METHOD STATEMENT
European Protected Species (Bats)

Reasonable Avoidance Measures

Leaches Farm,
Ashworth Road,
Rochdale OL11 5UN

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Report prepared by:
Dave Anderson
Batworker.com
dave@batworker.com
07894 338290

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Executive summary

This Method Statement supports plans to develop Leaches Farm, Ashworth Road, Rochdale, OL11 5UN. Proposed work includes converting existing buildings for residential use.

A combination of scoping, static detector and activity surveys have found no evidence of bats using buildings on site. Breeding barn Owls were observed using Barn D.

It is proposed that a method statement and appropriate timing of works will provide reasonable avoidance measures for bats and barn owls.

The overall purpose of the Method Statement is to ensure that bats and their roosts are fully protected to ensure the ‘favourable conservation status of the species’.

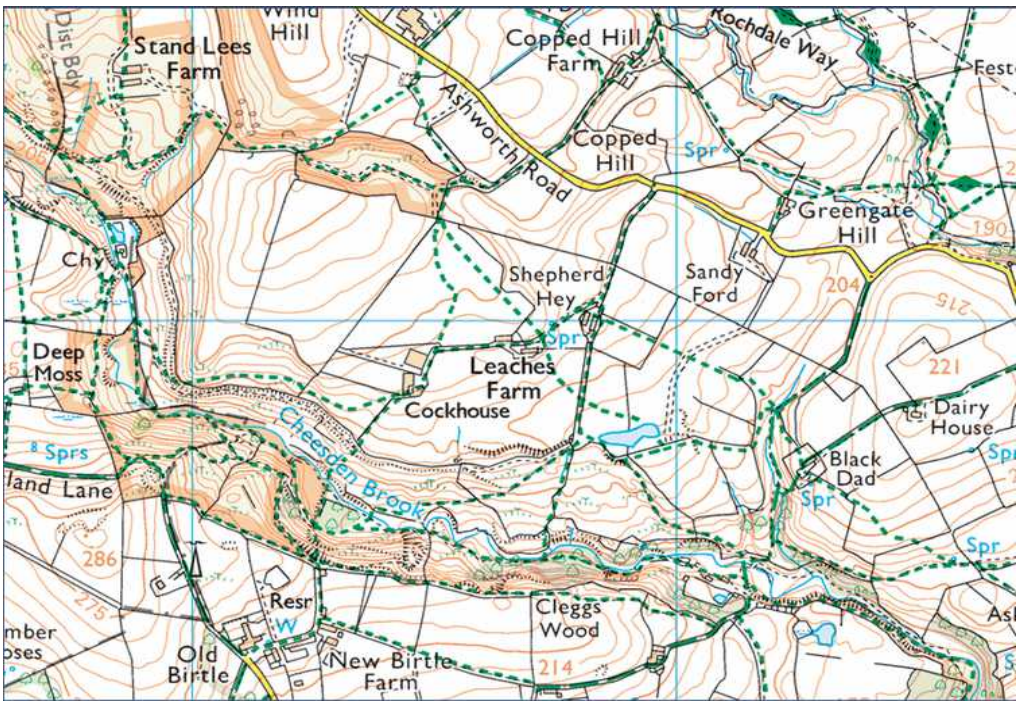
This Method statement is designed to minimise or remove any potential disturbance to bats; this is most easily achieved through appropriate timing of the works.

Compensatory measures have been recommended for barn owls.

By following the Reasonable Avoidance Measures that follow the development can take place, ensuring the Continued Ecological Functionality of the site, while avoiding a breach of the Habitat Regulations.

An EPS development licence is not required in situations where it can be demonstrated that satisfactory mitigation and enhancement works are sufficient to avoid offences being committed under the Habitat Regulations.

Site Location
Leaches Farm, Ashworth Road, Rochdale, OL11 5UN.
NGR: SD8369513931



Full details of proposed works covered by the Method Statement.



The property consists of a stone built farmhouse (A) with adjoining barn (B) and a separate stone barn (D) to the north west. A small stone outbuilding to the south of the farmhouse © and three static caravans (E). It is proposed to convert barns B and D for residential use and removing static caravans from site and replacing with a residential dwelling.

Survey Summary

A preliminary roost assessment carried out on the 20th July 2018 identified both the farmhouse and barns B and D as having low potential for roosting bats due to poor condition of roof areas and presence of barn owls in barn B. The outbuilding C and static caravans on site were assessed as having negligible roost potential.

The scoping surveys was supplemented by use of static bat detectors to monitor bat activity from 20th July to 3rd August 2018 and 4th August to 17th August 2018. A single activity survey was carried out 25th September 2018.

Personnel on surveys included: David Anderson, an experienced ecologist and bat researcher with 25 years experience of fieldwork and bat ecology, a founder member of the East Lancashire Bat Group and 'Batworker.com', formerly a Natural History Curator and manager of the East Lancashire Biological Records Centre. (Natural England licence No:2015-15784-CLS-CLS, Conservation, Science and Education), Sharon Anderson, an experienced bat worker.

Bats were identified to species level using a combination of Anabat Express, Anabat Walkabout and Elekon Batlogger M bat detectors. Potential roost entrances were monitored using video cameras equipped with infrared floodlighting to confirm roost locations and numbers of bats using the property.

No physical evidence of bat presence; staining, droppings or feeding remains, was recorded during the scoping survey.

Static bat detector monitoring recorded low levels of common pipistrelle activity, however timing of recordings at + two hours after sunset suggested bats arriving to forage on site having commuted from distant roosts. No recordings to suggest bats emerging from or returning to roosts were found during analysis. No recordings of myotis or brown long eared bats, typical barn dwelling species, were recorded during the survey periods.

During the activity survey a low number of common pipistrelle bats were observed commuting onto site at +one hour after sunset from along the access track to the east.

Interpretation of results

No physical evidence of use by bats was observed. No bat emergence or returns to roosts on or in any buildings on site was observed. Only a low level of common pipistrelle bats was observed using the site to forage, typical of bats commuting onto higher exposed sites during suitable weather conditions.

No evidence of use by bats was recorded, however it is considered that reasonable avoidance measures provide a measured approach to developing the buildings on site.

Survey constraints

Access to all areas of the interior and exterior of the buildings was possible and good visual inspection at ground level was possible. Crevice-roosting bat species are able to roost within very narrow gaps, frequently less than 25mm wide; solitary roosting bats are sometimes overlooked during daylight inspections, particularly in situations where bats have gained access within rubble infill walls and beneath roof materials and other significant structural features.

Evidence of bat activity such as bat droppings or staining on external walls and surfaces is frequently removed by the action of wind and rain; apparent absence of evidence is therefore evaluated with caution. In many situations it is not possible to inspect every locations where bats are present therefore it should be assumed that an absence of bat evidence does not necessarily equate to evidence that bats are absent.

Some species such as pipistrelle sp bats are opportunistic and it is possible for individuals to be found during works, even where surveys have had negative results during preliminary and activity surveys.

Impact Assessment

Short-term impacts: disturbance

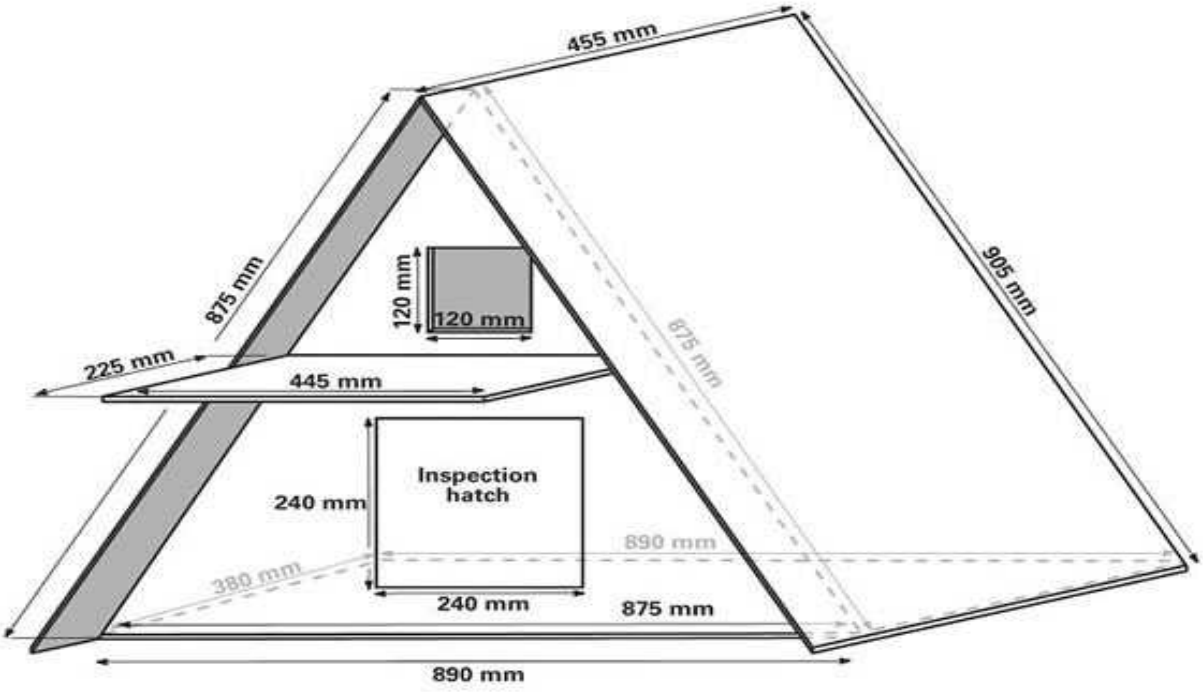
Low risk: No bats have been observed using buildings on site that are part of proposed work. However, care should be taken during roof works due to the opportunistic roosting behaviour of common pipistrelle bats.

Long-term impacts:
Roost loss: No impact on a local bat population. The destruction of a bat roost at the property is highly unlikely.

Long-term impacts:
Fragmentation and isolation: minimal, the impact of the proposed development on local bat species will be insignificant.

Predicted scale of impact
No loss of roosting sites of a common and relatively widespread species.

Suggested Mitigation



A compensatory barn owl box suitable for breeding birds should be installed prior to work commencing. The box could be pole mounted or mounted to a tree to the west of Barn D, allowing free flight from the box.

Method Statement

The overall purpose of the Method Statement is to ensure that bats and their roosts are fully protected to ensure the 'favourable conservation status of the species'.

The Method statement is designed to minimise or remove any potential disturbance to roosting bats; this is most easily achieved through appropriate timing of the works.

Timing of works.

Work to the roof areas should take place on days with a temperature of +5c, ideally between October and March.

Work to Barns C and D should be carried out outside bird nesting season (March to September).

A compensatory barn owl box to be installed prior to work commencing on Barn D. The box should be either pole mounted or mounted to a tree allowing free flight from the box.

No work should commence without contractors receiving a toolbox talk.

All contractors and project managers should be made aware of the legal protection afforded all species of bats in the UK and procedures should be in place to mitigate for the potential impact on bats before any building work is undertaken.

A copy of the Method Statement should be available to site / project managers in advance of any works being carried out.

The existence of a Method Statement helps to establish a defence against prosecution for intentional (WCA), deliberate (Habitat Regulations.) or reckless (WCA) disturbance of bats or damage to roosts. A Method Statement is normally required by the local planning authority to ensure that procedures are in place before the development works are carried out.

Accidental exposure of bats - EMERGENCY ADVICE

In the unlikely event of bats or their roosts being exposed or vulnerable to harm, suspend further work in that area. Cover the exposed bats to reduce any further risk of harm and seek advice immediately.

Call Dave Anderson (Batworker) on 07894 338290 (mobile); a site visit will be arranged to assess the situation and recover any bats / safely remove them from site.