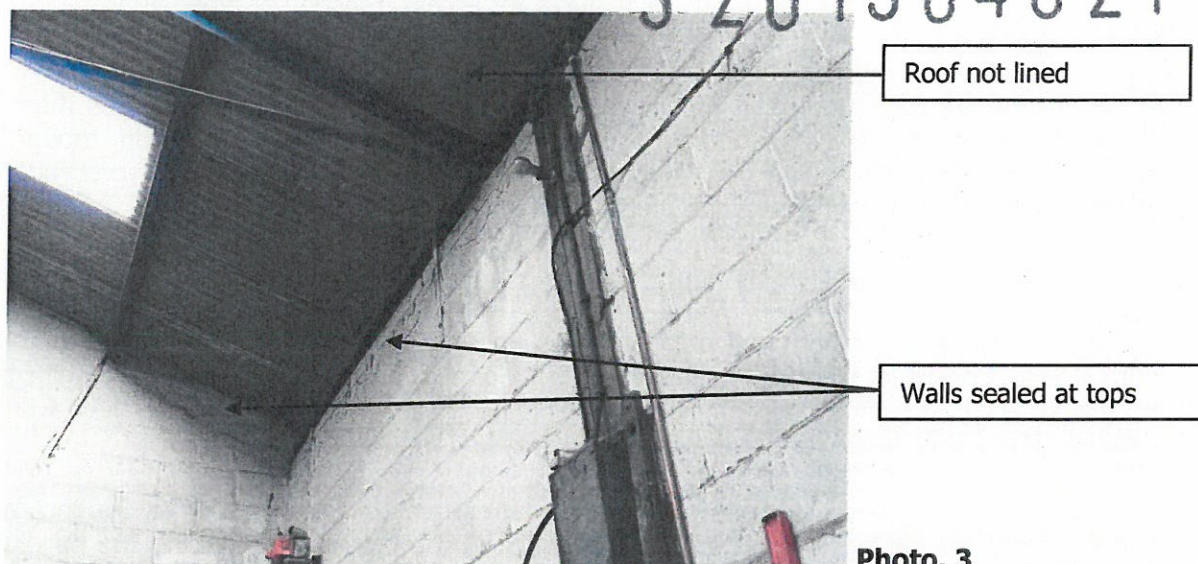
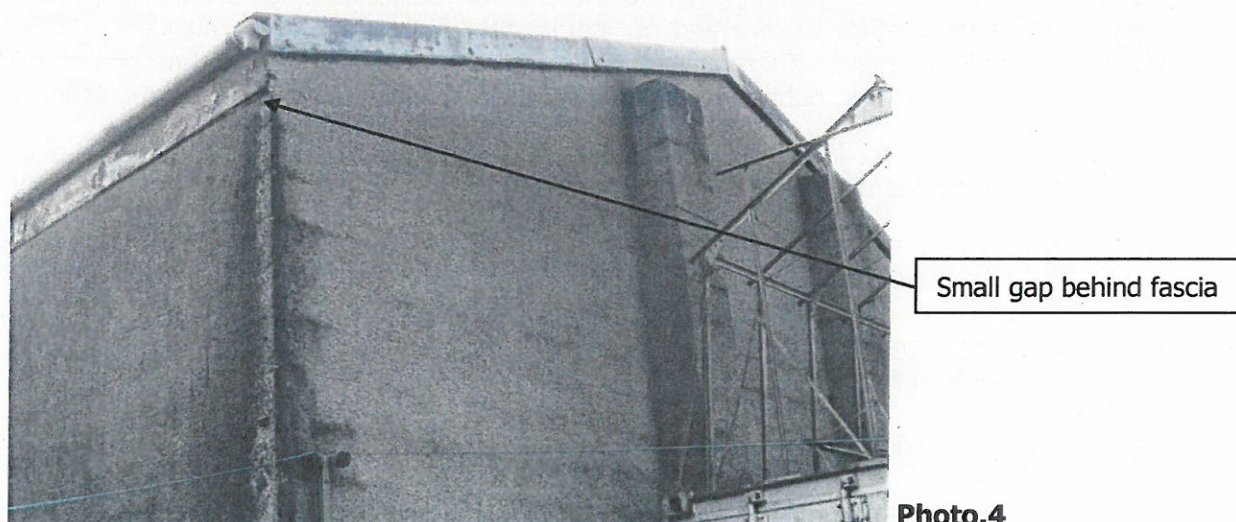
**Photo. 3**

Photo. 3 also illustrates that the corrugated asbestos sheets of the roof are not underlined and that they are accompanied by plastic skylights, of which there are eight. The asbestos sheets rest on timber purlins, affixed to the metal frame and rafters. Whilst there is a small crevice between the top of each purlin and the underside of each corrugated sheet, there is no evidence of bats within the building and the presence of the skylights allows abundant light penetration. It is judged that the roof is only of very low potential value for roosting bats and of no value for hibernating bats.

Fascia boards are attached to the exterior eaves, and these are finished with render. Along the north-west side there is a tightly sealed finish but along the south-east side there is missing render and localised lifting of the board, with narrow gaps to the rear of it at three small locations, one of which is illustrated in **Photo. 4**. The gaps afford low potential value for opportunistic use by lone crevice-roosting bats, but no potential value for hibernating bats.

**Photo.4**

Both gable ends are finished with dry verge / end cap features that stand off from the wall by approx. 4 – 5cm, thus give no crevice-roost habitat for bats. With the interior view of the walls suggesting that their tops are finished with mortar, it is likely that there is also little or no access to wall-tops to the rear of the caps. The roof gables therefore provide little or no potential value for bats.

Finally, windows and doors associated with the barn are limited to one large metal door at the south-west gable end and one smaller metal door and one window in the south-east elevation.

There is no potential for bats to use these features for access, roosting or hibernating.

Both externally and internally there is no evidence of bat droppings or other field signs. With all elevations having been studied, without access or visibility constraints, this indicates there are no significant constraints or considerations in relation to the proposed demolition, though the localised low potential value for lone, crevice-roosting bats will require precautionary consideration, as explained in sections D and E of this report.

C.7.3 Daylight survey and assessment – for Barn owl and other nesting birds

There is no evidence of Barn owl or other birds utilising the inside or outside of the storage outbuilding. Consistent with this, habitat appraisal indicates there is negligible potential for birds to gain access to the interior and there is negligible potential nesting habitat associated with the exterior. There is nowhere for Barn owl to gain access.

On a precautionary basis it is worth considering that certain bird species such as Starling, Wren and Blackbird can be highly opportunistic and might find a means of colonising the building in the future, but as it stands there is no significant concern or constraint in relation to the proposed demolition. Minor precautions may be applied, as explained in sections D and E of this report.

D Legislation and implications of the findings

D.1 Bats

All UK bat species are provided full legal protection under Schedule 5 (section 9) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, making them European Protected Species. In combination this legislation make it illegal to intentionally kill, injure, harm or disturb bats and illegal to damage, disturb or obstruct access to bat roosts.

There is no evidence of roosting bats, so there is no requirement for a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence and no requirement for a Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) Method Statement. There is no potential value for roosting bats and no potential for a maternity roost. However, habitat appraisal has identified two minor considerations, as follows:

- Low potential for lone, crevice-roosting bats to use small gaps to the rear of the south-east fascia board.
- Very low potential for lone, crevice-roosting bats to roost atop timber purlins, beneath the asbestos sheets.

On this basis, best-practice measures are required prior to and during work on these features, as specified in **Section E.1** of this report.

D.2 Nesting birds

Wild birds, their nests and their eggs are protected under Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it illegal to kill or injure a bird and to destroy its eggs or its nest whilst it is in use or being built. The Barn owl is also listed in Schedule 1 of the Act 1981 (as amended) and this affords it special protection that makes it illegal to disturb the species whilst at the nest.

With there being no evidence of Barn owl or nesting birds, and negligible habitat value, there is no substantive risk of negative impacts but on a precautionary basis it is advisable to apply the simple measures presented in Section E.2 of this report.

E Recommended actions

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E.1 Precautionary protection of bats

There will remain a low risk of one or more bats using the building for roosting between the time of this survey having been completed (early May 2013) and the time of work commencing. To ensure that no bats are killed or injured when the work takes place, the following precautions are recommended:

- A pre-commencement nocturnal bat survey is required, with such a survey being suitably timed (i.e. taking place between May and September) and under suitably mild and calm weather conditions.
- If any evidence of bats is detected then guidance from a licensed bat worker will need to be applied. to ensure there is no breach of the legislative protection afforded to roosting bats.
- Even if no evidence of roosting bats is detected, the initial invasive work on the roof should still be undertaken with care, with the southern fascia board removed by hand and with corrugated sheets removed by hand.
- Workers are to be alert for the presence of bats, and/or any accumulations of bat droppings, underneath the features that they are stripping. For guidance, the following photographs show a Common pipistrelle bat (the species that is most likely to be encountered) and an accumulation of bat droppings.



Fully grown Common pipistrelle bat



Pipistrelle bat droppings, which look like mouse droppings, but crumble to dust when squashed between the fingers (comprising tiny, glistening bits of insect wings etc.)

- If a bat (or an accumulation of bat droppings) is discovered at any time during the roof removal, work is to temporarily cease whilst an experienced bat ecologist is contacted for guidance and assistance. This can be the consultant who undertook the initial survey (Ribble Ecology: 01772 879545), any other licensed bat worker, or the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) helpline (0845 1300 228).
- If it is necessary to capture a bat to remove it to safety, this should be undertaken with gloves or a light cloth, capturing the bat and containing it whilst the advice of the bat worker is sought. Thereafter, following the on-site advice of the bat worker will ensure there is no breach of the legislative protection afforded to roosting bats.

E.2 Protection of breeding birds

The bird breeding season typically extends from the beginning of March to the end of August inclusive. As there is no evidence of nesting birds, no formal timing restriction needs to be

applied, but it is recommended that the following actions are taken in the lead up to commencement:

- In the days immediately prior to commencing work, a thorough inspection is to be made within and around the building to check for opportunistic colonisation by breeding birds.
- If any occurrences of breeding birds are detected, the nest must be left undisturbed until the chicks have fledged, at which point the work can take place.

F References

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