THE LIMES, BLACKBURN ROAD, RIBCHESTER

PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT

JUNE 24, 2024

project ecology

Document Title	The Limes, Blackburn Road, Ribchester
Prepared For	Eco Providers – Adam Patel
Document Reference	PE.1746
Prepared By	Ben Crossthwaite
Revision Number	
Date	24/06/24

project ecology

www.projectecology.co.uk
mail@projectecology.co.uk

Contents

1 Executive Summary

1.1.1 The site consists of a detached dwelling, located at The Limes, Blackburn Road, Ribchester, and is the subject of a planning application with Ribble Valley Borough Council for the installation of solar panels on the south facing roof elevation of the main dwelling.

1.1.2 The client received correspondence from Lesley Lund (Senior Planning Administration Officer), following the invalidation of a planning application, requesting a 'Bat Survey'.

1.1.3 The building was the subject of a preliminary bat roost assessment. The building was found to offer negligible bat roost suitability. No further Bat survey work or mitigation is required at this time.

1.1.4 Two active Swallow nesting are located on the western gable ends of the buildings.

1.1.5 Works should be carried out outside of the bird breeding season (March- August). Construction activities that might directly impact upon breeding birds should hence be limited to the September-February period. If works must be undertaken during the bird breeding season, these should not occur within 3 metres of the nesting sites. If this cannot be achieved, checks immediately before works by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required. If nesting activity is detected work in that area will need to stop until the ecologist considers that nesting activity is finished.

2 Introduction

2.1 Site Location

2.1.1 The site is located at The Limes, Blackburn Road, Ribchester (OS grid reference SD 65852 35410).

Figure 1: Site Location Courtesy of Google Maps

2.2 Background

2.2.1 The site is the subject of a planning application with Ribble Valley Borough Council for the installation of solar panels. Following the submission of the application, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) requested a bat survey of the property prior to validation.

2.3 Scope of Work

2.3.1 Adam Patel of Eco Providers Ltd commissioned Project Ecology to carry out a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of the dwelling on site to be affected by the proposals.

2.4 Aims and Objectives

2.4.1 The aims of the survey were to:

- Complete an assessment to ascertain if potential or evidence of use exists for bat species;
- Determine if there are requirements for further and/or more detailed surveys.

2.5 Site Visit

2.5.1 The survey was undertaken on 24th June 2024 by Ben Crossthwaite. Ben has 9 years' professional experience of undertaking similar surveys and holds a level 2 class survey licence (Reference 2020-48541-CLS-CLS) and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

3 Survey Methodology

3.1 Bat Survey

3.1.1 A survey of the building/s on site was undertaken in accordance with the standard methods described in the 'Bat Worker's Manual' (JNCC 2004) and 'Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines' (BCT 2023[1]). The survey comprised the following elements:

- A preliminary inspection of the exterior of the building/s to look for obvious signs of bat activity (such as droppings on windowsills) and assessing the potential for entry/exit into the roof. The survey was carried out with the use of binoculars, drone and endoscope where required.
- An assessment of the surrounding habitat quality for bats was carried out by walking the area on foot and later from reference to aerial images (Google Maps). These searches were used to identify important land use and habitat features known to be favoured by bats.

3.1.2 Interpretation of survey findings and assessment of roosting potential was undertaken using professional judgement and criteria described in published guidance[2].

3.2 Survey Limitations and Constraints

3.2.1 The dwelling was fully accessible and there were no constraints to the internal or external surveys.

[1] *Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good practice guideline (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.*

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

4 Results

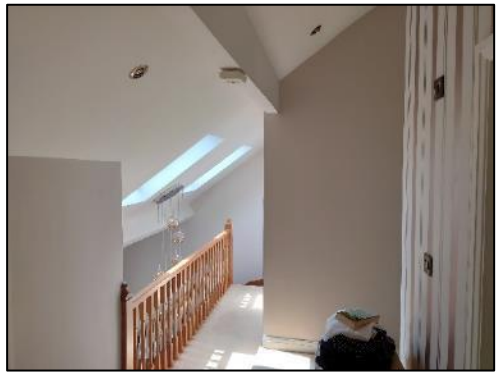
4.1 Site Survey

4.1.1 The site is located in a rural area of the Ribble Valley, on the peripheries of Ribchester. The site is surrounded by pastural farmland. Linear landscape features, and the River Ribble are located in the locality, as well as areas of woodland and grassland, all offering good foraging and commuting habitat for bats.

4.1.2 The results of the survey are described in detail in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Survey Results

Building Reference	Description	Photographs	Bat Roost Potential
Dwelling	A brick-built, rendered, single and two-storey, detached dwelling with a pitched roof. Masonry and associated render in good condition with no cracks, flaking or damaged sections. The slate roof tiles are in good condition and sitting flush to one another, with no slipped or damaged tiles. The ridge tiles are in good condition, free from damage. Small sections of mortar are missing. However, do not provide any entry points or potential roost features bats may exploit. Timber facia boards and uPVC soffits are in reasonable condition and fitted flush to the masonry, with no gaps or entry points present. At the gables of the building, at the point the masonry meets the roof line, the mortar is in good condition, with only hairline cracks present. Windows and doors are sealed to the surrounding masonry with sealant. Internally, the first and ground-floor areas are built up to the underside of the roof, with roof void spaces located at the eaves only. A small roof void space, located in the eaves of the eastern part of the first floor, was easily accessed via a hatch. The floor is boarded and covered with carpet. Much of the underside of the roof is insulated with foil-backed foam.	   	Negligible

	The felt roof linings are in reasonable condition, free from rips, tears and pocket features. No access points or evidence of bats was found during the internal or external surveys.	    	

5 Evaluation

5.1.1 The dwelling is located within a rural setting with good foraging and commuting habitat for bats in the locality, including tree lines, woodland, the River Ribble and grasslands.

5.1.2 The dwelling is in good condition with no external roosting features or entry points providing access into the roof void or onward cavities.

5.1.3 UK bat species generally roost in one of two locations;

- open locations, such as roof void, barns or caves
- and crevice locations, such as under roof slates, between bricks and amongst stonework.

5.1.4 The former type of roosting bat is very unlikely to be present within the building. The roof void was a small space, found to be sealed and did not contain any bat droppings, something which would have been almost certain to be present if an open roosting bat, such as a Brown Long-eared *Plecotus auritus* bat were present.

5.1.5 No roosting habitat for crevice dwelling bats was found during the internal or external surveys. The masonry and roof tiles were all in good condition, with no features present.

5.1.6 It is considered unlikely the proposed extension works will have any impacts on bats.

5.1.7 Two active Swallow *Hirundo rustica* nests are located on the western gable ends of the dwelling, under the eaves.

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

Bats

6.1.1 As the dwelling is considered to offer negligible bat roost suitability, no further survey work or mitigation is required at this time.

6.1.2 This report is valid for 18 months, at which point a suitably qualified ecologist will assess the validity of the report, with an updated assessment likely to be required.

Birds

6.1.3 Works should be carried out outside of the bird breeding season (March- August). Construction activities that might directly impact upon breeding birds should hence be limited to the September-February period. If works must be undertaken during the bird breeding season, these should not occur within 3 metres of the nesting sites. If this cannot be achieved, checks immediately before works by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required. If nesting activity is detected work in that area will need to stop until the ecologist considers that nesting activity is finished.

6.2 Precautions

6.2.1 It is not always possible to prove absence of roosting bats. Due to the transitional nature of bats, they can roost in suitable features opportunistically and are not always identified during surveys. It is recommended that roof coverings are removed with due caution. Should a bat/bats be identified at any time, work should stop, and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted to attend site and advise how to proceed.

7 Appendix A: Planning Policy and Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023) describes the Government's planning policy for England and how it should be applied. Within this framework, the requirements in relation to biodiversity are included within several policies. The two most relevant to individual planning decisions are Paragraphs 180 and 180, shown below:

- 180. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

  a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

  b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

  c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

  d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

  e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

  f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

- 186. 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 improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Legislation

All bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit), which make is an offence to:

- Deliberately kill, injure or capture a bat;
- Deliberately disturb bats;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) contains further provisions making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- Obstruct access to any structure or place which any bat uses for shelter or protection; or
- Disturb any bat while occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

Proposed development works that are likely to disturb or destroy bats or their roosts will need to obtain a licence from the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (e.g., Natural England) prior to work commencing.

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage, or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act while they are nest building or at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young.