



Bat and Bird Survey Report

Marshfield Gate Farm, Marshfield Gate Lane, Gillow Heath, ST8 6RG

Prepared for Mike Stanmore

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Methods used to prepare this report, including those carried out in the field followed The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct.

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Report checked by Tom Charlton MSc MRSB

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SUMMARY

A preliminary roost assessment (PRA) and three nocturnal bat surveys were carried out at two barns (B1 and B2) within the curtilage of Marshfield Gate Farm, Marshfield Gate Lane, Gillow Heath, ST8 6RG.

The PRA was completed in 2023, followed by nocturnal bat surveys in 2024.

Bat droppings and discarded feeding remains were discovered in B2 during the PRA.

No bats were recorded entering or emerging from either building during the nocturnal bat surveys.

B2 is infrequently used by feeding brown long-eared based on finding during the PRA. As such, an ecological constraint has been identified in association with the proposed development and roosting bats, and a bat mitigation licence is required ahead of works commencing on B2.

Evidence of bird nesting was discovered in each building during the PRA. Mitigation is required to ensure nesting birds are not affected while works are carried out.

Mitigation is required to ensure bats and birds are not affected by inappropriate use of artificial lighting at night.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents details of bat and bird surveys carried out by Fauna Forest Ecology Limited at two barns (B1 and B2) within the curtilage of Marshfield Gate Farm, Marshfield Gate Lane, Gillow Heath, ST8 6RG (the site) (grid reference SJ 88177 58976) on behalf of Mike Stanmore. It provides the findings of desk and field-based studies undertaken during 2023 and 2024.
- 1.2 Surveys included a preliminary roost assessment (PRA) followed by three subsequent nocturnal bat surveys.
- 1.3 Survey objectives were to:
- assess the buildings for their potential to support roosting bats and nesting birds.
 - search for evidence of roosting bats and nesting birds in the buildings.
 - confirm presence or absence of roosting bats in the buildings.
 - assess the site for its relative ecological importance to bats and birds.
- 1.4 The aim of this report is to:
- present survey findings.
 - highlight any ecological constraints relating to roosting bats, nesting birds and the proposed development.
 - make recommendations for mitigation, compensation and enhancements where necessary.
- 1.5 The proposals are to develop both barns for residential use.
- 1.6 All survey and assessment work was completed in accordance with official assessment guidelines¹ and largely followed that recommended by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)² and follows the British Standard Code of Practice³.
- 1.7 The site is located approximately 2km north of Biddulph (Figure 1) in a suburban setting surrounded by a mix of urban development and semi-natural habitats, such as pasture, interconnecting woodlands, and hedgerows.

¹ Collins J (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th edn. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

² CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing. CIEEM, Winchester.

³ British Standards Institution (2013) BS 42020:2013. Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development. British Standards Institution, London.

2 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

- 2.1 A search was undertaken using desktop resources including the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside⁴ (MAGIC) resource. MAGIC was used to search for records of designated sites and ecologically important habitats within a 1km radius of the site. Google Earth⁵ was also used to study the nearby landscape.

Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 2.2 Experienced bat ecologist David Nixon MSc MCIEEM MRSB (bat licence number 2015-18322-CLS-CLS) undertook the PRA on 10th July 2023.
- 2.3 The survey was carried out using visual encounter survey techniques. Potential bat movement corridors and movement barriers were assessed and noted. During the survey, where possible, all areas of each building were internally and externally examined for evidence of bats. The building survey included an internal and external assessment using a powerful torch and an endoscope. The internal rooms were fully assessed using a powerful torch beam to scan the walls and flat surfaces for droppings and other signs of bat activity. Feeding remains such as moth and butterfly wing concentrations were also surveyed for. All holes and crevices considered by the surveyor as likely to be used as a bat roost were examined to ascertain presence or absence of bats.
- 2.4 Externally, visual ground inspections of all elevations were undertaken using binoculars. Photographs were taken to capture likely features of ecological value to bats and birds i.e. missing tiles, damaged or missing mortar, exposed gable ends, gaps within soffit board, rotten timber and other potential entry points. Other external aspects of the buildings were surveyed, including windows, window sills, external doors and the ground within close proximity of the structure was thoroughly inspected for bat droppings and feeding remains.
- 2.5 Following a detailed assessment of the buildings in association with roosting bats, they were then classified according to their suitability for bats, based on the presence of features within the structure and surrounding landscape (Table 1).

⁴ Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC). Crown Copyright and database rights [2015]. Ordnance Survey 100022861. Available at: <http://www.magic.gov.uk/>

⁵ https://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/

Table 1: Guidelines summary for assessing potential bat roost suitability

Suitability	Description of building, tree or structure
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats
Low	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, potential roost sites not suitable for larger numbers or regular use (i.e. maternity or hibernation).
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
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.
Confirmed roost	Evidence of bats or use by bats found.

- 2.6 In addition to bats, an internal examination of the buildings was carried out to search for evidence of nesting birds. Evidence of nesting birds may include presence of nesting material, splashing, live or dead birds or begging calls from chicks.

Nocturnal Bat Surveys

- 2.7 The barns were surveyed on three separate occasions (they all had high bat roosting potential). Details relating to the surveys are as follows (also see Figure 3):
- survey 1 was carried out on 1st July 2024 by Ash Martin BSc (Hons) MSc ACIEEM (bat licence number 2019-43539-CLS-CLS), Martin Kessel (bat licence number 2018-33025-CLS-CLS), Gemma Cope BSc and Will Parkinson. A night vision aid (NVA) was used to cover the fifth position, then watched back the following day at real time speed by Ash Martin. It should be noted B2 was checked by Ash Martin ahead of the survey commencing to search for new evidence of bats.
 - survey 2 was carried out on 29th August 2024 by Ash Martin, Martin Kessel, Gemma Cope and Will Parkinson. An NVA was used to cover the fifth position, then watched back the following day at real time speed by Ash Martin.
 - survey 3 was carried out on 19th September 2024 by Ash Martin, Gemma Cope, Will Parkinson and James Bellingham. An NVA was used to cover the fifth position, then watched back the following day at real time speed by Ash Martin.
- 2.8 Surveyors took up separate positions surrounding the buildings for 15 minutes prior to, and for two hours after, sunset. At any one time between surveyors, roof aspects deemed to hold risk of bat emergence were being observed. Visual observations of bat activity were noted and bat species were identified using bat detectors. Information recorded included weather, timings, whether bats emerged from or entered the building(s), direction of travel, species and activity (e.g. foraging or commuting).

Equipment used during nocturnal surveys included EM Touch 2 Pro devices coupled to Android and Apple tablets and NVAs (Canon XA range along with Nightfox Whiskers).

- 2.9 Use of NVAs is vital for nocturnal surveys to give confidence in results. During the surveys, a photograph of the darkest part of the survey was taken to show the field of view and that appropriate illumination by infrared or thermal imaging was used.
- 2.10 All hand-held bat detectors are calibrated annually as per industry guidelines and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions to ensure they remain accurate and fully functional.

3 RESULTS

Desk Study Results

- 3.1 No statutory designated sites existed within 1km of the site.

Nearby Habitats

- 3.2 The site was located in a suburban setting on the northwestern fringe of Gillow Heath. A variety of residential properties were present nearby, including small holdings, farms, and residential dwellings. The landscape surrounding the site comprised a variety of semi-natural habitats, some of which included lowland pasture, interconnecting woodland corridors, lines of mature trees, and a network of mature hedgerows that provided connectivity between the site and the wider landscape. There were several buildings onsite within the curtilage of Marshfield Gate Farm, including a residential dwelling.

Preliminary Assessment Results

- 3.3 The survey was undertaken during good weather conditions with clear views of B1 and B2.

B1

General building description

- 3.4 B1 was an irregular-shaped brick-built barn with a timber-framed complex pitched roof structure that was clad with clay tiles and underlined with traditional bitumen felt. There were several doors for access inside the barn. The northern element extended out to form a garage used for vehicle parking. This part of the structure supported a timber-framed pitched roof that was lower in height than that of the main structure. There was also a small brick workshop extension to the southeast corner of the barn which supported a mono-pitched roof that merged with the main roof pitch at eaves level, as well as a separate room at the back of the same workshop along the eastern side aspect, which was small and used as a laundry facility. Internally, B1 was penned off in sections, presumably because it once housed livestock, and there was a ladder leading to a loft area, a first-floor room created by use of boarding set out over the joists. There were two large openings in the brickwork at first floor level on either side of the barn

and from within the loft area, many of the roof timbers could be inspected from a small opening leading through into the loft where the ladders rested against.

Building suitability and evidence of bats

- 3.5 Externally, many potential roosting features (PRFs) were identified during the survey, most of which were raised, fractured or dislodged roofing tiles which were suitable for use by a variety of bat species, and some of these gaps would likely provide bats with access between the tiles and bitumen felt. Gaps were also noted beneath the ridge tiles and while inside the loft, daylight could be seen shining through into the loft along the ridge line, which also suggests there was ample roosting opportunity along the ridge and ridge board below. Direct access inside the loft for bats was made available via the two large gaps in the brickwork at either side. Other suitable roosting locations were between the roof timbers and in small settlement cracks within the brickwork of the barn. In addition to above, the entire barn provided opportunity for night roosting and perch-feeding, for species such as brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*. No evidence of bats was discovered in B1.

B2

General building description

- 3.6 B2 was a rectangular-shaped brick-built barn with a gable end each side. Historically, it would have been designed to serve as two separate (albeit adjoining) barns. It supported a timber-framed pitched roof, half of which was clad with corrugated fibre sheeting (southern half), whereas the other half was covered with clay roof tiles (northern half). The ridge line was marginally stepped up higher along the southern half. Internally, there were two main compartments, although at the time of the survey, access to both could be achieved via a door located at the southern part of the barn. There was no loft void, the underside of the roof was not lined with bitumen felt and the entire roof could be observed from ground level. Concrete ridge tiles were fitted along the northern half of the barn.

Building suitability and evidence of bats

- 3.7 The tile covered section of B2 provided a suitable roosting environment for bats, with opportunity for roosting made available between very many tiles that had become raised or slipped over time. There was ample access for bats to enter inside the building given the roof was not underlined with felt. The corrugated fibre sheeting was less suitable for use by roosting bats, as it lacked crevices for bats to roost between, although the internal elements of the entire barn provided night roosting and perch-feeding opportunity for species such as brown long-eared. During the survey, small concentrations of moth wings were discovered in the northern half of B2 as well as the occasional relatively fresh medium-sized bat dropping typical of those deposited by brown long-eared.

Birds

- 3.8 Small birds could potentially nest between the gappy roof tiles of each building and nesting evidence was discovered in both buildings during the survey.

Nocturnal Bat Survey Results

Table 2: Nocturnal survey weather conditions

Date	Start	Finish	Sunset	Temp °C	Wind 0-5	Cloud %	Rain Yes/No/Note
01/07/2024	21:10	23:10	21:38	13	1	80	No
29/08/2024	19:49	21:50	20:04	15	0	20	No
19/09/2024	18:55	20:55	19:14	12	2	50	No

Dusk Survey – 1st July 2024

- 3.9 No fresh evidence of bats was discovered in B2 prior to the survey. Bat activity was low during the survey. Species recorded included common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and noctule *Nyctalus noctula*. The first bat recorded was a noctule commuting high above the site in a southeasterly direction at 21:53. Following this at 22:12, a single common pipistrelle was observed flying along the eastern side aspect of B2, having flown in from a northerly direction. The bat then turned and flew in a westerly direction without further trace. Finally, at 22:32 and 22:38, foraging common pipistrelles were briefly noted flying along the northern boundary line between B1 and the roadside verge.
- 3.10 No bats were recorded emerging from or entering the buildings during the survey.

Dusk Survey – 29th August 2024

- 3.11 Bat activity was moderate during the survey. Species recorded included common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle *P. pygmaeus*, noctule and *Myotis* spp. The first bat recorded was a noctule flying high above the site in its commute in a southerly direction at 20:18. From then on, a common pipistrelle was recorded commuting towards the site in a northerly direction before banking east at 20:23, followed by another following a similar flight path at 20:29. Other activity included brief commuting calls by common and soprano pipistrelles and noctule between 20:55 and the survey end, although activity was significantly reduced during the last 30 minutes, comprising a common pipistrelle foraging between B1 and B2 for several minutes at 21:26, as well as a *Myotis* spp. pass at 21:48.
- 3.12 No bats were recorded emerging from or entering the buildings during the survey.

Dusk Survey – 19th September 2024

- 3.13 Bat activity was moderate during the survey. Species recorded included common pipistrelle, noctule and brown long-eared. Like previously, noctule was the first bat recorded during the survey as it travelled high above the site at 19:37. Then at 19:43, the first common pipistrelle was observed commuting in a southerly direction towards the site, before continuing north without further trace. After this, common pipistrelle, brown long-eared and noctule were recorded briefly (audio records only) between 19:49 and 20:31, all of which were presumably active beyond the site boundaries some distance away. Three common pipistrelle social calls were recorded at 20:40, 20:48 and 20:51, again

all were brief registrations and the bats producing these calls were likely some distance from site. It is worth noting surveyors positioned at the eastern part of the site covering B2 recorded less activity than those covering B1 near the driveway entrance.

- 3.14 No bats were recorded emerging from or entering the buildings during the survey.

Limitations

- 3.15 Bat droppings deposited in or around the exterior can often degrade quickly due to weather. The presence of bats or their roost must not be disregarded in the absence of droppings.
- 3.16 For Health and Safety purposes, ladders were not used to gain close views of the external roof structure. All external aspects of the survey building were assessed from ground level.
- 3.17 The loft of B1 was not considered safe enough to enter which prevent a detailed search of the area.

4 DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The proposals will lead to significant alterations of both barns onsite, including impacts to the roof lines (and loft of B1).
- 4.2 No designated statutory sites were present within 1km of the site. The proposals are considered small-scale and will not impact habitats beyond the site boundaries provided mitigation measures against noise and lighting are secured.
- 4.3 Local biological records (that typically include details of protected species and local designated sites) were recommended however the client gave no instruction to order them. It should however be noted that although it is best practice to obtain local biological records when compiling an ecological report, in this instance, records would unlikely influence any mitigation measures already included in this report and therefore the absence of such records is not considered a limitation.
- 4.4 Most ecological data remain valid for only short periods of time due to the inherently transient nature of many protected fauna species. Where the species or group being surveyed for is present within the site, data are typically considered accurate for 12-18 months⁶.
- 4.5 Consideration with regard to the presence of other notable species and habitats was given prior to the survey and also by the ecologist while onsite. The results found that while the site was surrounded by

⁶ <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf>

habitats that could support a wide range of protected species, such as badger *Meles meles* and reptiles, as well as notable plants for example, the site and its immediate surrounds provided little in the way of suitable habitat for protected species other than bats and birds.

- 4.6 In terms of classification value, both barns at the time of the survey were considered to provide bats with high roosting potential, largely because from an ecological perspective, the site was well-connected to the wider landscape by semi-natural habitats such as mature trees and hedgerow networks. Bats could navigate along these habitats to reach the site. In addition to above, the classification was based on the presence of very many PRFs associated with the roof of each building, such as raised tiles with gaps beneath, many of which were large enough for bats to roost between, as well as many other features.
- 4.7 Non-classic hibernation potential was considered, although both buildings were unlikely to support hibernating bats because there was little opportunity for bats to gain access deep within wall cracks where conditions would need to be stable.
- 4.8 During the PRA, presence of discarded moth wings (and occasional droppings) found in B2, suggests the barn was used as a feeding roost by brown long-eared bat, a species which is known to carry moths into buildings before feeding.
- 4.9 Taking the above into consideration, three nocturnal bat surveys were recommended following industry guidelines⁷. Nocturnal surveys are typically carried out to establish if bats roost in a particular structure, and if they do, these surveys are useful to determine roost characterisation, and subsequently provide sufficient data to inform appropriate mitigation and compensation for development to lawfully proceed.
- 4.10 On average, activity by bats during the nocturnal surveys was moderate, most of which included commuting individuals over the site or further afield beyond the boundaries. All bat species recorded were common and widespread at the time of the surveys. Occasional foraging occurred as well as some social calling by common pipistrelles, which suggests a maternity roost may be located not far from the site. Regardless, confidence is given no bats entered or emerged from the survey buildings during the three surveys.
- 4.11 Sufficient survey effort was carried out to establish presence or absence of roosting bats during 2024. Whilst no fresh evidence of bats was discovered in B2 and bats were not recorded emerging from or entering either building during the nocturnal surveys, presence of relatively fresh bat droppings and discarded moth wings in B2 during 2023 indicates the presence of an infrequently used feeding roost by brown long-eared. In view of this, an ecological constraint has been identified in connection with roosting bats and the proposed development.

⁷ Collins J (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th edn. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

4.12 Bats are protected by law. If a bat roost exists in a building, it would be a criminal offence to impact the roost without a bat mitigation licence which would be issued by Natural England prior to works commencing and after planning permission and/or other relevant consents have been granted. All survey work must be complete before a licence application can be made. The licence application is usually supported by a method statement that includes mitigation measures aimed to safeguard bats and their Favourable Conservation Status (FCS). Natural England expect three tests to be satisfied before a bat mitigation licence can be issued. These tests are as follows:

- there is no satisfactory alternative.
- the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.
- the action authorised preserved public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment

4.13 For enhancements in connection with bat mitigation and compensation, bats will be provided with alternative roosting options which should be adequate and proportionate. Fitting three bat boxes onsite to the side of a building will be sufficient. The boxes must be fitted in good time ahead of works commencing, they should be ideally 4-5m above ground level, not face north or south and not be surrounded by clutter, such as vegetation or other obstacles that may prevent bats from accessing them. Importantly, bat boxes must be sited away from artificial nocturnal light spill and not be sited above windows or other building aspects that may lead to bats being disturbed. Schwegler 1FF bat boxes are recommended because they are used by a number of species and roost types including maternity roosts, largely because they retain good thermal properties because they are built using a mix of wood and concrete (Woodcrete).

4.14 Works must not commence until the bat mitigation licence has been granted by Natural England. There will be no timing constraints associated with the licence because no breeding or hibernating bats will be affected by the proposed works.

4.15 Prior to the commencement of the proposed works and once the licence has been granted, the consultant/named ecologist/accredited agent must carry out a final inspection to check for the presence of bats. If any are found, they will be carefully removed and placed in the bat boxes which will serve as a receptor site.

4.16 All contractors associated with the works will receive a briefing regarding the legal protection afforded to bats and their places of shelter and how to proceed if a bat is discovered during the course of the work in the event an ecologist is not present. Either the registered consultant/named ecologist/accredited agent listed on the bat mitigation licence will carry out a watching brief while tiles

and other key roofing components are removed. The client will provide secure scaffolding or a cherry picker so the ecologist is able to safely inspect the roof while works are carried out.

- 4.17 The supervising ecologist will continue the watching brief until the building (or areas affected by the proposed works) is declared free of bats. Any bats found during this period will be safely removed by the ecologist and placed in the bat boxes. If in the unlikely event a bat is discovered after the ecologist is no longer supervising, works should halt immediately and Fauna Forest Ecology Limited should be contacted for advice.
- 4.18 Inappropriate use of artificial lighting may lead to bats being forced to seek alternative flight routes which to some degree may impact the favourable conservation status (FCS) of local communities. General good practice regarding use of nocturnal lighting is as follows:
- if external artificial lighting is required during or after the construction phase, a low-level/low lux lighting scheme should be implemented to avoid indirect disturbance to nocturnal animals that may utilise local habitats.
 - during the construction phase, works will ideally not be carried out after dusk and should not commence until after dawn (it is also recommended that generators and machinery that emit significant noise levels are not left to run through the night).
 - light spill should be controlled and if lighting is required at night, hooded shields should be fitted to prevent inappropriate light spill.
- 4.19 No specific additional surveys relating to birds are recommended. However, if works must commence within the bird nesting period (February to September (inclusive)), it is recommended that a suitably qualified ecologist is appointed to inspect the site/survey building for nesting activity ahead of works commencing. Works should not be initiated until the ecologist has confirmed that no nesting birds exist within the area of impact. If an active nest is discovered, an exclusion zone should be established, and works must be halted in that area until the nest is no longer active. Works should not commence without confirmation from a suitably qualified ecologist that no nesting birds exist within the area of impact.
- 4.20 Irrespective of the time of year, if any nesting birds are discovered on site, an area around the nest site will be protected from disturbance with a suitable fence (not HERAs fencing) that would include an appropriate buffer zone, as determined by the suitably qualified supervising ecologist. Work will then be avoided in this area until the nest is no longer in use. Buffer zones in this respect will normally be 5m in diameter, and will be delineated by canes, cordon tape and signage.
- 4.21 Ways to provide birds with additional nesting opportunity would be to install nest boxes on nearby trees in the local area or on the side of buildings. Options would be to fit a number of close and open-fronted boxes to benefit a range of species. Boxes should be sited away from prevailing wind and may be fitted at various heights, ranging between 2 and 4m above ground level. Other options would be to fit sparrow

terraces to the side aspects of the building in locations away from open windows, artificial light spill and prevailing winds.

APPENDIX A: LEGISLATION SUMMARY

Bats

In England and Wales, bats and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Taken together, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture (or take), injure or kill a bat
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a group of bats where the disturbance is likely to significantly affect the ability of the animals to survive, breed, or nurture their young or likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species whether in a roost or not
- Damage or destroy the breeding or resting place of a bat
- Possess a bat (alive or dead) or any part of a bat
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost
- Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats (alive or dead) or parts of bats

A roost is defined as being ‘any structure or place that is used for shelter or protection’, and since bats regularly move roost site throughout the year, a roost retains such designation whether or not bats are present at the time.

Birds

All common wild birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built
- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird
- Certain rare breeding birds are listed on Schedule 1 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and as amended). Under this legislation they are afforded the same protection as common wild birds and are also protected against disturbance whilst building a nest or on or near a nest containing eggs/unfledged young.

APPENDIX B: MAPS

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Figure 1: Site Location Map

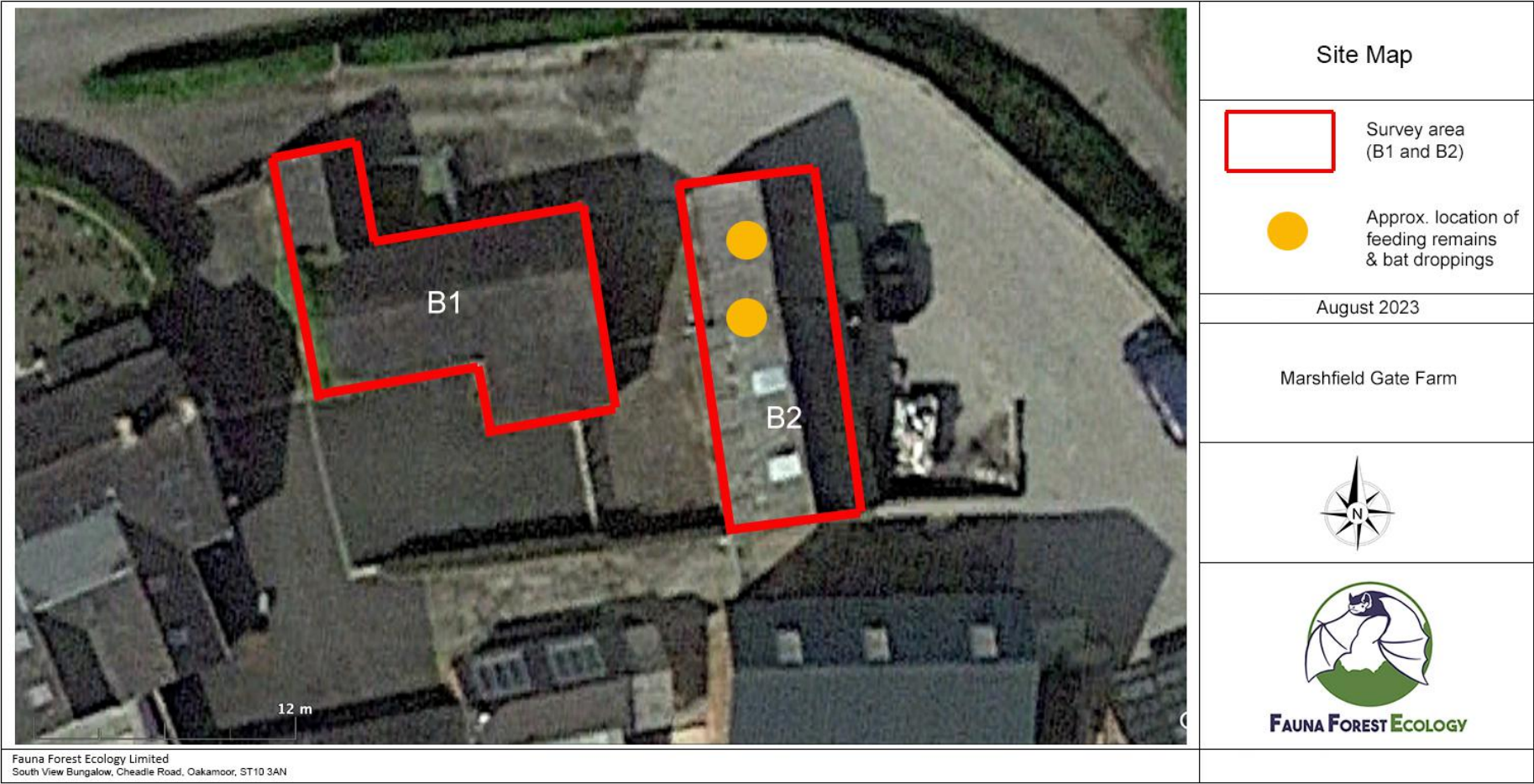


Figure 2: Site Map

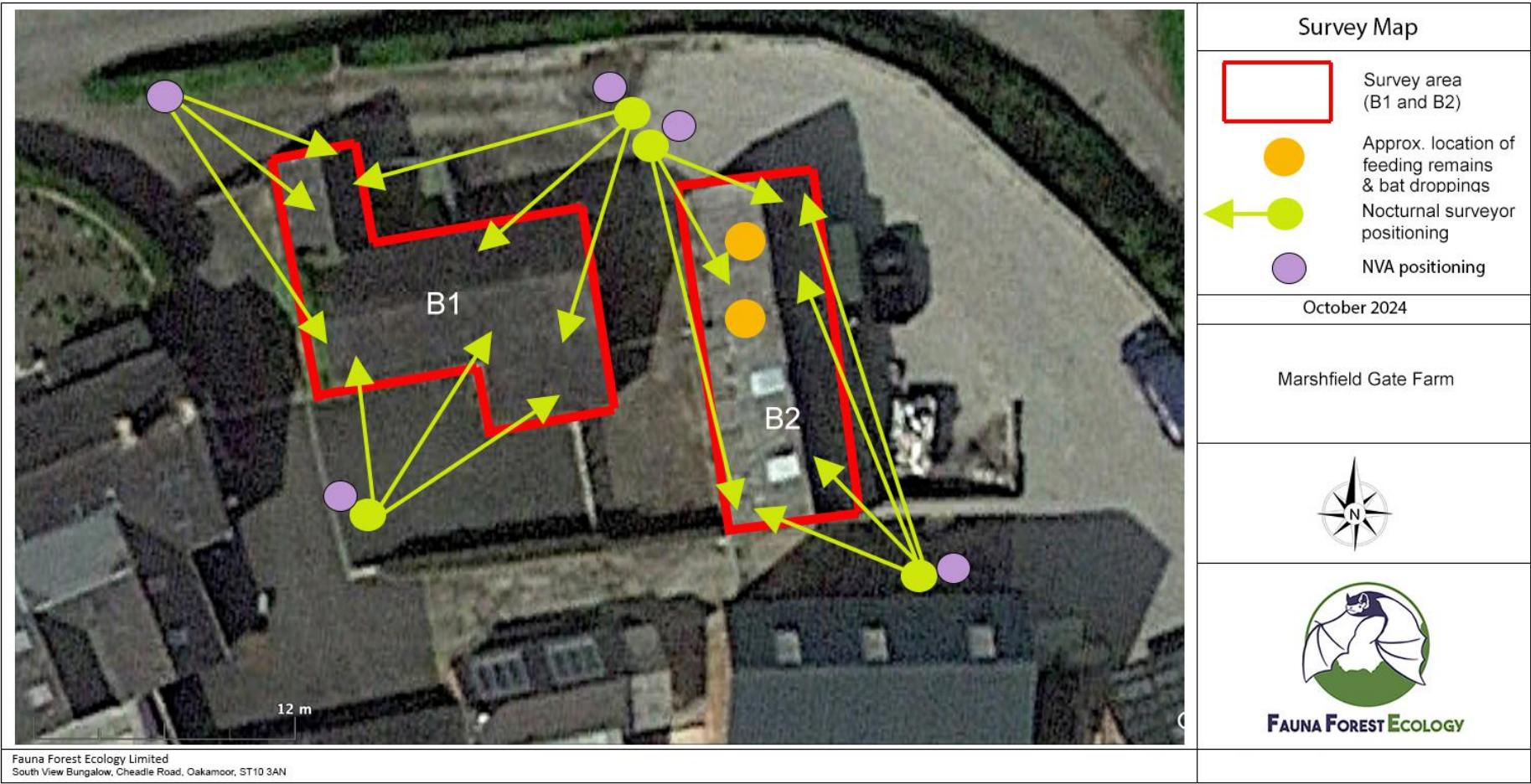


Figure 3: Survey Map



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APPENDIX C: SITE IMAGES



Photo 1: views of the southwest facing corner of B1



Photo 2: views of the northwest facing corner of B2



Photo 3: views of the east facing side aspect of B2



Photo 4: internal elements of B2



Photo 5: red arrow points to discarded moth feeding remain in B2



Photo 6: Red arrow points to bat dropping and yellow arrows point to discarded moth feeding remains in B2



Photo 7: NVA image covering rear east facing roof pitch of B2



Photo 8: NVA image covering southwest corner of B1