
DAYTIME BAT SURVEY & ECOLOGICAL SCOPING SURVEY

BRYN NEWYDD FARM, WHITCHURCH



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Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION	2
2.0	METHODOLOGY.....	4
3.0	DAYTIME BAT SURVEY	5
4.0	ECOLOGICAL SCOPING SURVEY	8
5.0	SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	10
6.0	REFERENCES	11



1.0 INTRODUCTION

Site Information

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2020 by Euan Morrison to undertake a daytime bat survey and ecological scoping survey at Bryn Newydd Farm in Hanmer, Whitchurch, Shropshire (O.S. grid reference: SJ 42819 41804). The site is located north of Bryn Lane and east of Rock Lane. The proposed development site currently comprises part of a barn, surrounded by a yard and an improved grassland field. The farm is in a rural area, bordered by farmland on all sides. Hedgerows and scattered trees are present in the wider area and Cumber's Brook lies 160m east, providing suitable bat foraging and commuting opportunities for bats.
- 1.2 A previous bat survey was undertaken in 2018 (see *Bryn Newydd Farm Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Report, Avian Ecology*). This found evidence of bat use in the western section of the barn. No evidence of bat was found in the section of barn to be affected in this development.



Figure 1 showing the site location

Description of Development

- 1.3 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the conversion of a ground floor section of the barn into a residential dwelling. This will extend an existing dwelling in the barn to the north. This will include a new access from Bryn Lane and car parking space.

Biodiversity in Planning

- 1.4 Biodiversity is a material consideration, and Local Planning Authorities have a requirement to consider biodiversity and protected species when determining planning applications. Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) gives specific reference to minimising the impacts of development on biodiversity. Local and Neighbourhood plans also provide guidance towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including priority habitats and notable species.



Legal Context

- 1.5 All bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit), which make is an offence to:
- Deliberately kill, injure or capture a bat;
 - Deliberately disturb bats;
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat.
- 1.6 The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) contains further provisions making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:
- Obstruct access to any structure or place which any bat uses for shelter or protection; or
 - Disturb any bat while occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.
- 1.7 Proposed development works that are likely to disturb or destroy bats or their roosts will need to obtain a licence from the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (e.g., Natural England) prior to work commencing.
- 1.8 All bird species are protected at their nest under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).



2.0 METHODOLOGY

Daytime Bat Survey

- 2.1 A daytime bat survey of the site was undertaken to search for, and to assess the potential for, a bat roost within the building.
- 2.2 An external survey was carried out, which included, for example, looking for gaps between any soffit boards and walls, gaps between window frames and the walls, and looking for bat droppings on the walls and window ledges. An internal survey was also carried out, with particular focus on gaps in walls, cracks in roof beams, and any evidence of bat activity, such as bat droppings, in the internal spaces.
- 2.3 A pair of close-focussing binoculars and a high-powered torch were used to search for evidence of bats externally.

Ecological Scoping Survey

- 2.4 In addition to the daytime bat survey an ecological scoping survey was carried out on the wider site, to search for other protected species issues, such as Badger and Otter. This included a search for invasive species, such as Japanese Knotweed.

Personnel and Seasonal Timing

- 2.5 Rosie Fisher (Ecologist) carried out the daytime bat and ecological scoping survey on the 12th February 2021. Rosie is experienced and fully trained in protected species surveys and holds a Natural England Level 1 Class Survey Licence for bats (Licence Reference: 2018-35011-CLS-CLS). The weather at the time of the survey was dry and bright.

Survey Constraints

- 2.6 Daytime bat surveys can be conducted at any time of the year. The structures could be surveyed fully internally and externally, therefore there were no constraints to the survey.

3.0 DAYTIME BAT SURVEY

Site Description

- 3.1 Bryn Newydd Farm includes an L-shaped barn. The south-eastern room of the barn is to be converted to join the room adjacent which is currently a dwelling. The remainder of the barn is not proposed to be affected. The barn is surrounded by hardstanding to the west and south and an improved grassland field to the east.

Barn - External Assessment

- 3.2 The barn comprises brick walls and a tiled roof (see Photograph 1). The external brickwork is in good condition, with all mortar in place. The windows are in good condition and flush to the surrounding walls. A small gap is present between the doors and the frame. The roof of the building is pitched and tiled. All tiles are intact and lie flush to one another. No bargeboards are present, and the wall is sealed to the roof by mortar. Small sections of mortar are missing which could provide internal access for bats into the first floor.



Photograph 1 showing the exterior of the barn

Barn - Internal Assessment

- 3.3 Internally, the section of the barn to be converted comprises one ground-floor room with double doors and no windows (see Photograph 2). The internal space is draughty due to the gap above the doors. The ceiling and roof joists are in good condition and feature no cracks that bats could utilise. The internal brickwork is weathered, and mortar is missing in places (see Photograph 3). These areas were inspected and found to be cobwebbed and found not to lead to cavities.





Photograph 2 showing the interior of the barn to be converted



Photograph 3 showing crack in internal wall

- 3.4 The room adjoining the room to be converted and room above are converted to living space and office space. The rooms are plastered, well-sealed and lit by daylight through windows (see Photograph 4). No bats or evidence of bat use, such as bat droppings, was found in the barn. This matches the results of the 2018 survey.



Photograph 4 showing first floor room

4.0 Ecological Scoping Survey

- 4.1 The building is immediately surrounded by hardstanding, used as a yard to the west and south. A strip of improved grassland in the field to the east of the barn, towards Bryn Lane is included within the application boundary (see Photograph 5). This is grazed and species-poor. This habitat comprises Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus Lanatus*, and Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*. A small area of amenity grassland with Apple *Malus* sp. trees is present on the south-east of the barn. This is mown and dominated by Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*.



Photograph 5 showing improved grassland on site

- 4.2 The south-western boundary of the field is marked by an intact hedgerow and a dry ditch (see Photograph 6). The hedgerow is dominated by Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and occasionally includes Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Dog Rose *Rosa canina* and Ivy *Hedera helix*. The ditch is narrow, holds no aquatic vegetation and was almost entirely dry at the time of survey. The banks are shallow, and the channel is filled with leaf litter. No evidence of Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* such as burrows was found along the ditch.



Photograph 6 showing ditch along field boundary

- 4.3 Three ponds lie within 250m of the proposed development. One lies 100m south of the site and is separated from the site by Bryn Lane and an improved grassland field which are considered barriers to newt movement. Two ponds lie within a field to the north of the site; 140m and 190m north. Both ponds are isolated within fields of low-growing grassland and hold no connectivity to suitable terrestrial habitat. No terrestrial vegetation suitable for Great Crested Newt will be affected by the development. The bare ground and short grassland provide no cover for newts and the hedgerows and ditch are proposed to be retained and protected. Therefore, Great Crested Newt is not considered to be a constraint on development.
- 4.4 The hedgerows and trees on site provide potential nesting habitat for birds. Nesting birds can be mitigated for by allowing no works to potential nesting habitats to be carried out within the bird nesting season (which is generally March – August) unless a nesting bird survey is undertaken first.
- 4.5 The trees on site provide negligible potential roosting features for bats. No evidence of other protected species such as Badger was found on site or adjacent to the site.
- 4.6 No invasive, non-native species as listed on Schedule 9 Part II (plants) of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are present on site.



5.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

- 5.1 No evidence of bat activity was found at the barn at Bryn Newydd Farm, Whitchurch. This matches the results of the 2018 survey of this part of the barn. The section of the barn to be converted does not share a wall with the section of the barn where evidence of bats was found in 2018. Bat access is possible to the barn through missing mortar at the roof plate and where the doors are not sealed to the walls. No roof void is present, and the first-floor space and ground floor room adjacent are plastered and lit by daylight through the windows. Missing mortar is present in the internal walls on the ground floor. These areas were inspected and found to be cobwebbed and no evidence of bat use was found. Given the results of the survey, the barn is considered to offer **negligible bat roost suitability**.
- 5.2 The trees on site hold no potential roosting features and are considered to offer **negligible bat roost suitability**.
- 5.3 The trees and hedgerows hold potential for nesting birds. No evidence of other protected species or invasive species was found during the ecological scoping survey.

Recommendations

- 5.4 It is the opinion of the author of this report that the development can proceed without the need for further survey work (e.g. bat activity surveys) or bat mitigation due to the negligible potential of the buildings to support bats. However, if the work is delayed by longer than two years from the date of this survey, a further bat survey will be required to update the findings.
- 5.5 It should be noted that bat absence is very difficult to prove definitively due to their mobility and size, and single or small numbers of bats are able to roost in extremely small spaces, such as in gaps between panels. The development work should be undertaken with care, for example with roof tiles lifted rather than dragged.
- 5.6 **If during development works a bat (or an accumulation of bat droppings) is discovered at any time, work is to temporarily cease whilst an experienced bat ecologist is contacted for guidance and assistance.** This can be Rachel Hacking Ecology (0161 465 8971) who undertook the initial survey, any licensed bat worker, or the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) helpline (0345 1300 228).
- 5.7 If the work to the hedgerows or trees shall be carried out within the bird nesting season (generally March to August), a nesting bird survey will be required immediately prior to work commencing.

6.0 REFERENCES

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

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