

Preliminary Bat Survey Report

Site: Outbuildings at New Platt Farm, Littleborough, Rochdale

Ref: 21513

Client: Paul Whitehead



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SUMMARY

At New Platt Farm, Littleborough, Rochdale, planning permission is being sought to convert/demolish a barn and adjoining stable block.

In August 2021 Indigo Surveys Ltd was instructed to carry out preliminary bat roost assessment survey of the property.

As the proposals could impact on features typically used by bats as roosting places, a diurnal inspection of the building was undertaken on 5th August 2021 to assess for signs of, and/or suitability for bat occupation.

All the external structures, especially those associated with the roofs and walls of the buildings were examined.

The inspection revealed no signs of recent or historical bat activity or occupation, however a number of features (gaps and potential entry points) were present and the buildings were classified as medium suitability for roosting and/or hibernating bats.

As such, it is recommended a minimum of two nocturnal bat surveys are undertaken in the period May to September (inclusive). One of the surveys should comprised a dawn re-entry survey. Two surveyors are required to cover the elevations simultaneously.

*

No evidence of nesting birds were found.

1. INTRODUCTION

At New Platt Farm, Littleborough, Rochdale, planning permission is being sought to convert/demolish a barn and adjoining stable block.

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The result of the survey is contained in this report.

In England, Scotland and Wales, all bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended), through inclusion in Schedule 5. In England and Wales this Act has been amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), which adds an extra offence, makes species offences arrestable, increases the time limits for some prosecutions, and increases penalties.

All bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994, (or Northern Ireland 1995) (the Habitats Regulations), which defines 'European protected species of animals'.

The above legislation can be summarised thus (Mitchell-Jones and McLeish, 2004):

- ❑ *Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) bats*
- ❑ *Deliberately disturb bats (whether in a roost or not)*
- ❑ *Recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts*
- ❑ *Damage or destroy roosts*
- ❑ *Possess or transport a bat or any part of a part of a bat, unless acquired legally*
- ❑ *Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats, or parts of bats*

The word 'roost' is not used in the legislation, but is used here for simplicity. The actual wording is 'any structure or place which any wild animal...uses for shelter or protection' (WCA), or 'breeding site or resting place' (Habitats Regulations).

As bats generally have both a winter and a summer roost, the legislation is clear that all roosts are protected whether bats are in residence at the time or not.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to fully assess bat occupation of a particular site, the Bat Conservation Trust (2016) recommends that information gathered from a desk study of known bat records, and a daytime site walkover, is used to inform the type and extent of future bat survey work, potentially including nocturnal surveys.

The diurnal walkover provides an opportunity to check for signs of occupancy, such as droppings, scratch marks, feeding remains, carcasses, or even animals in residence, whilst nocturnal surveys (if required) allow numbers and species of bats to be confirmed. The latter are also used to determine the presence or absence of bats, where signs of bat activity are indeterminate or absent but likelihood of roosting is considered to be medium to high.

Roosting places vary depending on the species. Pipistrelles usually inhabit narrow cracks or cavities around the outside of buildings, but they will roost in similar niches inside larger barns. Typical sites include soffit spaces, gaps behind fascia boards and end rafters, crevices around the ends of projecting purlins, under warped or lifted roof and ridge tiles, or in gaps in stone and brickwork where mortar has dropped out.

Larger species such as Brown Long-eared Bats *Plecotus auritus*, Myotis bats (Natterer's *Myotis nattereri* and Whiskered/Brandt's *M. mystacinus*/*M. brandtii*), and Lesser Horseshoes *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, like to roost in the roof voids of buildings, and can often be found hanging singly or in small groups from ridge boards or roof timbers, especially where these butt up against gable walls or chimney breasts. They especially favour older structures with timber frames. Here they squeeze into tight crevices making them difficult to observe.

Diurnal walkovers can be carried out at any time of the year, but nocturnal surveys should only be undertaken when bats are out of hibernation and in their summer roosts. The recommended period is from May to September inclusive, with May to August optimum, and a minimum of 2 or 3 surveys are required. The season can be extended into October, although particularly cold weather will render this inadvisable.

At moderate to high value sites, one of the nocturnal visits should comprise a dawn re-entry (dawn swarm) survey. For sites < 5 ha in size, two surveyors should be present, with more surveyors at complex buildings, e.g. those with multiple elevations and/or roof structures.

On 5th August 2021, a thorough inspection of the buildings was made by Matt Liston (working under Natural England bat licence 2015-16489-CLS-CLS), including the exterior walls, roof coverings, eaves, gables, roof, window casements and door frames.

10x42 Opticron binoculars and a Clulight CB2 torch were used for the inaccessible/unreachable areas. On this occasion an endoscope was not used, as there were no crevices and cavities that could not be inspected with a torch or by use of binoculars from a ladder.

The result of the inspection is detailed in Section 3.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Location

The site is located at just off Carriage Drive, in Littleborough, Rochdale, at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SD 93977 17112 (Appendix 1).

3.2 Site Description

The site comprised a stone-built barn with adjoined row of single-story stables (Figs. 1 and 2).



Figs. 1 & 2 Barn and stables

The layout of the site is shown in the aerial photograph in Appendix 2.

3.3 Buildings Surveys

The daytime inspections were carried out on 5th August 2021, commencing at 13.00pm. The weather conditions during the time of the survey were recorded and are presented in Table 1 below.

Parameter	Value
Temperature (°C)	17.0
Cloud cover (%)	30
Precipitation	None
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	0

Table 1 Weather conditions during the diurnal survey

The inspection revealed the presence of several external and internal gaps, along with potential access points on/into the buildings; these included, raised/lifted roof tiles, gaps around framework/loose fitting doors (Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10).



Figs. 3 & 4 Raised tiles on barn roof



Figs. 5 & 6 Gaps beneath ridge tiles (stables)



Figs. 7 & 8 Potential access points – loose door and window gaps

Internally, the inspection revealed no roof voids were present; The barn roof was lined with breathable roof membrane, with exposed timbers (Figs. 9 and 10), whilst the stables had been boarded out and plastered (Figs. 11 and 12 – overleaf).



Figs. 9 & 10 Barn internal detail



Figs. 11 & 12 Stables internal detail

Internal niches were noted in both buildings; gaps were present around the barn door, whilst there were gaps in the ceilings of the stables (Figs. 13 and 14).



Figs. 13 & 14 Internal gaps

Despite the presence of the external gaps and internal niches, there was no evidence of bat activity or occupation associated with the buildings.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bats tend to be seasonal visitors to properties, and are not usually in occupation all year round. The females normally form maternity colonies during May or June and then leave for adjacent trees and/or woodland during July or August once the young bats are able to fly and become independent. Here they will spend the winter months in hibernation before returning to the house or barn the following spring.

Male bats generally live alone and have a number of favored roosts. During the summer they visit each of these for a few days at a time, before moving to their chosen hibernation site in mid-late October.

Different species have different habits, but this seasonal movement is common to all.

Bats choose their roosts carefully. During the summer they look for sites which are warmed by the sun, and as a result are most often found on the south and western side of buildings.

Pipistrelles, our smallest and commonest bats, prefer to roost in very confined spaces around the outside of buildings, typical places being behind hanging tiles, weather boarding, soffit, barge and eave boarding, between roof felt and roof tiles or in cavity walls.

As such they can be difficult to find, so likelihood of roosting was also assessed.

All the external structures, especially those associated with the roofs and walls of the buildings were examined.

The inspection revealed no signs of recent or historical bat activity or occupation, however a number of features (gaps and potential entry points) were present and the buildings were classified as medium suitability for roosting and/or hibernating bats.

As such, it is recommended a minimum of two nocturnal bat surveys are undertaken in the period May to September (inclusive). One of the surveys should comprised a dawn re-entry survey. Two surveyors are required to cover the elevations simultaneously.

5. REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust, 2016. *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines. 3rd edition.* Bat Conservation Trust, London.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Location plan

Appendix 2: Site layout

Appendix 1: Location plan



New Platt Farm, Littleborough

Appendix 2: Site layout



New Platt Farm, Littleborough