



Preliminary Roost Assessment and Ecological Walkover

The Farmhouse, Littleborough

Reference: 81-315-R1-1

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PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT AND ECOLOGICAL WALKOVER

The Farmhouse
Littleborough

Prepared for:
Lisa and Tim Knight

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site Address	The Farmhouse, Hollingworth Road, Littleborough, OL15 0AZ
Coordinates	E 393794, N 415481
Site Area	Approximately 0.6 ha
Current Site Use	The site comprised two residential buildings with associated hardstanding and garden vegetation. Residential buildings consisted of a main farmhouse with annex and garage, and a converted stables.
Proposed Development	The proposed scheme includes the development of a new extension and garage and pool. The converted stables (B2) and the annex (B1a) to the main residential building on-site will require demolition in order for the development to proceed.
Results	All three buildings (B1, B1a, B2) were assessed as having Moderate bat roost potential due to gaps underneath tiles on both gable ends. Starling were seen entering a gap underneath the tiles on the north-west facing wall of the main residential property (B1) and is likely that the birds seen were nesting.
Conclusions and Recommendations	Two separate Nocturnal Bat Surveys are required on all three buildings between May and September, with at least one survey between May and August (inclusive). It is recommended that works or any vegetation should be removed outside of the breeding bird season (March to September inclusive). If this is not possible, a nesting bird check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist up to 24 hrs before works commence. If a nest, or nest in construction, is located, then a stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

E3P has been instructed by Lisa and Tim Knight to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment at The Farmhouse, Littleborough, hereafter referred to as “the site”. A walkover was also undertaken to assess the site for any additional protected species constraints.

This report has been prepared by Conor Evans BSc (Hons) MRes QCIEEM, Graduate Ecologist at E3P, who has two years professional experience as an ecological consultant. Conor has experience in completing Preliminary Roost Assessments at many sites across the UK.

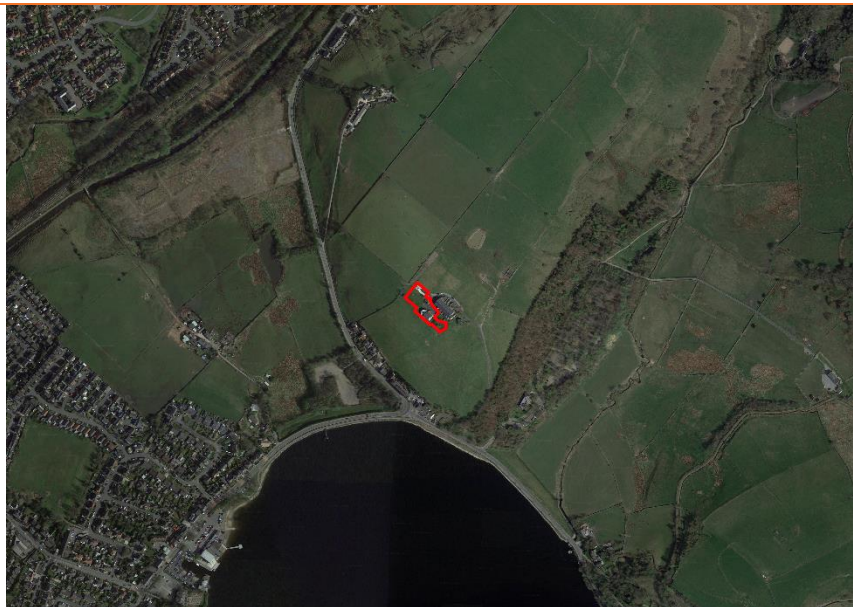
1.2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Detailed proposals include the development of an apartment complex with associated car parking. The converted stables and annex to main residential building on-site will require demolition in order for the development to proceed.

1.3. SITE LOCATION

The site is located to the south of Littleborough, surrounded by arable fields. A series of residential units are situated to the east of the site. Hollingworth Road defines the site boundary to the south-west. Whittaker Gold Club is located approximately 935 m north-east of the site boundary. A large water body is located approximately 180 m south of the site. Please refer to Figure 1.1. for the approximate site location.

FIGURE 1.1 APPROXIMATE SITE LOCATION



1.4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Preliminary Roost Assessment are as follows:

- ✿ Determine if bats currently, or could potentially, utilise the building for roosting.
- ✿ Determine whether further surveys (e.g. nocturnal bat surveys) and/or further mitigation is necessary for development to proceed.

The objectives of the Ecological Walkover are as follows:

- ✿ Identify the major habitats present.
- ✿ Ascertain the presence or potential presence of any legally protected species and habitats.
- ✿ Recommend any further surveys or mitigation that may be required.

The survey findings are detailed in this report, as well as any recommendations.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. DESK STUDY

The following sources of information and ecological records were consulted:

- ✳ MAGIC – A government web-based interactive mapping system, demonstrating European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) and Natural England Licences which have been previously granted within England.
- ✳ Information and species records from South Lancashire Bat Group.

A search via MAGIC was undertaken in May 2023 to identify EPSL within 1 km of the site boundary. This search area is considered suitable for the size of the development and the surrounding habitat.

2.2. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on the 22nd May 2023 by Conor Evans who has undertaken multiple PRA's on buildings and trees across the UK. The weather was dry and clear.

The survey involved undertaking a systematic search of the trees and buildings, searching for signs of bats, or spaces where bats would be able to access. The methodology followed that described in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, 3rd Edition* (Collins, 2016). Please refer to Figure 2.1 for building locations and references. The annex attached to the main residential building has been defined as B1a to allow for ease of reference.

FIGURE 2.1 BUILDING LOCATIONS AND REFERENCES



The trees and buildings were categorised for their bat roosting potential as described in Table 2.1 in accordance with Collins (2016).

TABLE 2.1 BAT ROOSTING POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION OF TREES AND BUILDINGS

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
NEGLECTIBLE	A tree or buildings with no roosting features present or of an age/species that would not support roosting bats.
LOW	A tree or buildings with one or more potential roost site. However, the potential roost sites do not provide suitability for large numbers of bats (i.e. for maternity or hibernation) and would only be used on an occasional basis.
MODERATE	A tree or buildings with one or more potential roosting feature which could support bats but is of a suitability meaning that it would be unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
HIGH	A tree or buildings with several potential roosting features which would be able to support large number of bats on a regular basis and for longer periods of time. The tree or buildings would have suitability to support maternity or hibernation roosts.

The survey was undertaken utilising suitable binoculars and ladders to access all areas where safe to do so.

2.3. ECOLOGICAL WALKOVER

A site walkover was undertaken by Conor Evans on 22nd May 2023 to assess the site for any protected or notable species.

The walkover survey was undertaken to the standard methodology as detailed by the JNCC Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (2010). The assessment follows the methodology as per "Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal" (CIEEM, 2017).

Searches were made for uncommon, rare and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and species which are indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019).

Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on the revised (April 2010) Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) including but not limited to Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

2.4. LIMITATIONS

Access to all areas within 30 m of the site to search for signs of badger (*Meles meles*) was not possible due to residential gardens and private properties bordering the site to the east. However, these residential areas are anticipated to offer low-value habitat for badger, therefore this is not considered to be a major constraint.

Access to all waterbodies within 250 m of the site was not possible as they were located within private land.



3. RESULTS

3.1. LOCAL BAT GROUP RECORDS

Based on information from South Lancashire Bat Group, species present within the local area include; whiskered/brandt's (*Myotis mystacinus/brandtii*) brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), Nathusius' pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), brown long ear (*Plecotus auratus*), Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), Brandt's bat (*Myotis brandti*) and Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*).

3.2. MAGIC REVIEW

No European Protected Species Licences were located within the 1 km search area. The closest licence was located 1.9 km north-west of the site boundary. The licence was active in 2009 for the destruction of a common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle non-breeding roost.

3.3. SITE CONTEXT

The site comprised two residential buildings with associated hardstanding and garden vegetation. Residential buildings consisted of a main farmhouse with annex and garage, and a converted stables. An area of broadleaved woodland is located approximately 185 m to the east of the site. This habitat is expected to offer essential resources for local wildlife, including roosting and foraging opportunities for bats. A large waterbody is located approximately 180 m south of the site. This habitat is expected to offer essential foraging opportunities for local bat species.

3.4. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

A PRA was undertaken on the three buildings and nine trees on-site. No other structures or trees were present within the site boundary.

3.4.1. BUILDING 1

Building 1 (B1) was a residential building located in the south of the site. B1 was a three-storey building, constructed of stone with a pitched tiled roof. No loft void was present as it had previously been converted into an attic bedroom and ensuite. It had been noted during the survey that the roof had been previously covered in tarpaulin and may need to be replaced.

The stonework was in good condition with no cracks or gaps that could support crevice dwelling bat species. The windows were also in good condition.



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PLATE 1 SHOWING NORTH EASTERN ASPECT OF BUILDING 1



A gap approximately 10 cm across was present between the eave and soffit on the gable end of the north west facing aspect of the building. This feature may be used on a regular basis by bats. It should however be noted that starling were seen flying in and out of the gap, and as such the building supports nesting birds.

PLATE 2 SHOWING FEATURE ON NORTH WEST ASPECT



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A gap approximately 10 cm across was present between the eave and soffit on the gable end of the south east facing aspect of the building. This feature may be used on a regular basis by bats crevice dwelling bats such as common and soprano pipistrelle.

PLATE 3 SHOWING FEATURE ON SOUTH EAST ASPECT



Gaps were present between the roof tiles and brickwork on the gable end of the north west facing aspect of the building. These features may be used on a regular basis by bats. A lifted tile was also noted near to the chimney, which may have the potential to support crevice-dwelling bat species on an occasional basis.

PLATE 4 SHOWING GAP BETWEEN ROOF TILES AND BRICKWORK ON NORTH WEST ASPECT



PLATE 5 SHOWING CLOSE UP OF GAPS ON NORTH WEST ASPECT



A gap was present between the brickwork and soffit box on the south west facing aspect of the building, which may have the potential to support crevice-dwelling bat species on an occasional basis. The gap may lead to additional features beneath the soffit, which may support regular roosting bats.

PLATE 6 SHOWING GAP BETWEEN BRICKWORK AND SOFFIT BOX



An internal inspection of the building was completed, and it was determined that there was no suitability for bats due to the lack of internal access. No roof void was present due to prior renovation in to an attic bedroom and ensuite.



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Overall, Building 1 (B1) was assessed as having **Moderate** bat roosting potential due to the multiple gaps on the gable ends of the building and gaps between brickwork and soffit box. B1 also has the potential to support nesting birds.

3.4.2. BUILDING 1A

Building 1a (B1a) was an annex adjacent to the main residential building B1, constructed of stone with a flat roof. No loft void was present. It had been noted during the survey that B1a was due to be demolished.

The stonework was in good condition with no cracks or gaps that could support crevice dwelling bat species. The windows and door were also in good condition.

PLATE 7 SHOWING NORTH EASTERN FACING ASPECT OF BUILDING 1A



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A gap between a roof tile and brickwork was present on the north east facing aspect that could support crevice dwelling bat species on a regular basis. Nesting birds may also make use of this feature.

PLATE 8 SHOWING GAP BETWEEN ROOF TILE AND BRICK WORK



A chimney with four entrances was noted which may be used on a regular basis by a large number of bats. It was assumed that no access into the building internals for bats was possible due to being sealed off prior renovations, as evidenced by signs of damp on the interior of the building below the chimney.

PLATE 9 SHOWING CHIMNEY AT CENTRE OF BUILDING 1A



PLATE 10 SHOWING DAMP BELOW CHIMNEY



An internal inspection of the building was completed, and it was determined that there was no suitability for bats due to the lack of internal access as a result of prior renovations.

Building 1a (B1a) was assessed as having **Moderate** bat roosting potential due to the multiple features on the roof of the building. The building also has potential to support nesting birds.

3.4.3. BUILDING 2

Building 2 (B2) was a converted stable constructed of wood panelled walls with a pitched tile roof. No loft void was present. It had been noted during the survey that B2 was due to be demolished.

The woodwork was in good condition with no cracks or gaps that could support crevice dwelling bat species. The windows and door were also in good condition.



PLATE 11 SHOWING BUILDING 2



Gaps were present between the roof tiles and woodwork on the gable end of the south east facing aspect of the building. These features may be used on a regular basis by bats.

PLATE 12 SHOWING GAPS BETWEEN ROOF TILES AND WOODWORK



PLATE 13 SHOWING CLOSE UP OF GAPS BETWEEN ROOF TILES AND WOODWORK



Lifted roof tiles were present on the north east facing aspect of the building. These features may be used on a regular basis by bats.

PLATE 14 SHOWING LIFTED TILES ON NORTH EAST FACING ASPECT



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Gaps were present between the roof tiles and woodwork on the gable end of the north west facing aspect of the building. These features may be used on a regular basis by bats.

PLATE 15 SHOWING GAPS BETWEEN ROOF TILES AND WOODWORK



PLATE 16 SHOWING GAPS BETWEEN ROOF TILES AND WOODWORK



An internal inspection of the building was completed, and it was determined that there was no suitability for bats due to the lack of internal access. No roof void was present due to prior renovation in to a residential dwelling.

The building was assessed as having **Moderate** bat roosting potential due to the multiple features on the roof of the building. The building also has potential to support nesting birds.



3.5. ECOLOGICAL WALKOVER

The habitats on-site comprised hardstanding, introduced shrub, amenity grassland, scattered trees and hedgerows. The habitats are described below.

The amenity grassland comprised a small area near the stable around the north-west and south-east extent of the site. The grassland was short and managed and comprised perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and common daisy (*Bellis perennis*).

PLATE 17 SHOWING AMENITY GRASSLAND



PLATE 18 SHOWING AMENITY GRASSLAND



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Introduced shrub was present directly south of Building 3, and along the hedgerow opposite the north-east facing aspect of Building 1. Introduced shrub species included evergreen spindle (*Euonymus japonicus*), broad-leaved lavender (*Lavandula latifolia*), intermediate Lady's-mantle (*Alchemilla xanthochlora*), broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*) and garden privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*).

PLATE 19 SHOWING INTRODUCED SHRUB



PLATE 20 SHOWING INTRODUCED SHRUB



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A number of scattered trees were located on site. Tree species comprised sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Lawson cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*), Hinoki cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*), poplar (*Betula tremula*), and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). All trees were deemed as **Negligible** for bat potential as no features were identified.

PLATE 21 SHOWING SCATTERED TREES



PLATE 22 SHOWING SCATTERED TREES



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A number of hedgerow were present on site adjacent to Building 3, and along the north-east and south-east site boundaries. Hedgerows were comprised of Lawson cypress and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).

PLATE 24 SHOWING HEDGEROW



The remainder of the site comprised an area of hardstanding used as car parking.

PLATE 25 SHOWING HARDSTANDING



4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. BATS

All three buildings were assessed as having Moderate bat roosting potential. As such, two nocturnal bat surveys are required on the buildings between May and September, with at least one of the surveys between May and August. If bats are identified roosting within the building, a third survey would be required to characterise the roost, a European Protected Species Licence would also be required and would require up to date surveys from the survey season prior to the application submission.

4.2. NESTING BIRDS

It is recommended that any works or vegetation removal take place outside of the breeding bird season (March–September inclusive). However, if this is not possible, then a suitably qualified ecologist should inspect the area no more than 24 hours for nesting birds prior to works or vegetation removal. Should any nests, or nests in construction be located, a suitable stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged. The ecologist will advise on suitable stand off and provide a toolbox talk to all site contractors regarding their working limits and legal implications.

4.3. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

The current application is as a householder application, as such the proposed development will be exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

As set out in Section 3.1 of the Government's 2023 consultation response, BNG exemptions, which are to be implemented via secondary legislation, include:

-  Developments impacting habitat of an area below a threshold of 25 m², or 5 m of linear habitats, such as water courses or hedgerows.
-  Householder applications.
-  Small scale self-build and custom housebuilding.
-  Biodiversity gain sites where habitats are being enhanced for wildlife.



5. REFERENCES

- ✿ Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.
- ✿ Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- ✿ Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2023).
- ✿ JNCC (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey: A technique for environmental audit. English Field Unit, Nature Conservancy Council.
- ✿ Stace, C. A. (2019). New Flora of the British Isles. Fourth Edition. Cambridge University Press.
- ✿ Wildlife and Countryside Act (2010) Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

END OF REPORT

