

Preliminary Roost Assessment

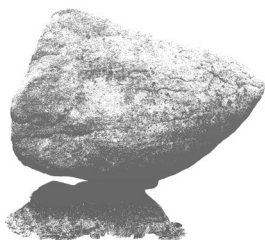
Outbuilding to the rear of
Longley Hey Farm

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 of an outbuilding to the rear of Longley Hey Farm, Littleborough, on 2nd September 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 15 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 conversion of a former agricultural storage shed for residential use.

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 outbuilding is to the rear of the farmhouse on the northern boundary of the site.

The site includes a single-storey storage shed and areas of hard landscaping.

Habitat within 50m of the site includes; a derelict stone farmhouse, 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.

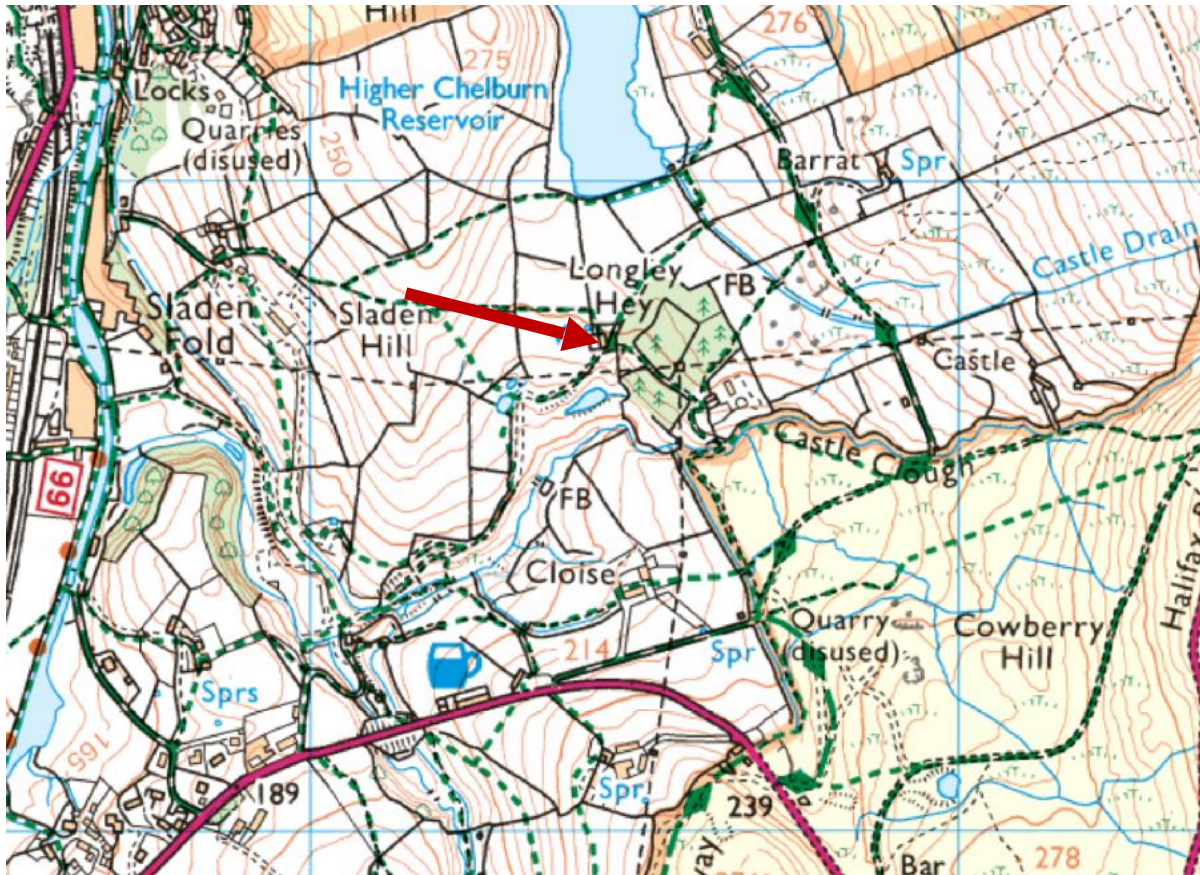
Blocks of woodland, waterbodies, watercourses, and open pastures potentially provide good quality foraging opportunities for bats in an area which is subject to little disturbance from light, noise, and other human activity.

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 – Outbuilding rear of Longley Hey Farm – aerial photograph.



2. Methods

2.1. Survey timings

The survey was completed on 3rd September 2024. Weather conditions during the survey were overcast, warm, and dry, with a temperature of 18°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 Early September, when bats are active, and external signs of use, such as droppings, are more likely to be evident, if present.



3. Results

3.1. Building inspection



3.1a – Looking north toward the front of outbuilding.

The outbuilding to the rear of Longley Hey Farm is used as a storage shed for materials and machinery.

The building has a single pitched corrugated steel roof with steel fascia to the front and sides, and timber fascia boards to the rear. Rear and side walls are a single layer of solid concrete blocks, front walls are single layered timber board with corrugated steel sliding doors.

Internally the building consists of a single large open storage space, and has no internal roof void, or other enclosed areas. The roof has a simple steel and timber structure. The roof is not lined and the underside of roofing materials and supports is exposed. Walls are bare concrete blockwork, with no insulation or internal lining.

The building is in generally good condition. Roofing materials are in good condition with no broken or missing roof panels. Steel fascia are tightly fixed. Timber fascia to the rear are fixed tightly against blockwork. Externally the walls are in good condition with no missing mortar or cracks which could be used by roosting bats. Internally the building is well-lit by natural light, in use regularly, and has no enclosed spaces or crevices which are likely to be used by roosting bats.

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



3.2. Indications of use

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

3.3. Level of suitability

The building has **negligible suitability** for use by roosting bats. This is as the building is in generally good condition, and is constructed from materials which are not typically favoured by roosting bats, such as solid concrete blocks, and corrugated steel. Additionally no bat droppings or other indications of use by bats were found.

4. Evaluation

The building is 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 building is constructed from solid concrete block walls and corrugated steel roof, and has no features which are likely to be used by roosting bats.

The building has no roof void, no enclosed crevices, or other suitably enclosed features which could be used by roosting bats. Additionally the building is well-lit by natural light, and subject to regular disturbance.

There are no features externally, which are suitable, or likely to be used by roosting bats; roof panels are in good condition, and fascia panels and boards are fixed tightly against the walls.

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

Walls are solid concrete blockwork 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 concrete blockwork, with no enclosed spaces or crevices suitable for use by roosting bats.

The top of walls at the eaves are exposed to the elements, and any gaps between roofing materials and concrete blockwork, are either filled with cement, or open to the elements, and do not provide sufficient shelter to be used by roosting bats.

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



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 conversion of a former agricultural storage shed for residential use.

The building has no features which are suitable, or likely to be used by roosting bats and has **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.

6. Required actions

The building has **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.



7. 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



8. Appendix 1 – Photographs



1 – The front of the building.



2 – The rear of the building.





3 – The front walls are a single layer of timber boarding, sliding doors are corrugated steel.



4 – Side and rear walls are a single layer or solid concrete blocks.





5 – Steel fascia panels are fitted tightly.



6 – Timber fascia are fitted tightly.





7 – The building has no enclosed spaces and is well-lit by natural light.



8 – The roof has a simple steel and timber structure with no insulation.





9 – Steels are fixed into walls with cement, with no suitable gaps between materials.



10 – The front doors and walls are of single layered materials with no enclosed crevices.

