



Mr. J. Wilkinson
Fox Fields Farm
Hurst Green
Lancashire
BB7 9PN

12th April 2016

320160335P

Dear Mr. Wilkinson,

Re: Proposed development at Fox Fields Farm, Hurst Green BB7 9PN

Thank you for your request for a bat survey. I understand that the survey is required to accompany a planning application, which comprises the change of use of an existing barn to a dwelling.

Background and Qualifications

I am a licensed bat worker (Class 2 licence), registered consultant of the Bat Low Impact Class Licence, a Chartered Environmentalist and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology.

I have been working as an ecological consultant for over eighteen years, most recently as Director of Ecology Services UK Limited. This work includes provision of expert advice and guidance to bodies such as Statutory Nature Conservation Organisations, Local Planning Authorities and Lancashire and Yorkshire Police Authorities, as well as the delivery of professional training courses about bat survey, ecology and mitigation at a national level.

I have extensive knowledge of bat ecology relating to buildings including the requirements and condition necessary for bats roosting. I also have recognised skills relating to bat surveys and assessment

I meet the requirements for knowledge, skills and practical experience as outlined in the CIEEM technical guidance (Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (2013) *Competencies for Species Survey: Bats*. CIEEM, Winchester, Hants).

Advisory Note

The information in this letter represents the professional opinion of an ecological consultancy and does not constitute professional legal advice. You may wish to seek professional legal interpretation of the wildlife legislation associated with this area of work.

The information, opinion and advice that Ecology Services UK Ltd has prepared are true, and have been prepared in accordance with the CIEEM Code of Professional Conduct. Ecology Services UK Ltd confirms that the opinions expressed are our true professional bone fide opinions.

Methodology

In order to assess the likelihood of bats being present the barn at Fox Fields Farm, a daytime inspection of the building and surroundings was carried out on 11th April 2016.

Observations were made from ground level, as well as from fixed, double section ladders. An endoscope, although available, was not required for this particular inspection. A 1000 lumens Led Lenser X21 torch and close-focussing Zeiss Victory FL 8x42 binoculars were also used as aids to visibility.

As with most buildings, the roof coverings could not be examined in detail due to limits on access and concerns about the safety of the surveyor. However, the roof coverings were visible from ground level; this enabled an assessment to be made in relation to potential for roosting areas for bats.

It is recognised that limiting the survey to a single visit in one month does not take account of bat activity on the site through the whole of the active season (March/April to October) or at other times of the year.

Results of the Survey

The barn at Fox Fields Farm is an unoccupied, unheated single storey building, lying between a farmhouse to the east and an office building to the west. The barn, which is used for general storage, has stone walls and a dual pitched, slated roof with fascia boards to north and south.

The roof is unlined and supported by a timber frame structure with no obvious roosting features such as gaps in joints. No gaps were observed at the ridge or within the main roof coverings. The building supports no roof voids or other large, enclosed features.

Exterior and interior walls are in a good condition, although the internal walls support several deep cavities, almost all of which (i.e. those that were safely accessible) were inspected.

All doorways and windows in the barn were uncovered at the time of the survey, and supported large, open lintels above and wall cavities to the sides. As a result of the open nature of windows and doorways, the building interior is draughty and subject to extensive natural light incursion and fluctuations in temperature.

There was no vegetation lying against the barn which had potential for use by bats or nesting birds.



Habitats and surroundings

The proposed development site lies within a farmstead comprising several buildings, hard standing and a mature garden; there are few sheltering or potential foraging features for bats associated with the building and its immediate surroundings. The barn interior, by virtue of its open and accessible nature, provides a potential sheltering and foraging resource. The immediate surroundings are connected to the wider landscape by a series of low, managed broadleaved hedgerows.



Image 1 – aerial view of Fox Field Farm. The building subject to survey is outlined in red.

The wider surroundings are dominated by managed farm fields (permanent pasture), a network of managed hedgerows and small woodlands. The River Ribble lies within 500 metres of the south of the barn.

The proposed development site lies in a lowland position. The wider area around the proposed development site is known to support a range of bat species and roost types.

Overall, the proposed development site and its immediate surroundings provide a resource of low value to bats.

Bats

No bats were found during the site inspection.

Scattered individual bat droppings, characteristic of those produced by pipistrelle bats, were found throughout the barn. The arrangement of droppings was in keeping with a bat or bats flying through and around the building interior at night; this behaviour is very typical of pipistrelles and other bat species where buildings are sufficiently large and accessible.

Potential roosting features for bats are as follows:

Night roosting

- Any place inside the barn – Low potential

Day roosting

- Gaps associated with window and doorway lintels – Low potential
- Gaps associated with deep wall cavities – Low potential
- Interior wall tops beneath roof – Low potential

Hibernation roosting

- Gaps associated with window and doorway lintels – Low potential
- Gaps associated with deep wall cavities – Low potential

Low potential in the above examples reflects the condition of the building and its environment and does not suggest that further surveys are necessary.

Nesting birds

Four disused barn swallow nests and two disused small bird nests were found; all of these were inside the barn except for a single small bird nest inside a pipe on the external north elevation.

No nesting birds were found.

Due to the construction and condition of the building there are many suitable features with potential for use by nesting birds - these include:

- Behind fascia boards
- Inside window and door lintels
- Inside wall cavities
- Attached to structural timbers

Other Protected Species

There is no evidence of any other protected species. The proposed development site is considered unsuitable to support other protected species as a result of current use of the site and the availability and condition of habitats present.

Advice and Recommendations

Bats

It is advised that there is no evidence to suggest that bats pose a constraint to the proposed development.

It is advised that it is possible that bats could utilise a number of features for roosting, including window and door lintels. These features, in this location and landscape setting, have some potential for bats to use throughout the year.

It is advised that as a precaution, either a daytime building check and single emergence survey (assuming that this is within the bat activity season) or a daytime building check alone (at other times) should be undertaken immediately prior to commencement of development, to check for the presence of roosting bats.

It is advised that as a precaution, all personnel involved in works to the building should be carefully advised about bats by an appropriate person, so that all works are undertaken with a clear understanding about legal aspects, precautions to be adopted and what to do if a bat is found.

It is advised that although there is no evidence to show that bats are a constraint to development of the building at the time of the survey, it is possible that a development at another time may impact on bats – this is because the features including gaps at lintels and wall cavities are accessible to bats and have some (limited) potential for use by roosting bats. It is therefore recommended that if works to the building are undertaken after spring 2016, advice should be sought as to the need for further surveys at that time.

It is advised that if bats are found at any time during the development, work must stop until advice has been sought from Natural England directly or through an appropriately experienced Ecologist. If the development will affect bats, a licence may be required and suitable mitigation put in place.

It is recommended that development work takes place outside of the hibernation season (generally November to March) or is sufficiently advanced by this season to render the building unlikely to be used by roosting bats.

Rationale for advice and recommendations

The survey has provided no evidence of bat roosts; however a number of building features are present and have some potential to be used by bats. Bats are small, opportunistic animals that may exploit a wide range of niches.

The precautionary measures are generally regarded by Statutory Bodies, Local Planning Authorities and Professional Ecologists as being appropriate where there is a low risk of bats being present.

Bats and their roosts are protected under UK and European legislation. Roost sites are protected even if bats are not present at the time of the survey.

Nesting birds

It is advised that there is no evidence to suggest that nesting birds currently pose a constraint to the proposed development. It is, however, advised that there is a high risk that nesting birds will occupy the barn at some time during the nesting season (generally February to September).

It is advised that development works should take place outside of the nesting season, or are sufficiently advanced by this season to render the building unlikely to be used by nesting birds.

It is advised that as a precaution, if works take place during the nesting season, a single nesting bird survey should be undertaken immediately prior to commencement of development, to check for the presence of nesting birds.

It is advised that as a precaution, all personnel involved in works to the building should be carefully advised about nesting birds by an appropriate person, so that all works are undertaken with a clear understanding about legal aspects, precautions to be adopted and what to do if an active nest is found.

It is advised that if birds are found to be nesting within or in close proximity to the work area during development works, it will be necessary to delay works or seek advice as to whether or not any development can proceed lawfully at that time. Under these circumstances, work must stop until advice has been sought from Natural England directly, or through an appropriately experienced Ecologist.

Rationale for advice and recommendations

Nests have been found inside and outside the barn.

Bird species which nest in buildings such as the barn are likely to occur within the immediate surroundings of the proposed development site during the nesting season. The proposed works to the building have potential to disturb nesting birds if they are making use of the building or surrounding vegetation.

Under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), wild birds are protected from being killed injured or captured, while their nests and eggs are protected from being damaged destroyed or taken. In addition certain species such as the barn owls are included under Schedule 1 of the Act and are protected against disturbance while nesting and when they have dependant young. Offences against birds listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are subject to special penalties.

If nesting birds are present, plans will need to show how offences will be avoided during the proposed development. Work will have to be programmed around the nesting season to minimise disturbance.



There is no provision under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) for licensing the disturbance of nesting birds (other than feral pigeons) or the destruction of nests which are in use for the purpose of development. If enforcement action were taken the developer would need to rely on the 'incidental result of an otherwise lawful operation' defence if it were not possible to avoid an offence being committed. This defence can only be tested in court and it is therefore important to ensure all possible mechanisms for avoiding an offence are considered.

Other Protected Species

There are no constraints in relation to other protected species.

If you require any further ecological advice or guidance in relation to the proposed works please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Waring". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

**Pat Waring CEnv MCIEEM - Director
Ecology Services UK Ltd**



South elevation (lhs) and north elevation (rhs). Dashed lines show extent of barn.



Space beneath fascia – potential nesting site (lhs) and window lintel with wall cavity – potential bat roost and bird nest site (rhs)



Internal gable adjoining walls (lhs - east) (rhs - west)



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Disused swallow nests (lhs) and other small bird nest (rhs)



Bat dropping (lhs) and wider landscape to north east (rhs)

