



**Bat, Breeding Bird and Barn Owl Scoping Survey
Hark to Bounty, Slaidburn**

November 2020

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| Status | Date | Checked by: |
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Site:

Hark to Bounty
Town End
Slaidburn
Clitheroe
BB7 3EP

Dates:

Scoping survey: 30th October 2020

Client's agent:

Crawford Higgins Associates Ltd
1 Fore Street
Hexham
Northumberland
NE46 1ND

Planning Authority:

Ribble Valley Borough Council

Our ref:

2020-1035

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1 Summary

A bat, breeding bird and barn owl scoping survey has been undertaken on Hark to Bounty, a 16th Century coaching inn, within the village of Slaidburn.

A detailed building inspection revealed low potential bat roost habitat, due to partially lined roofs and deep masonry crevices. A bat activity survey is required to confirm presence/absence of bats before any impact of works on crevice dwelling bat species can be assessed.

We can rule out any use of the buildings by a maternity roost of void dwelling bats, as no droppings or feeding remains were identified despite dense internal cobwebbing, and dry undisturbed internal conditions. Therefore, should bat roosts be identified during the emergence survey, mitigation and licensing is likely to be straightforward and should not require any set aside void space for bats. Mitigation for the loss of any crevice roosts will be provided through installation of suitable professional and long-lasting bat boxes post-development.

A single Jackdaw nest was identified in the void within the area of works, and there is potential for bird nesting in masonry crevices. Therefore, timing of works should avoid the bird breeding season if possible. If works are to be carried out in the bird breeding season a check should be made immediately prior to works commencing for the presence of any active bird nests in areas affected by works. If any active nests are discovered, then, where possible, work to these areas should be carried out once any chicks have fledged in order to avoid disturbance.

There will be no loss of barn owl habitat.

2 Introduction

MAB Environment and Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Crawford Higgins Associates Ltd. to undertake a bat, breeding bird and barn owl scoping survey on a 16th Century coaching inn at Hark to Bounty, Slaidburn to accompany listed building consent for repairs to an external wall which has subsided.

The site is located within the village of Slaidburn (Central grid reference: SD71125240). The location of the site is shown on Figure 1 below, and the application site boundary is shown in Figure 2.

The report was written by Sarah Emerson Grad CIEEM of MAB Environment and Ecology Ltd.

The report's primary objective is to provide an impact assessment for the development on bats, define any necessary mitigation proposals, and to assess the requirement for a Protected Species Licence. A secondary objective is to assess potential impact on breeding birds.

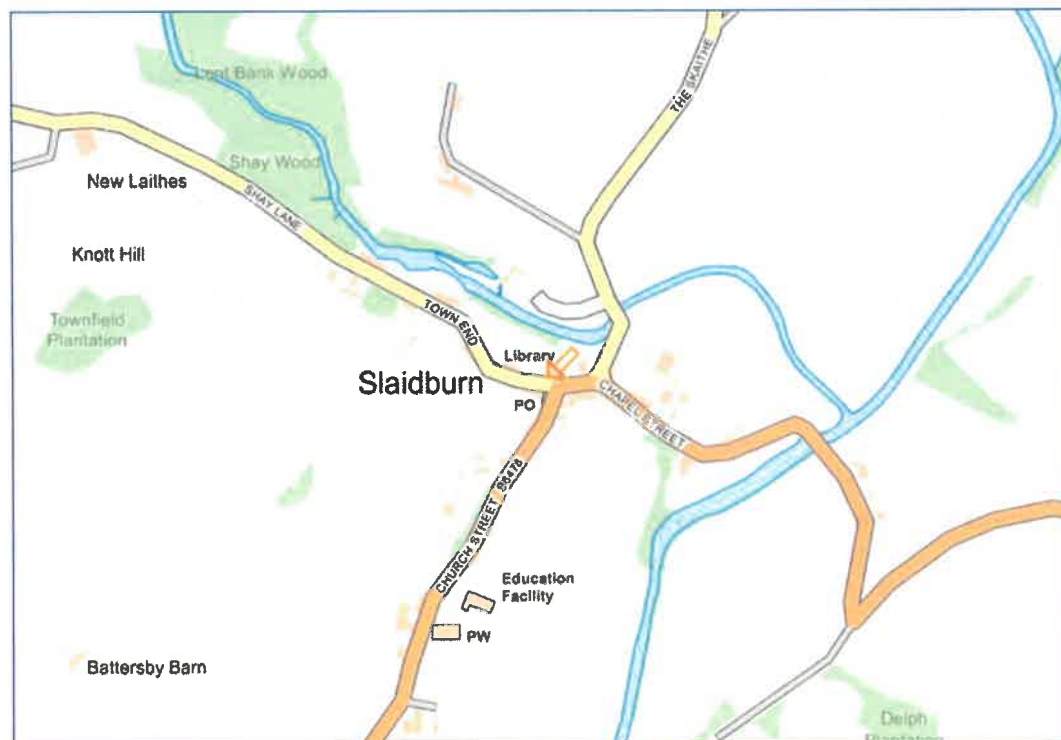


Figure 1: Site location.

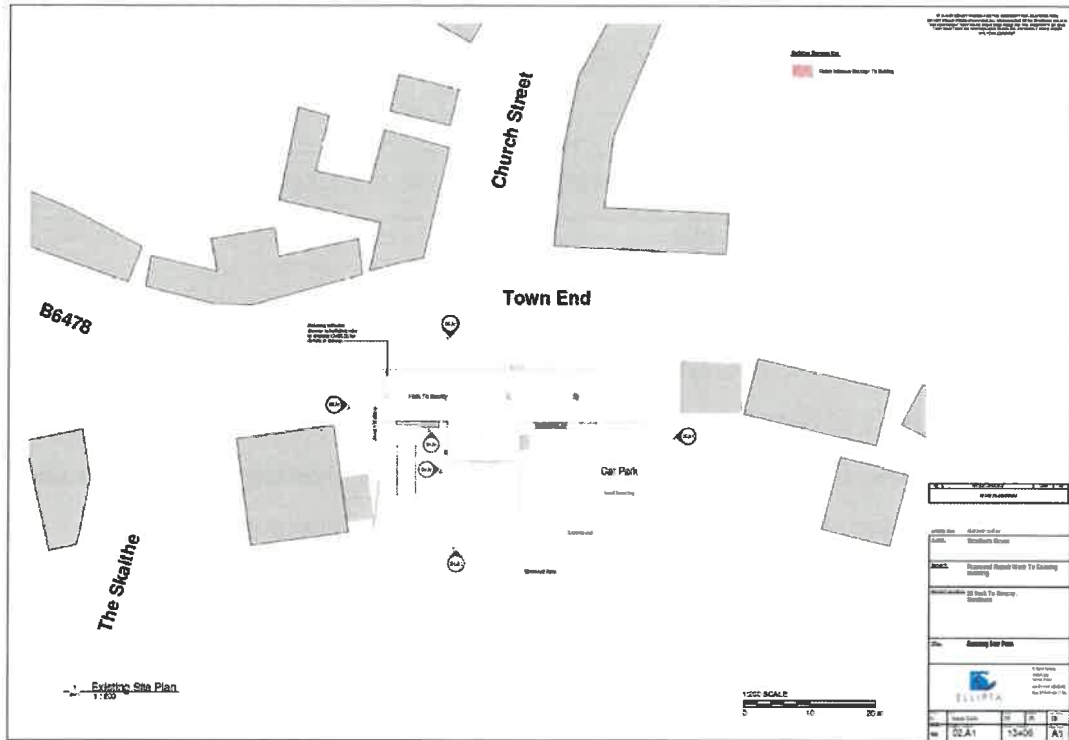


Figure 2: Site plan as existing.

3 Methodology

3.1 Desktop Study

3.1.1 Bat roost records for a 2km radius around the site were commissioned from the East Lancashire Bat Group (ELBG).

3.1.2 Aerial imagery from Google Earth and 'MAGIC' government website were used to assess the location of the site and the surrounding habitat for value to bats. This includes proximity of the site to good bat foraging habitat such as woodland and water bodies and if the site is linked to such habitats by linear features like hedgerows, woodland edges or rivers which bats use to commute around the environment.

3.2 Field Survey

3.2.1 The site was surveyed by Sarah Emerson Grad CIEEM who has worked as an ecologist since 2015 and for MAB since 2017. She holds a Class Survey Licence WML-A34 (Bat Survey Level 2) registration number: 2016-26716-CLS-CLS. She also holds a Class Survey Licence for Great Crested Newts WML-CL09 (level 2) registration number 2016-19358-CLS-CLS. The surveys were carried out in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust, Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn).

3.2.2 The interior and exterior of the buildings were inspected during the day using halogen torches (500,000 candle power), binoculars, ladders, and a flexible endoscope (a Sea Snake LCD inspection scope). All normal signs of bat use were looked for, including bats, bat droppings, feeding waste, entry and exit holes, grease marks, dead bats, and the sounds / smells of bat roosts.

3.2.3 All signs of breeding bird activity and barn owl (*Tyto alba*) activity were looked for. Signs looked for included white droppings, often vertical down walls or beams; active nests and nesting materials; (birds flying into and out of barns: generally, summer only); bird feathers, particularly swift (*Apus apus*), swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) and house martin (*Delichon urbica*), bird corpses, feeding waste (including pellets), and the sound/smell of birds.

3.2.4 Trees within the site and areas of vegetation were also assessed for value to bats and their importance as foraging and commuting habitat.

3.2.5 The buildings were assessed for their degree of potential to support roosting bats. This includes assessing the building design, materials and condition. See Table 1 for more information.

| Colour code | Suitability. | Roosting habitats | Commuting and foraging habitats |
|-------------|-----------------|--|--|
| Grey | Negligible risk | Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats. | Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats. |
| Yellow | Low risk | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. Unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation). | Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. Not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable but isolated habitat that could only be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub. |
| Amber | Moderate risk | A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only-the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed). | Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as a line of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water. |
| Red | High risk | A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. | Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts. |

Table 1: Guidelines for assessing the suitability of proposed development sites for bats. Adapted from BCT Bat surveys for Professional Ecologists, Good Practice Guidelines 2016.

4 Constraints

The surveys were constrained by season: bats were not active at the time of the survey; therefore, external evidence of bats is likely to have been removed by weather, and bat activity survey methodology is not available.

Records were requested from East Lancashire Bat Group, but there has been no response.

5 Site Description

The surveyed building is a 16th-century coaching inn, which is stone-built, with a slate tiled roof. Further building descriptions can be found in Section 6.2 Visual inspection.



Photo 1: Southern aspect of building.



Photo 2: Northern aspect of building.

6 Results

6.1 Desktop Study

The proposed development site is located within an area of high-quality bat foraging habitat, with Eller Beck approximately 30m to the north with mature riparian habitat leading to Shay Wood, approximately 260m north west. Eller Beck is a tributary of the River Hodder, which also links woodlands and large waterbodies to the development site.

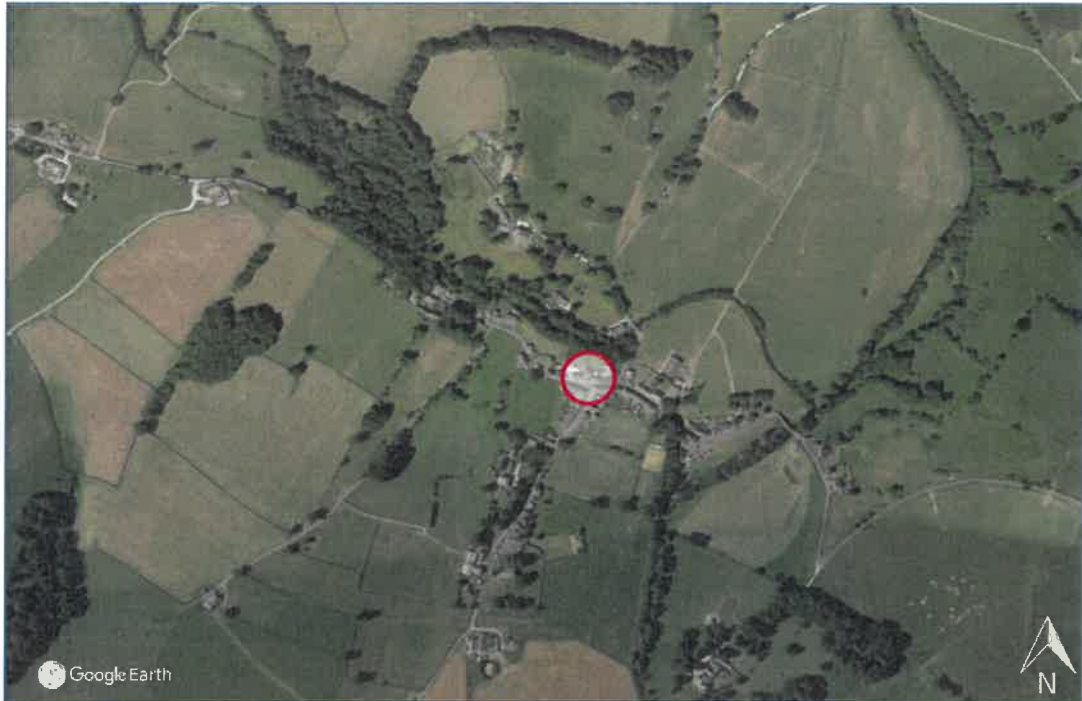


Figure 3. Aerial view of the surrounding landscape.

6.1.2 Bat Group Records

Records were requested from the East Lancashire Bat Group. There has been no response at the time of writing.

6.2 Visual Inspection

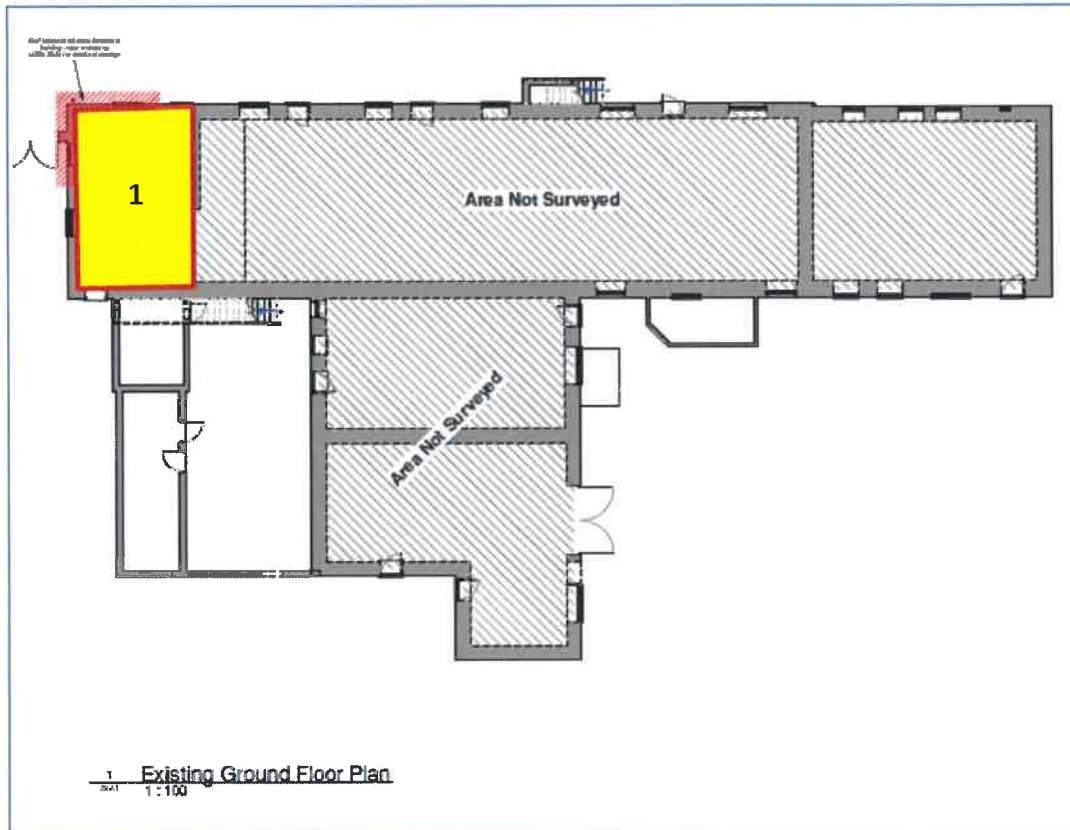


Figure 4: Visual inspection results, Section 1 is area of works, no work proposed to Section 2-4.

| Building ref. | Description | Features with potential bat roost habitat (PBRH). |
|--|--|---|
| 1 – Low potential risk of supporting bats | Stone-built building, with slate tiled roof, half of the roof is lined with a bitumastic liner, and other section is unlined. Internally, the void is undisturbed, and ridge is heavily cobwebbed. No evidence of bats identified. Access into void via loose/missing tiles. Large jackdaw nest within void. Externally, the building has subsided, and significant cracks formed gable and southern wall. 3D image of cracks shown in | External cracks in masonry, PBRH between tiles and lined section. |

Table 2: Visual inspection results

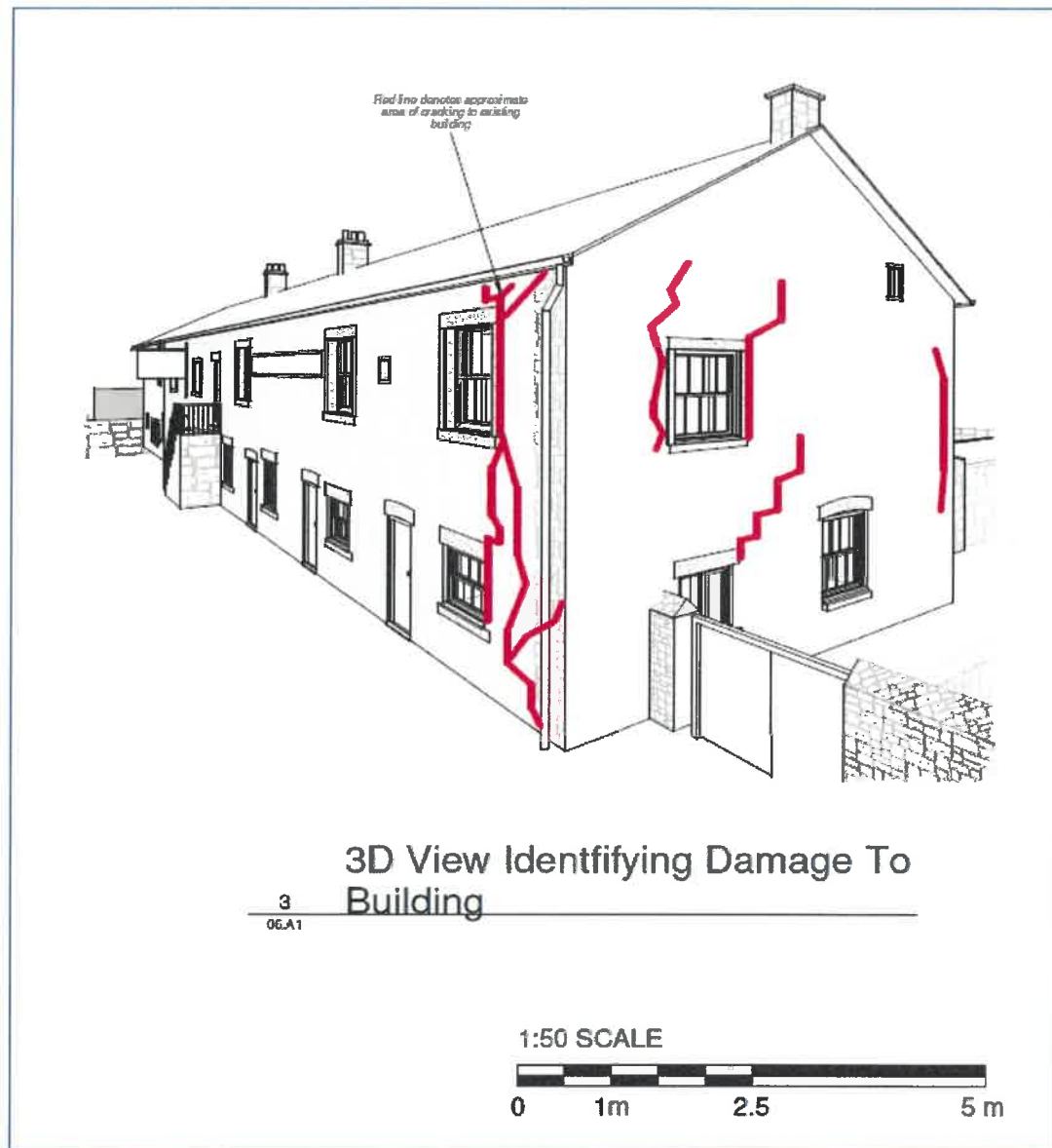


Figure 5: Image to show extent of cracking on Section 1.

Site Photographs



Photo 3: Internal view of void of Section 1.



Photo 4: View of liner in Section 1.



Photo 5: Jackdaw nest in 1.



Photo 6: External crack on southern wall of 1.



Photo 7: Gable of Section 1.

7 Discussion and Analysis

Low potential bat roost habitat, suitable for use by crevice dwelling bat species, such as pipistrelles, was identified. No work to any other section of building is currently proposed.

The roof of Section 1 was partially lined, and there were low number of lifted tiles which could provide access for bats. No evidence of bats was identified within the loft void, despite dry and undisturbed conditions, and a heavily cobwebbed ridge. Externally, there are deep masonry crevices which would also provide suitable roosting habitat for crevice dwelling bat species.

We can rule out any use of the buildings by a maternity roost of bat species which require a covered void to fly in. Internal conditions were undisturbed and dry, and there was dense cobwebbing within the internal roofs which are optimal for the preservation of bat droppings and feeding remains. We would expect to find bat droppings within the voids should a maternity roost be present on site.

Mitigation for any roosts detected by the summer surveys would not require a change in plans and can be incorporated within existing development plan. Further details can be found in Section 9.

There is no evidence of the use of the site by barn owls, and a singular jackdaw nest was noted in Section 1.

We, therefore, recommend that work should be timed to avoid disturbance to nesting birds. If this is not possible, then a check should be made immediately prior to work for the presence of any nesting birds in areas to be worked on. If any active nests are found, then work to those areas should be delayed until after the bird breeding season or once any chicks have fledged.

8 Impact Assessment

To establish whether any bat mitigation will be needed, an evening emergence survey in line with current Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines should be carried out on Section 1, during the period May to September to determine if bats are roosting within the area of proposed works. Any required mitigation measures and requirement for a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) will be confirmed following the results of the summer surveys. Impacts of development works on bats can be found summarised in Table 3.

| Impact on bats | Impact on roosting habitats |
|---|---|
| Physical disturbance | Modification of access point to roost either physically or through, for example lighting or removal of vegetation. |
| Noise disturbance through, for example increased human presence or use of noise generating equipment. | Modification of roost either physically, for example by roof removal, or through, for example, changed temperature, humidity, ventilation or lighting regime. |
| Injury/mortality (e.g. in roost during destruction or through collision with road/rail traffic) | Loss of roost. |

Table 3: Impacts on bats that can arise from proposed activities (from BCT survey guidelines 2016)

There will be a reduction in available nesting sites for small birds on site and a risk of disturbance to nesting birds if work is carried out where active nests are present.

There will be no impact on barn owl.

9 Mitigation & Compensation

9.1 Mitigation Summary

In order to gain a full understanding of the nature of use of the buildings by bats and to assess the extent to which they may be affected by the proposed conversion work, at least one bat activity survey will be required on Section 1 (area of works) during the period May – September (see method statement), prior to any repair works.

Should plans change and other areas of the building are to be included, these will also require further survey effort.

Mitigation is likely to be bat boxes, and not set aside void space, due to the lack of any evidence of use by any of the buildings by void dwelling bats.

Replacement potential crevice bat roost habitat will be provided through the installation of a long-lasting, professional quality bat box, for example a Schwegler 1FF or equivalent. This will ensure that ecological functionality of the site is maintained post-development.

We recommend that work is carried out outside of the bird breeding season. If this is not possible then a check should be made for active bird nests prior to works. If any active nests are present, then work should be delayed until after the bird breeding season or once chicks have fledged in order to avoid disturbance.

No mitigation is required for barn owls.

9.2 Method Statement

Bats

9.2.1 Prior to the commencement of works, a bat activity survey, in line with current Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines will be carried out on Section 1 at the appropriate time of year (May-September) and in suitable weather conditions.

9.2.2 If any roosting bats or evidence of roosting is found to be present, further advice will be sought with regard to the need to apply for a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL). If an EPSL is needed, no work shall take place until this has been obtained.

9.2.3 To mitigate for the loss of tile crevices and to enhance the site, a professional quality Schwegler (Type 1FF) bat box (or equivalent) will be installed in a location as agreed by the ecologist.

Breeding birds

9.2.4 Work should be carried out outside of the bird breeding season. If this is not possible then a check should be made for active bird nests immediately prior to works. If any nests are discovered, work to these areas shall be carried out outside of the bird breeding season or once any chicks have fledged in order to avoid disturbance.

10 Recommended Ecological Enhancement

Bird and bat boxes should be incorporated within the development. We recommend 1 bird box, which could include a 'Vivara Pro Nest Box' or other WoodCrete alternatives.

11 Information concerning bat protection and the planning system

11.1 Relevant Legislation

All bat species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitat Regulations 2017').

Under the WCA it is an offence for any person to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bat; to intentionally disturb any wild bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection; to intentionally damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a wild bat uses for shelter or protection; to be in possession or control of any live or dead wild bat, or any part of, or anything derived from a wild bat; or to sell, offer or expose for sale, or possess or transport for the purpose of sale, any live or dead wild bat, or any part of, or anything derived from a wild bat.

Under the Habitat Regulations 2017, it is an offence to (a) deliberately capture, injure or kills any wild animal of a European protected species (EPS), (b) deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species, (c) deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal, or (d) damages or destroys a breeding site or resting place of such an animal. Deliberate disturbance of animals of a European protected species (EPS) includes in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability (i) to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or (ii) in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

Prosecution could result in imprisonment, fines of £5,000 per animal affected and confiscation of vehicles and equipment used. In order to minimise the risk of breaking the law it is essential to work with care to avoid harming bats, to be aware of the procedures to be followed if bats are found during works, and to commission surveys and expert advice as required to minimise the risk of reckless harm to bats.

11.2 Licences

Where it is proposed to carry out works which will damage / destroy a bat roost or disturb bats to a significant degree, an EPS licence must first be obtained from the Natural England (even if no bats are expected to be present when the work is carried out). The application for a license normally requires a full knowledge of the use of a site by bats, including species, numbers, and timings. Gathering this information usually involves surveying throughout the bat active season. The licence may require ongoing monitoring of the site following completion of the works.

Licences can only be issued if Natural England are satisfied that there is no satisfactory alternative to the development and that the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

11.3 Planning and Wildlife

National planning guidance for ecological issues is set out in the updated February 2019 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The requirements are consistent with those specified in the July 2018 NPPF; which advocate biodiversity net gain and improvement where possible, as evidenced below.

Paragraph 174 refers to the requirement of plans to “protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity” In order to do this, “plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.”

In paragraph 175 the NPPF indicates that “when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.”

The accompanying ODPM / Defra Circular 06/2005 remains pertinent; circular 06/2005 is prescriptive in how planning officers should deal with protected species, see paragraphs 98 and 99:

The presence of a protected species is a material consideration when considering a proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat (see ODPM/Defra Circular, para 98)

LPA should consider attaching planning conditions/entering into planning obligations to enable protection of species. They should also advise developers that

they must comply with any statutory species protection issues affecting the site (ODPM/Defra Circular, para 98)

The presence and extent to which protected species will be affected must be established before planning permission is granted. If not, a decision will have been made without all the facts (ODPM/Defra Circular, para 99)

Any measures necessary to protect the species should be conditioned/planning obligations used, before the permission is granted. Conditions can also be placed on a permission in order to prevent development proceeding without a Habitats Regulations Licence (ODPM/Defra Circular, para 99).

The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances.

Further to NPPF and OPDM Circular 06/2005, Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) 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) also states that 'conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'.

11.4 Legislation in relation to barn owls

Barn owls are afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. Their inclusion in Schedule One protects against wilful disturbance whilst an owl is at or near the nest, and makes it an offence to carry out any of the following actions:

- Killing or injuring a barn owl
- Catching a barn owl
- Taking or destroying any egg of a barn owl
- Damaging or destroying the active nest site with eggs or young or before eggs are laid
- Disturbing the dependent young of a barn owl
- Possessing, offering for sale or selling a barn owl (but see exceptions)
- Release or allow the escape of a barn owl into the wild (but see exceptions)

These actions are punishable by a maximum fine, upon conviction, of £5,000. Nesting has been recorded in every month of the year.

Protection is also given under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 against reckless disturbance whilst nesting.

Because of recent declines in numbers, and concern over their current status, barn owls are also listed in the EC Birds Directive and Appendix II of the Bern Convention. They are an Amber Listed species in “Birds of Conservation Concern” (RSPB).

12 References

BS42020. Biodiversity - Code of Practice for planning and development. British Standards Institution 2013.

Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/circularbiodiversity>

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

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004). *Bat Workers Manual*. JNCC

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

National Planning Policy Framework 2019:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/revised-national-planning-policy-framework#revised-national-planning-policy-framework>

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

UKBAP 1995. *UK Biodiversity Action Plan*. <http://www.ukbap.org.uk/>

Appendix 1: Glossary of bat roost terms

Bat Roost Definitions:

Day roost: a place where individual bats, or small groups of males, rest or shelter in the day but are rarely found by night in the summer.

Night roost: a place where bats rest or shelter in the night but are rarely found in the day. May be used by a single individual on occasion or it could be used regularly by the whole colony.

Feeding roost: a place where individual bats or a few individuals rest or feed during the night but are rarely present by day.

Transitional / occasional roost: used by a few individuals or occasionally small groups for generally short periods of time on waking from hibernation or in the period prior to hibernation.

Swarming site: where large numbers of males and females gather during late summer to autumn. Appear to be important mating sites.

Mating sites: where mating takes place from later summer and can continue through winter.

Maternity roost: where female bats give birth and raise their young to independence.

Hibernation roost: where bats may be found individually or together during winter. They have a constant cool temperature and high humidity.

Satellite roost: an alternative roost found in close proximity to the main nursery colony used by a few individual breeding females to small groups of breeding females throughout the breeding season.

Appendix 2: Standard good working practices in relation to bats

Bats are small, mobile animals. Individual bats can fit into gaps 14-20mm wide. They can roost in a number of places including crevices between stonework, under roof and ridge tiles, in cavity walls, behind barge boards, in soffits and fascias and around window frames. Builders should always be aware of the potential for bats to be present in almost any small gap accessible from the outside in a building. The following guidelines are provided in order to reduce the risk of harm to individual bats.

- Roofs to be replaced, or which are parts of a building to be demolished, should be dismantled carefully by hand. Ridge tiles, roof tiles and coping stones should always be lifted upwards and not slid off as this may squash/crush bats.
- Re-pointing of crevices should be done between April and October when bats are active. Crevices should be fully inspected for bats using a torch prior to re-pointing.
- Any existing mortar to be raked should be done so by hand (not with a mechanical device).
- Look out for bats during construction works. Bats are opportunistic and may use gaps overnight that have been created during works carried out in the daytime.
- If any bats are found works should stop and the Bat Conservation Trust (0845 1300 228) or a suitably qualified bat ecologist should be contacted.

If it is necessary to pick a bat up always use gloves. It should be carefully caught in a cardboard box and kept in a quiet, dark place. The Bat Conservation Trust or a suitably qualified bat ecologist should be contacted.