Brooks's Barn,

Hurst Road, Biddulph, ST8 7RU

Building Inspection Report for Bat Roosting Potential

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Title: **Brooks's Barn, Hurst Road, Biddulph, ST8 7RU**
Building Inspection Report for Bat Roosting Potential

Client: **Mr & Mrs Rutter**

Date: March 2020

Status	Date	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Approved by
V1	20/03/2020	Megan Williams Ecologist	Francis Marshall Assistant Ecologist	Megan Williams Ecologist

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SUMMARY

NLG Ecology Ltd (NLG) was commissioned by EPOCH Architecture Ltd., on behalf of Mr & Mrs Rutter, in March, 2020 to undertake a building inspection for bat roosting potential at Brooks's Barn located on Horse Pasture Farm, off Hurst Road, Biddulph, Staffordshire, ST8 7RU and centered at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference (OSGR) SJ 90331 59474. The scope of the proposed works is to convert the Brooks's Barn into a two bed bungalow, which will involve replacing the current corrugated asbestos roof with tiled roofing and changing the internal layout. The site is shown on Figures 1 and 2, Appendix 1 and photographs are provided in Appendix 2.

The inspection aimed to determine the potential presence of roosting bats across Brooks's Barn, both in terms of actual evidence and in the form of suitable features. In addition, consideration was given to the presence of breeding birds and other European Protected Species, again in terms of actual evidence and in terms of opportunities for such use. The inspection was undertaken on 18th March, 2020 by Megan Williams (Ecologist, GradCIEEM and Natural England Class Level 1 survey licence holder for bats 2019-38752-CLS-CLS) of NLG Ecology Ltd.

Overall the barn was assigned '**negligible'** potential for roosting bats, based on the lack of suitable external roosting features and the absence of suitable internal roosting points, with no actual evidence of bats found. Therefore, bats are not considered to pose a constraint to the proposed barn conversion works which may proceed without further survey effort for roosting bats. However, there is always a low risk that any building can be used on occasion by roosting bats. As a legal requirement, should bats be suspected at any time during the works, works must cease and the project ecologist must be contacted immediately. The ecologist will attend site if necessary to assess the situation and advise on how to proceed. This may involve seeking further advice from Natural England and the Bat Conservation Trust.

Opportunities for and old evidence of nesting birds were recorded within the interior of the building as access opportunities were available via a large hole in the roof. Therefore, the proposed works to the building, should ideally be carried out outside of the main bird breeding season (which runs from March to August inclusive), i.e. carry out works between September and February. If this is not possible and proposed works are scheduled within the nesting season, then the buildings must be checked by a suitably qualified ecologist for active nests no more than 48 hours prior to the start of works. If nests are present, then a minimum 5m exclusion zone should be established around the nest(s) and no works to the building (to be advised by an ecologist in the context of the proposals) should be carried out within the exclusion zone(s) until a suitably qualified ecologist has confirmed that the nest(s) is completed and that the young have fledged.

No opportunities for and/or evidence of other protected or invasive species were noted surrounding the building. Therefore, no further recommendations or additional survey efforts are required.

Further detail and advice is provided in the Conclusions and Recommendations section of the report.

This report is valid for a period of 18 months from the date of the building inspections (i.e. valid until 18th September, 2021).

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 NLG Ecology Ltd (NLG) was commissioned by EPOCH Architecture Ltd., on behalf of Mr & Mrs Rutter, in March, 2020 to undertake a building inspection for bat roosting potential at Brooks's Barn located on Horse Pasture Farm, off Hurst Road, Biddulph, Staffordshire, ST8 7RU and centered at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference (OSGR) SJ 90331 59474. The scope of the proposed works is to convert the Brooks's Barn into a two bed bungalow, which will involve replacing the current corrugated asbestos roof with tiled roofing and changing the internal layout of the building. The site is shown on Figures 1 and 2, Appendix 1 and photographs are provided in Appendix 2.

1.1.2 The inspection aimed to determine the potential presence of a bat roost or roosts within the buildings, both in terms of actual evidence and in the form of suitable features for roosting bats across the building's interiors and exteriors. In addition, consideration was given to the presence of breeding birds, again in terms of actual evidence and in terms of opportunities for such use (e.g. ledges). Surrounding the building, the habitat was noted and further consideration was given to the potential presence of other European protected species. Desk study data and the habitat surrounding the site has also been considered so that a wider context to the potential for roosting and foraging bats in the vicinity of the barn can be gained.

1.1.3 The inspection was undertaken on 18th March, 2020 by Megan Williams (Ecologist, GradCIEEM and Natural England Class Level 1 survey licence holder for bats 2019-38752-CLS-CLS) of NLG Ecology Ltd. Relevant legislations that have informed survey effort are detailed in Appendix 3. Please note that the text provides a brief summary of the legislation in relation to bats in England and Wales and the original Acts, Regulations and any amendments should be referred to for the precise wording.

1.2 Bat Biology

1.2.1 Within the British Isles there are 17 resident (i.e. breeding) species of bat. Bats are nocturnal and feed entirely on insects. They use echolocation, a complex system similar to sonar, to navigate around their surroundings and to forage.

1.2.2 Depending on the species of bat, habitat requirements vary widely although features such as traditional pasture, woodland edges, parkland, and wetland are particularly good for bats as insects are abundant within these areas (Mitchell-Jones 2004). Linear features such as hedgerows, tree lines and watercourses are important for commuting, as they assist navigation.

1.2.3 Bats utilise different roosts at different times of the year, and roost requirements vary between species. Typical roost sites include caves, mines, trees, and buildings. Bats hibernate between October and March and usually within a damp, unexposed roost which can maintain a relatively stable temperature such as thick stone walls, caves, cellars and mines. Around March, bats emerge from hibernation and gradually move to their summer roosts - during spring females gather together to form maternity colonies to give birth and rear their young. Summer and maternity roosts are typically found within man-made structures or suitable crevices in trees.

1.2.4 Birthing usually occurs late June – mid July, with the young able to fly within three to five weeks (Altringham 2003). By the end of August, most of the young bats are independent and the colony begins to break up. Mating takes place between August and December either at autumn swarming sites or winter hibernation sites. Bat roost sizes can vary from individual bats found within summer roosts, to hundreds of bats found within maternity colonies or hibernation sites.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 Google Maps (https://www.google.co.uk/maps?hl=en&tab=wl - accessed 18/03/2020) was used to contextualise Brooks's Barn and to assess ecological connectivity between the site and the surrounding landscape. The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas (https://nbnatlas.org/ – accessed 18/03/2020) was used to search for bat records within 2km of the site. Defra's Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website (http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx - accessed 18/03/2020) was also searched for nearby records of successful mitigation licence applications to Natural England pertaining to roosting bats.

2.2 Building Inspection for Bat Roosting Potential

2.2.1 The building inspection adhered to guidance within the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Mitchell-Jones 2004) and within Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins 2016). The survey involved an external and internal examination of relevant areas in and around the barn. Equipment used to support the assessment included binoculars and a high-powered torch, with an endoscope on hand for any accessible crevices.

2.2.2 Throughout the building inspection, evidence of use by bats (for example, droppings, feeding remains, staining by fur oils or urine) was searched for, in addition to suitable potential access and roosting points. These can include gaps beneath roof and ridge tiles, gaps behind fascia boards and in soffit boxes, gaps beneath lead flashing and crevices in the brickwork. Internally, the loft space was also inspected for evidence of bat use, as well as bats themselves.

2.2.3 Any trees within the survey area were also assessed for any features that may present suitable opportunities to roosting bats. Such features can include: woodpecker holes, rot holes, splits, cavities, bat boxes and densely-plated ivy growth.

2.2.4 The building was assigned a value for its bat roosting potential, as described in Table 2.2 (adapted from Collins, 2016), whilst relevant trees assessed to have bat roosting potential, or be of a suitable age and size, were also formally recorded and assigned a value. The assessment criteria for buildings and trees are shown in Table 2.2, below.

2.2.5 The classification of the building and trees corresponds to the level of further survey effort required i.e. the number of recommended emergence/re-entry surveys for bats, in accordance with best practice guidance (Collins 2016). The levels are as follows:

- Negligible: no survey requirement;
- Low: for buildings, one survey required at dawn or dusk and for trees, ecological supervision during soft-felling only required;
- Moderate: for buildings and trees, two surveys required comprising one at dawn and one at dusk; if bats are seen to emerge or re-enter, then one further confirmation visit is required; and
- High or confirmed day roost: three surveys, including at least one at dawn and one at dusk required.

Table 2.2: Visual Assessment Criteria for Buildings and Trees

Suitability	Description Roosting habitats	Commuting and foraging habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger number of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity of hibernation). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roosting features (PRF's) but with none seen from the ground of features seen with only very limited roosting potential.	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a happy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees. Scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure or 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.	Continuous high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams , hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to known roosts.

2.3 Breeding Birds

2.3.1 The building inspection included a visual search for breeding bird activity and potential access and nesting points, including identification of bird species either observed to be building or occupying a nest. Adjacent habitats were also assessed for their potential value to nesting birds.

2.3.2 Relevant legislation afforded to birds is presented in Appendix 3.

2.4 Constraints

2.4.1 Whilst desk study records can help to inform and complement survey effort, they should not be treated as a comprehensive list of species present within the search area. Many species are under-recorded and a lack of records can reflect a lack of survey effort in certain areas rather than confirming absence of a species.

2.4.2 The building inspections were conducted outside of the peak activity season for bats, i.e. from May to August inclusive. Therefore, any bat evidence which may have accumulated on the structures exterior is highly likely to have been washed/blown away since the previous bat activity season (i.e. summer 2019).

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 Desk Study

Surrounding Habitats

3.1.1 Brooks's Barn is situated to the north-east of the town of Biddulph within a predominantly rural area. The barn is immediately surrounded by agricultural fields used for pasture and other farm buildings. Biddulph Grange Country Park is located approximately 275m south of the barn which comprises of large areas of 'priority' deciduous woodland and 'priority' wood-pasture and parkland habitats (as covered by the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (formerly UK BAP)) and contains Spring Wood Ancient Woodland and the National Trust Site 'Biddulph Grange Gardens'. Biddulph Grange Country Park is ecologically well-connected to the barn via a pocket of woodland approximately 80m west of the site which is deemed in parts to be 'priority' deciduous woodland. Further 'priority' habitats within 1km include areas of open mosaic habitats on previously developed land (the closest area being approximately 103m west) and an area of lowland heathland approximately 100m east. Numerous drains, issues and brooks are also located within 1km, the closest being a brook flowing roughly from east to west approximately 320m south of the barn at its closest point. This brook and its tributaries are also surrounded by 'priority' deciduous woodland and Ancient Woodland. The presence of watercourses and 'priority' habitats in such close proximity to the barn provide ideal foraging and commuting opportunities for a range of wildlife including roosting bats, nesting birds, badgers etc.

3.1.2 The site is located within Stoke Greenbelt and the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Ganister Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Dane-in-Shaw Pasture (SSSI) and Roe Park Woods (SSSI), approximately 3.35km west, 3.75km north-west and 3.95km west respectively. However, the proposed works do not fall into any of the IRZ categories deemed as likely to impact upon the designation; therefore no constraints to this designation is envisaged. No other statutory or non-statutory designated sites are located on or adjacent to the survey area using the MAGIC Maps application.

Species Records

3.1.3 A search using the MAGIC website returned two European Protected Species Mitigation licence for bats within 2km of Biddulph Arms which are summarised below:

- A licence (reference no. EPSM2011-3372) issued from 06/09/2011 to 30/09/2013, allowing for the destruction of a brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) and Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*) resting place, approximately 1.27km west; and
- A licence (reference no. EPSM2012-5072) issued from 31/10/2012 to 30/09/2016, allowing for the impact and destruction of a common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) breeding site and resting place, approximately 1.72km south-west.

3.1.4 In regards to bats, the NBN Atlas returned one record of common pipistrelle within 2km of the site. The NBN Atlas was also used to search for records of protected, invasive or notable species within 1km. These are summarised as follows:

- **Birds (Schedule 1 species as listed within the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981**): one record of brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*) and one record of fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*);
- **Invasive species (Schedule 9 species as listed within the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981):** one record of Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*); and
- **Protected Plant Species (Schedule 8 species as listed within the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981):** one record of English bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*).

3.1.5 In relation to nearby potential amphibian breeding habitat (including for great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*), two ponds are located within 250m of the site, approximately 175m north-west and 245m west (see Figure 1, Appendix 1); therefore it is possible that amphibians may pose an issue to the proposed works. However, grassland maintained at a relatively short sward surrounds the building which was deemed unsuitable for great crested newts and no refuge opportunities were recorded.

3.2 Building Inspection for Bat Roosting Potential

Exterior

3.2.1 Brooks's Barn is a single-storey, brick-built building with a pitched corrugated asbestos roof, wooden facias across the northern, western and southern elevations, plastic guttering along the western and eastern elevations and well-sealed wooden doors and wooden framed windows across the northern, eastern and southern elevations (Photograph 1 to 3). Motion activated security lighting is present across the eastern elevation of the building which may deter roosting and foraging bats.

3.2.2 Across the roof, the corrugated asbestos sheets are lifted in three places along both the eastern and western pitch of the roof likely for ventilation; however the corresponding gaps underneath are too large and exposed to be utilised by roosting bats (Photograph 4). A large hole is present in the centre of the roof along the apex, allowing internal access by wildlife into the barn (Photograph 5).

3.2.3 The wooden facia boards present on the northern elevation are slightly lifted on the eastern and western corner; however the gaps underneath appeared shallow and were highly cobwebbed which indicates a lack of recent use by bats (Photograph 6).

3.2.4 The brickwork is overall in a good condition. A number of holes (likely drill holes) are located along the eastern elevation which were deemed too shallow to offer any potential for roosting bats and each hole was highly cobwebbed internally (Photograph 7).

Interior

3.2.5 The internal of the building was historically used as a cattle shed. At present the building is divided into two rooms; a small workshop at the southern end (Photograph 8) and the disused cattle shed at the northern end (Photograph 9). Overall the interior of the building is open, light (both with artificial and natural day light) and regularly used by the client; in addition the roof did not appear well-sealed as water seepage was noted across the walls. These factors all contribute to the building being deemed less suitable for roosting bats.

3.2.6 No loft space is present and wooden rafters supporting the roof are visible. Within the small workshop space the corrugated asbestos roof is lined with wooden boards which have become worn exposing the asbestos roof above (Photograph 10). All of the crevices noted between the wooden boarding and the roof which were accessible via these holes within the boards were deemed too exposed to offer any potential for roosting bats.

Summary

3.2.7 No evidence of bat use, in the form of droppings, prey remains, staining on crevices by fur oils or urine, or bats themselves were identified across the exterior or interior of the building. No external roosting features were recorded and the interior of the building was deemed unsuitable for roosting bats with no suitable roosting points identified. Therefore Brooks's Barn has been assessed as offered **negligible** potential to roosting bats.

3.3 Breeding Birds

3.3.1 Nesting material was noted in the internal of the building between the rafters and the roof and between the wooden lining and the roof where the lining has torn (Photograph 11).

3.4 Surrounding Habitat

3.4.1 Brooks's barn is surrounded by semi-improved neutral grassland on all aspects which is maintained at a short sward with species including perennial rye grass *(Lolium perenne)*, white clover (*Trifolium repens*), mouse eared chickweed (*Cerastium fontanum*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) and broadleaved dock *(Rumex obtusifolius)*. The grassland is divided by dry stone walls and wooden fencing.

3.4.2 Other buildings which are part of Horse Pasture Farm surround the barn to the east and south. These buildings were not subject to inspections as they will not be impacted by the proposed works.

3.4.3 No opportunities for and/or evidence of other protected or invasive species were noted surrounding the building.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Roosting Bats

4.1.1 Overall the barn was assigned '**negligible'** potential for roosting bats, based on the lack of suitable external roosting features and the absence of suitable internal roosting points. Therefore, bats are not considered to pose a constraint to the proposed barn conversion works and works can proceed without further survey effort for roosting bats. However, there is always a low risk that any building can be used on occasion by roosting bats. As a legal requirement, should bats be suspected at any time during the works, works must cease and the project ecologist must be contacted immediately. The ecologist will attend site if necessary to assess the situation and advise on how to proceed. This may involve seeking further advice from Natural England and the Bat Conservation Trust.

4.2 Breeding Birds

4.2.1 Evidence, and opportunities, of nesting birds is present across the internal of the building on top of the rafters and on top of the torn roof lining in the small workshop room.

4.2.2 Therefore, the proposed works to the building, should ideally be carried out outside of the main bird breeding season (which runs from March to August inclusive), i.e. carry out works between September and February. If this is not possible and proposed works are scheduled within the nesting season, then the buildings must be checked by a suitably qualified ecologist for active nests no more than 48 hours prior to the start of works. If nests are present, then a minimum 5m exclusion zone should be established around the nest(s) and no works to the building (to be advised by an ecologist in the context of the proposals) should be carried out within the exclusion zone(s) until a suitably qualified ecologist has confirmed that the nest(s) is completed and that the young have fledged.

5 REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Google Maps (https://www.google.co.uk/maps) – accessed on 20/03/2020

MAGIC Maps (http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx) – accessed on 20/03/2020

Mitchell-Jones, A.J, (2004). Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.

National Biodiversity Network Atlas (https://records.nbnatlas.org – accessed 18.09.2017) – accessed on 20/03/2020

APPENDIX 1 – FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location and Ecological Context showing Brooks's Barn (red circle), ancient woodland (brown horizontal lines), ponds within 250m of the barn (circled blue) and nearby 'priority' habitats including deciduous woodland (dark green shading), open mosaic habitats on previously developed land (blue diagonal lines), lowland heathland (pink shading) and woodpasture and parkland (light green shading with tufts of grass). Map screenshot from Magic Maps (accessed on 20/03/2020).

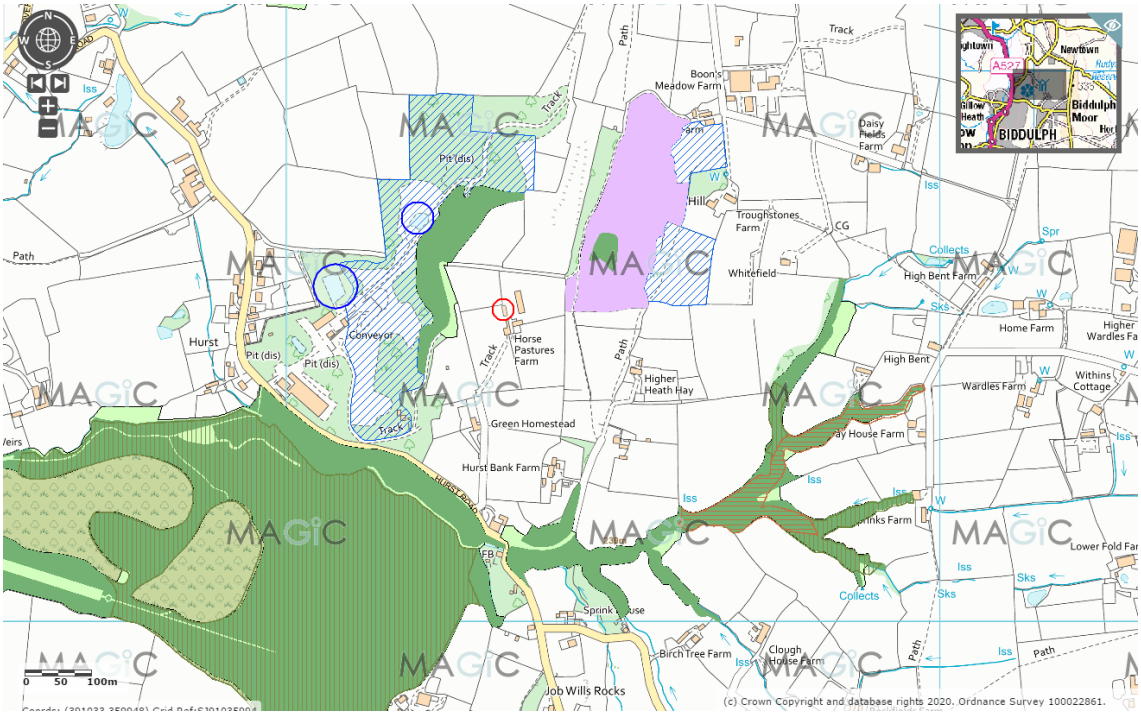


Figure 2: Site layout of Horse Pasture Farm showing the Brooks's Barn circled red. Image taken from Google Maps (accessed on 20/03/2020).



APPENDIX 2 - PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES

Photograph 1. View of the northern and eastern elevations of Brooks's Barn.



Photograph 2. View of the western elevation of Brooks's Barn.



Photograph 3. View of the southern elevation of Brooks's Barn.



Photograph 4. Gap under corrugated roof sheets.



Photograph 5. Large hole in the roof.



Photograph 6. Gap under the wooden facia boards on the northern elevation.	**Photograph 7.** Hole in the wall plate along the eastern elevation.
	
Photograph 8. Internal of the building; small workshop room.	**Photograph 9.** Internal of the building; disused cattle shed.
	
Photograph 10. Large holes under the torn roof lining.	**Photograph 11.** Disused nest material within the internal of the building.
	

APPENDIX 3 - LEGISLATION

Bats

All UK bat species receive full protection (Schedule 5 species) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which is further amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Taking these Acts together, it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection (S9:4b).
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a bat (S9:4c).
- The term 'reckless' is defined by the case of Regina v Caldwell 1982. The prosecution has to show that a person either deliberately took an unacceptable risk, or failed to notice or consider an obvious risk.

A bat roost has been interpreted to mean any structure or place which is used for shelter or protection whether or not bats are present at the time. Bat roosts may be defined (Hunt, L, 2012) as either (i) Transition Roosts, (ii) Maternity roosts, (iii) Satellite Roosts, (iv) Mating Roost, (v) Hibernation roosts, (vi) Night Roost, (vii) Day Roost, (viii) Feeding Roost or (ix) Swarming Sites.

Bats are listed under Annexes IIa and IVa of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, or the 'Habitats Directive'. Inclusion on Annex IVa means bats are a European Protected Species (EPS) and protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, thus it is an offence to:

(a) deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of an EPS,

(b) deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species, in such a way as –

- (i) to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear their young, or
- (ii) in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate, or
- (iii) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;

A licence to disturb or take bats can be issued for certain purposes under Section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and under Regulation 44 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 permitting activities that would otherwise be illegal under the legislation. Licences can take up to thirty working days to be issued by Natural England. Where impacts on bats are unavoidable, mitigation will be required to maintain and enhance the favourable conservation status of bats. Losses of bat roosts must be compensated for by the provision of new roosting sites and planting of new foraging habitat. Mitigation measures will need to be designed on a site specific basis and only in consultation with an expert. All mitigation proposals must be agreed with Natural England and put in place prior to the commencement of works.

Breeding Birds

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) all wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is an offence to;

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built
- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild birds.