
DAYTIME BAT SURVEY

BARN AT LEACHES FARM, ASHWORTH ROAD, ROCHDALE



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Site Information

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned by Mr Jut Farrell in 2023 to undertake a daytime bat survey at Leaches Farm (hereafter referred to as the 'site'). The site is located on a farm track, south of Ashworth Road, Rochdale (O.S. grid reference: SD 83637 13969). The site is located in a rural setting, surrounded by pastoral farmland with some farm and residential properties nearby (see Figure 1). In the wider environment, Cheesden Valley approximately 400m to the south, is the closest suitable area of bat foraging habitat.



Figure 1 showing the site location

Description of Development

- 1.2 The site is the subject of a planning application for the conversion of the barn into a residential dwelling (planning reference: 21/00721/FUL). Works such as this can result in impacts to bats and their roosts, should these be present.

Biodiversity in Planning

- 1.3 Biodiversity is a material consideration, and Local Planning Authorities have a requirement to consider biodiversity and protected species when determining planning applications. Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) gives specific reference to minimising the impacts of development on biodiversity. Local and Neighbourhood plans also provide guidance towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including priority habitats and notable species.

Legal Context

1.4 All UK bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit), which make it 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.

1.5 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.

Survey History

1.6 A daytime bat and nesting bird survey was undertaken in April 2021 (RHE 2021a) which identified bat feeding remains and assessed the building as having low potential to support roosting bats.

1.7 Following this, a dusk emergence survey was carried out in May 2021 (RHE 2021b). No evidence of roosting bats was identified.

1.8 Following discussion with Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) a detailed inspection survey was undertaken in November 2022 (RHE 2022). Two Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* bats were recorded roosting within a deep crevice in the brick walls.

Aims

1.9 The aims of this survey were to:

- Further assess the status of the site to support roosting (or hibernating) bats;
- Inform the requirement for any further survey work;
- Inform the assessment of likely impacts to bats; and
- Inform a mitigation strategy.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Personnel and Seasonal Timing

- 2.1 Simon Holden BSc (Hons) MCIEEM (Associate Ecologist) carried out the survey on 14th February 2023. Simon has 18 years' professional experience and holds a Level 2 class licence to survey for bats (licence reference 2019-42937-CLS-CLS). The weather at the time of the survey was 5°C, dry and sunny.

Survey Methods

- 2.2 The site was subject to a ground-based inspection using binoculars and a torch. An endoscope was used to inspect various crevices in the masonry to identify evidence of roosting bats. Such evidence may include live or dead bats or bat droppings. A telescopic ladder was used to access some of the features.

Assessment

- 2.3 The site was assessed for its potential value to bats using professional judgement, with reference to published guidance (Collins 2016; Mitchell-Jones 2004).

Survey Constraints

- 2.4 The site contains numerous crevices within the masonry. The building is in a dilapidated state and it was not possible to inspect all the potentially suitable features due to health and safety concerns. It is possible that evidence of roosting or hibernating bats went unrecorded. However, the survey aims were met.

3.0 RESULTS

Site Description

- 3.1 The site is a two-storey traditional barn building constructed of brick and stone (see Photograph 1). The roof is pitched and is almost entirely uncovered (see Photograph 2).



Photograph 1 showing the front of the site (southwest aspect)



Photograph 2 showing the rear of the site (north aspect)

- 3.2 The masonry is in a dilapidated condition with numerous crevices (see Photographs 3 and 4).



Photograph 3 showing crevices in the masonry (south elevation)



Photograph 4 showing crevices in the masonry (east elevation)

- 3.3 Several of the crevices extended beyond 100mm into the rubble-filled walls (see Photograph 5).





Photograph 5 showing a deep crevice in the masonry

3.4 No evidence of roosting bats was recorded during the survey.

4.0 DISCUSSION

Site Summary

- 4.1 The site supports numerous features with potential to support roosting bats. The features are considered suitable to support small numbers of non-breeding crevice-dwelling bats such as Pipistrelle species. The site is unlikely to be used by significant numbers of bats (i.e. as a maternity roost) as it is unlikely to have the thermal properties required (stable high temperatures).
- 4.2 Some of the deeper crevices offer potential to support hibernating bats. No evidence of hibernating bats was recorded during the survey and it is considered unlikely that the site supports significant numbers of hibernating bats.

Previous Surveys

- 4.3 When the feeding remains were recorded in April 2021 the site roof was largely in-tact. These results suggest the site had been used as a feeding roost by Brown Long-eared bat *Plecotus auritis*. In its current state the site does not offer the sheltered conditions required for this use.
- 4.4 The presence of two Common Pipistrelles within a crevice in the masonry in November 2022 suggests the presence of a transitional roost (these are roosts used between the active period and the hibernation period). No bats were recorded within this feature during the current survey.

Assessment

- 4.5 Common Pipistrelle is a common and widespread species. A transitional roost is of low conservation status (Mitchell-Jones 2004).

Potential Impacts

- 4.6 The proposed development has the potential to destroy a transitional roost used by small numbers of Common Pipistrelle. Given the presence of numerous suitable features, it is possible that other minor roosts may be present and would also be destroyed. In the absence of mitigation, the renovation works could result in small numbers of bats being killed or injured, should they be present. Such impacts would be significant at the site level and would not affect the favourable conservation status of the species within its normal range.

Further Survey Requirements

- 4.7 Two dusk surveys should be undertaken in accordance with current guidelines (Collins 2016) between May and September to establish the current status of roosting bats during the active period.

Mitigation Requirements

- 4.8 A licence will be required to avoid the risk of an offence. It is likely that the site will meet the criteria to qualify to be registered under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence.

Once planning permission is granted a licence application will be made. Mitigation measures will include:

- The Registered Consultant will give a toolbox talk to people working on the renovation to ensure they are aware of the potential presence of bats, the legal status of bats, where bats may be present and what to do should they encounter bats during works.
- Prior to the commencement of renovation works The Registered Consultant (or Accredited Agent) will undertake a detailed inspection using an endoscope. Should any bats be present they will be captured and transferred to safety.
- It may be necessary to fit exclusion devices to features which cannot be fully inspected. These would allow any bats present to exit but not re-enter the feature. Exclusion devices would be left in-site for at least five nights under suitable conditions.
- Two integral bat boxes would be installed within the brickwork, at suitable locations as advised by the Registered Consultant.

Conclusion

- The current survey has informed a robust assessment of the value of the site to bats.
- Two dusk emergence surveys are required (May to September).
- The presence of two bats recorded in November 2022 means that a licence will be required to avoid the risk of an offence.
- Mitigation has been identified which will ensure the proposed development can be delivered in accordance with the planning policy and legislation relating to bats and their roosts.

6.0 REFERENCES

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