

**Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.**



NOBLETHORPE BARN, SILKSTONE.

OS REF: SE 2828 0525.

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT.

Ref No: 220821.

Date: 17th August 2022.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. There are plans to carry out changes to the existing barn at Noblethorpe Hall and to possibly convert to a domestic dwelling. A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment has been requested by the owner in anticipation of a planning application.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out that Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment. The survey was carried out on 9th August 2022 and this report outlines the results of that survey and assessment.

1.3. Appendices I to II of this report provide additional information on specific species and are designed to assist the reader in understanding the contents of this report.

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. The buildings were thoroughly checked internally and externally for potential bat roosting sites by looking for the following signs: -

- * Holes, cracks or crevices.
- * Bat droppings.
- * Prey remains.
- * Staining on external walls.

2.2. Unless otherwise stated, all lofts were accessed and inspected using a high-powered torch and where necessary an endoscope.

2.3. A thorough external inspection was carried out from ground level for any gaps or openings in the roof and ridge tiles, behind soffits and fascia's and in the walls of the structure for suitable roost access points and field signs to indicate possible use by bats.

2.4. All window cills, walls and the ground around the structure were checked for signs of bat droppings or staining to indicate possible use by bats. Where necessary, ladders were utilised to gain access within the limits of health and safety. Any access constraints encountered are outlined within the following report.

2.5. All survey work was carried out in line with Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition), with an assessment of the buildings suitability for roosting bats made in accordance with these guidelines.

2.6. All surveys were carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) survey standards and advice.

2.7. The survey was undertaken by Derek Whitcher who has over twenty years' experience of surveying for wildlife and has run his own wildlife consultancy since 1998. He has extensive experience of a wide variety of survey techniques for a variety of species of protected wildlife supplemented by attendance on a wide range of training courses through CIEEM, FSC and BCT. As a member of CIEEM he is committed to continuous professional development, a continual process of learning and career development, a condition of CIEEM membership. He holds current Natural England, CCW and NRW survey licences for, bat, great crested newt and white clawed crayfish.

3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data search request was submitted to South Yorkshire Bat Group for records of bat roosts within 2km of the site.

3.1.2. A number of bat roost records were returned but all significant roost records were recorded in Cawthorne well away from the site. The closer records were for individual bats or small numbers and many were bat care calls.

3.1.3. None of the records provided were relevant to the survey area.

3.1.4. A full copy of the data search has not been included in this report, but it is available if requested.

3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The survey area comprises a free standing, timber clad barn shown on the aerial photograph below and marked by the red arrow.

3.2.2. The barn is located to the north of the Noblethorpe Hall and adjacent properties with a large area of open parkland to the north with abundant parkland trees.



3.2.3. The external of the barn is timber clad with a lean-to conservatory on one end, shown in the photograph below.



3.3. Day Time Bat Roost Assessment.

3.3.1. The existing property is a single storey building, constructed with blockwork walls that are timber clad and with a pitched roof covered with close fitting slates.

3.3.2. The timber cladding is in very good condition and has been well fitted to ensure no gaps between the boards that would provide opportunities for roosting bats.



3.3.3. The roof slates are thin and flat and thus close fitting and most are in place. There is one missing half slate visible in the picture above but the individual slates are very thin and the top half of the slate is in place thus providing no opportunities for roosting bats.



3.3.4. The internal walls are well pointed blockwork and the underside of the roof is lined with a tight fitting liner.



3.3.5. The building has a number of rooms with different purposes like storage, play areas for the grand children, an office and a conservatory.

3.3.6. No bats or bat field signs were found inside or outside the building and the building is assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats when assessed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines.

3.3.7. No evidence of nesting birds was identified inside or outside the existing barn.

4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. No bats or bat field signs were found inside or outside the building and the building is assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats when assessed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines.

4.2. Therefore, no further surveys are recommended and the conversion of the building will have no impact on roosting bats or nesting birds.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. No bats or bat field signs were identified inside or outside the existing building and the barn was assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats when assessed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines.

5.2. No further surveys are recommended and there is no necessity for a mitigation strategy or a Natural England licence in connection with any proposed development of the building.

5.3. Nevertheless, individual bats can seek temporary shelter almost anywhere and therefore all personnel engaged on the project should be briefed on the identification of bats and a toolbox talk on bats has been included at the end of this report to provide further information. The works should be carried out with care and in the unlikely event a bat is found during the works, the bat should be carefully covered and protected, work should cease at that location and the undersigned should be contacted for further advice.

5.3. It is recommended that works to the building are carried out outside the nesting bird season, which extends from March to September. Any works to the building required during the bird nesting season will need to be preceded by a nesting bird survey, carried out by a suitably experienced person. Any nests identified during this survey will need to be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

5.4. It is recommended that Biodiversity enhancements in the form of integrated bat bricks or swift nest boxes are considered when the design of the proposed conversion are known, in line with the requirements of the NPPF.

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Appendix I. BAT INFORMATION.

Ecology

There are currently 18 species of bat residing in Britain, 17 of which are known to breed here. They are extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

All appear to be diminishing in numbers, probably due to habitat change and shortage of food, caused by pesticides, as insects are their sole diet.

As their diet consists solely of insects, bats hibernate during the winter when their food source is at its most scarce. They will spend the winter in hollow trees, caves, mines and the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly the pipistrelle (the commonest and most widespread British bat) can quickly adapt to man-made structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

Surveys

During walkover surveys, bat roosts can be identified by looking for:

- Suitable holes, cracks and crevices within any building, tree or other structure.
- Bat droppings along walls, window cills, or on the ground.
- Prey remains, such as insect wings.

Further investigations can be made using endoscopes, by carrying out aerial inspections of trees or by conducting bat activity surveys during dusk and dawn over summer months.

Legislation

Bats are protected under Appendix II and III of the Bern Convention (1982), Schedule 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (some species under Annex II), Annex II of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and EUROBATs agreement. Numerous species are also listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) making them species of principal importance.

All bats and their roosts are therefore protected in the UK. This makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any bat, to interfere with any place used for shelter or protection, or to intentionally disturb any animal occupying such a place.

The UK has designated maternity and hibernacula areas as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) under the Habitats Directive. Implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan also includes action for a number of bat species and the habitats which support them.

Where development proposals are likely to affect a bat roost site, a licence is required from Natural England.

Appendix II. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.

Ecology

The nesting season will vary according to the weather each year but generally commences in March, peaks during May and June and continues until September. It is also worth remembering that some birds nest in trees and scrub, but others are ground nesting or prefer man-made structures or buildings.

Surveys

Nesting bird surveys search for potential nest sites in vegetation, buildings etc. Potential nesting sites are observed over a suitable period of time for bird movements or calling male birds that would indicate the presence of a nest. The presence of a nest can be identified from the field signs without the necessity to see the nest itself, thereby avoiding any disturbance of the nests. The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

Legislation

Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Part 1. -(1) Of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - kills, injures or takes any wild bird; takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird, he shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1. -(5) of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young; or disturbs young of such a bird, he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amends the above by inserting after “intentionally” the words “or recklessly”.

Toolbox Talk: Bats

Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

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18 species of bat have been recorded in Britain, 17 of which are known to breed here.

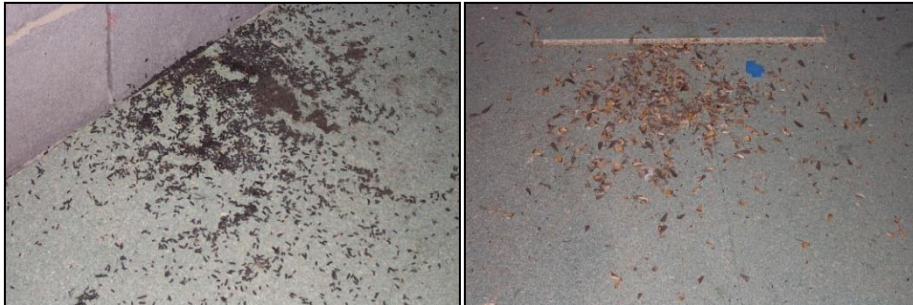
Identification.

Some species can be extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

Species such as the Brown Long Eared bat pictured above can be more easily identified in the hand. Whereas, the Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle are more difficult to identify.



Bats are more easily identified by field signs such as droppings or feeding remains.



Habitat.

Bats are highly specialised creatures and require a relatively narrow range of suitable conditions in order to sustain a viable population. Bats require an abundant supply of flying insect food in places where they can easily be caught and they need safe and reliable roosting sites, particularly during breeding and hibernation.

Bats are heavily dependent on buildings and trees for their roost sites and therefore extremely susceptible to disturbance from human activities. Development schemes can also isolate bat populations and sever roost sites from favoured feeding areas by removing hedgerows or other features used as commuting routes.

Bats are susceptible to disturbance and have been known to abandon roost sites after instances of disturbance. The effects of disturbance are more pronounced at different times of year. Serious disturbance during breeding can result in the breeding females being killed or the abandonment and subsequent starvation of dependant young. Repeated disturbance during winter hibernation can result in the death of adult animals from starvation.

The level of protection afforded to bats in the UK and European legislation reflects the fact that it is now generally accepted that bats have declined substantially, maybe by as much as 60%, over recent years. Most species are declining and vulnerable with all species being protected.

As their diet consists solely of insects, bats hibernate during the winter when their food source is at its most scarce. They will spend the winter in hollow trees, caves, mines and occasionally the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly Pipistrelle, can quickly adapt to manmade structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

Legislation.

Bats and their roosts are fully protected at all times (whether the bats are currently present or not). This protection comes from the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (updated by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000) and the Habitats Regulations 1994. Under this legislation it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection.

Under the Habitats Regulations, where bats may be affected by development proposals, a licence is required from Natural England. Natural England's published guidelines on the licence procedure indicate that if, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, the proposed activity is reasonably likely to result in an offence then a licence is required. If, on the other hand the proposed activity is reasonably unlikely to result in an offence, then a licence is not required.

If bats or bat field signs are identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk