

Malt Kiln Farm, High Street, Royston

Bat Survey Report

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Contents

1. Summary	2
2. Introduction	3
3. Habitat Assessment.....	3
4. Methodology	4
5. Results.....	5
6. Assessment.....	10
7. References	12

1. Summary

- 1.1.1 The bat survey was commissioned by architect Mark Booth on behalf of the client on 10th December 2019.
- 1.1.1 The survey was undertaken to inform a planning application for the proposed renovation of a listed farmhouse and the demolition of two former agricultural buildings to make way for a new development on its existing footprint.
- 1.1.2 The preliminary roost assessment survey was conducted on the 16th December 2019.
- 1.1.3 The site comprises a listed farmhouse and associated barn, together with a 'L' shaped open fronted farm building on High Street in the village of Royston near Barnsley.
- 1.1.4 There were no visible signs of bat presence on either the inside or outside of the surveyed buildings. The buildings display a low number and diversity of roost features and were assessed as offering a low level of roost potential.
- 1.1.5 In order to confidently determine the presence/absence of roosting bats, it is advised that a single nocturnal survey is undertaken on all buildings during the bat activity survey season (peak season: mid-May to August).

2. Introduction

- 2.1.1 The bat survey was commissioned by architect Mark Booth on behalf of the client on 10th December 2019. The survey was undertaken to inform a planning application for the proposed renovation of a listed farmhouse and the demolition of and the demolition of two former agricultural buildings to make way for a new development on its existing footprint.
- 2.1.2 The site is subject to a planning application. Middleton Bell Ecology were therefore contracted initially to conduct a baseline assessment to determine the likely presence or absence of roosting bats and to identify roost locations, access points, species present, level of use and the importance of nearby landscape features.
- 2.1.3 The site is situated in a residential area in the village of Royston, approximately 5.2km north-northeast of Barnsley town centre.

3. Habitat Assessment

- 3.1.1 The surrounding area consists predominantly of residential development and associated gardens, together with areas of amenity grassland. Suboptimal foraging habitat is present in the area and therefore bat species present are likely to be restricted to common and widespread species.
- 3.1.2 Table 1 summarises the habitats present, adjacent to and further afield of the surveyed buildings in Royston.

Table 1. Location and habitat table

Name and address: Malt Kiln Farm, 104 High Street, Royston S71 4RN			
OS Grid Ref. SE 3564 1148		Altitude. 126m	
Local Planning Authority: Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council			
Features on site and adjacent to site			
Feature	On site	Adjacent	Comments
Buildings	✓	✓	Dwellings adjacent
River bordered by trees			
Standing water			Disused canal 1.4km east
Bridges tunnels and culverts			
Trees			Few trees in the local area
Woodland			Nearest woodland over 1km west
Grassland	✓	✓	Amenity 160m northeast

Figure 1. Site location, as indicated by red circle



3.2 Aims

3.2.1 The survey was conducted to help determine the following:

- The presence/absence of roosting bats.
- Potential roosting areas and access/egress points into structures.
- Determine the level of bat roost potential associated with the structures.
- Identify further survey work or mitigation requirements.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data Consultation

4.1.1 Bat records were requested from South Yorkshire Bat Group (SYBG) for locations within a 2km radius of the site. A search of the Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was undertaken to identify historic European Protected Species (EPS) licences obtained for locations within 2km of the site.

4.2 Field Survey

4.2.1 The following personnel conducted the survey on 16th December 2019:

- Peter Middleton (MCIEEM; Class license WML-A34-Level 4, 2017-27977-CLS-CLS)

4.2.2 The following activities were carried out during the surveys in compliance with relevant Bat Survey Guidelines (Collins 2016):

- A brief inspection and assessment of the site and habitats present to within 300m.

- An extensive examination of all parts of the buildings both inside and out to record structural features and condition and to record features that may be suitable for roosting bats. Particular attention was paid to any crevices or gaps in walls, lintels, gaps between beams and joists and to the possibility of finding droppings stuck to walls, floors or other surfaces, or insect remains below beams, among a number of other factors. All signs indicative of a bat roost presence including live or dead bats, droppings, feeding remains, scratch marks and staining were recorded.
- An assessment of the buildings' bat roost potential (negligible, low, moderate, high or confirmed roost).

4.2.3 The following equipment was used or at hand during the survey:

- Clulight
- Binoculars
- Endoscope
- Ladders
- Camera

4.3 Survey Limitations

4.3.1 With the exception of no access to the upper floor of B2 for reasons of health and safety, no limitations to the undertaking of a preliminary roost assessment survey were encountered.

5. Results

5.1 Data Consultation

5.1.1 South Yorkshire Bat Group provided 43 bat records for locations within a 2km radius of the site. Species positively identified in the data consultation comprised common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Leisler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri* and whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus*. The nearest roost record to site comprised two common pipistrelle, recorded in 2005 from a location approximately 330m north of the site.

5.1.2 No historical bat EPS mitigation licences have been issued for locations within 2km of the surveyed building.

5.2 Field Survey

5.2.1 No evidence of bat roosting was recorded on site. The buildings display a low number and diversity of roost features and were assessed as displaying a low level of bat roost potential overall. The site buildings are described in detail below.

Description

5.2.2 The surveyed buildings comprise a listed farmhouse (B1), a barn (B2) and a 'L' shaped open fronted farm building (B3). For ease of understanding the building numbers are shown in Figure 2).

5.2.3 Malt Kiln farmhouse (B1) comprises the western wing of a larger Grade II Listed 'T' shaped building, the original section of which dates back to the 17th Century. The two-storey building is stone built beneath a pitched Welsh slate roof which has been covered in bitumen. The building has single paned wood framed windows throughout and the external masonry is cement rendered. A very large stone-built chimney stack exits the centre of the roof (see Plates 1 & 2).

Figure 2. Building layout



Plate 1. Farmhouse (B1)



5.2.4 Building 2 (B2) comprises a c1800s rectangular two-storey stone built derelict barn beneath a pitched stone slate roof (only 40% of the roof exists). The building has single pane wood framed windows throughout and the southern section is in a dangerous condition with one external wall likely to collapse at any time soon (see Plates 3 & 4).

5.2.5 Building 3 (B3) is an 'L' shaped open fronted outbuilding with many compartments formally used for agricultural use. It is stone built with a shallow mono-pitched corrugated galvanised sheet metal roof. Some of the compartment walls are built of concrete blocks and the pillars are built of a combination of brick or blocks (see Plates 4, 5 & 10).

Plate 2. B1 south elevation



Plate 3. Section of B2 with no roof and collapsing wall



Plate 4. North section of B2 with roof, section of B3 on right



Plate 5. B3 looking north



External inspection

- 5.2.6 Bat roost features identified on B1 during the preliminary roost appraisal are restricted to the wall top, whilst bat roost features identified on the exterior of B2 include: several holes in the mortar joints of masonry in the southern section (see Plate 6), potential access to the wall top under the eaves on both the east and west elevations and gaps around one window frame on the north section. The external walls of B3 lack features with potential to accommodate bats.

Plate 6. Holes in the mortar joints of masonry on this section of B2 are unlikely to be utilised by roosting bats because of the ingress of water from above



Internal inspection

- 5.2.7 There is a stairway to the roof void of B1. The roof void has a height to the ridge of 3m and there is Type 1F felt beneath the slates. The roof is supported by king-post roof trusses, purlins, rafters and battens and there is a very large stone flue in the centre (see Plate 7). There is no insulation at ceiling height and there is potential access for bats via the wall top at eaves level. The space was not particularly 'cobwebby', but nevertheless, no signs of bats were found.

5.2.8 The northern section of B2 has kingpost roof trusses, purlins, rafters and battens with no membrane beneath the slates. Plate 8 was taken through a hole in the first floor as it was not possible to access the upper floor for reasons of health and safety (rotten floor). The first floor in the southern section which has no roof and is now so rotten that it is collapsing (see Plate 9). No signs of bats were found in lintels above doorways or in the areas where access was possible.

Plate 7. Inside of B1 showing large stone flue (Type 1F Felt beneath slates)



Plate 8. Inside of north section of B2 (no membrane beneath slates)



Plate 9. Inside south section of B2 (collapsing ceiling)



- 5.2.9 Features with potential to accommodate roosting bats on B3 are restricted to several holes low down in the mortar joints and a gap behind a roof timber near the rear wall of the west section. The holes in masonry were found to be largely debris filled and very damp and no signs of bats were found.

Plate 10. Inside of northwest corner of B3



6. Assessment

6.1 Summary and Evaluation of Findings

- 6.1.1 There were no visible signs of bat presence on either the inside or outside of the surveyed buildings. However, all three buildings display a low number and diversity of roost features and have therefore been assessed as offering a low level of bat roost potential. In the absence of nocturnal surveys, it is not possible to confidently determine the presence/absence of roosting bats, or the status of any bat roosts present in the building.

6.2 Legislation and Policy Guidance

Bats

- 6.2.1 Bats receive protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 6.2.2 It is an offence to:
- Deliberately capture (or take), injure or kill a bat.
 - Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats whilst they are occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection or obstruct access to any such place.
 - Damage or destroy the breeding or resting place (roost) of a bat.
 - Possess a bat (live or dead), or any part of a bat.
 - Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.
 - Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats (dead or alive), or parts of parts.

- 6.2.3 The Convention on Biological Diversity, signed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, requires member states to develop national strategies and to undertake a range of actions aimed at maintaining or restoring biodiversity. The UK Biodiversity Strategy was produced in response to the Convention.
- 6.2.4 In England & Wales, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, 2006 imposes a duty on all public bodies, including local authorities and statutory bodies, in exercising their functions, “to have due regard, as far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”. It notes that “conserving biodiversity includes restoring or enhancing a population or habitat”. Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*, Bechstein’s *Myotis bechsteinii*, brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, noctule and soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* bats are included as priority species within Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. At a more local level there are Local Biodiversity Action Plans for smaller geographical areas which may cover a greater or lesser range of bat species.
- 6.2.5 Where it is proposed to carry out works which will have an adverse impact on roosting bats, the site must either be registered on the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) or a European Protected Species (EPS) license must first be obtained from Natural England. This requirement applies even if no bats are expected to be present when the work is carried out.
- 6.2.6 The National Planning Policy Framework for England was revised in 2019. This document states that plans should ‘promote the conservation, restoration and re-creation 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’.

Birds

- 6.2.7 Special penalties relate to offences concerning birds listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). In addition to the offences detailed above relating to all wild birds, it is illegal to intentionally or recklessly disturb any Schedule 1 bird or their dependent young while nesting.
- 6.2.8 All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000), which makes it illegal (subject to exceptions) to:
- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird.
 - Take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or eggs of any wild bird.

6.3 Recommendations/enhancements

- 6.3.1 In compliance with the bat survey good practice guidelines (Collins 2016) and in order to confidently determine the presence/absence of roosting bats, it is recommended that all three buildings are subject to a single nocturnal survey. The survey should be undertaken during the bat activity period (peak period: mid-May to August).

6.3.2 At this stage, it is not possible to determine the requirement for any bat mitigation or compensation as the confident presence/absence and the status of any roosts present, has not yet been determined.

6.4 Conclusion

6.4.1 There were no visible signs of bat occupation on either the inside or outside of the surveyed buildings. Nevertheless, the buildings display several features with potential to accommodate bats and they are considered to offer low bat roost potential.

6.4.2 In order to confidently determine the presence/absence of roosting bats, it is advised that a single nocturnal survey is undertaken on each building (peak season: mid-May to August).

7. References

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines. The Bat Conservation Trust.