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BAT SCOPING SURVEY

At

Langley Lane Farm

Middleton

Manchester

M24 5LJ

NGR: SD 85932 07669

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is written by Harry Fox BSc MRes, Graduate Ecologist at United Environmental Services Ltd (UES). It provides an assessment of the potential impacts on bats as a result of the proposed development at Langley Lane Farm, Middleton, Manchester.

A bat scoping survey was undertaken by UES on 16th April 2024. The objective of the survey was to establish the suitability of the buildings on site to support roosting bats, based on a site-specific survey and habitat assessment. The building was searched externally and internally (where accessible) for bat presence and features associated with bat activity, as detailed in Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance (2023).

The proposed development includes the renovation of Building 1, the conversion of Building 2 from a barn into a residential extension of Building 1, and the demolition of Building 10.

Langley Lane Farm is situated on the northern outskirts of Middleton, a highly urbanised area where foraging opportunities are limited to parks and areas of amenity grassland. However, from the northeast to northwest there are areas of higher quality habitat such as scattered woodland, rough grassland, waterbodies, and watercourses. The connectivity between these higher quality habitats is restricted from the south but to the north, hedge lines, watercourses and treelines will provide commuting opportunities to site.

Buildings 1 and 2 have been assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats and Building 10 has been assessed as having low potential to support roosting bats. These assessments are based largely on the number of external PRFs across the three buildings (including raised tiles and gaps between the brickwork, loose bargeboards etc.). No evidence of bats was observed during the internal or external building inspections.

As per the BCT survey guidelines, further bat presence / absence surveys are required in order to determine whether bats are using the buildings for roosting purposes, and if so, to determine the species and number of bats. Buildings 1 and 2 (moderate potential) require two surveys during the bat survey season of May to September inclusive, with at least one of the surveys undertaken during the peak bat survey season of May to August inclusive. Building 10 (low potential) requires a single survey during the peak bat survey season of May to August inclusive.

Evidence of nesting birds (robin *Erithacus rubecula*) was found during the internal inspection of Building 10. Additionally, house sparrows *Passer domesticus* were recorded as being active around Buildings 1 and 2, although no evidence of nesting was recorded during the building inspection. It is recommended that construction works take place outside of the breeding bird season and should not be undertaken from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible and works need to take place during this period, a breeding bird nest survey should be undertaken prior to the commencement of works by a suitably experienced ecologist and an ecological clerk of works appointed if considered necessary.

The report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 4, which give visual representations of the survey results.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Author, surveyors and qualifications

This report is compiled and written by Harry Fox BSc MRes, UES Graduate Ecologist. Other surveyors included:

- Tom Kenwright BSc MSc ACIEEM, UES Senior Ecologist. Tom is licensed by Natural England to disturb, take and handle all species of bats under licence number 2023-11076-CL18-BAT (level 2).

All surveyors have the knowledge, skills and experience identified within CIEEM's "Competencies for Species Survey: Bats" (2013) or were under the supervision of a surveyor with the required competencies.

1.2 Survey objectives

UES was commissioned in April 2024 to conduct site surveys which include the following activities:

- Conduct internal and external building inspections to look for field signs of bats.
- Assess the suitability of the buildings for use by roosting bats.
- Recommend further surveys, mitigation and compensation, where appropriate.

1.3 Proposed development

The proposed development includes the:

- Internal renovation and re-insulation of Building 1, including work to the roof.
- Conversion of Building 2 (a barn adjoined to Building 1), into a residential extension of Building 1
- Demolition of Building 10 (a long barn) and the construction of a new dwelling.

No further details were provided to UES at this stage.

1.4 Structure of the report

This report sets out the methodology, results, and recommendations in relation to a specific bat survey. Recommendations are in line with statutory legislation and planning policy objectives.

The report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 4, which give visual representations of the survey results.



2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

All surveys were carried out to recognised guidelines, timings and weather conditions, with particular reference to Natural England and BCT publications (see references for further information).

The habitats on site and in the surrounding area were assessed during a walkover survey and by studying aerial photographs, in order to gauge their suitability to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats.

2.2 Building survey

The buildings on site were searched both externally and internally (if accessible) for bat presence and features associated with bat activity, as detailed in BCT guidance (Collins, 2023). This was conducted on 16th April 2024 by Tom Kenwright and Harry Fox.

2.2.1 External inspection

The external inspection of the buildings on site was carried out from ground level using binoculars and a high-powered torch. The objective of the survey was to find and record any signs of bat use, for example:

- Bat droppings
- Feeding remains
- Grease staining / urine marks
- Corpses or skeletons

The bat signs listed above are visible from the outside of a building. The following areas were searched, where present:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| • Roof and ridge tiles | • Gaps under felt |
| • Lead flashing | • Cracks / holes in woodwork or behind cladding |
| • Eaves | • Gaps in brickwork and mortar |
| • Boxed soffits | • Air bricks |
| • Fascia and barge boards | • Grills |
| • Windowsills and panes | • Vents |
| • Walls | |

2.2.2 Internal inspection

The internal inspection covered all of the accessible rooms and roof spaces within the buildings. Bats regularly utilise specific areas within roof spaces, which were searched for any field signs of bats using high-powered torches and an endoscope, where considered necessary by the licenced ecologist. The following features were searched, where present:

- Roof beams and junctions
- Gaps under felt
- Dividing walls



- Chimney breasts
- Gaps in brickwork and mortar
- Cracks / holes in woodwork
- Floor or other surfaces on which droppings could accumulate

2.3 Survey limitations

The survey was carried out in mid-April at a time when bats may be in transitional roosts. For this reason, exposed droppings from summer roosts may not be evident as they are likely to have decomposed or have been washed away. Internal field signs should still be evident at this time of year, as should droppings in sheltered locations.

Additionally, the roof void of Building 1 could not be inspected in detail due to health and safety concerns. However, a reasonably detailed inspection could be undertaken from the access hatch using a high-powered torch. As further survey work will be undertaken this is not considered to be a significant limitation.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Habitat assessment

Langley Lane Farm is located within the town of Middleton. The buildings on site include a residential dwelling with eight other storage sheds, barns and other agricultural facilities. The habitats on site include areas of hardstanding, residential gardens, as well as areas of pasture, scattered trees, small areas of woodland and a small brook on the northwest of site within the woodland. The habitats onsite such as the woodland, stream and pasture offer some higher quality commuting and foraging opportunities for bats.

The immediate area to the south is almost entirely composed of commercial and residential buildings and small gardens intersected by well-lit roads. From the northeast to the northwest the habitat is of a higher quality. To the north, there are large tracts of arable land interspersed with small waterways, hedge lined fields, waterbodies and scattered woodlands which will provide higher quality foraging and commuting opportunities for bats.

The highest quality habitat local to site is Bowlee Park located 500m southeast of site. Bowlee Park contains scattered treelines and woodland, areas of rough grassland, amenity playing fields and several small brooks. These habitats likely provide higher quality feeding and commuting opportunities for bats however, the connectivity to site is limited by large areas of residential housing and well lit roads.

Further afield, there are areas of higher quality habitat, such as the ancient woodlands (Oaken Bank Wood and Glade Wood located approximately 1.3km northwest), watercourses, waterbodies and large tracts of arable land. There is a single statutorily protected site within 2km, Hopwood Woodlands LNR¹ is located 1.2km northeast and contains the two aforementioned semi-natural ancient woodlands.

The surrounding 2km generally provides low quality habitats for bats, the scattered agricultural fields and small patches of woodland may serve as pockets of higher quality habitats. However, connectivity between site and these higher quality habitats is limited by the presence of roads and the highly urban landscape extending to the south and continuing again further north.

3.2 Building survey

3.2.1 External inspection

The buildings surveyed on site include one residential dwelling (Building 1), an adjoining barn (Building 2) and an old shed/stable (Building 10).

Building 1 – a farmhouse with redbrick whitewashed walls and numerous well sealed uPVC windows and doors (see Photographs 1–3). The roof is pitched, has a central chimney (in good condition) and is covered with old concrete tiles. The tiles are in a poor state with numerous cracks, missing and lifted tiles providing numerous PRFs (see Photographs 7 & 8). The roofline at the east gable end is capped with a plastic covering. The fascia under the eaves on all aspects (except west) were unsealed providing PRFs in the form of gaps at the wall plate into the roof void (see Photograph 9 & 10).

¹ Local Nature Reserve



Building 2 – of similar construction and adjoining Building 1, however its unpainted brickwork is in considerably worse condition (see Photographs 3 & 4). Unlike Building 1 it also has numerous slit openings in the brickwork on all aspects (see Photograph 4). These features were identified as PRFs as they provide access to internal PRFs (see section 3.2.2). On the northern aspect a large wooden door is present, above which there is a significant gap between the doorframe and the lintel creating a PRF (see Photograph 4). The windows are unglazed and covered with wood boards which have numerous gaps around the edges providing access to the interior (see Photograph 11). Like Building 1 it also contains numerous PRFs in the form of lifted, cracked or missing tiles (see Photographs 7 & 8) and gaps under the fascia at the wall plate (see Photograph 9 & 10) across all aspects.

A small lean to shed is also present on the northern aspect (see Photograph 4). This had a tiled mono – pitched roof, redbrick walls, a small single painted window, and a wooden door. The PRFs were limited to gaps created by lifted tiles, as well as sections of lifted lead flashing providing access into the interior. The interior is comprised of well-sealed brickwork, a collapsing chipboard sealing and is generally lacking in PRFs.

Building 10 – an old dilapidated stable, with wooden board walls with various external wooden panels attached to the outside (see Photographs 5 & 6). The roof is pitched and has numerous vents protruding from the ridgeline. The roofing is comprised of corrugated asbestos sheeting with several corrugated plastic skylights. A small entry way extends out of the northern side of the building, its construction is identical except it has a mono-pitched corrugated metal roof. PRFs on the exterior include gaps in the wooden walls across all aspects (see Photograph 12 & 13). Loose fitting bargeboards/metal covering on all aspects (see Photographs 6 & 10). PRFs on the roof include gaps between the asbestos sheeting (see Photograph 15), under the eaves (see Photograph 12) and under the ridge tiles (see Photograph 16).

No bat droppings or any other evidence of bat activity was found during the external building inspections.

3.2.2 Internal inspection

Building 1 – the interior of Building 1 consists of multiple well lit open and recently stripped rooms. The ceiling is partially collapsed/rotted in places creating gaps into the roof void (see Photographs 17 & 18). The roof void itself is roughly 5m wide, 10m long and 1.5m high, it has a trussed queen post structure (see Photographs 19). The floor is lined with insulation. The interior of the roof is in good condition with no obvious cracks or slits in the roofing material. PRFs within the void are limited to gaps above the trusses and ridge beams. Two redbrick interior walls were present within the void, both had had numerous sizeable holes. The eastern wall partially blocks part of the same roof void (see Photograph 20 & 21), while the holes in the western wall lead into Building 2 and were the only source of light ingress (see Photograph 19). Additionally, the building contained a small cellar, this was damp, small and completely sealed without access points or light ingress (see Photograph 22), it was therefore deemed to have negligible potential for hibernating bats.

Building 2 – a large storage barn, open from floor to roof, the interior walls were bare redbrick and in poor condition (see Photograph 23). A large set of wooden doors are present on the northside. The roof is of identical construction to Building 1 except without queen posts (see Photograph 24). The room is dimly lit and draughty with numerous points of light ingress through the slit windows and gaps around the doors and windows. The interior of the main room provided numerous PRFs, these include gaps and cracks in the brickwork (see Photograph 25 & 27) and behind exposed beams (see Photograph 26). Furthermore, the access points in Building 2 also provide egress into the roof void of Building 1.



On the western side of the barn an internal brick wall and corrugated metal roof, create an additional room (see Photograph 28). This small room has whitewashed walls, steel girders, numerous small windows and wooden doors (see Photograph 29). The room had limited PRFs mainly in the form of gaps above and between the ceiling panels (see Photograph 30). However, on the western side an open doorframe led into an adjoining building (not surveyed) (see Photograph 31). This adjoining building had numerous entry points and PRFs and also had evidence of nesting birds within. Despite the fact this building is not to be affected, it still serves as a point of access to Building 2.

Building 10 – like the exterior, the interior of Building 10 is in a dilapidated state (see Photograph 32). The internal space is open without interior walls and has numerous steel beams supporting a steel frame roof. The roofing is panelled with insulation boards, many of which were broken, rotting, and collapsing. The numerous skylights and large holes in the walls create a well-lit and draughty interior. The space is highly cluttered with stored furniture, leaving only small open areas. The wall structure is complex with numerous layers of wooden sheeting and boards creating large cavities (see Photograph 33). Numerous gaps and cracks were present in the walls and ceiling (see Photographs 13 & 34). These gaps allow access into the cavities in the walls and the ceilings creating PRFs. Due to the numerous low quality external and internal PRFs and generally unfavourable internal conditions, the building was deemed to have low potential for roosting bats.

Evidence of breeding birds within the structure was observed in the form of a robin bringing nesting material into the structure several times.

No bat droppings or any other evidence was found during the internal building inspections.



4 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Evaluation of results

4.1.1 Qualitative assessment of foraging habitats

In summary, the buildings at Langley Lane Farm are situated on the border of an urbanised area, with very limited foraging and commuting habitat for bats. However, in the surrounding landscape (mainly to the north) there are some areas with higher quality habitats for bats including areas of amenity and rough grassland, arable fields, hedgerows, watercourses, waterbodies and woodland. Despite this, the connectivity between these habitats and site is partially restricted by built-up areas to the south and well-lit roads, with commuting routes limited to the hedge lined arable fields to the north.

4.1.2 Qualitative assessment of roosting habitats

Buildings 1 and 2 on site have been assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats, due to the presence of several external PRFs such as gaps created by lifted / raised tiles and in brickwork and under the fascia. The interior areas particularly of Building 2 and its open roof structure present numerous internal roosting features suitable for use by crevice and loft dwelling bat species. Furthermore Building 2 provides internal access to the roof void of Building 1, although this had significantly less PRFs.

Building 10 has been assessed as having low potential for roosting bats, as the features within the roof and walls may offer opportunities for individual / small numbers of bats. Despite the numerous external PRFs the internal conditions were deemed to be of low quality for bats (too bright, exposed, and draughty) with internal PRFs limited to roof and wall cavities.

The buildings within the immediate vicinity and surrounding area will provide an abundance of alternative roosting opportunities for bats.

4.2 Mitigation and compensation measures

4.2.1 Bats

No evidence of roosting bats was observed during the building inspections at Langley Farm Lane. However, numerous PRFs are present within all buildings which remain suitable for use by roosting bats. As such Buildings 1 and 2 have been assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats. Therefore, two further bat presence / absence surveys will be required in order to determine whether bats are roosting within the buildings, and if so, to determine the species and number of bats. These surveys should be undertaken by an appropriately licenced ecologist during the bat survey season of May to September inclusive, with at least one of the surveys undertaken during the peak bat survey season of May to August inclusive.

Building 10 had less favourable internal conditions and lower quality PRFs and was therefore assessed as having low potential to support roosting bats. As such, only one further bat presence / absence survey is required in order to determine whether bats are using the building to roost, and if so, to determine the species and number of bats. This survey should be undertaken by an appropriately licenced ecologist during the peak bat survey season of May to August inclusive.



The survey results will need to be submitted to the local planning authority (LPA) as part of the planning application. In addition, further mitigation or compensation measures may need to be detailed in a bat method statement and submitted to and agreed with the LPA prior to a planning decision. It should be noted that if bats are present, it is likely that these further measures will need to include an application for a protected species licence from Natural England, which can be applied for once planning permission is granted.

4.2.2 Breeding birds

Evidence of or potential for breeding birds was observed within all three buildings, in the form of frequent commuting of house sparrows into the roofline of Building 1 and 2, and a robin (carrying nesting material) continually entering Building 10.

Therefore, it is recommended that construction works take place outside of the breeding bird season and should not be undertaken from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible, a breeding bird nest survey should be undertaken prior to the commencement of works by a suitably experienced ecologist and an ecological clerk of works appointed if considered necessary.



5 CONCLUSION

The proposed development site at Langley Lane Farm is situated on the edge of an urban area which provides low quality foraging and commuting habitats for bats. However, slightly higher quality habitats are present within the surrounding area. Despite this, the connectivity between the higher-quality habitats and the development site is limited.

Buildings 1 and 2 have been assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats due to the presence of a number of external PRFs such as gaps created by lifted / raised tiles, gaps in brickwork. An internal inspection revealed further internal PRFs particularly in Building 2. Building 10 contained numerous PRFs but of lower quality, due to this and its less favourable internal conditions it was deemed to be of low potential for roosting bats. As such, further bat presence / absence surveys should be undertaken by a suitability licenced ecologist during the bat survey season (see section 4.2.1).

Construction works onsite should also be mindful of breeding bird legislation as detailed in section 4.2.2.



6 REFERENCES

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2013). *Competencies for Species Survey: Bats*.

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. (3rd ed.) The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

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

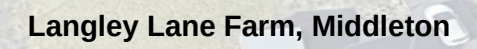
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Stockport Council, *Crookilley Wood SBI report*. (2007)



APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site plan





Appendix 2 – Aerial photographs



Langley Lane Farm, Middleton

Close aerial photograph

— Site boundary

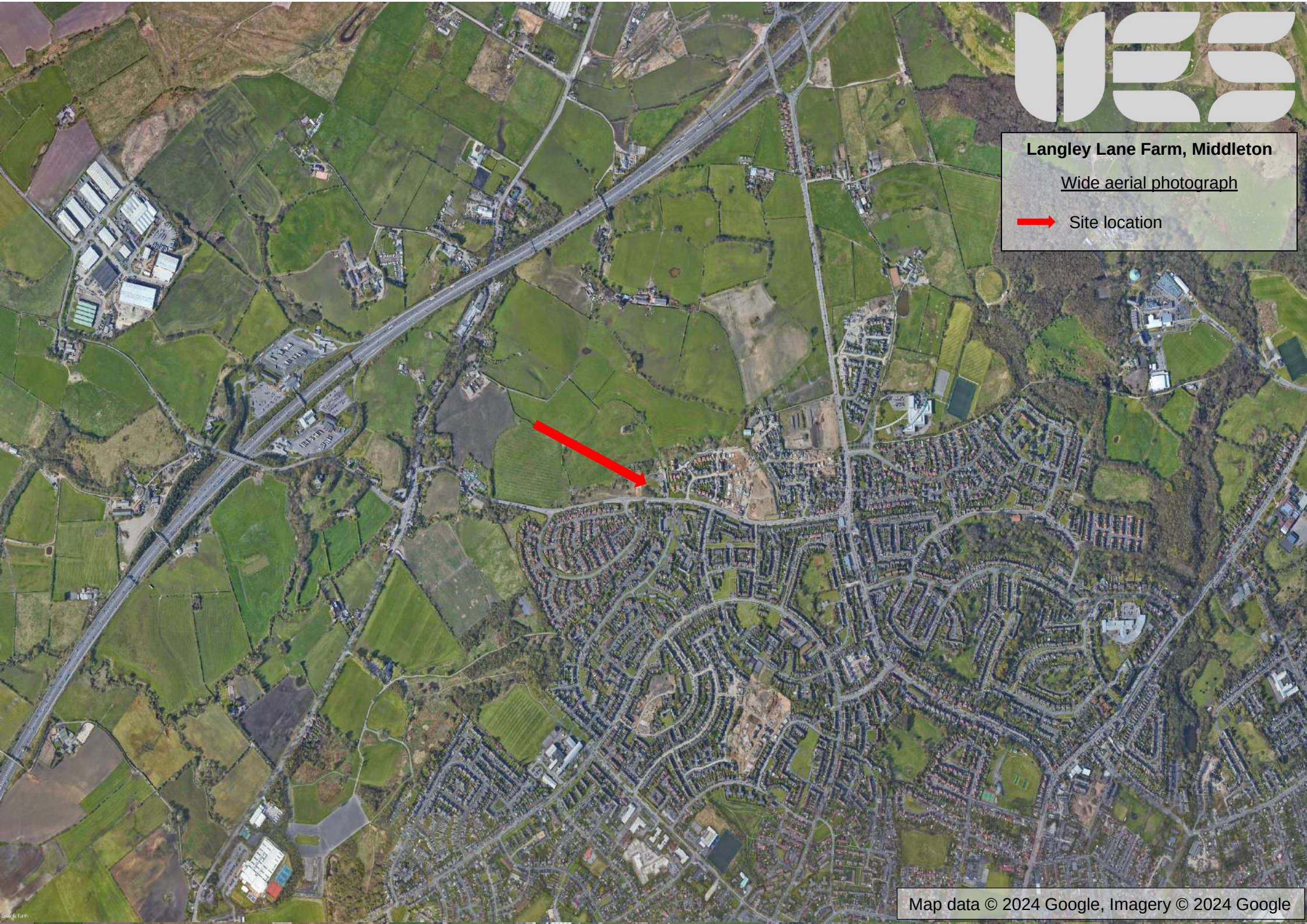




Langley Lane Farm, Middleton

Wide aerial photograph

 Site location





Appendix 3 – Photographs



Photograph 1 – Northern aspect of Building 1.



Photograph 2 – Eastern aspect of Building 1.



Photograph 3 – Southern aspects of Buildings 1 & 2.



Photograph 4 – Northern aspect of Building 2, ventilation gaps can be seen on the top right section of wall (present on all aspects). Additionally a large gap is present between the door and the lintel.



Photograph 5 – Northeastern aspect of Building 10.



Photograph 6 – Southwestern aspect of Building 10.



Photograph 7 – Examples of cracks and gaps in tiling across the roofs of Buildings 1 & 2.



Photograph 8 – Examples of cracks and gaps in tiling across the roofs of Buildings 1 & 2.



Photograph 9 – Covering of roofline on eastern gable end of Building 1, showing PRFs created by loose covering.



Photograph 10 – Gap between fascia and wall plate on southern aspect of Building 1.



Photograph 11 – Example of gap around the windowframes in Building 2.



Photograph 12 – Example of gap in wooden panelling and gaps under the eaves in Building 10.



Photograph 13 – Example of gap in wooden panelling in Building 10.



Photograph 14 – Example of gaps under loose fitting metal sheeting covering gable end on Building 10.



Photograph 15 – Example of gaps between asbestos sheeting on Building 10.



Photograph 16 – Example of gaps under ridgeline on Building 10.



Photograph 17 – Example of internal conditions within Building 1.



Photograph 18 – Example of internal conditions within Building 1 with section of collapsing ceiling.



Photograph 19 – Internal roof structure of Building 1, also shows hole within internal wall to Building 2.



Photograph 20 – Gap in central internal wall withing roof void of Building 1.



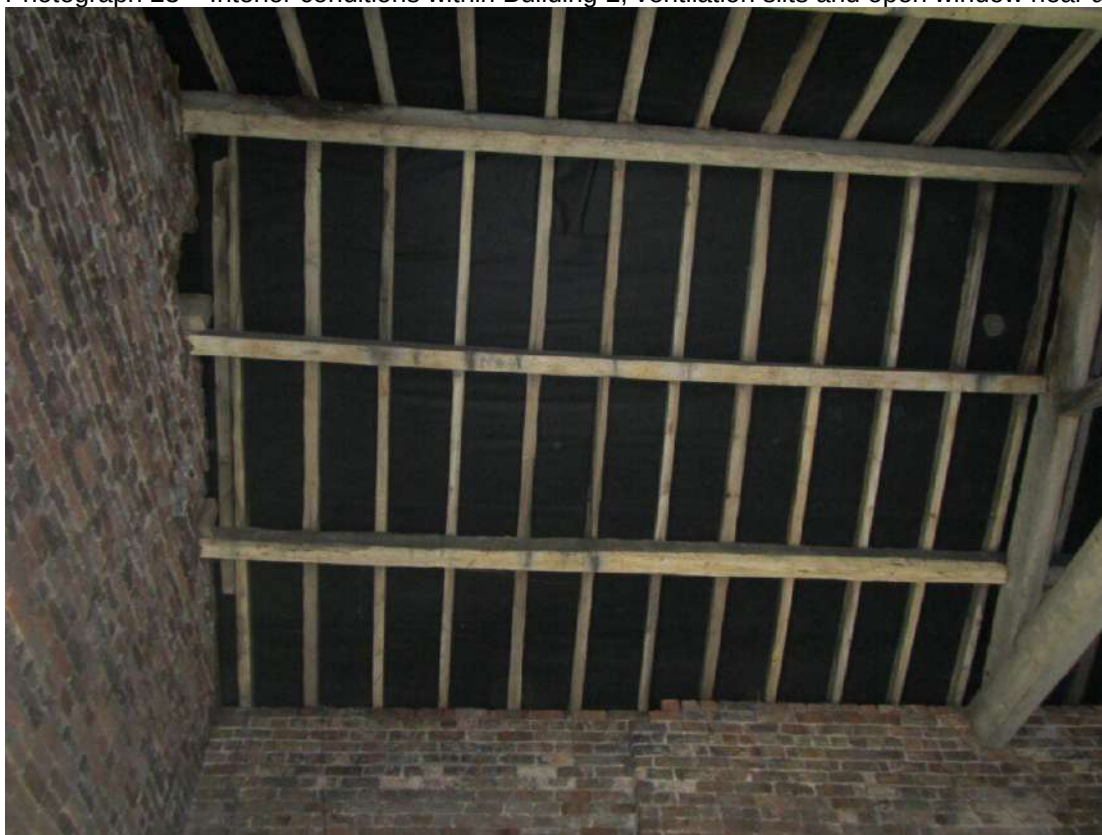
Photograph 21 – Eastern end of roof void of Building 1 (past the internal wall).



Photograph 22 – Small cellar beneath Building 1.



Photograph 23 – Interior conditions within Building 2, ventilation slits and open window near apex.



Photograph 24 – Roof structure of Building 2.



Photograph 25 – Example of gaps in the internal walls of Building 2.



Photograph 26 – Example of gaps under exposed wall beam creating an ideal PRF inside Building 2.



Photograph 27 – Example of gaps between brickwork and roof structure in Building 2.



Photograph 28 – Small room created by internal wall on eastern end of Building 2.



Photograph 29 – Small room on eastern end of Building 2.



Photograph 30 – Gaps between ceiling pannels within small room on eastern end of Building 2.



Photograph 31 – Building adjacent to Building 2 connected through the small room.



Photograph 32 – Interior conditions within Building 10.



Photograph 33 – Wall structure and cavities in Building 10.



Photograph 34 – Example of gaps present in Building 10.



Appendix 4 – Statutory and planning context

Ecological assessments

Ecological assessments play an important part within the planning context; they include an initial assessment which highlights any specific interests of a site. From the initial site assessment, the surveyor assesses the suitability of habitats within the site to support protected species and makes recommendations for further survey works if required. The following paragraphs provide a brief interpretation of the legislative protection that is relevant to the findings of this report.

Bats

In the United Kingdom, all species of bat and their roosts are afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU exit) Regulations 2019 (known as the “Habitats Regulations”). The Wildlife and Countryside Act is the domestic implementation of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention) and was amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a bat
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (even if the bat is not present at the time)
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead bat, any part of a bat or anything derived from a bat

Under UK law, a bat roost is *any structure or place which any wild [bat] ... uses for shelter or protection*. As bats often reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time of the activity taking place.

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

If an activity is likely to result in any of the above offences, a licence can be applied for to derogate from the protection afforded. These licences must provide appropriate mitigation and are issued by Natural England.

A Natural England mitigation licence application requires a Mitigation Method Statement and, in many cases, a Reasoned Statement of Application. The Mitigation Method Statement contains details of the proposed mitigation works. The Reasoned Statement needs to provide a rational and reasoned justification as to why the proposed development meets the requirements of the Conservation (National Habitats & c.) regulations 1994, namely Regulations 44(2)(e), (f) or (g), and 44(3)(a).

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) provides guidance on the interpretation of the law in relation to the natural environment and development.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 lists the following bat species as species of principle importance under Section 41:

- Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*
- Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
- Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*
- Greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
- Lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

Section 40 requires every public body in the exercising of its functions ‘have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’ (all biodiversity and not just section 41 species and habitats); therefore making these bats a material consideration in the planning process and requiring a detailed ecological bat survey before planning permission can be granted.

Birds

All wild birds, their nests and young are protected throughout England and Wales by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is illegal to kill, injure or take any wild bird, or damage or destroy the nest or eggs of breeding birds. The legislation applies to all bird species, common and rare.

In addition to the protection afforded to all wild birds, more vulnerable species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act receive enhanced protection when breeding. Schedule 1 species, including their dependent young, are protected from intentional or reckless disturbance whilst at or near the nest, in addition to the protection afforded the more common species.

The NERC Act offers further protection to the nests of some species that regularly re-use their nests, even when the nests are not in use.

The leading governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations in the UK have reviewed the population status of 244 UK bird species. "Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the Red List for Birds" is the most recent publication summarising their findings. Three lists, Red, Amber and Green, have been produced based on the most up-to-date evidence available and criteria include conservation status at global and European levels and, within the UK: historical decline, trends in population and range, rarity, localised distribution and international importance. These lists are a valuable resource when considering conservation priorities.

Planning policy

National Planning Guidance is issued in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF). The most relevant section is 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Key relevant principles stated in 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment are;

- 174.** 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.
- 179.** To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity⁶¹; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation⁶²; and
 - b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity
- 180.** 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 reasons⁶³ 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.