

Spring House Farm, Pendleton Protected Species Survey

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consultant ecologists

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Dunelm Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a protected species survey at Spring House Farm, Pendleton. The survey was requested by the local planning authority as part of proposals to undertake repairs to several farm buildings including a Grade II listed barn. Remedial works would involve re-roofing, timber repairs/treatment, replacement of roof lights, minor repointing and repair/replacement of rainwater goods. Taking into consideration the proposals and the site's character/location, the survey principally focused on bats and breeding birds.
- 1.1.2 The main objective of the survey was to identify if bats and birds are utilising the buildings for roosting/nesting. This report provides a brief overview of the legal protection afforded to bats and birds in the UK. It includes a detailed description of the methods used and the results of the survey. The implications of the survey findings are discussed; with an assessment of potential impacts provided and recommendations given as to what further measures are considered necessary.

1.2 Legislative and Planning Context

Bats

- 1.2.1 All British bat species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, which has been amended by later legislation, including the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Taken together, the above legislation makes it an offence to:
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection.
 - Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a bat.
 - deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat,
 - deliberately disturb bats, in such a way as –
 - i) to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear their young, or
 - ii) to hibernate or migrate, or
 - iii) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of bats;
 - damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.
- 1.2.2 Under the 2019 Regulations it is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place whether a bat is in occupation or not.

Birds

- 1.2.3 All wild species of breeding birds and their nests are protected under Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, as amended by later legislation including the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Part 1 (Section 1:1) of the WCA states that it is an offence to intentionally:
- (a) kill, injure or take any wild bird;
 - (b) take, damage or destroy a nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
 - (c) take or destroy an egg of any wild bird,
- 1.2.4 Part 1 (Section 1:5) of the WCA (amended by the CROW Act 2000) refers to specific birds listed on Schedule 1 of the WCA including barn owl, and makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:
- (a) disturb any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or
 - (b) disturb dependent young of such a bird.
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- 1.2.5 Seven native British bat and bird species are listed as 'Priority Species' and are referred to as 'species of principal importance' for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales within Section 74 of the CROW Act 2000 and Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.
- 1.2.6 The effects of developments on protected species are considered in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Section 15 of the NPPF states that Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment through a range of measures including minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs. Local authorities in England are required to ensure that where significant harm resulting from development cannot be avoided (through locating on alternative sites with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for; planning permission is refused.
- 1.2.7 Finally, Circular 06/2005: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System* states that protected species and habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.
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2 Methods and Approach

2.1 Field Survey

Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA)

- 2.1.1 A PRA of the site buildings was carried out during daylight hours on 11 March 2026 following the methodology outlined in the *Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins 2023). The survey involved searching the interior and exterior of the buildings for bats and their field signs with the aid of close-focusing binoculars (Opticron Countryman BGA 8x42) and a powerful torch (Clulite 1M candle-power). The buildings were assigned to a roost potential category based on the criteria presented in Table 1 (Collins 2023).

Table 1 Roost Assessment Criteria

Roost Potential Category	Description of Roosting Habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats, however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of year. 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 and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site but could be used by individual hibernating bats).
Moderate	A structure 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 such as maternity or hibernation – the categorisation in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	A structure 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. These structures have the potential to support high conservation roosts e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.

2.2 Personnel

- 2.2.1 The survey was carried out by Jon Guarnaccio MCIEEM who has 23 years continuous experience as a professional ecologist and has held Natural England bat and barn owl survey licences since 2005 and 2008 respectively (2015-2025-86371-CL18-BAT and 2026-88839-CL29-OWL).

2.3 Survey Constraints

- 2.3.1 The survey was carried out at an appropriate time of year with access to most relevant parts of the site. It was however not possible to inspect the first floors of barns 2 and 3 owing to the poor condition of the floorboards.
- 2.3.2 It should be noted that species such as bats are unpredictable and may not conform to standard patterns recorded in scientific literature. Therefore, this report cannot predict with absolute certainty that species will occur in apparently suitable locations or habitats, or that they will not occur in locations or habitats that appear unsuitable.

3 Results

3.1 Bats

- 3.1.1 The results of the PRA survey are shown in Table 2 below. In summary no evidence of bats was recorded during the survey although barns 1-3 were assessed as having moderate bat roost potential owing to the presence of several PRF and proximity of suitable foraging habitat. Barn 4 was assessed as having low roost potential while barn 5 has no roost potential. Spring House Farm is located within the centre of Pendleton which is surrounded by pasture fields bordered by hedgerows and trees. Pendleton Brook flows along the southern edge of the farm. Such habitats mean bat roosts are likely to be common in the village.

Table 2 PRA Results

Building	Building Description	Roosting Opportunities & Signs of Bat Use	Roost Potential
Barn 1	Open sided barn (east elevation) dating from 18 th /19 th century and constructed from random stone walls set under an unlined pitched roof clad with blue slates. Internal light levels are high due to the barn being open on one side.	No evidence of bats was recorded during the survey. Generally, the roof and walls are in fair condition with few obvious gaps for bats. However, there are some gaps where purlins enter the gable walls and occasional gaps exist between roof slates and ridge tiles.	Moderate
Barn 2	Barn adjoins southern elevation of barn 1 and is of similar age and construction but built over two floors. The roof is covered with stone slates, with dense ivy growth covering part of the western pitch and most of the wall on this elevation.	No evidence of bats was recorded although it was not safe to inspect the first floor of the barn. Several potential roost features were identified, including: perished mortar around the northern gable verges and under roof slates on both roof pitches. Bats can access the interior of the building via unglazed widow openings on the east and west elevations.	Moderate
Barn 3	Large Grade II listed barn dating from early 19 th century and extending from the farmhouse. The walls comprise random sandstone and the pitched roof is clad with unlined stone slates. The roof is supported by three large dimension queen post trusses. The barn is open from floor to apex (7.3 m high) along half its length with a mezzanine level in the western half (animal stalls are present on the ground floor below), this having a floor to apex height of 5.4 m. The barn is used for storage including hay and is currently occupied by several pigeons. There is connectivity between the barn and farmhouse's roof space via an opening in the dividing wall. Several ventilation slots exist and together with skylights	No evidence of bats recorded but numerous gaps are present between roof slates, where mortar has perished at the western gable end wall, around internal gable wall tops and occasionally between stonework although the walls are generally well pointed.	Moderate

Building	Building Description	Roosting Opportunities & Signs of Bat Use	Roost Potential
	and a large opening on the southern elevation result in moderate-high internal light levels.		
Barn 4	Single storey barn of similar age and construction (stone walls and unlined pitched stone slate roof) to the above buildings but possibly slightly more recent in origin. The barn is divided into three individual rooms which are currently used for storage. Cobwebs are prevalent throughout and internal conditions are well lit and draughty.	No signs of bats were recorded. Few potential roosting features were identified, these being restricted to gaps between roof slates.	Low
Barn 5	Dilapidated timber post and panel lean-to structure (dating from mid 20 th century) with corrugated asbestos roof.	No evidence of bats was recorded and no potential roosting features were identified.	None

3.2 Birds

- 3.2.1 Barn 1 supports numerous swallow nests while pigeons probably breed in barn 3. Passerine nests were found in barn 4 while wall crevices and dense ivy growth on barn 2 also represent suitable nesting habitat. No signs of barn owl were observed despite favourable habitat, especially barn 3.

4 Discussion

4.1 Assessment and Recommendations

Bats

- 4.1.1 There is no evidence to suggest that the buildings are used by roosting bats although four of the barns are assessed as having low - moderate roost potential. Some bat species such as pipistrelle spp. are itinerant in their roosting habits and sometimes leave no clues of their presence, particularly when only low numbers of bats are present. The possibility of non-breeding roosts occasionally used by solitary or low numbers of bats should therefore not be discounted. It is however considered unlikely that the buildings would be used by significant numbers of bats (i.e. a maternity colony) given an absence of field signs and number/type of features present. The barns also do not provide the humid stable conditions required for hibernation.
- 4.1.2 Further survey effort in the form of two dusk emergence surveys is therefore recommended to give confidence in the initial negative survey result and to comply with best practice guidelines (Collins 2023). Such surveys can only be undertaken between May and August during suitable weather conditions i.e. warm ($>10^{\circ}\text{C}$), light winds and dry, with at least three weeks between each survey. Should further survey confirm the presence of bats, then works would need to be completed under licence from Natural England. Roost sites for bats should be incorporated into the scheme whether bats are present or not, in accordance with the NPPF which seeks net gains in biodiversity. This could be achieved by installing bat boxes within the barns and providing ridge tile access points in the repaired roofs. Wall crevices can also be retained by inserting timber battens and pointing around these before removing once mortar has started to set.

Birds

- 4.1.3 The proposals could potentially result in the loss of swallow nests within barn 1 and nests of other species in some of the other barns which would contravene the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 that protects all wild birds and their nests. Works should therefore be timed to avoid the bird breeding season, which runs from March to August (inclusive) but if this is not feasible and works need to take place during the nesting season, then a survey should first be carried out no more than 48 hours in advance by a qualified ecologist to ensure no active nests are present. If nesting was confirmed, works would need to be postponed until young have fledged, or alternatively a no works buffer zone installed preventing access to areas within 5 m of the nest. Once works are completed swallows and other bird species will be able to return to the barns and nest in more sheltered conditions. Barn owls would benefit from the installation of bespoke nesting boxes (designed to Barn Owl Trust spec) in barns 1 and 3.
- 4.1.4 Feral pigeons in barn 3 are considered likely to pose a health and safety risk to contractors and therefore Natural England's general licence 41 can be relied upon to legally permit works in this structure should pigeons be present at the time of works. The licence explicitly covers feral pigeons and allows the humane killing, taking, damaging/destroying nests and removing eggs.

5 References

Collins J (ed) (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. Fourth Edition. BCT, London.



Plate 1 Looking through barn 3



Plate 2 Barns 1, 2 and 4 from road



Plate 3 Barns 1, 3 and 4 from farmyard



Plate 4 Barn 5



Plate 5 Gaps under roof coverings



Plate 6 Barns 1 and 2 from the west. Note dense ivy growth.