

Preliminary Roost Assessment & Nesting Bird Check

Longley Hey Farm
Halifax Road
Littleborough
OL15 0LB

For
Kelly Slicker



Gritstone Ecology

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the report

The report is written by Stewart Bradshaw for Kelly Slicker. Stewart carried out a Preliminary Roost Assessment and Nesting Bird Check at Longley Hey Farm, Littleborough, on 12th January 2024. The survey report will be used to provide supporting information for a planning application, at the property.

1.2. Survey aims

The aim of the survey was to determine the actual or potential presence of bats and the need for further survey or mitigation; and to check the site for features which could be used by nesting birds, or indications of use by nesting birds.

1.3. Surveyor details

Stewart is licensed to disturb, take and handle all species of bats in all counties of England under licence number 2015-15615-CLS-CLS. He has more than 10 years of experience in ecological consultancy, including the planning & preparation of bat surveys, and mitigation licences.

1.4. Proposed development

The development proposals are for the demolition of the farmhouse, which has been destroyed by fire, has no roof, and has been open to the elements for a number of years; and the construction of a more modern replacement residential building, and associated landscaping works.

1.5. Site context

The farm is located to the north of Halifax Road, Littleborough, OL15 0LB, GR SD 95443 17764, approximately 8km northeast of Rochdale Town Centre. The farm is on an exposed hillside at 230m above sea level, in a rural area, surrounded by pasture, with a small block of plantation woodland to the east.

The site includes derelict stone farmhouse with single-storey lean-to sheds to the north, south, and east; gardens, and areas of hard landscaping to the sides and rear.

Habitat within 50m of the house includes; agricultural buildings, open pastures, dry-stone walls, trees, watercourses, and quiet access roads.

Habitat within 500m includes, open farmland, agricultural buildings, mature trees, small blocks of woodland, ponds, reservoirs, and watercourses.

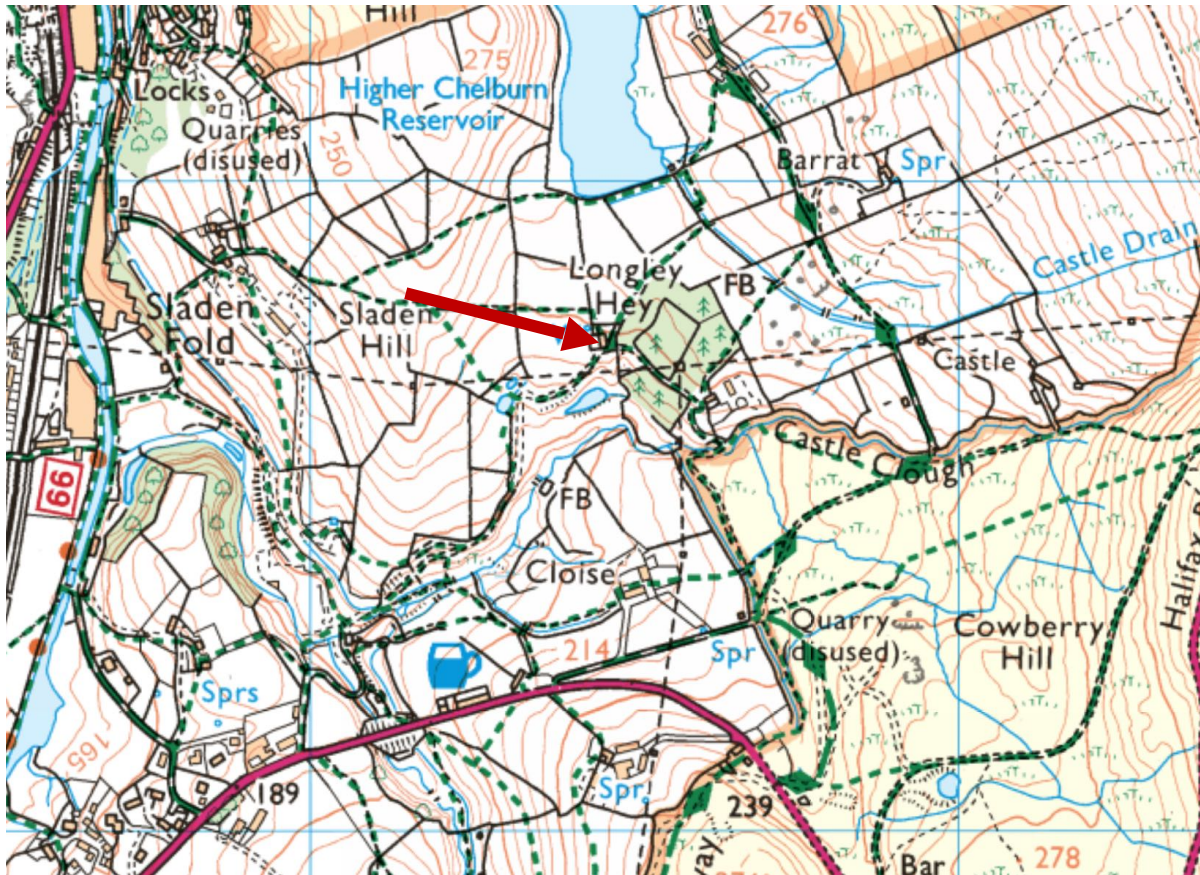
Blocks of woodland, waterbodies, watercourses, and open pastures potentially provide good quality foraging opportunities for bats in an area which is subject to little disturbance from light, noise, and other human activity.

However, the site is on an exposed hillside, and is exposed to the prevailing wind and rain, which is likely to reduce its quality as foraging habitat.

The site and surrounding area provide moderate quality foraging, commuting, and roosting opportunities for bats.



1.6. Site location



1.6a – Longley Hey Farm – site location.



1.6b – Longley Hey Farm – aerial photograph.



2. Methods

2.1. Survey timings

The survey was completed on 12th January 2024. Weather conditions during the survey were overcast, cool, and dry, with a temperature of 6°C.

2.2. Desk study

No formal desk study of the site was undertaken, prior to the preliminary roost assessment, and no other ecological surveys have been carried out in relation to the proposals.

The development has a small footprint, and impacts beyond the site boundary are unlikely. A site-specific investigation was considered more suitable.

2.3. Habitat assessment

The habitat on site and in the surrounding area was assessed using Ordinance Survey mapping, and aerial photography. Habitat features on site, and those in the surrounding area were assessed for their suitability for use by bats during the site visit.

2.4. Building inspection

A systematic search of the exterior of the building was made to identify potential or actual bat access points and roosting places, and to locate any evidence of bats such as live or dead specimens, bat droppings, urine splashes, fur-oil staining and or squeaking noises. Bat specimens and droppings are the most reliable type of evidence; the other types are not always the result of bat activity. Sometimes bats leave no visible sign of their presence on the outside of a building (even when they do wet weather can wash evidence away.)

The search included (where present) the ground beneath potential access points, windowsills, window panes, walls, behind peeling paintwork and lifted rendering, hanging tiles, weatherboarding, eaves, soffit boxes, fascia's, lead flashing, gaps under felt, under tiles / slates and in existing bats boxes. Gaps in brickwork and stonework were searched (where present). All evidence of use by bats, or features with the potential to be used by bats was recorded and photographed.

A systematic search of the inside of the building was undertaken to identify potential or actual bat access points and roosting places, and to locate evidence of bats. Bat specimens (live or dead) and droppings are the most reliable type of evidence. Other evidence can include urine splashes, fur-oil staining, feeding remains, squeaking noises, bat fly (Nycteribiid) pupal cases (Hutson 1984) or odour.

Areas inspected include;

Within rooms

- floors and surfaces
- behind wooden panelling
- in lintels above doors and windows
- behind window shutters and curtains
- behind pictures, posters, furniture, peeling paintwork, peeling wallpaper, lifted plaster and boarded up windows
- inside cupboards and in chimneys accessible from fireplaces.



Within roof spaces

- the tops of gable end and dividing walls
- the top of chimney breasts
- ridge and hip beams and other structural timbers
- mortise and tenon joints
- all beams
- the junction of roof timbers, especially where ridge and hip beams meet
- behind purlins
- between tiles and the roof lining (where accessible)
- under flat felt roofs.

The areas listed above were inspected (where present), any additional areas with potential for use were also inspected.

The buildings were checked for indications of use by nesting birds, such as old nests, nesting materials, whitewash, feeding remains, and regurgitated pellets.

2.5. Equipment

The equipment listed below was available for use during the surveys and was used where required.

Clulite CB2 1,000,000 candlepower torch. Digital endoscope with 5m cable reach with 9mm imaging head. Digital camera with 50x zoom. 8x25 close focussing binoculars, 4m ladders, bat handling gloves, and DNA sampling tubes.

Additionally a camera drone was used to check the roof and difficult to access areas in detail.

2.6. Survey limitations

None. All accessible areas of the building were inspected in detail. The survey was completed in January, when bats are less active, and external signs of use, such as droppings, are less likely to be present.



3. Results

3.1. External inspection



3.1a – Looking north toward the farmhouse.

Longley Hey Farm is an unoccupied derelict stone farmhouse which has been damaged by fire. The building consists of the original stone section of the farmhouse, and lean-to sheds which abut the northern, southern, and eastern walls.

The main section of the farmhouse has no roof, floors, ceilings, or enclosed spaces, and is fully open to the elements.

Some pieces of lead flashing are still present around the chimneys; although they are either fully open and exposed to the elements, or tight against brickwork. External timbers such as purlins, fascia boards, soffits, and gutters, were largely destroyed by the fire. Timbers that remain are fully open to the elements, and provide no suitable crevices for roosting bats.

Walls are white painted solid local stone, lintels are stone, sills are stone; window and door frames are UPVC, all glass has been destroyed.

External features which are typically used by roosting bats, such as gaps between roof tiles, under ridge tiles, under lead flashing, and behind roof timbers have been destroyed by the fire. Walls are white painted local stone, with no gaps in mortar, or cracks which could be used by roosting bats. There are no gaps between window and door frames (where present) and stonework.

There are no features remaining externally which are suitable or likely be used by roosting bats, and no indications of use by bats were present during the inspection.



3.2. Internal inspection



3.2a – The inside of the farmhouse.

Internally the main section of the farmhouse house was completely destroyed by the fire. There are no roof voids, floors, or ceilings, and the remains of the roof have collapsed into what was the cellar, leaving no enclosed spaces.

Internal walls are bare stone, or bare brickwork. There are minor gaps between blocks of stone, and bricks, where mortar has washed away, however these are superficial and do not lead into suitable crevices or cavities.

3.3. The Lean-to sheds

There are three lean-to sheds abutting the walls of the farmhouse as described below.

The northern lean-to has a single-pitched roof covered with corrugated steel panels, and a simple timber supporting structure. Internally the building has no internal roof voids, and walls are white painted blockwork. Timber fascia boards are fixed tightly against walls with no gaps. There are no gaps between materials internally or externally which are suitable for use by roosting bats.

The southern lean-to was formerly a livestock shed. The building has a single-pitched roof covered with corrugated asbestos cement panels, and a simple timber supporting structure. Walls are white-painted solid brick. Asbestos cement fascia panels at the front of the building are fixed tightly against the wall with no gaps. Gaps between roofing materials and walls are filled with cement. There are no gaps between materials internally or externally which are suitable for use by roosting bats.

The eastern lean-to was formerly a vehicle storage shed. The building has a flat felt-covered roof, and white-painted concrete block walls. There is a large timber sliding door on the east



wall, and another doorway has been blocked with a single layer shiplap timber wall. Internally the building has a simple steel and timber roof structure, with no roof void, and the underside of plywood roofing boards are exposed. Internal walls are painted concrete blockwork, with no internal lining. There are no gaps between blockwork and roofing materials, and there are no crevices internally which are suitable for use by roosting bats.

Although all of the sheds are open to the elements and offer open access to bats in flight, there are no crevices, or other suitably enclosed features internally which could be used by roosting bats.

3.4. Indications of use

No indications of use by bats were present during the survey, either internally, or externally.

3.5. Level of suitability

The buildings have **negligible suitability** for use by roosting bats. This is as the majority of the building was severely damaged by fire, which destroyed features which may otherwise have been suitable for use by roosting bats; and as the areas of the building which remain have no features suitable for use by roosting bats. Additionally no bat droppings or other indications of use by bats were found.

4. Evaluation

The buildings are set in an area which, in general, provides moderate quality habitat, for foraging, commuting and roosting bats, and bats are likely to be present locally.

Areas of open farmland, watercourses, and small blocks of woodland locally provide good foraging opportunities for bats, in an area which is subject to little disturbance from light and noise.

Buildings adjacent to good quality habitat are more likely to be used by roosting bats than those further away. However, the majority of the building was severely damaged by fire, is open to the elements, and has no features which could be used by roosting bats.

The lean-to sheds offer open access to bats in flight, and are the only areas of the building left intact. However, these areas have no roof voids, crevices, or other suitably enclosed features which could be used by roosting bats. Additionally these areas are well-lit by natural light, and open to the elements, through missing windows and doors.

There are no features externally, which are suitable, or likely to be used by roosting bats; roof tiles and external timbers which are often used by roosting bats, were destroyed by the fire. Remaining timbers on the lean-to sheds are either missing, or fixed tightly against the walls.

The lack of any evidence of use inside the lean-to sheds, such as droppings or feeding remains, reduces the likelihood of a significant roost being present. If bats were present inside these areas, even in lower numbers, some evidence of use would be likely to persist.

Walls are solid stone with no insulating cavity. External walls are in good condition, with no cracks, or missing mortar which could be used by crevice dwelling bats. Internal walls are bare brick or stonework, with some areas of missing mortar and superficial gaps. However there are no crevices suitable for use by roosting bats.



The top of walls at the eaves and gables are exposed to the elements, and any gaps between individual blocks of stone, or bricks, are either filled with the remains of mortar, or do not provide sufficient shelter to be used by roosting bats.

Window and door frames (where present) are fixed into the stone window settings with no suitable gaps, and offer no suitable roosting opportunities.

Prior to the fire, and subsequent damage by the weather and lack of maintenance, the building had a tiled roof covered with rough cut local stone, and would likely have been suitable for use by roosting bats. However in its current condition the building has no suitable features.

The construction of a new building, and provision of bat boxes on trees locally would provide an improvement in roosting habitat for bats.

Taking into account the habitat surrounding the site, and the features present, the buildings are unlikely to be used by roosting bats and have **negligible suitability** for use.

No indications of current or previous use by nesting birds were present during the building inspection.

4.1. Legal and planning context

All species of bats in the UK and their roosts are legally protected by UK and European legislation. The UK the legal protection is summarised as follows:

You will be committing a criminal offence if you:

1. Deliberately* capture, injure or kill a bat
2. Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats
3. Damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time)
4. Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat
5. Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost even if bats are not present at the time

*In a court, 'deliberately' will probably be interpreted as someone who, although not intending to capture/injure or kill a bat, performed the relevant action, being sufficiently informed and aware of the consequence his/her action would most likely have.

If bats or bat roosts are present in the building, the proposed demolition works could result in an offence being committed.

5. Impact assessment

The development proposals are for the demolition of the farmhouse and lean-to sheds, and the construction of a more modern replacement building, and associated landscaping works.

The buildings have no features which are suitable, or likely to be used by roosting bats and have **negligible suitability** for use.

The proposed work is unlikely to impact on bats or bat roosts; and, once completed is unlikely to provide any increase in levels of disturbance for bats locally.



The buildings offer open access to birds in flight, and birds could nest inside the lean-to sheds during the nesting season.

6. Habitat improvements

Bat and bird boxes will be fitted to trees on site in order to provide improved habitat for roosting bats and nesting birds. The bat and bird boxes below are suitable for the species recorded locally, and will be fitted in suitable trees.

- Schwegler 1FF x 1 (or similar)
- Schwegler 2FN x 1 (or similar)
- Schwegler 1 SP sparrow terrace (or similar)
- Owl nesting box x1

7. Required actions

The buildings have **negligible suitability** for use by roosting bats, no field signs of use by bats were found internally or externally during the inspection, and no further survey work is required with regard to bats.

The buildings offer open access to nesting birds, and may be used by birds during the nesting season (from 1st March to 31st August). Ideally any demolition works should be completed outside of the nesting bird season, however if this is unavoidable then the buildings should be checked for the presence of nesting birds immediately prior to the start of works.



8. References

Department for Communities and Local Government (2012). National Planning Policy Framework.

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines. (4th ed.) The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

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

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004). The Bat Workers Manual. (3rd ed.) JNCC



9. Appendix 1 – Photographs



1 – The west side of the building.



2 – The east side of the building.





3 – The roof and inside of the building were destroyed by fire.



4 – Gaps in stonework and timbers at the top of the walls are open to the elements.





5 – Inside the farmhouse.



6 – Asbestos cement fascia are fitted tightly with no gaps.





7 – There are no suitable gaps between roofing materials and blockwork.



8 – Fascia boards where present are fitted tightly with no suitable gaps.





9 – Inside the northern lean-to.



10 – Inside the eastern lean-to.





11 – Inside the southern lean-to.

