

DAYTIME BAT SURVEY AT DANIELS FARM, PRESTON ROAD, LONGRIDGE, PRESTON, LANCASHIRE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in July 2017 by PWA Planning to undertake a daytime bat survey of three farm outbuildings at Daniels Farm, Longridge, Preston, Lancashire. The site will be the subject of a planning application for the demolition of the existing agricultural buildings and the construction of three residential developments with associated access and parking.
- 1.2 Daniels Farm is located off Preston Road, Alston, Longridge (O.S. grid reference: SD5990735456). The development site comprises two steel-framed barns with a breezeblock feeding shed. There are other buildings on site that are not part of the development. The barns currently house livestock and the breezeblock feeding station is used for storage.
- 1.3 The site is surrounded by agricultural land, with mature trees and hedgerows. There are a small number of residential properties to the north. The surrounding land offers good potential commuting and foraging opportunities for bats.
- 1.4 Biodiversity is a material consideration to the planning process and consideration must be given to protected species. The proposed works to the structure at Davenport House Farm will be intrusive and therefore consideration should be given to roosting bats and other protected and notable species, which could potentially utilise the property.
- 1.5 All bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Environmental Damage Regulations 2009. It is illegal to disturb or damage a bat roost whether bats are present or not.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 A daytime bat survey of the building at Daniels Farm was undertaken to search for, and to assess the potential for, a bat roost to be present within the building.
- 2.2 An external survey was carried out, which included, for example, looking for gaps between any soffit boards and walls, gaps between window frames and the walls, and looking for bat droppings on the walls and window ledges.
- 2.3 The building was also searched internally for evidence of a bat roost, which included looking for the following signs:
 - live or dead bats
 - bat droppings
 - bat entry/exit points
 - bat urine staining
 - grease marks on any timbers
 - feeding remains such as insect wings
 - areas clear of cobwebs.
- 2.4 A pair of close-focussing binoculars, a high-powered torch and an endoscope were used (where required) to search for evidence of bats externally and internally.

Personnel and Timing

- 2.5 Rosie Fisher and Kate Reed carried out the daytime bat survey on the 5th July 2017. Both surveyors have four years of experience, and are fully trained, in protected species surveys. The weather on the day of the survey was overcast and dry.

Survey constraints

- 2.6 Daytime bat surveys can be undertaken at any time of year. All of the internal spaces were fully accessible. There were negligible constraints to the survey.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 The survey site comprises 3 buildings. Figure 1 shows the buildings.



Figure 1 showing the buildings to be surveyed in red (Large Barn to west and Feeding Shed to the east) and blue (Small Barn)

LARGE BARN

External Survey

3.2 The main barn has breezeblock walls up to approximately 1.5 metres, then sheet metal or corrugated asbestos panels up to the roof (see Photograph 1). The external walls are intact and in generally good condition. Some of the corrugated asbestos sheeting is damaged and some sections are missing. The mortar between the breezeblocks is all intact. Large parts of the walls are open.



Photograph 1 showing the exterior of the Large Barn

- 3.3 The building has a pitched asbestos cement roof with skylights (see Photograph 2). The roof panels are all complete, intact and flush with each other. Bargeboards cover the join of the walls and roof where present, however these are in poor repair and missing in places. Minor gaps exist beneath, but when inspected these gaps were found not to lead to any suitable roosting opportunities for bats.



Photograph 2 showing the corrugated asbestos walls and roof

Internal Survey

- 3.4 The building does not support a roof void. The entire roof has exposed wooden and steel support beams which are complete and without gaps or significant cracks (see Photograph 3).



Photograph 3 showing the internal roof beams of the Large Barn

- 3.5 The internal walls have missing panels and are open in places (see Photograph 4). No suitable cavities are present for roosting bats to use.



Photograph 4 showing the interior gable end of the Large Barn

- 3.6 The interior spaces of the Large Barn are well-lit with natural light, and draughty from the window gaps and the open wall panels. No suitable bat roosting cavities were found and no evidence of bat activity, such as bat droppings, was found within the Large Barn.

SMALL BARN

External Survey

- 3.7 The Small Barn has breezeblock walls up to approximately 1.5 metres then a combination of corrugated metal and wooden panels up to the roof (see Photograph 5). The wooden panelled walls are in poor condition, with missing panels. This leaves the building open and the northern elevation is completely open. The corrugated metal also supports gaps.



Photograph 5 showing the walls of the Small Barn

- 3.8 The building has a pitched asbestos cement roof (see Photograph 6). The panels are all complete, intact and flush with each other. The ridge tiles are all present and intact. Bargeboards are present on the gable ends which seal the gaps between the roof and the walls. On the other sides minor gaps exist beneath, but when inspected these gaps were found to be very shallow and not to lead to any suitable bat roosting opportunities.



Photograph 6 showing the roof of the Small Barn

Internal Survey

- 3.9 The building does not support a roof void. The entire roof has exposed metal support beams which are complete and without gaps or cracks (see Photograph 7).



Photograph 7 showing the internal roof beams of the Small Barn

- 3.10 This building is well-lit with daylight and draughty from the open sections (see Photograph 8). No suitable bat roosting cavities were found and no evidence of bat activity, such as bat droppings, was found within the Small Barn.



Photograph 8 showing the interior of the Small Barn

FEEDING SHED

External Survey

- 3.11 The external breezeblock walls of the Feeding Shed are complete and mostly intact, with only negligible, shallow cracks in the brickwork (see Photograph 9). The wooden door frame it is not useable so the front is left open. Sections of bargeboard are missing, leaving gaps into the building. The pieces left remain flush with the brickwork, with no suitable cavities for roosting bats.



Photograph 9 showing the front of the Feeding Shed

- 3.12 The building has a pitched corrugated asbestos roof with skylights (see Photograph 10). The panels are mainly complete and flush with each other, with some cracks and broken panels. Minor gaps exist between the roof panels and the walls, but when inspected these gaps were found to be very shallow and do not lead to any suitable bat roosting spaces.



Photograph 10 showing the roof of the Feeding Shed from the north of the property

Internal Survey

- 3.13 The building does not support a roof void. The entire roof has exposed wooden and metal support beams which are complete and without gaps or significant cracks (see Photograph 11). The ceiling is very dusty and cobwebbed, suggesting that there has been no recent bat activity.



Photograph 11 showing the roof beams of the Feeding Shed

- 3.14 The internal brickwork is in good condition, with minimal missing mortar and damage, leading only to shallow gaps. These recesses were inspected fully and no suitable bat roosting cavities were found. The room is well-lit with daylight visible through the skylights and around the back door (see Photograph 12).



Photograph 12 showing the interior of the Feeding Shed

- 3.15 A very small number (<10) of bat droppings were found scattered sparsely on the ground of the Feeding Shed. As there is no concentration of droppings, this appears to be where bats have entered through the open doorway to forage. No other evidence of bat activity was found. No suitable roosting cavities for bats exist. Old bird nests were balanced on roof beams. These were inactive.

SURROUNDING LAND

- 3.16 The surrounding buildings have intact tiled, pitched roofs that look preferable for use by bats. All the buildings occur within the farm complex which is a large area of hardstanding (see Photograph 13). Ephemeral vegetation has started to develop over some of the hardstanding, where a large amount of building materials are stored (see Photograph 14). Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* is present within this ephemeral vegetation adjacent to the feeding shed. Himalayan Balsam is an invasive plant species and is listed on Schedule 9 Part II (plants) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). A small area of amenity grassland occurs at the front of the large barn, this is regularly managed through mowing (see Photograph 15). The surrounding pasture with hedgerows and mature trees offers commuting and foraging opportunities for bats.



Photograph 13 showing the hardstanding around the buildings



Photograph 14 showing the ephemeral vegetation



Photograph 15 showing the amenity grassland

4.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 No evidence of roosting bats was located at the three buildings at Daniels Farm, Longridge. The scattered bat droppings found in the feeding shed were concluded to be from bats using the building to forage as there are no suitable roosting features present. The buildings are in poor condition, making them draughty and full of natural light. No suitable cavities for roosting bats were found, internally or externally, upon a full inspection. No loft space exists within the structures. The interior roofs are fully exposed, and the internal spaces are cold and heavily cobwebbed. Each building offers **negligible bat roost suitability**. The boundary hedgerows and trees are to be retained by the development there will be no loss of bat foraging habitat. The hardstanding, amenity grassland and ephemeral vegetation will all be lost to the development, these all have poor ecological value. The proposed developments have large gardens which have the potential to bring ecological gain to the site.
- 4.2 It is the opinion of the author of this report that the development can proceed without the need for further survey work (e.g. bat activity surveys) or bat mitigation due to the negligible potential of the structures to support bats. However, if the work is delayed by longer than two years from the date of this survey, a further bat survey will be required to update the findings.
- 4.3 It should be noted that bat absence is very difficult to prove definitively due to their mobility and size, and single or small numbers of bats are able to roost in extremely small spaces, such as in gaps between panels. Development should be undertaken with care, with roof panels lifted rather than dragged, for example.
- 4.4 **If during development works a bat (or an accumulation of bat droppings) is discovered at any time, work is to temporarily cease whilst an experienced bat ecologist is contacted for guidance and assistance.** This can be Rachel Hacking Ecology (0161 465 8971) who undertook the initial survey, any licensed bat worker, or the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) helpline (0845 1300 228).
- 4.5 No evidence of other protected species, such as occupied birds' nests, could be found within the buildings. The surrounding hedgerows have the potential to support nesting birds. All bird species are protected whilst at the nest under The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), therefore, it is recommended that any work to the vegetation takes place outside of the bird nesting season (the nesting season is generally March to August) or a bird nest check be undertaken prior to work commencing.

- 4.6 It is recommended that the Himalayan Balsam is removed prior to work commencing or during construction, using a suitable eradication methodology such as strimming or application of herbicide.

REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed.). (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd Edition*. Bat Conservation Trust. London.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature.