Bat Survey - Preliminary Roost Assessment

Barn at Bentley House Farm, Newton Road, Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent, ST8 7SW

Samantha Williams

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Executive summary

Arbtech Consulting Ltd. undertook a Preliminary Roost Assessment at a barn at Bentley House Farm, Newton Road, Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent ST8 7SW on 19th September 2017. The aim of the assessment was to consider the value and suitability of the structures for roosting bats.

The development proposals are for the conversion of the barn.

Recommendations - This is work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent.

Survey feature	Recommendations
B1	One bat emergence/re-entry survey is required during the active bat season (May – September). To comply with national guidelines, this survey should be completed during the optimal survey period (mid-May to August). Two surveyors are required to provide full coverage of the building. Should bats be found to be using the building on this survey then further surveys will be required to inform a licence application to Natural England.

For full justification of these recommendations, please go straight to section 4.0 Conclusions, Impacts and Recommendations. Otherwise, the full report starts below.

Contents

1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Arbtech were commissioned by Samantha Williams to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) at the barn at Bentley House Farm, Newton Road, Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent ST8 7SW. The assessment is informed by the Bat Conservation Trust publication *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, J. (Ed) 2016).

No previous reports have been produced for this site by Arbtech Consulting Ltd.

1.2 Site Context

The site is located at National Grid Reference SJ 9086 6058, and comprises an area of approximately 0.1ha. There is one building within the site boundaries. One building was surveyed as this will be affected by the proposed development.

1.3 Scope of the report

This report provides a description of all features suitable for roosting bats, and evaluates those features in the context of the site and wider environment. It further documents any physical evidence collected or recorded during the site survey that establishes the presence of roosting bats. It provides information on constraints to the proposals as a result of roosting bats, and summarises the requirements for any further surveys, to inform subsequent mitigation proposals, achieve Planning or other statutory consent, and to comply with wildlife legislation.

The aim of the assessment was to determine the presence or evaluate the likelihood of the presence of roosting bats, and to gain an understanding of how they could use the site. To achieve this, the following steps have been taken:

- A desk study has been carried out, including a request for information from the County Records Centre - Staffordshire Ecological Record (SER)
- A field survey has been undertaken, including an external survey and internal inspection where possible.
- An outline of likely impacts on any known roosts has been provided, based on current development proposals
- Recommendations for further survey and assessment have been made, along with advice on European Protected Species Mitigation Licensing if appropriate

A survey plan is presented in Appendix 1, the proposed Project Plan is included in Appendix 2 (where available), desk study results are provided in the Appendix 3 and a summary of relevant legislation can be found in Appendix 4.

1.4 Project Description

This report is prepared in support of a planning application that is being prepared for submission.

The proposed development is described as: a barn conversion.

The proposed site plan is included in Appendix 2 (where available).

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desk Study methodology

Existing bat records relating to the site and a surrounding 2km radius (the study area) are required to conform to national guidelines and these have been requested from environmental records centre, SER. The data search is confidential information that is not suitable for public release.

A review of the following information sources has also been undertaken to inform the assessment:

- Landscape structure using aerial images from Google Earth and OS maps
- Designated sites, habitat and granted EPSL records held on Magic.gov.uk.

2.2 Site Survey methodology

The survey was undertaken by Charlotte Hammond (Natural England Bat Licence Number: 2016-27302 CLS-CLS) on 19th September 2017.

All features that will be impacted by the project proposals were assessed for their bat roosting and/or commuting habitat. The surveyor systematically surveyed all features suitable for-bats and signs of bat activity.

<u>For any surveyed buildings:</u>

A non-intrusive visual appraisal from the ground using binoculars, inspecting the external features of the building(s) for potential access/egress points, and for signs of bat use. An internal inspection of the building was also made, including the living areas of derelict or abandoned buildings and the accessible roof spaces of all buildings, using an endoscope, torch and ladders. The surveyor paid particular attention to the floor and flat surfaces, window shutters and frames, lintels above doors and windows, and carried out a detailed search of numerous features within the roof space.

<u>For any surveyed trees</u>

A visual inspection from ground level using binoculars and where accessible an internal inspection of suitable roosting features using an endoscope, torch and ladders.

2.3 Breeding birds and other incidental observations

The surveyor also made note of any other ecological constraints observed during the survey, notably the likelihood of presence or signs of breeding birds, and the suitability of the site for barn owls *Tyto alba*.

2.4 Suitability Assessment

All affected survey features on site were categorised according to the likelihood of bats being present, in line with best practice guidelines (Collins, J. (ed) 2016). The features that dictate the likelihood of roosting bats are summarised in Tables 1 and 2 below. Roost suitability is classified as high, moderate, low and negligible and dictates any further surveys required before works can proceed.

Table 1: Features of a building that are correlated with use by bats

Likelihood of bats being present	**Feature of building and its context**
Higher	Buildings/structures with features of particular significance for roosting bats e.g. mines, caves, tunnels, icehouses and cellars. Habitat on site and surrounding landscape of high quality for foraging bats e.g. broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is connected with the wider landscape by strong linear features that would be used by commuting bats e.g. river and or stream valleys and hedgerows. Site is proximate to known or likely roosts (based on historical data).
Lower	A small number of possible roost sites/features, used sporadically by more widespread species. Habitat suitable for foraging in close proximity, but isolated in the landscape. Or an isolated site not connected by prominent linear features. Few features suitable for roosting, minor foraging or commuting.

Table 2: Features of a tree that are correlated with use by bats

Likelihood of bats being present	**Feature of tree and its context**
Higher	A tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.
Lower	A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roosting features but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.

2.5 Limitations – evaluation of the methodology

It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to describe the features on site in the context of their suitability for roosting bats, this does not provide a complete characterisation of the site. This survey provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of bats being present. This is based on suitability of the habitats on the site and in the local area, the ecology and biology of bats as currently understood, and the known distribution of bats as recovered during the desk study.

There were no specific limitations to the survey regarding internal access, exterior visibility, safety from biotic (e.g. wasps) or abiotic (e.g. asbestos) sources or adverse weather. Therefore, the survey was carried out to its fullest extent, and the conclusions based on the maximum range of evidence.

3.0 Results and Evaluation

3.1 Desk Study Results

A summary of desk study results are provided below; full details are included in Appendix 3.

3.2 Designated sites

There are is one statutory designated sites and no known non-statutory sites within the study area. Their location and extent are illustrated in Appendix 3. Table 3 provides details of the designated site including its reason for notification.

Table 3: Designated sites within 2km radius of the site

Designated Site Name	**Distance from Site (approx.)**	**Reasons for Notification from Natural England and/or BRD or LPA policy maps**
Statutory Sites		
Moorland Line	1002m north-west	N/A
Non-statutory Sites		
None known	N/A	N/A

The site lies within two Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (see Figure 1, page 10). The first IRZ is for Gannister Quarry SSSI which lies 4350m south west of the site and was designated for its geological importance. The other is Dane in Shaw Pasture SSSI 3910m to the north west of the site, designated for being one of the largest and most botanically diverse areas of flushed neutral grassland remaining in lowland Cheshire. The IRZ provides details for different categories of development that the LPA would have to consult with Natural England on. The proposed development and development type is not sizeable enough to impact on the SSSI and the development does not fall into any categories where the LPA would need to consult with Natural England.

1. DOES PLANNING PROPOSAL FALL INTO ONE OR MORE OF THE CATEGORIES BELOW?	2. IF YES, CHECK THE CORRESPONDING DESCRIPTION(S) BELOW. LPA SHOULD CONSULT NATURAL ENGLAND ON LIKELY RISKS FROM THE FOLLOWING:
All Planning Applications	
Infrastructure	Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.
Wind & Solar Energy	
Minerals, Oil & Gas	Oil & gas exploration/extraction.
Rural Non Residential	
Residential	
Rural Residential	
Air Pollution	Pig & poultry units, slurry lagoons > 750m² & manure stores > 3500t.
Combustion	General combustion processes >50MW energy input. Incl: energy from waste incineration, other incineration, landfill gas generation plant, pyrolysis/gasification, anaerobic digestion, sewage treatment works, other incineration/ combustion.
Waste	
Composting	
Discharges	
Water Supply	
Notes	

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All Planning Applications	
Infrastructure	Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.
Wind & Solar Energy	
Minerals, Oil & Gas	Oil & gas exploration/extraction.
Rural Non Residential	
Residential	
Rural Residential	
Air Pollution	Pig & poultry units, slurry lagoons > 750m² & manure stores > 3500t.
Combustion	General combustion processes >50MW energy input. Incl: energy from waste incineration, other incineration, landfill gas generation plant, pyrolysis/gasification, anaerobic digestion, sewage treatment works, other incineration/ combustion.
Waste	
Composting	
Discharges	Any discharge of water or liquid waste of more than 20m³/day to ground (ie to seep away) or to surface water, such as a beck or stream (NB This does not include discharges to mains sewer which are unlikely to pose a risk at this location).
Water Supply	
Notes	

Figure 1: SSSI IRZs - to assess planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs

Figure 2: Aerial photo of site, showing landscape structure

3.3 Landscape

A review of the designated sites, aerial photographs (Figure 2, page 11), the Magic database and OS maps has been undertaken. Collated together, the site's local bat habitat is described below:

The site is in a rural area of Stoke-on-Trent. The surrounding area comprises of agricultural fields with associated hedgerows. There are a number of unlit country roads around the property, creating useful wildlife corridors in addition to the hedgerows. There are some pockets of woodland to the south west of the site, near to Poolford. The landscape provides ample opportunities for commuting and foraging bats, with less potential roosting places.

Priority habitats within 2km of the site are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Priority Habitat Inventory within 2km (Magic.gov.uk):

Habitat	**Approximate Closest distance from site**
Lowland heathland	868m south west
Ancient & semi-natural woodland	1024m south
Ancient replanted woodland	1024m south
Deciduous woodland	937m north west
National Forest Inventory – Broadleaved	792m north
Traditional orchard	1872m north west
Woodpasture & Parkland BAP priority habitat	1774m south west
No main habitat, but additional habitat exists	1664m north east

3.4 Historical records

The county biological records centre SER has provided bat records for within 2km of the site. These can be provided on request and records from the last 10 years are summarised in Table 5. The biological records show that there are roosts of common crevice dwelling and void dwelling bat species present within the study area.

Table 5: Historical records of bats within 2km of the site

Common name	Scientific binomial	Number of records	Number of roost records	Closest record	Most recent record
A bat	*Chiroptera*	3	Information not provided	1503m	24/03/2017
Myotis bat	*Myotis*	6	Information not provided	1256m	01/09/2016
Brandt's	*Myotis brandtii*	1	Information not provided	1256m	02/06/2016 – 30/08/2016
Daubenton's	*Myotis daubentonii*	2	Information not provided	1256m	02/06/2016 – 30/08/2016
Natterer's	*Myotis nattererii*	5	Information not provided	1256m	02/06/2016 – 30/08/2016
Noctule	*Nyctalus noctula*	2	Information not provided	1256m	02/06/2016 – 30/08/2016
Pipistrelle bat	*Pipistrellus*	2	Information not provided	1948m	03/08/2016
Common pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	8	Information not provided	1256m	01/09/2016
Soprano pipistrelle	*Pipistrellys pygmaeus*	7	Information not provided	1256m	01/09/2016
Brown long-eared	*Plecotus auritus*	10	Information not provided	1256m	01/09/2016

A search of the Magic database for granted European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSMLs) for bats within a 2km radius found no licenced sites and details are provided in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Granted EPSMLs (bats) within 2km of the site

Case reference of granted application	Approx. distance from site	Bat Species Effected	Licence Start Date:	Licence End Date:	Impacts allowed by licence
None present in the search area					

3.5 Field Survey Results

There is one survey building on the site. This building is designated as B1 and is illustrated in the map in Appendix 1. The environmental variables recorded at the time of the survey are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Environmental variables during the survey

Date: 19/09/2017	
Temperature	20°C
Humidity	57%
Cloud Cover	0%
Wind	1.1km/h
Rain	None

3.6 Site Feature descriptions and photos

Building B1 Description

B1 is a two-storey stone building with a single pitch roof. There are open doorways and gaps around windows and in the brickwork on all elevations on the upper storey. Downstairs the area is split to three areas, one which is currently regularly used as a drying room, a second which provides the access to the second floor, and a third which appears to have historically been utilised to keep animals. On the west elevation there is a corrugated metal structure attached to the barn that is currently utilised as a hay store. There are raised slate roof tiles particularly along the ridge of the roof.

Photo 1: Barn (B1). Section of east elevation

Photo 2: Western elevation showing the potential access points and the hay store

Photo 3: Area used as a drying room

Photo 4: Area with access to the second storey

Photo 5: Area with historic animal use. Evidence of birds on the trough

Photo 6: Upstairs looking to the south. Showing potential access.

Photo 7: Boarded up window with gaps on the north elevation.

Evidence of bats

No evidence of bats was located internally or externally during the survey.

Breeding birds and other incidental observations

Bird droppings were found in the third area of the barn on the troughs.

4.0 Conclusions, Impacts and Recommendations

4.1 Informative guidelines

Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and Conservation Regulations; see Appendix 3 for a summary of legislation protecting bats in the UK. Legislation protects all wild birds whilst they are breeding, and prohibits the killing, injuring or taking of any wild bird or their nests and eggs. Certain species of bird, including the barn owl, are subject to special provisions; it is an offence to disturb any bird or their young during the breeding season.

There are three possible outcomes of this survey, each with specific recommendations. These are outlined below:

Confirmed bat roost

Best practice survey guidelines (Collins, 2016) recommends additional surveys for confirmed roosts. Three further surveys are required to characterise the bat roost present including species, roost type and access points to inform a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) application with Natural England. Surveys must be completed during the active bat season (May – September). At least two of the surveys should be completed during the optimal survey period mid-May to August, and at least on the surveys should be a dawn re-entry survey (Collins, J. 2016).

Low, moderate or high likelihood of a bat roost present

Best practice survey guidelines (Collins, 2016) recommends additional surveys for features assessed as having low to high suitability for roosting bats. One, two or three further surveys are required to confirm presence/likely-absence of a bat roost, based on a low, medium or high roost likelihood evaluation. Surveys must be completed during the active bat season (May – September). If more than one survey is recommended, at least one of them should be completed during the optimal survey period mid-May to August, and at least one the surveys should be a dawn re-entry survey (Collins, J. 2016). The survey effort recommended at this stage is iterative and if bats are recorded emerging from the buildings, a further survey will be required to provide sufficient information to inform an EPSML application to Natural England.

Negligible likelihood of a bat roost present

Buildings assessed as comprising negligible suitability for roosting bats do not normally require further surveys. However, if bats are found during any stage of the development, work should stop immediately and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted to seek further advice.

Appropriate justification for this assessment is provided in Section 3 and Tables 1 and 2 of this report.

4.2 Evaluation

Taking the desk based assessment and site survey results into account, the following value for roosting bats has been placed on each site survey feature.

Table 8: Evaluation of buildings/trees on site

Ref	Survey assessment conclusions (with justification)	Foreseen impacts	Recommendations	Enhancements The Local Planning Authority has a duty to ask for enhancements under the NPPF and circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation. Para.99
B1	This building has a **low** likelihood of supporting roosting bats.	As the proposals include the modification of this building, any bat roosts present could be destroyed. This could result in death/injury of bats.	One bat emergence/re-entry survey is required during the active bat season (May – September) to confirm the presence/likely-absence of a bat roost. The survey should be completed during the optimal survey period mid-May to August inclusive. Sub-optimal: early May and September. Two surveyors are required to provide full coverage of the building.	To be confirmed following further surveys.

Ref	Survey assessment conclusions (with justification)	Foreseen impacts	Recommendations	Enhancements The Local Planning Authority has a duty to ask for enhancements under the NPPF and circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation. Para.99
B1	This building has been used by birds previously.	Active nests could be disturbed or destroyed during the works.	Any works to the building and any tree or scrub removal should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the building and trees and scrub to be removed should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to works/clearance. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged.	Install three Schwegler bird boxes on retained trees/buildings on site e.g. Schwegler No 17 swift nest box Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace Schwegler 1B nest boxes Schwegler 2H Robin Boxes Nest boxes should be positioned approximately 3m above ground level where they will be sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight. Small-hole boxes are best placed approximately 1-3m above ground on an area of the tree trunk where foliage will not obscure the entrance hole.

5.0 Bibliography

- British Trust for Ornithology (2016) www.bto.org/about-birds/nnbw/putting-up-a-nest-box
- Collins, J. (ed.) (2012). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists —Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- Garland & Markham (2008) Is important bat foraging and commuting habitat legally protected?
- Google Earth (2017) accessed on 27/09/2017.
- Magic database (2017) http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx accessed on 27/09/2017.
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.

Appendix 1: Survey Plan

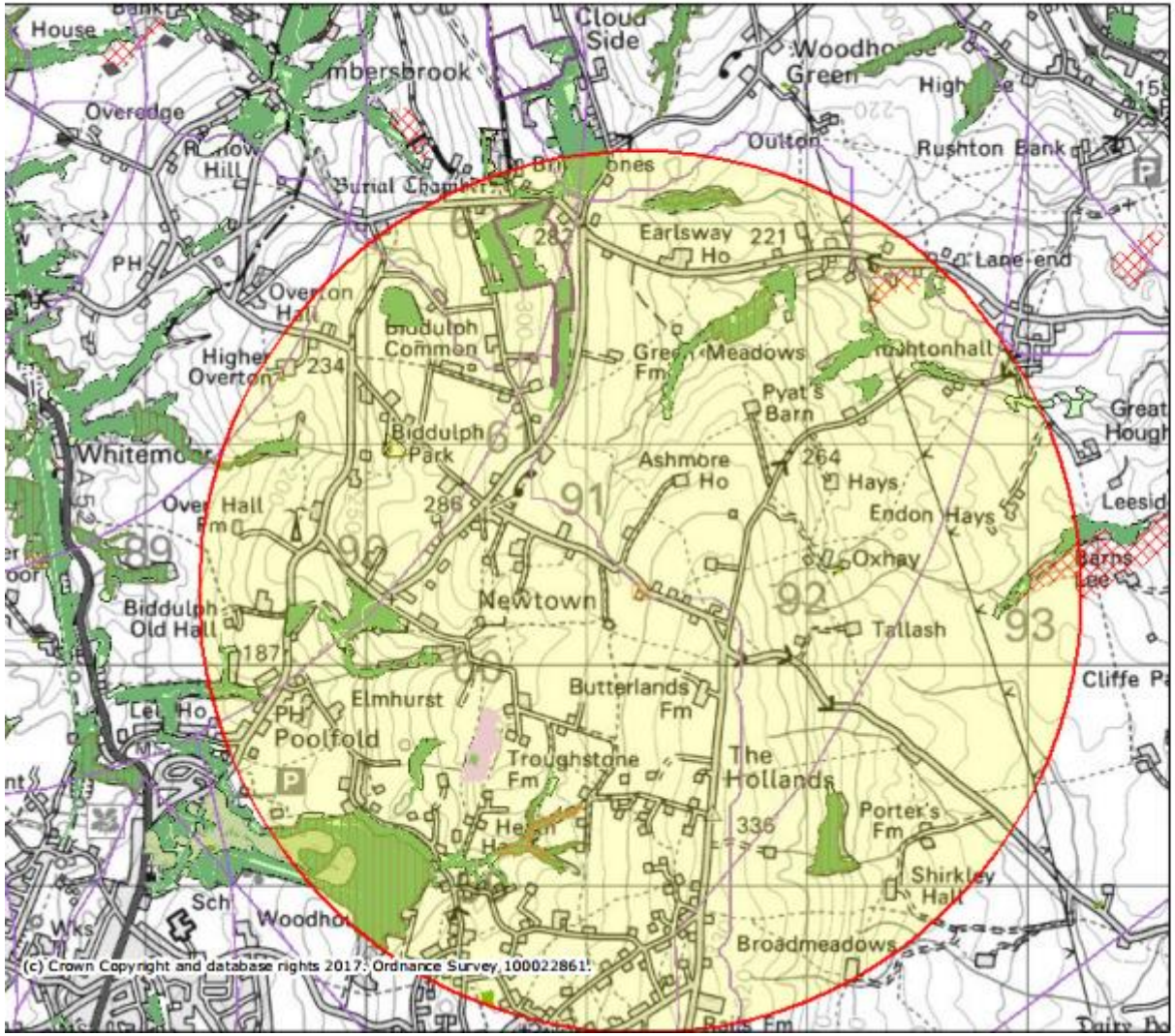
Appendix 2: Proposed Site Plan

None provided

Appendix 3: Desk Study Information

MAGiC

Designations and Habitats



Legend

- Moorland Line (England)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)
- SSSI Impact Risk Zones - to assess planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs/SACs/SPAs & Ramsar sites (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Heathland (England)

Ancient Woodland (England)

- Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland
- Ancient Replanted Woodland
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland (England)

National Forest Inventory (GB)

- Assumed woodland
- Broadleaved
- Cloud \ shadow
- Conifer
- Coppice
- Coppice with standards
- Failed
- Felled
- Ground prep
- Low density
- Mixed mainly broadleaved
- Mixed mainly conifer
- Shrub
- Uncertain
- Windthrow
- Young trees
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Traditional Orchards (England)
- Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - No main habitat but additional habitat exists (England)

Projection = OSGB36
xmin = 386200
ymin = 358300
xmax = 395800
ymax = 363000

0 0.5 1 km

Map produced by MAGIC on 29 September, 2017.

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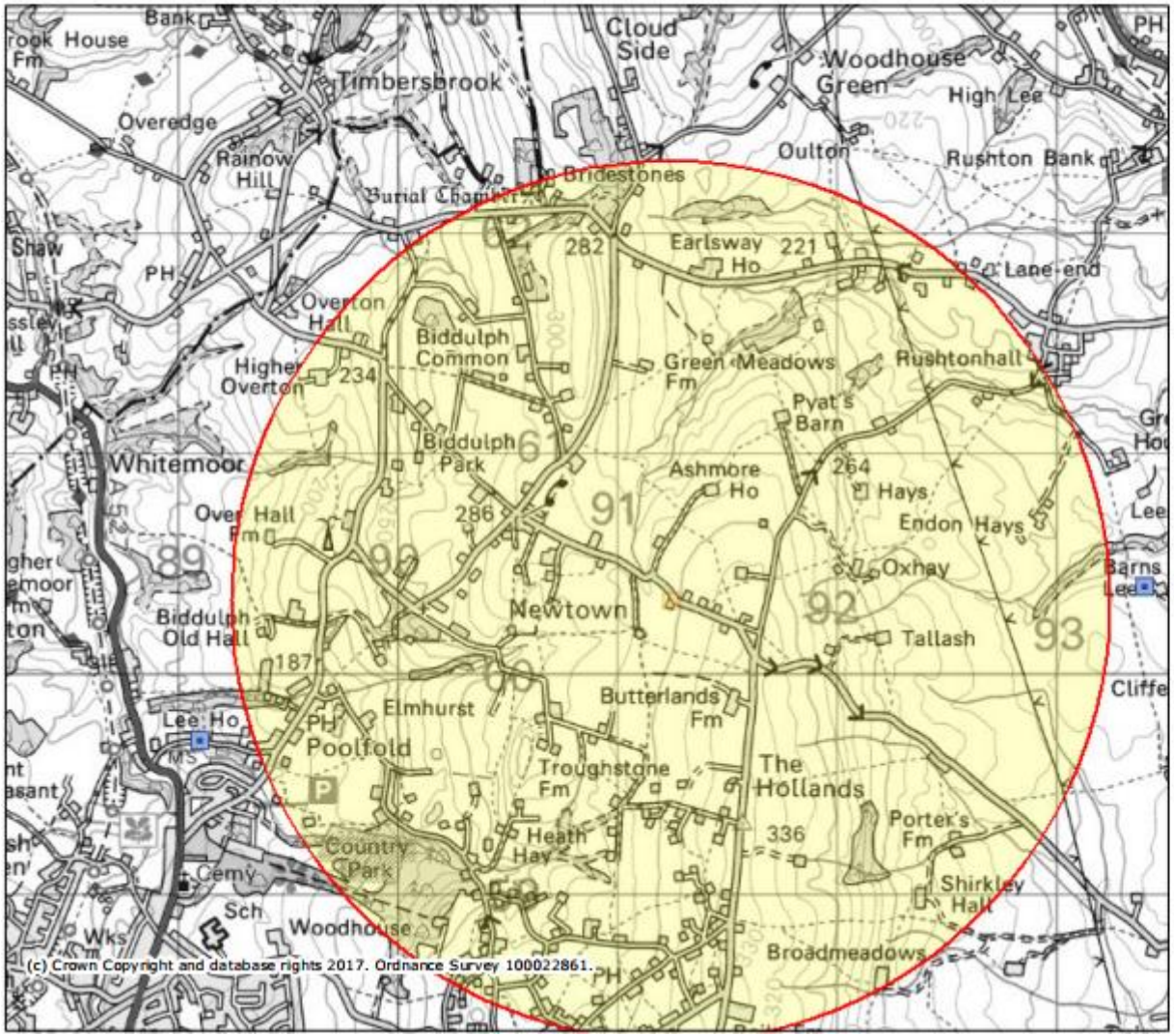
Species



Legend

Granted European Protected Species Applications (England)

- Amphibian
- Bat
- Cetacean
- Invertebrate
- Other Mammal
- Plant
- Reptile

Projection = OSGB36
xmin = 386000
ymin = 358300
xmax = 395700
ymax = 363100
0 0.5 1 km

Map produced by MAGIC on 29 September, 2017.
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Appendix 4: Legislation and Planning Policy related to bats

LEGAL PROTECTION

All species of bat are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 2.

Regulation 41 prohibits:

- Deliberate killing, injuring or capturing of Schedule 2 species (e.g. all bats)
- Deliberate disturbance of bat species as:

  a) to impair their ability:

  (i) to survive, breed, or reproduce, or to rear or nurture young

  (ii) to hibernate or migrate

  b) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place

Bats are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 5. Under this Act, they are additionally protected from:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance (at any level)
- Intentional or reckless obstruction of access to any place of shelter or protection
- Selling, offering or exposing for sale, possession or transporting for purpose of sale

Effect on development works:

A European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence issued by the relevant statutory authority (e.g. Natural England) will be required for works likely to affect a bat roost or for operations likely to result in a level of disturbance which might impair their ability to undertake those activities mentioned above (e.g. survive, breed, rear young and hibernate). The licence is to allow derogation from the relevant legislation but also to enable appropriate mitigation measures to be put in place and their efficiency/success to be monitored.

The legislation may also be interpreted such that, in certain circumstances, important foraging areas and/or commuting routes can be regarded as being afforded *de facto* protection, for example, where it can be proven that the continued usage of such areas is crucial to maintaining the integrity and long-term viability of a bat roost (Garland & Markham, 2008).

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (ENGLAND)

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development. The Framework specifies the need for protection of designated sites and priority habitats and species. An emphasis is also made on the need for ecological infrastructure through protection, restoration and re-creation. The protection and recovery of priority species (considered likely to be those listed as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species) is also listed as a requirement of planning policy.

In determining a planning application, planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by ensuring that: designated sites are protected from harm; there is appropriate mitigation or compensation where significant harm cannot be avoided; opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments are encouraged; and planning permission is refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including aged or veteran trees and also ancient woodland.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Biodiversity Duty

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, 2006, requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. This is commonly referred to as the 'biodiversity duty'.

Section 41 of the Act (Section 42 in Wales) requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of 'principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity.' This list is intended to assist decision makers such as public bodies in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act. Under the Act these habitats and species are regarded as a material consideration in determining planning applications. A developer must show that their protection has been adequately addressed within a development proposal.