Bat and Breeding Bird Survey

MALTHOUSE FARM, NEW ROAD, DILHORNE

Jonathan Ayres CEnv MCIEEM FLS | 03/06/2016



Malthouse Farm Bat and Breeding Bird Survey Report

Document title: Malthouse Farm Bat and Breeding Bird Survey

Version: Version 1 Final

Date: 03/06/2016

Prepared by: Jonathan Ayres

Jonathan Ayres
141 Lawton Road
Alsager
Cheshire
ST7 2DD
Tel: 07766 587224
Email: info@ardeaecology.co.uk

COPYRIGHT: The concepts and information contained in this document are the property of Jonathan Ayres. Use or copying of this document in whole or in part without the written permission constitutes an infringement of copyright.

LIMITATION: This report has been prepared on behalf of and for the exclusive use of its client, and is subject to and issued in connection with the provisions of the agreement between Jonathan Ayres and the client. We accept no liability or responsibility whatsoever for or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

Contents

Executive summary **3**

1. Introduction **4**

1.1 Site Description 4

1.2 Proposed Works 4

1.3 Aims of Survey 4

2. Methods **5**

2.1 Summary of survey methods 5

2.2 Pre-survey data search 5

2.3 Surveyor information 5

2.4 Field surveys 5

3. Results **6**

3.1 Pre-survey data search 6

3.2 Field surveys 6

4. Assessment **8**

4.1 Constraints on survey information 8

4.2 Constraints on equipment used 8

4.3 Evaluation of bat and breeding bird activity 8

4.4 Potential impacts of development 8

4.5 Legislation and policy guidance 8

5. Summary **10**

6. References **11**

Appendix A. Photographs

Executive summary

Rationale

This survey and report has been undertaken at the request of the applicant in support of a planning application for a proposed barn conversion at Malthouse Farm Cottage, Dilhorne, the local planning authority is Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

The former grain barn is located to the rear of the house; the barn is brick built with a tiled roof. A detailed internal and external inspection to look for the presence of bats or their field signs and breeding birds was undertaken. The entirety of the barn and the internal roof space was surveyed, no trees suitable for bat roosting were identified within the site and no other buildings will be directly impacted by the proposed works. In accordance with the latest bat survey guidelines this report represents the results of a preliminary roost assessment.

Planning

The planning application is due to be submitted to the LPA in June 2016. The application seeks to renovate the barn and convert into dwellings.

Desk-top Information

Searches of known local databases and online mapping were also undertaken including MAGIC.gov and Google.

No European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) were recorded within 2km of the site. No records were found for protected species within or immediately adjacent to the property.

The site is not located within or adjacent to any designated sites.

Survey Results

The building inspection survey of the barn found no evidence of bats or their field signs such as droppings or feeding remains on any of the external faces of the buildings or within the roof space, Overall the barn is deemed to be of negligible/low suitability for bats and therefore in accordance with current BCT guidelines, no further activity surveys are considered necessary.

No breeding birds or evidence of use by birds were recorded within the barn.

The predicted impact on local colonies of bats as a result of the proposed works is deemed to be negligible, as no evidence of bat presence was detected within the site and the barn offers only very minor opportunities for bat species.

The proposed works may therefore be undertaken without the need for an EPSL issued by Natural England.

1. Introduction

This report has been re-produced in accordance with the standard template outlined in BCT 2012/2016 guidelines. Jonathan Ayres CEnv MCIEEM FLS an experienced and bat licenced ecologist was commissioned by the applicant to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment on a barn located at Malthouse Farm Cottage, New Road, Dilhorne; at OS Grid Ref: SJ970434. A daytime internal and external inspection of the property was carried out on the 3rd June 2016.

1.1 Site Description

The property is located in a rural location in the centre of the small village of Dilhorne in Staffordshire. The barn is located within the farmyard to the rear of the main house, Malthouse Farm is a working farm. The wider site is bound by improved grassland used for grazing, the immediate land uses are hard standing and agricultural buildings. The survey site consists of the following:

- a detached barn,

The barn is a typical brick built agricultural building, with a pitched tiled roof currently used for storage by the owner.

The surrounding habitats within the immediate area (open fields) are likely to be of local value to bat species and provide connectivity to the wider landscape, none of these will be impacted by the proposed works.

1.2 Proposed Works

The applicant seeks to renovate the barn and convert into dwellings, the majority of the works will be internal and the roof is to be unaffected by the proposed works.

1.3 Aims of Survey

To determine the presence or likely absence of bat species within the barn, and to evaluate the use of the property by bats, to evaluate any roost status and assess the habitats within the site and their importance on a local level to bat species; should any roosts be found to provide advice on further surveys and any licencing or mitigation works that may be necessary. To determine the presence or absence of breeding birds.

All surveys have been undertaken in accordance with the methods outlined in the BCT 2012/2016 guidelines and where necessary adapted to the site specific requirements.

2. Methods

2.1 Summary of survey methods

The aims of the survey and this report are to determine the ecological value of the site in relation to bat species and the likely impact from any proposed development works upon bats. The survey evaluated the potential of the barn to be used by roosting bats. To determine the presence of absence of breeding birds.

2.2 Pre-survey data search

A number of freely available ecological records were examined for evidence of historical bat records.

2.3 Surveyor information

The survey was undertaken Jonathan Ayres an experienced ecologist and full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) – and holder of Natural England **2015-11635-CLS-CLS Class Licence in Bat Survey Level 4 (CL20) and Barn Owl licence CL29/00085**.

2.4 Field surveys

2.4.1 Daytime Survey

An external and internal inspection of the barn was undertaken on the 3rd June 2016 – this survey involved a detailed examination of all external surfaces of the barn to look for any evidence of bat usage such as droppings, rub marks and staining. An assessment of the condition and suitability of the barn for bats was also made in order to investigate any suitable access and egress points such as under eaves, loose tiles or vents. The visual survey was enabled using ladders to gain access and high powered torches, endoscopes and binoculars where necessary.

The internal inspection of the barn involved a detailed examination of the interior roof space, in particular the areas that may be used by bats such as wall cavities, behind felt, looking for warm dark areas, checking for droppings on beams and flooring, corpses, feeding remains and listening for any chattering bats. A digital endoscope was used to investigate behind panels and into cavities and a high powered torch was used to enhance darker areas.

Throughout the surveys checks were also made for the presence of breeding birds.

3. Results

3.1 Pre-survey data search

Online resources such as Google and MAGIC.gov were used to undertake a basic records search to look for any evidence of known bat records within 2km of the site.

3.1.1 Designated sites

The property is not located within or adjacent to any statutory or non-statutory designated wildlife sites.

3.1.2 Protected species

No European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) applications were recorded within 2km of the property. No records were found for protected species within or immediately adjacent to the property.

The results of the data trawl confirm that the recorded level of bat usage at the site is low, this does not mean that there is no potential for bat species at the property, merely there is likely a lack of records for bats in this locale.

3.2 Field surveys

No previous ecological surveys have been undertaken on the property.

3.2.1 Daytime Survey

Building Survey

The site is located in a rural location and surrounded by grazing land and is part of a working farm. The survey was undertaken on the detached barn to be renovated.

The barn is bordered to the east by garden and on the remaining three sides by hard standing and agricultural buildings, predominantly steel framed buildings.

The barn is brick built, with a pitched tiled roof. Wooden framed windows are located in the north and south faces of the barn and the upper level is accessed via a ladder on the western face. The barn is relatively well sealed with only minor gaps observed in brickwork on the eastern and western faces, all windows and door openings are kept closed removing potential access for birds or bats to the interior.

The roof is in relatively good condition with all ridge tiles intact and no observable gaps underneath. The majority of roof tiles were intact with few missing or slipped tiles, a potential gap under a tile on the western corner of the north face of the roof was noted no visible signs of usage were noted.

External vents in the brick work are present on all sides however these have largely been sealed internally, each vent was inspected with the endoscope and no evidence of bat presence was observed.

Internally the ground floor is used for storage of materials. The ceiling consists of a mix of steel RSJ's and wooden beams, the ceiling above has been decked with board and therefore no ceiling cavity was present. No signs of bat usage or breeding birds were recorded on the ground floor.

The upper floor of the barn is accessed via a door on the western face. The interior has been renovated and is in relatively good condition with only minor gaps visible in the brickwork. The ceiling is boarded across 80% of the roof space with a relatively small upper loft space present above, the main roof is lined with plastic mesh type roofing felt undertaken in the 1980's but is still in good condition with no obvious gaps and limited opportunity for bats to roost underneath.

Cavities within the upper floor and gaps between wooden beams were inspected with a digital endoscope. Ladders were used to access the upper loft space and a torch used to highlight dark areas.

No evidence of bats or their field signs or the presence of breeding birds was observed during the detailed external and internal inspection of the barn. Given the lack of evidence and only very limited opportunity for roosting the barn is deemed to be of negligible to low suitability for bats.

4. Assessment

4.1 Constraints on survey information

The surveys were undertaken in June which is deemed to be an optimal time of the year to undertake bat roost inspection surveys.

4.2 Constraints on equipment used

No constraints were considered present with regards to the equipment used during the survey.

4.3 Evaluation of bat and breeding bird activity

No bats or their field signs or the presence of breeding birds were recorded during the survey of the barn.

4.4 Potential impacts of development

4.4.1 Designated sites

None predicted.

4.4.2 Roosts

It is considered that the renovation works to the barn will have no impact on bat roosts.

4.4.3 Foraging and commuting habitat

There will be no increased loss of foraging or commuting habitat as part of the redevelopment works on site.

4.4.4 Breeding Birds

As no birds are present within the barn no perceived impacts upon breeding birds is likely.

4.5 Legislation and policy guidance

All bat species, their breeding sites and resting places are fully protected by law – they are all listed as European protected species.

All species of bat are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the European Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This legislation makes it illegal to possess or control any live or dead specimens, to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter, protection or breeding, and to intentionally disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Section 11: The recently published framework in 2012, replaces the previous Planning Policy Statement 9. Section 11: states - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, reaffirms the government's commitment to maintaining green belt protections and preventing urban sprawl, retains the protection of designated sites and preserves wildlife, aims to improve the quality of the natural environment and halt declines in species and habitats, protects and enhances biodiversity and promotes wildlife corridors.

All wild birds, their nests and young are protected throughout England by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is illegal to kill, injure or take any wild bird, or damage or destroy the nest or eggs of breeding birds. The legislation applies to all bird species, common and rare. In addition to the protection afforded to all wild birds, rarer or particularly vulnerable species listed on Schedule 1 of the 1981 Act, such as the barn owl, receive enhanced protection when breeding. Schedule 1 species, including their dependent young, are protected from

intentional or reckless disturbance whilst at or near the nest, in addition to the protection afforded the more common species.

5. Summary

5.1.1 Bat presence/absence

The predicted impact on local bat species is deemed to be negligible, as no anecdotal evidence of bat presence was identified within the barn.

5.1.2 Bat Roosts

Based on the lack of visual evidence it is deemed that the impact upon bat roosts is negligible, the works will have no impact upon the bats within the local area.

5.1.3 Ecological value of buildings on site

The building inspection survey has confirmed that the ecological value of the barn is negligible as no evidence of bats was identified during the survey and the barn contained very limited opportunity for bats or breeding birds.

6. References

Bat Conservation Trust (2012). Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines. 2nd Edition. Bat Conservation Trust: London.

Bat Conservation Trust (2016). Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines. 3rd Edition. Bat Conservation Trust: London.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (c.37). London: HMSO.

Dietz, C., von Helversen, O. & Nill, D. (2009) Bats of Britain, Europe and Northwest Africa. London: A. C. Black

Rydell J & Racey, P A (1993). Street lamps and the feeding ecology of insectivorous bats. Recent Advances in Bat Biology, Zool Soc Lond Symposium abstracts.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007. London: HMSO.

UK Biodiversity Action Plan (2007). UK List of Priority Species. Joint Nature Conservation Committee. http://www.ukbap.org.uk/NewPriorityList.aspx.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments). London: HMSO.

Appendix A. Photographs



Photograph 1 – the front of the barn facing southeast.



Photograph 2 – the rear of the barn facing north west.



Photograph 3 – the side of the barn facing west – main access to the upper level.



Photograph 4 – the ground floor of the barn, well lit and exposed ceiling joists.



Photograph 5 – the interior of the upper floor of the barn.



Photograph 6 – the apex of the roof showing well sealed plastic underfelt.



Photograph 7 – the upper loft space of the barn.



Photograph 8 – the interior of the entrance to the upper floor of the barn.