

Bat Survey Report for Cash Heath Farm buildings, Forsbrook, Stoke-on-Trent, ST11 9DE



Cotswold Wildlife Surveys

28th May, 15th June and 1st July 2021

QUALITY CONTROL

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The information in this report has been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Professional Conduct. The conclusions and recommendations expressed are reasoned judgements based on the evidence.

Every reasonable attempt has been made to comply with BS42020:2013 *Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development*, *CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing* (CIEEM, 2017) and Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (3rd edition, Collins, 2016). If there has been deviation from recognised practice, justification/explanation has been given.

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SUMMARY

At Cash Heath Farm in Forsbrook near Stoke-on-Trent, planning permission is being sought to re-develop the farm buildings, including a barn, two sets of stables, dog kennels and a lean-to.

As this could impact on features typically used by bats as roosting places, a diurnal inspection was undertaken on 28th May 2021, to assess the buildings for signs of bat occupation.

All the internal and external structures, especially those associated with the roofs and walls of the buildings were examined.

In the roof space of the brick stables, a roosting Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus* was found, along with a few droppings from the animal.

Although no other evidence of bat activity was found, the suitability for roosting pipistrelles *Pipistrellus sp.* was considered to be low in the brick stables and barn, as there were a few gaps under roof tiles.

Given the low suitability and the presence of the bat, two nocturnal emergence surveys were carried out on the evenings of 15th June and 1st July 2021. The surveys began 15 minutes before sunset and continued for up to one and three quarter hours after sunset.

A check of the buildings before the start of the first survey revealed no signs of the Brown Long-eared Bat, and it was not recorded during the nocturnal. However, at least 20 Common Pipistrelles *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* were noted as they flew north up the lane from the direction of the village, indicating a maternity roost somewhere to the south. Also recorded flying past were single Soprano and Nathusius's Pipistrelles *P. pygmaeus* and *P. nathusii*, and an overflying Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*.

No bats emerged from any of the buildings, or the farmhouse.

The Brown Long-eared Bat was not present during the second survey either, and the number of commuting Common Pipistrelles was much lower, with only five of six animals recorded. One or two Noctule Bats were noted flying overhead, and both Soprano and Nathusius's Pipistrelles were again detected. A Whiskered/Brandt's Bat *Myotis mystacinus*/*M. brandtii* was also recorded flying past, having emerged elsewhere.

Taking the inspection and nocturnal surveys into account, the status of bats at Cash Heath Farm is as follows:

- ❑ Brown Long-eared Bat – day roost used occasionally for a single animal in the brick stables.

Since the proposed works will cause the loss of the bat roost, a licence from Natural England will be required.

Given the low status of the roost, the site is eligible for registration under Natural England's Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) scheme.

Mitigation measures will include a 'toolbox talk' by a Registered Consultant (RC) to contractors about bats and what to do if one is unexpectedly encountered, a pre-works inspection of the buildings by the RC, supervision of exclusion measures and/or any destructive roof works by the RC, the latter undertaken by hand, and the provision of a Schwegler 1FD bat box, or similar, on a tree in the grounds in which to relocate a bat if one is discovered before or during works.

It should be noted that under BMCL there will be no timing constraints, and an ecologist will be present at all key stages to ensure the replacement roosting provision is correctly installed.

*

There were at least 10 old Swallows' *Hirundo rustica* nests in the brick stables and barn, these not in use in 2021.

Since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any works which affect buildings should ideally be undertaken outside the period March to August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the buildings affected will be undertaken prior to clearance. Work will not be carried out in close proximity to any in-use nest, and a minimum buffer of 5.0 metres will be established, although this could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species. Any in-use nest will be allowed to fledge before it is disturbed.

1. INTRODUCTION

In late May 2021, Cotswold Wildlife Surveys was instructed by Mr & Mrs Leavy, to undertake a bat survey of the buildings at Cash Heath Farm in Forsbrook near Stoke-on-Trent. On 28th May 2021, a visit was made to the property to carry out a diurnal inspection of the buildings to check for signs of bat occupation.

In the brick stables a roosting Brown Long-eared Bat was found, whilst the suitability for roosting pipistrelles was considered to be low, as there were a few gaps under roof tiles.

Given the low suitability and the presence of the roosting bat, two nocturnal emergence surveys were carried out on the evenings of 15th June and 1st July 2021.

The results of the inspection and nocturnal surveys are contained in this report.

In England, Scotland and Wales, all bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended), through inclusion in Schedule 5. In England and Wales this Act has been amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), which adds an extra offence, makes species offences arrestable, increases the time limits for some prosecutions, and increases penalties.

All bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994, (or Northern Ireland 1995) (the Habitats Regulations), which defines 'European protected species of animals'.

The above legislation can be summarised thus (Mitchell-Jones and McLeish, 2004):

- ❑ *Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) bats*
- ❑ *Deliberately disturb bats (whether in a roost or not)*
- ❑ *Recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts*
- ❑ *Damage or destroy roosts*
- ❑ *Possess or transport a bat or any part of a part of a bat, unless acquired legally*
- ❑ *Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats, or parts of bats*

The word 'roost' is not used in the legislation, but is used here for simplicity. The actual wording is 'any structure or place which any wild animal...uses for shelter or protection' (WCA), or 'breeding site or resting place' (Habitats Regulations).

As bats generally have both a winter and a summer roost, the legislation is clear that all roosts are protected whether bats are in residence at the time or not.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to fully assess bat occupation of a particular site, the Bat Conservation Trust (2016) recommends that information gathered from a desk study of known bat records, and a daytime site walkover, is used to inform the type and extent of future bat survey work, potentially including nocturnal surveys.

The diurnal walkover provides an opportunity to check for signs of occupancy, such as droppings, scratch marks, feeding remains, carcasses, or even animals in residence, whilst nocturnal surveys (if required) allow numbers and species of bats to be confirmed. The latter are also used to determine the presence or absence of bats, where signs of bat activity are indeterminate or absent but the suitability for bat roosting is considered to be low, medium or high.

Roosting places vary depending on the species. Pipistrelles usually inhabit narrow cracks or cavities around the outside of buildings, but they will roost in similar niches inside larger barns. Typical sites include soffit spaces, gaps behind fascia boards and end rafters, crevices around the ends of projecting purlins, under warped or lifted roof and ridge tiles, or in gaps in stone and brickwork where mortar has dropped out.

Larger species such as Brown Long-eared Bats, *Myotis* bats (Natterer's *Myotis nattereri* and Whiskered/Brandt's), and Lesser Horseshoes *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, like to roost in the roof voids of buildings, and can often be found hanging singly or in small groups from ridge boards or roof timbers, especially where these butt up against gable walls or chimney breasts. They especially favour older structures with timber frames. Here they squeeze into tight crevices making them difficult to observe.

Diurnal walkovers can be carried out at any time of the year, but nocturnal surveys should only be undertaken when bats are out of hibernation and in their summer roosts. The recommended period is from May to September inclusive, with May to August optimum and September sub-optimum. The season can be extended into October, although particularly cold weather will render this inadvisable. Indeed, the air temperature at the start of each survey must be at least 10°C or above.

Visits will be a minimum of two weeks apart, and the number of surveys is dependent on the evidence found or the suitability of the site to bats.

Where bats are found, or there is evidence of bat occupation or activity, i.e. that bat use is confirmed, the number and timing of visits will be decided by the ecologist, and will be appropriate for the type of roost. In general at least two nocturnal surveys will be carried out, both of which can be emergence surveys, or one emergence and one dawn re-entry.

Where there is no evidence of bat presence, and no suitability for roosting, no nocturnal surveys will be needed.

For a site with no evidence but low suitability, just one nocturnal emergence survey is required, this to be in the optimum period.

For medium suitability a minimum of two visits are needed, of which one must be in the optimum period, and one must be a dawn re-entry survey. With high suitability, three visits will be necessary, of which two must be in the optimum period. At least one of these must be a dawn re-entry survey, with the third visit either an emergence or a dawn re-entry.

For sites < 5 ha in size, and/or regularly shaped structures, at least two surveyors must be present, with more surveyors at larger sites and more complex buildings, e.g. those with multiple elevations and/or roof structures.

On 28th May 2021, a thorough inspection of the buildings was made by Andy Warren (Natural England bat licence No. 2015-16489-CLS-CLS), including the exterior and interior walls, roof coverings, roof spaces, eaves, gables, fascias, roof and ceiling timbers, window casements and door frames.

10x42 Nikon binoculars and a Clulight CB2 torch were used for the inaccessible/unreachable areas. On this occasion an endoscope was not used, as there were no crevices and cavities that could not be inspected with a torch or by use of binoculars.

On the evenings of 15th June and 1st July 2021, nocturnal emergence surveys of the buildings were undertaken by Andy Warren and three assistants, to determine the presence or absence of roosting bats.

The surveys began 15 minutes before sunset and continued for up to one and three quarter hours after sunset.

The surveys were aided by the use of electronic Echo Meter Touch and BatBox Duet bat detectors and i-pads. This facilitates the detection of bats, and computer analysis of recordings aids in the identification of individual species, in particular those which might be utilising different frequencies simultaneously.

The results of the inspection and nocturnal surveys are detailed in Section 3.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Desk Study

Given that a roosting Brown Long-eared Bat was noted during the daytime inspection, a detailed data search was not considered necessary in this instance.

However, within 5.0 km of Cash Heath Farm, the following Development Licence for bats was issued by Natural England:

- 2017-30264-EPS-MIT 3.7 km east for Common Pipistrelle.

3.2 Location

Forsbrook is a large village located approximately 9.0 km southeast of the centre of Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire. Cash Heath Farm lies at the northern end of Chapel Street, this running north off the A521 Cheadle Road towards the northern end of the village. The Ordnance Survey Grid Reference of the farm is SJ 96256 42217 (Appendix 1).

3.3 Site Description

The survey site comprised a barn (Fig. 1), two sets of stables (Figs. 2 and 3), dog kennels (Ref. Fig. 3) and a lean-to (Fig. 4).



Figs. 1 & 2 Barn (L) and brick stables (R)



Figs. 3 & 4 Block stables and dog kennels (L) and lean-to (R)

The farm was surrounded by grazed horse paddocks, with a ménage to the north (Figs. 5 and 6). Mature trees and hedgerows bordered the paddocks.



Figs. 5 & 6 Horse paddocks and ménage

The layout of the site is shown in the aerial photograph in Appendix 2.

3.4 Building Survey

The daytime inspection was carried out on 28th May 2021, commencing at 10:00. The weather conditions during the time of the survey were recorded and are presented in Table 1 below.

Parameter	Value
Temperature (°C)	16.5
Cloud cover (%)	100
Precipitation	None
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	0

Table 1 Weather conditions during the diurnal survey

3.4.1 Bats

Brick stables

The pitched roof of the brick built stables was covered by clay tiles (Figs. 7 and 8).



Figs. 7 & 8 Roof of the brick built stables

The ridge was intact, but there were a few gaps under some of the tiles, and there were more gaps under some of the tiles on the roof slopes, with several tiles dislodged.

The roof verges were fully pointed (Fig. 9), and the eaves were clipped, with no gaps.

The brickwork was largely sound, with no cracks, and those cavities that were present were not deep enough to provide roosts sites. The window casements and door frames were tightly fitting, but some windows were unglazed, with doorways open.

A small block toilet had been constructed against the east elevation (Fig. 10).



Figs. 9 & 10 East elevation

No signs of bat activity were found around the outside of the building.

Internally the stables were open to the roof, this lined with tarred felt, the latter in good condition and untorn (Figs. 11 and 12).



Figs. 11 & 12 Interior of stables

The roof timbers were lightly cobwebbed, and the interior was brightly illuminated.

At the eastern end of the stables, a roosting Brown Long-eared Bat was found (Figs. 13 and 14 overleaf).

The location of the bat is shown in Appendix 2.



Figs. 13 & 14 Roosting Brown Long-eared Bat

Barn

The barn also had a pitched roof covered by clay tiles. The ridge was intact, except for one missing tile, with a few gaps under some of the other tiles. There were also gaps under some of the tiles on the roof slopes, with several tiles raised and dislodged. (Figs. 15 and 16).



Figs. 15 & 16 Roof of the barn

The roof verges were fully pointed (Fig. 17), and the eaves were clipped, with no gaps (Fig. 18).



Figs. 17 & 18 South gable end (L) and east elevation (R)

The brickwork was sound throughout, and the window casements and door frames were tightly fitting, with no gaps or crevices.

No signs of bat activity were found around the outside of the building.

Internally the barn was open to the roof, this lined with tarred felt, the latter in good condition and untorn (Figs. 19 and 20).



Figs. 19 & 20 Interior of barn

The roof timbers were lightly cobwebbed, and the interior was brightly illuminated.

No evidence of bat activity was found inside.

Dog kennels

The kennels lay between the barn and block stables. They were built from blocks and had a shallow, mono-pitched roof covered by corrugated metal sheets (Fig. 21). The interior was lined throughout to allow the individual kennels to be easily sterilised between dogs (Fig. 22).



Figs. 21 and 22 Exterior and interior of kennels

As the building was in regular use by dogs, it was considered unsuitable for bat use, and no signs of bat occupation were found around the inside or outside the structure.

Block stables

On the north side of the yard lay another set of stables, these block built (Fig. 23) with a mono-pitched roof covered by corrugated metal sheets (Fig. 24). The roof had a wide overhang on the yard side (Ref. Fig. 3), and the eaves were open.



Figs. 23 & 24 Block built stables

The blockwork was sound throughout, and the window casements and door frames were tightly fitting, with no gaps or crevices.

No signs of bat activity were found around the outside of the building.

Internally the stables were open to the roof, this lined with chipboard onto which the metal sheets were attached (Fig. 25).



Fig. 25 Interior of stables



Fig. 26 Lean-to

The roof timbers were lightly cobwebbed, and the interior was brightly illuminated.

No evidence of bat activity was found inside, and it was considered unsuitable for bat roosting.

Lean-to

Adjoining the brick built stables was a timber lean-to with a mono-pitched roof covered by corrugated fibre cement sheets (Fig. 26). The roof and walls were unlined, and there were numerous gaps between the timbers. The lean-to was unsuitable for bat use, and no evidence of bat activity or occupation was found inside or outside the building.

3.4.2 Other species

At least 10 old Swallows' nests were noted in the brick stables and barn, these not in use in 2021.

3.5 Emergence Surveys

3.5.1 1st Emergence Survey

The first emergence survey was carried out on 15th June 2021, commencing at 21:10 and finishing at 23:00. The weather conditions during the time of the survey were recorded and are presented in Table 2.

Parameter	Value
Temperature (°C)	16.0 start, 15.0 finish
Cloud cover (%)	0
Precipitation	None
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	0
Sunset	21:36

Table 2 Weather conditions during the 1st emergence survey

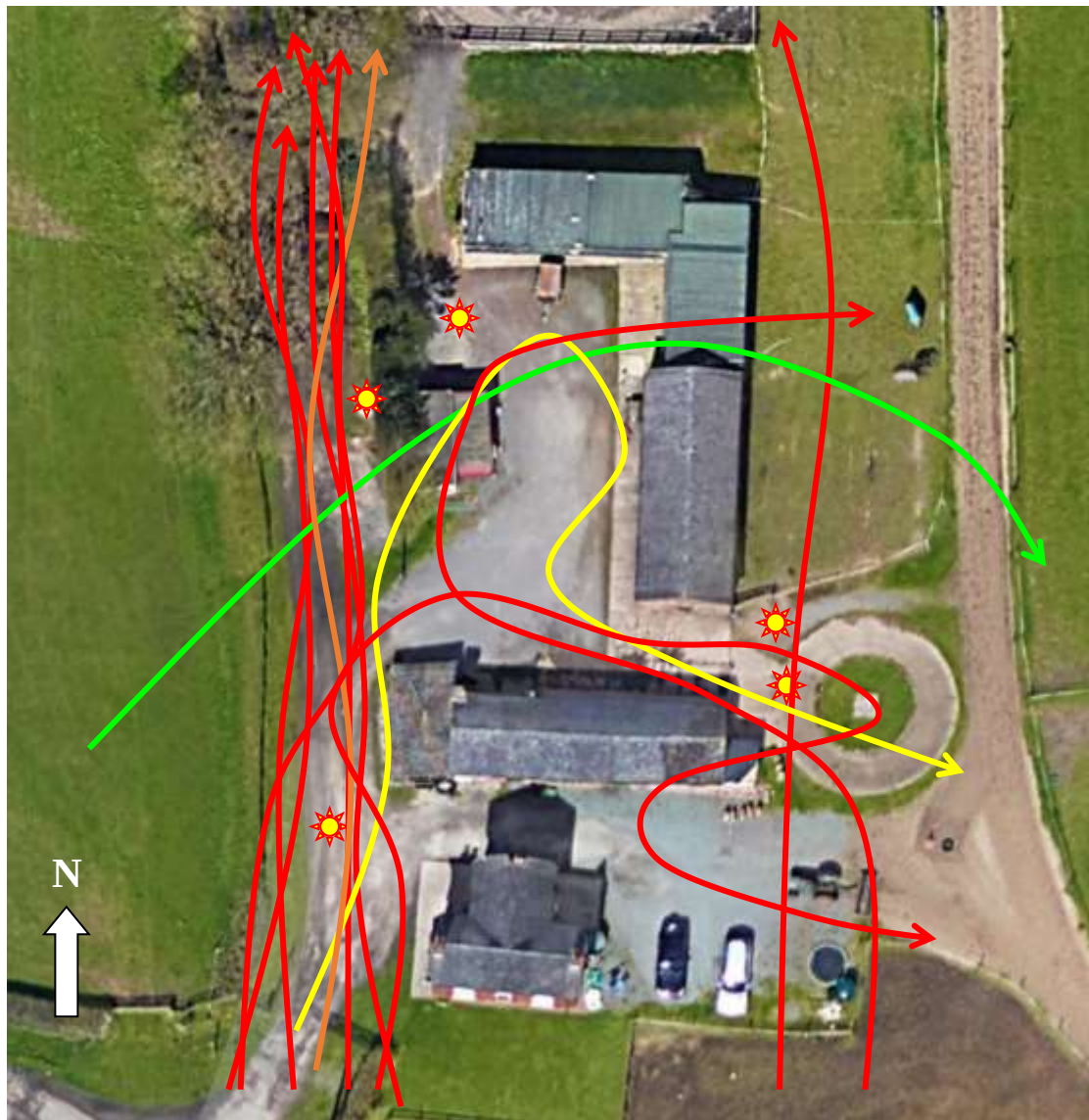
A check of the buildings before the start of the first survey revealed no signs of the Brown Long-eared Bat, and it was not recorded during the nocturnal. However, at least 20 Common Pipistrelles were noted as they flew north up the lane from the direction of the village, indicating a maternity roost somewhere to the south. Also recorded flying past were single Soprano and Nathusius's Pipistrelles, and an overflying Noctule.

No bats emerged from any of the buildings, or the farmhouse.

The times of bat observations and detections are shown below.

Time	Observation
22:10	2 x Common Pipistrelles flew north along the lane from the direction of the village
22:11	Noctule overhead
22:12	A 3 rd Common Pipistrelle flew north along the lane
22:13	Nathusius's Pipistrelle flew north along then lane
22:17	2 x Common Pipistrelles flew north along the lane
22:19-22:34	13 x Common Pipistrelles flew north along the lane
22:35	Soprano Pipistrelle flew over the yard and away north. Also 1-2 Common Pipistrelles starting to forage along the lane
22:45	Still 1-2 Common Pipistrelles present, but passes becoming intermittent
23:00	No further detections were made and survey ended

The bat flight paths at 1st emergence are shown on Plan 1 overleaf.

Plan 1 Bat flight paths at emergence on 15th June 2021

Common Pipistrelle Bats →

Soprano Pipistrelle Bat →

Nathusius's Pipistrelle Bat →

Noctule Bat →

Positions of observers *

3.5.2 2nd Emergence Survey

The second emergence survey was carried out on 1st July 2021, commencing at 21:10 and finishing at 23:00. The weather conditions during the time of the survey were recorded and are presented in Table 3.

Parameter	Value
Temperature (°C)	17.0 start, 15.5 finish
Cloud cover (%)	80
Precipitation	None
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	0.5 NW
Sunset	21:36

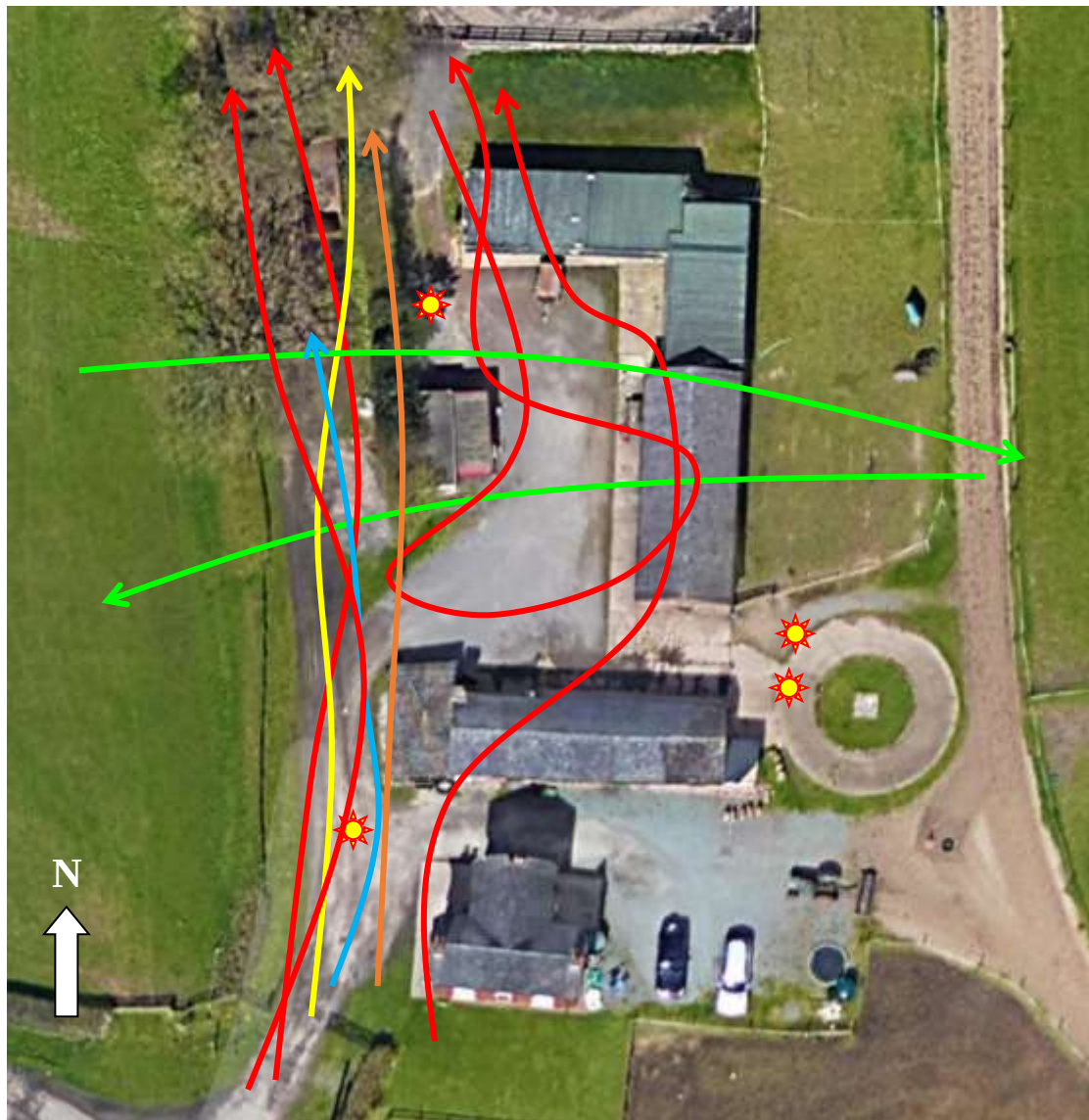
Table 3 Weather conditions during the 2nd emergence survey

The Brown Long-eared Bat was not present during the second survey, and the number of commuting Common Pipistrelles was much lower, with only five of six animals recorded. One or two Noctule Bats were noted flying overhead, and both Soprano and Nathusius's Pipistrelles were again detected. A Whiskered/Brandt's Bat was also recorded flying past, having emerged elsewhere.

The times of bat observations and detections are shown below.

Time	Observation
21:53	Common Pipistrelle flew onto site and then away north up the lane
21:58	Common Pipistrelle flew north, followed by Nathusius's Pipistrelle
22:03	Common Pipistrelle along the lane, with another flying past the house
22:10	Soprano Pipistrelle flew north along the lane, with one Common Pipistrelle present
22:12	Whiskered/Brandt's Bat flew north up the lane
22:16	Whiskered/Brandt's Bat flew south down the lane
22:17	Noctule Bat flew over
22:19	Noctule again, or second animal
22:27	Just one Common Pipistrelle present
22:29	Common Pipistrelle still present
22:37	Intermittent pipistrelle activity
23:00	No further detections were made and survey ended

The bat flight paths at 2nd emergence are shown on Plan 2 overleaf.

Plan 2 Bat flight paths at emergence on 1st July 2021

Common Pipistrelle Bats →

Soprano Pipistrelle Bat →

Nathusius's Pipistrelle Bat →

Noctule Bat →

Whiskered/Brandt's Bat →

Positions of observers *

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bats tend to be seasonal visitors to properties, and are not usually in occupation all year round. The females normally form maternity colonies during May or June and then leave for adjacent trees and/or woodland during July or August once the young bats are able to fly and become independent. Here they will spend the winter months in hibernation before returning to the house or barn the following spring.

Male bats generally live alone and have a number of favoured roosts. During the summer they visit each of these for a few days at a time, before moving to their chosen hibernation site in mid-late October.

Different species have different habits, but this seasonal movement is common to all.

Bats choose their roosts carefully. During the summer they look for sites which are warmed by the sun, and as a result are most often found on the south and western side of buildings.

Pipistrelles, our smallest and commonest bats, prefer to roost in very confined spaces around the outside of buildings, typical places being behind hanging tiles, weather boarding, soffit, barge and eave boarding, between roof felt and roof tiles or in cavity walls. As such they can be difficult to find, so suitability for roosting was also assessed.

This was considered to be low, as there were a few gaps under roof and ridge tiles.

However, the absence of roosting pipistrelle bats was confirmed by the nocturnal surveys, when no animals emerged from the buildings, although at least 20 Common Pipistrelles were noted as they flew north up the lane from the direction of the village, indicating a maternity roost somewhere to the south. Also recorded flying past were single Soprano and Nathusius's Pipistrelles.

Another bat frequently encountered in buildings is the Brown Long-eared. This is also a common species, but unlike pipistrelles, they prefer the dry, warm space of the loft or roof void, and can often be found hanging from roof timbers, especially rafters and the ridge board next to chimney breasts.

The few scattered droppings found in the brick built stables were from a Brown Long-eared Bat, as an adult was found roosting during the daytime inspection on 28th May 2021. It was not present during either of the nocturnal surveys, and no Brown Long-eared Bats were recorded flying past.

Taking the inspection and nocturnal surveys into account, the status of bats at Cash Heath Farm is as follows:

- Brown Long-eared Bat – day roost used occasionally for a single animal in the brick stables.

Since the proposed works will cause the loss of the bat roost, a licence from Natural England will be required.

Given the low status of the roost, the site is eligible for registration under Natural England's Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) scheme.

Mitigation measures will include a 'toolbox talk' by a Registered Consultant (RC) to contractors about bats and what to do if one is unexpectedly encountered, a pre-works inspection of the buildings by the RC, supervision of exclusion measures and/or any destructive roof works by the RC, the latter undertaken by hand, and the provision of a Schwegler 1FD bat box, or similar, on a tree in the grounds in which to relocate a bat if one is discovered before or during works.

It should be noted that under BMCL there will be no timing constraints, and an ecologist will be present at all key stages to ensure the replacement roosting provision is correctly installed.

*

There were at least 10 old Swallows' nests in the brick stables and barn, these not in use in 2021.

Since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any works which affect buildings should ideally be undertaken outside the period March to August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the buildings affected will be undertaken prior to clearance. Work will not be carried out in close proximity to any in-use nest, and a minimum buffer of 5.0 metres will be established, although this could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species. Any in-use nest will be allowed to fledge before it is disturbed.

5. REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Location plan

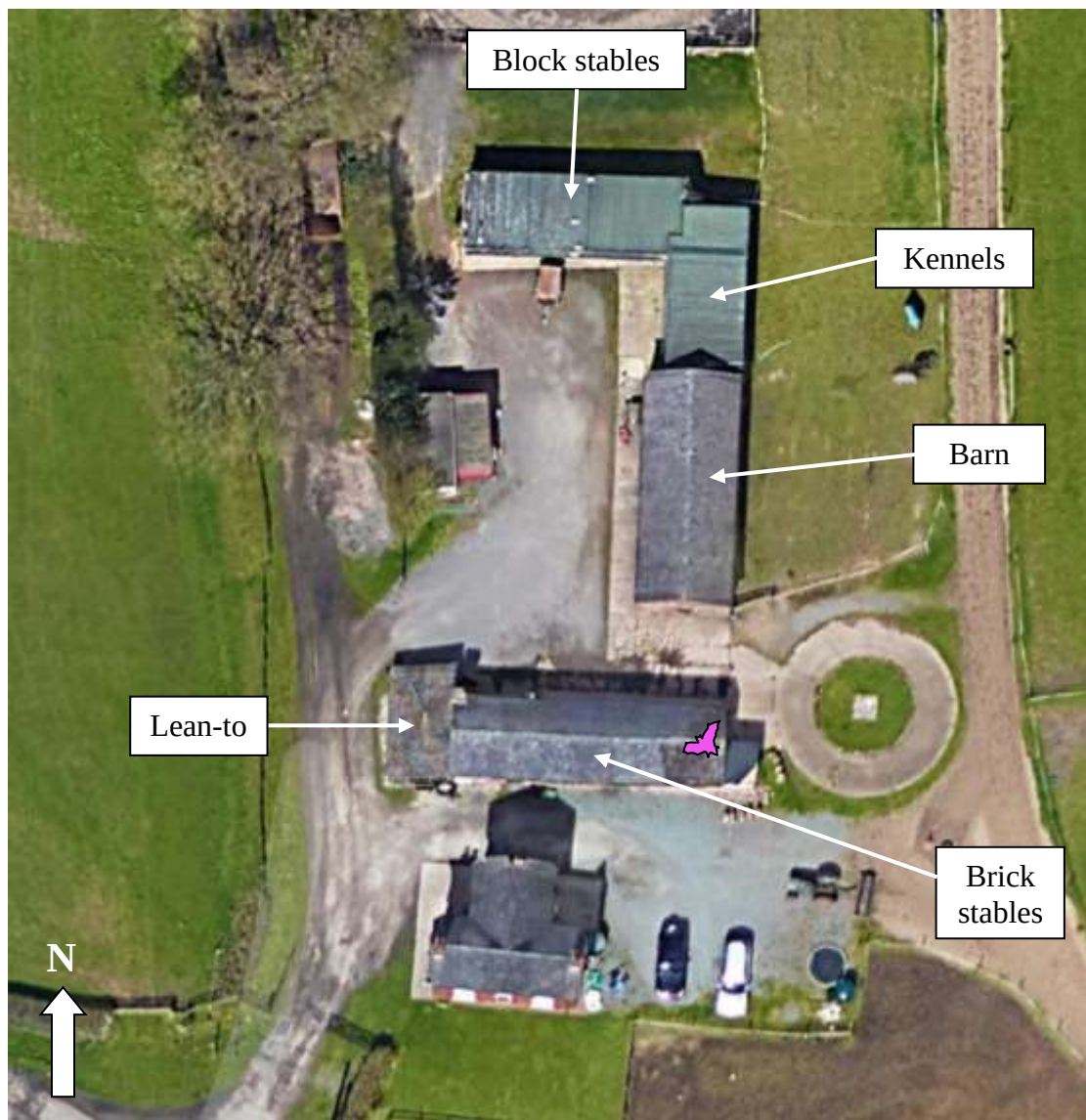
Appendix 2: Site layout

Appendix 1: Location plan



Cash Heath Farm, Forsbrook, Stoke

Appendix 2: Site layout



Cash Heath Farm buildings

Roosting Brown Long-eared Bat on 28.05.21 

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Cash Heath Farm buildings, Forsbrook, Stoke – Bat Survey Report

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