Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Site: Simfield Farm

Woodhouse Lane

Slaidburn

Clitheroe

BB7 3AH

14th January 2022

CLIENT: Mr D MacGill

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Date checked & released:

27th January 2022

Summary

This report presents the results of a daylight potential bat roost assessment (PRA) undertaken on January 14th 2022, at Simfield Farm, Woodhouse Lane, Slaidburn, Clitheroe, BB7 3AH. The work has been commissioned in connection with a proposed planning application for the conversion of the adjacent barn into dwelling space. The scope of the survey has primarily considered roosting and hibernating bats, breeding birds and barn owls.

In summary, the survey outcome shows no evidence of historic use by bats, and has identified that there is negligible potential habitat value on site for any bat species. However, a precautionary approach should always be used when demolishing/converting buildings due to the transient nature of bats. The site is currently used for feeding by barn owls, with evidence present on the site. Swallows evidently nest yearly in the barn and provision will need to be made on site to mitigate for the loss of nesting habitat.

Recommendations - This is work you will need to commission to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent.

Recommendations: Bats
No further surveys required. However, if bats are found during any stage of the development, work should stop immediately and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted to seek further advice. **See also enhancement recommendations at 4.2**
Recommendations: Barn Owl/birds
Any building work should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the building should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist, immediately prior to commencement to ensure no nests are active. **All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged.** To mitigate for the loss of existing nesting habitat, a minimum of 8 swallow cups (e.g. WoodStone® range of nest cups), should be placed under the eaves of the building to offer alternative nesting sites. Re-siting the owl perch is also advised at least a month before the work commences, as owls are easily disturbed and may not return to the site. **See also enhancement recommendations at 4.2**

For full justification of these recommendations, please go straight to section 4.0 Conclusions, Impacts and Recommendations. Otherwise, the full report starts below.

Contents

1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

The survey site is an attached former barn at Simfield Farm, Slaidburn, and forms part of the dwelling.

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

1.2 Site Context

A bat survey has been deemed necessary due to the nature of the proposed works and location of the site.

The proposals are for the conversion of the interior of the barn annex, and consist of internal alterations only.

In addition, the presence or absence of Barn owl and nesting birds has been taken into consideration, along with other local wildlife.

1.3 Scope of the report

This report provides a description of all features suitable for roosting bats, and evaluates those features in the context of the site and wider environment. It further documents any physical evidence collected or recorded during the site survey that establishes the presence of roosting bats. It provides information on constraints to the proposals as a result of roosting bats, and summarises the requirements for any further surveys, to inform subsequent mitigation proposals, achieve Planning or other statutory consent, and to comply with current wildlife legislation.

The aim of the assessment was to determine the presence or evaluate the likelihood of the presence of roosting bats, and to gain an understanding of how they could use the site. Due to the transient nature of bats, this report is not able to definitively ascertain the absence of bats, rather the absence of *evidence* of use by bats either prior to or at the time of the survey.

To achieve this, the following steps have been taken:

- A desk study has been carried out, including information from local wildlife groups & MAGiC
- A field survey has been undertaken, including an external survey and internal inspection where possible.
- An outline of likely impacts on any known roosts has been provided, based on current development proposals.
- Recommendations for further survey and assessment have been made, along with advice on European Protected Species Mitigation Licensing if appropriate.

A survey plan is presented in Appendix 1, the proposed Project Plan is included in Appendix 2 (where available), desk study results are provided in the Appendix 3 and a summary of relevant legislation can be found in Appendix 4.

The assessment is informed by the Bat Conservation Trust publication *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, J. (Ed) 2016).

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desk Study methodology

Prior to attending the Site, desk and internet based resources were used to obtain background information about known bat habitat and occurrences in an approx. 2km surrounding radius.

The resources used for the desk study were as follows:

- Google Earth Pro (http://earth.google.co.uk) for aerial photographs
- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) collaborative database website (http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx), for information on statutory designations.
- Local bat care group for local knowledge on known roosts.

2.2 Site Survey methodology

All features that will be impacted by the project proposals were assessed for their bat roosting and/or commuting habitat. The surveyor systematically surveyed all features suitable and for signs of bat activity.

<u>For any surveyed buildings:</u>

A non-intrusive visual appraisal from the ground using binoculars, inspecting the external features of the building for potential access/egress points, and for signs of bat use. An internal inspection of the building was also made, including areas of derelict or abandoned buildings and the accessible roof spaces of all buildings, using an endoscope & torch. The surveyor paid particular attention to the floor and flat surfaces, window shutters and frames, lintels above doors and windows, and carried out a detailed search of numerous features within the roof space.

2.3 Breeding birds and other incidental observations

The surveyor also made note of any other ecological constraints observed during the survey, notably the likelihood of presence or signs of breeding birds, and the suitability of the site for barn owls *Tyto alba*.

2.4 Suitability Assessment

All affected survey features on site were categorised according to the likelihood of bats being present, in line with best practice guidelines (Collins, J. (ed) 2016). The features that dictate the likelihood of roosting bats are summarised in Table 1 below. Roost suitability is classified as high, moderate, low and negligible and dictates any further surveys required before works can proceed

Table 1: Features of a building that are correlated with use by bats

Likelihood of bats being present	**Feature of building and its context**
Higher	Buildings/structures with features of particular significance for roosting bats e.g., mines, caves, tunnels, icehouses and cellars. Habitat on site and surrounding landscape of high quality for foraging bats e.g., broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is connected with the wider landscape by strong linear features that would be used by commuting bats e.g., river and or stream valleys and hedgerows. Site is proximate to known or likely roosts (based on historical data).
Lower	A small number of possible roost sites/features, used sporadically by more widespread species. Habitat suitable for foraging in close proximity, but isolated in the landscape. Or an isolated site not connected by prominent linear features. Few features suitable for roosting, minor foraging or commuting.

2.5 Limitations – evaluation of the methodology

It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to describe the features on site in the context of their suitability for roosting bats, this does not provide a complete characterisation of the site. This survey provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of bats being present. This is based on suitability of the habitats on the site and in the local area, the ecology and biology of bats as currently understood, and the known distribution of bats as recovered during the desk study.

The survey was carried out outside the main activity season for bats (Mid-May to September being deemed the main activity season) and the conclusions drawn are based on the range of evidence available at the time of the survey.

3.0 Results and Evaluation

3.1 Desk Study Results

The site is located at National Grid Reference SD 70237 54780.

3.2 Designated sites

The site is within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural beauty (AONB) but the proposed works are not considered to be detrimental to the landscape as mainly internal. The proposal will not have an impact on any Sites of Scientific interest or other designated statutory sites.

3.3 Landscape

A review of the designated sites, aerial photographs (Figure 1), the Magic database (App. 3) and OS maps has been undertaken. Collated together, the site's relevance to bat habitat is described below:

The site is located in a rural location north of the village of Slaidburn, at the foot of Croasdale Fell, set in an agricultural landscape of pasture and meadows with hedges. Small areas of deciduous woodland and along Croasdale brook are close by, which could be used for foraging and commuting by bats. The woodland and grassland habitat immediately north of the Site would provide foraging habitat for bats.

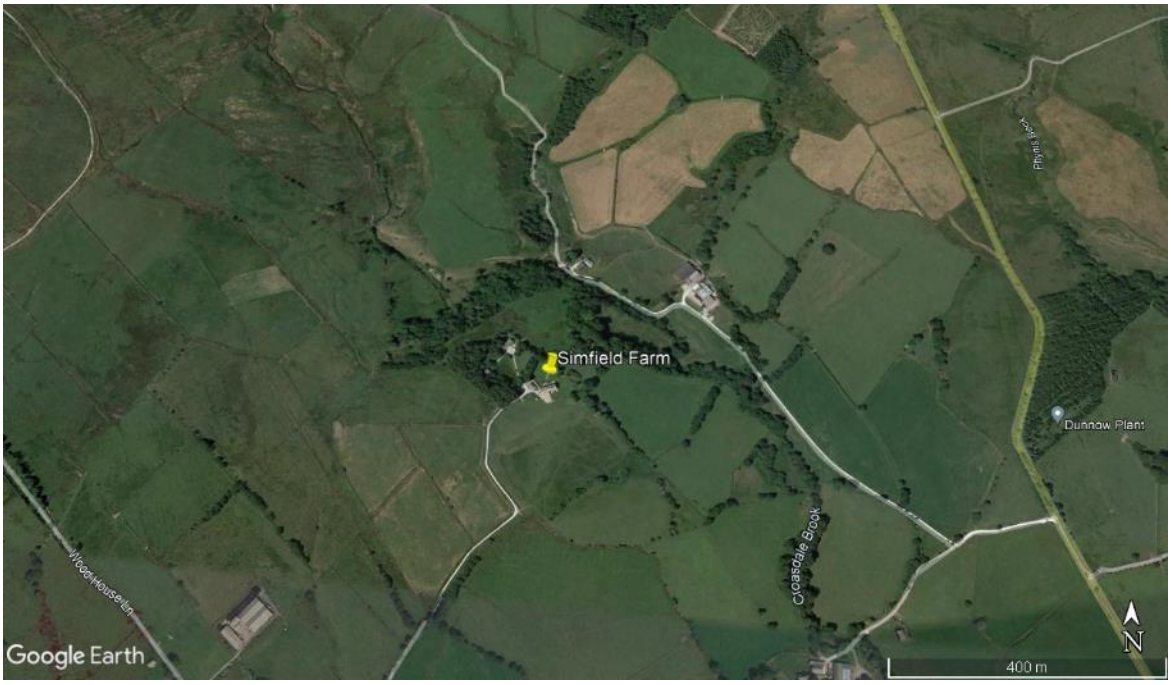


Figure 1: Aerial photo of site, showing surrounding landscape structure

3.4 Historical records

A search of the magic database shows no granted European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSMLs) within a 2km radius of the survey site.

3.5 Field Survey Results

The survey was undertaken on 14/01/2022 by Carol Edmondson (Natural England bat licence number: **2015-12195** CLS-CLS), an MSc qualified ecologist with 9 years' experience in specific bat habitat surveying.

There is one survey building on the site which is illustrated in the map in Appendix 1. The environmental variables recorded at the time of the survey are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Environmental variables during the survey

Date: 14/01/22	
Temperature	7°C
Cloud Cover	5%
Wind	4 km/h
Rain	-

3.6 Site Feature descriptions and photos

Building Description potential roosting features

The survey building is a single storey traditional stone-built barn attached to a residential property in an excellent state of repair.

The velux windows around the property are in good repair and close fitting.

All mortar and brickwork is sound with no gaps or missing sections.

The eaves, gutters and fascia boards are close fitting and in good condition.

The fascia board is well sealed to the wall, not affording any gaps for bats to roost behind.

Photo 1: South-east (front) elevation.

The dual-pitched roof ridge runs west to east, and is clad in traditional stone tiles.

The roofing tiles are in a good state of repair with no visible gaps or missing tiles.
The lead is in good condition, and is close fitting to all substrates.

Photo 2: Roof area of barn on the southeast pitch.

Interior

Internally the barn is light and airy with evidence of recent renewal of the roofing materials and wall cap to all elevations.

The roof liner and timbers are exposed, and are all in an excellent state of repair. The roof lights and windows are all close fitting with no gaps in the lintels.

There are some gaps in the interior masonry where there is missing pointing.

Photo 3: Gable end (west facing) wall of the barn and recently restored roofing materials.

Interior cont...

The wall adjoining the house is constructed of breeze block, with no gaps in the mortar or at the wall cap.

Photo 4: Internal view of roof structure and adjoining interior wall.

The entrance porch and barn doors are the original timber construction and although aged, are in a reasonable state of repair. The boards are loosely laid on the crossbeams and not fixed in position. Some of the gaps between the boards and beams may offer temporary roosting places for bats.

The gaps above the doors would allow bats to enter the barn.

Photo 5: Internal view of the entrance porch viewed from inside the barn.

Evidence of bats

There was no evidence of bats historically or currently using this building as roosting habitat. There were no droppings visible on any surfaces, nor grease or urine stains on any of the stonework.

Breeding birds and other incidental observations

There was evidence of nesting swallows within the barn. Most surfaces had multiple droppings, with at least 8 nesting sites visible inside, suggesting high numbers and long-term historic use.

Photo 6: Example of swallow nesting site inside the barn.

Barn owl

On the external wall of the entrance porch is a known barn owl feeding perch, currently in frequent use, with fresh pellets evident, and camera in use to observe feeding habits.

Photo 7: Owl feeding perch under the entrance porch.

4.0 Conclusions, Impacts and Recommendations

4.1 Informative guidelines

Bats and their roosts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and Conservation Regulations; see Appendix 3 for a summary of legislation protecting bats in the UK. Legislation protects all wild birds whilst they are breeding, and prohibits the killing, injuring or taking of any wild bird or their nests and eggs. Certain species of bird, including the barn owl, are subject to special provisions; it is an offence to disturb any bird or their young during the breeding season.

4.2 Evaluation

Taking the desk-based assessment and site survey results into account, the following value for roosting bats has been placed on The Site.

Table 3: Evaluation Summary for presence of bats

Survey assessment conclusions	There is suitable bat foraging habitat in the proximity of this building but no records of bat roosts present in the area. However, the nature and condition of this building shows that it has a **negligible** likelihood of supporting roosting bats.
Foreseen impacts	There is a negligible risk that bats could be injured or killed during the conversion process.
Recommendations	No Further Surveys. However, if bats are found during any stage of the development, work should stop immediately and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted to seek further advice.
Enhancements *The Local Planning Authority has a duty to ask for enhancements under the NPPF and circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation. Para.99*	The installation of a minimum of 2 bat boxes on the building before the work commences will provide additional roosting habitat for bats e.g. • 1FF Schwegler Bat Box • Greenwoods Ecohabitats • https://www.greenwoodsecohabitats.co.uk/bats • Kent Bat Box (timber). Bat boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing in a south/south-westerly direction with a clear flight path to and from the entrance.

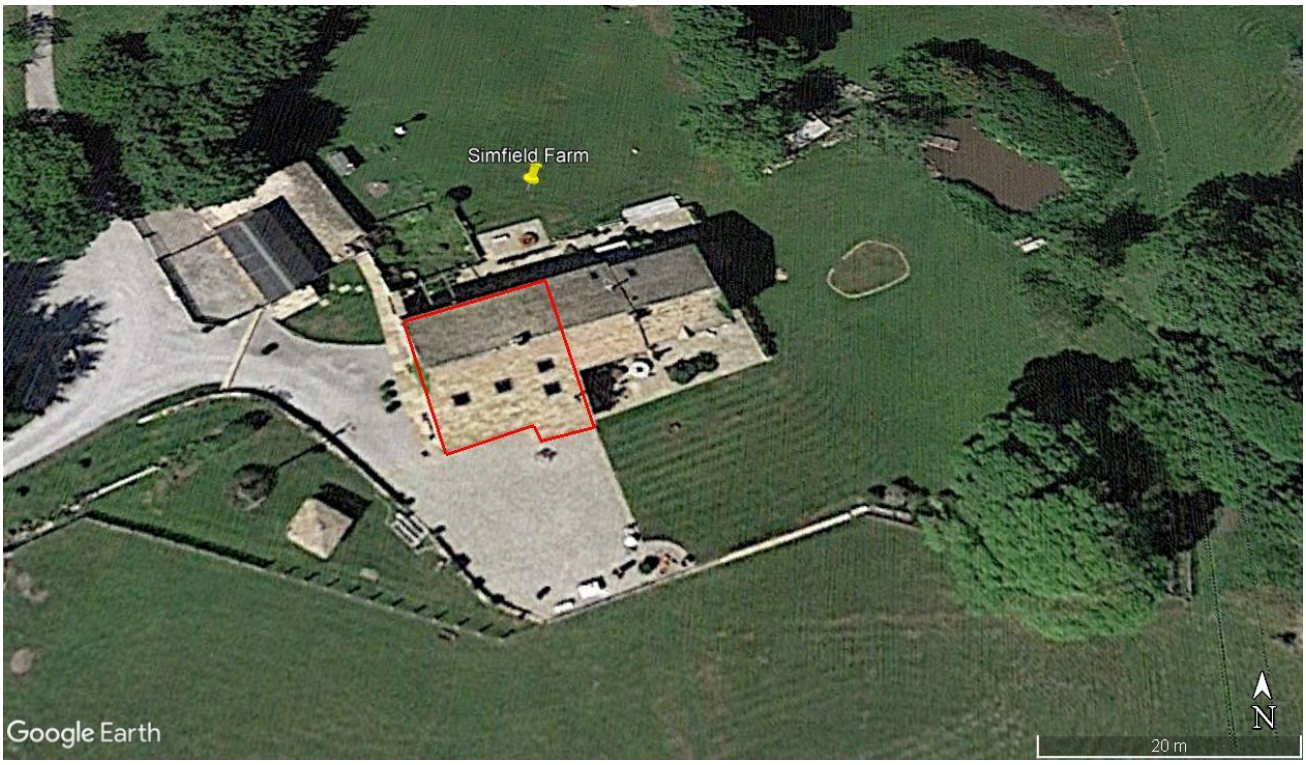
Table 4: Evaluation Summary for presence of breeding birds

Survey assessment conclusions	The site includes suitable habitat for nesting birds.
Foreseen impacts	Active nests could be destroyed during vegetation removal. Any works which affect The Site could have an impact on nesting birds.
Recommendations/Mitigation	Any building work should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the building should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist, immediately prior to commencement. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged. To mitigate for the loss of existing nesting habitat, a minimum of 8 swallow cups (e.g WoodStone® range of nest cups), placed under the eaves of the building to offer alternative nesting sites. Re-siting the owl perch is also advised at least a month before the work commences, as owls are easily disturbed and may not return to the site.
Enhancements *The Local Planning Authority has a duty to ask for enhancements under the NPPF and circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation. Para.99*	The installation of a barn owl box on site would provide additional nesting opportunity for the local population. The box can be placed either on a mature tree or on the building: https://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/barn-owl-nestbox/ In addition to the swallow cups, installing a minimum of two bird boxes on trees/buildings on site e.g. • Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace • Schwegler 1B nest boxes • Schwegler 2H Robin Boxes or equivalent, would offer additional nesting opportunity for other bird species. Nest boxes should be positioned approximately 3m above ground level where they will be sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight.

5.0 Bibliography

- Bat Conservation Trust: http://www.bats.org.uk/
- British Trust for Ornithology (2016) www.bto.org/about-birds/nnbw/putting-up-a-nest-box
- Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists —Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- Garland & Markham (2008) Is important bat foraging and commuting habitat legally protected?
- Google Earth Pro (2020)
- Magic database (2019) http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.

Appendix 1: Survey Plan

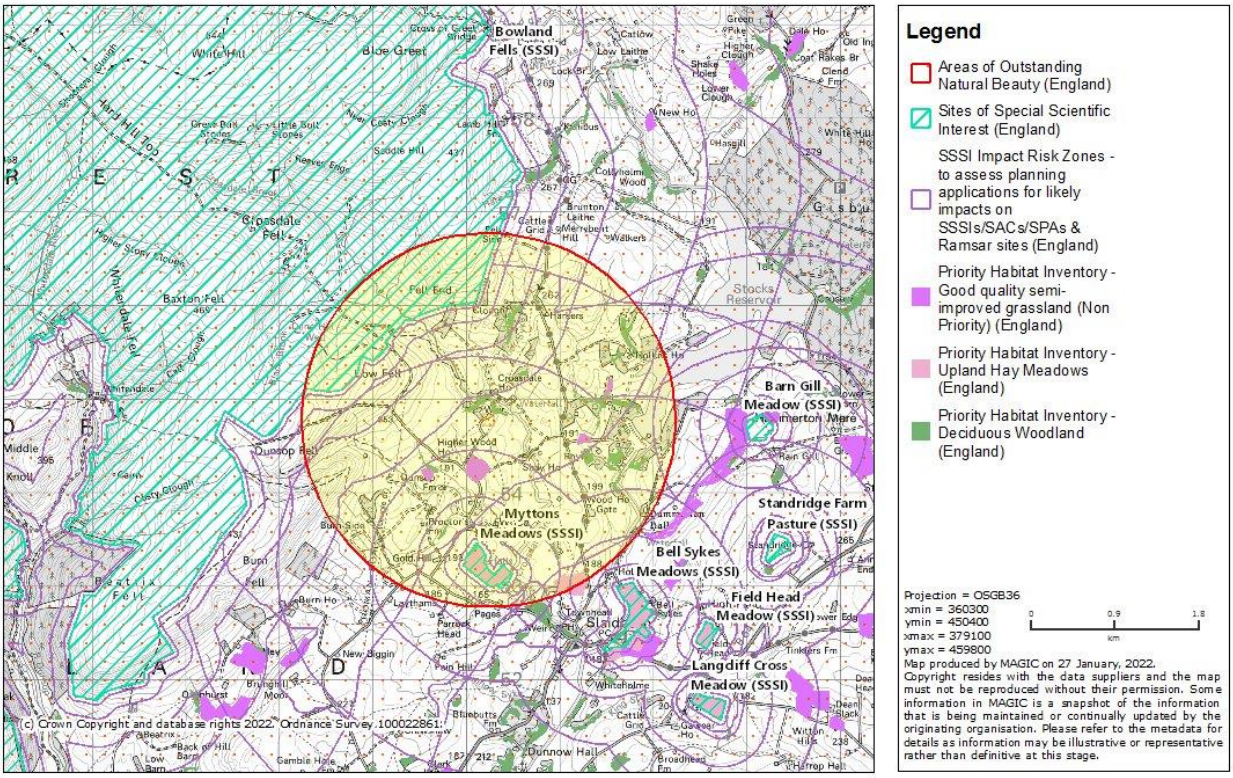


Appendix 2: Proposed Site Plan

Not supplied

Appendix 3: Desk Study Information

MAGIC **Simfield Farm designation & Priority habitats**



Appendix 4: Legislation and Planning Policy related to bats

LEGAL PROTECTION

All species of bat are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 2.

Regulation 41 prohibits:

- Deliberate killing, injuring or capturing of Schedule 2 species (e.g. all bats)
- Deliberate disturbance of bat species as:

  a) to impair their ability:

  (i) to survive, breed, or reproduce, or to rear or nurture young

  (ii) to hibernate or migrate

  b) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place

Bats are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 5. Under this Act, they are additionally protected from:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance (at any level)
- Intentional or reckless obstruction of access to any place of shelter or protection
- Selling, offering or exposing for sale, possession or transporting for purpose of sale

Effect on development works:

A European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence issued by the relevant statutory authority (e.g. Natural England) will be required for works likely to affect a bat roost or for operations likely to result in a level of disturbance which might impair their ability to undertake those activities mentioned above (e.g. survive, breed, rear young and hibernate). The licence is to allow derogation from the relevant legislation but also to enable appropriate mitigation measures to be put in place and their efficiency/success to be monitored.

The legislation may also be interpreted such that, in certain circumstances, important foraging areas and/or commuting routes can be regarded as being afforded *de facto* protection, for example, where it can be proven that the continued usage of such areas is crucial to maintaining the integrity and long-term viability of a bat roost (Garland & Markham, 2008).

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (ENGLAND)

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development. The Framework specifies the need for protection of designated sites and priority habitats and species. An emphasis is also made on the

need for ecological infrastructure through protection, restoration and re-creation. The protection and recovery of priority species (considered likely to be those listed as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species) is also listed as a requirement of planning policy.

In determining a planning application, planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by ensuring that: designated sites are protected from harm; there is appropriate mitigation or compensation where significant harm cannot be avoided; opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments are encouraged; and planning permission is refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including aged or veteran trees and also ancient woodland.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Biodiversity Duty

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, 2006, requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. This is commonly referred to as the 'biodiversity duty'.

Section 41 of the Act (Section 42 in Wales) requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of 'principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity.' This list is intended to assist decision makers such as public bodies in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act. Under the Act these habitats and species are regarded as a material consideration in determining planning applications. A developer must show that their protection has been adequately addressed within a development proposal.