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BAT PRESENCE / ABSENCE SURVEY

At

Croxton Farm Barns
Hanmer
Whitchurch
Shropshire
SY13 3BS

NGR: SJ 45942 41263

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CIEEM REGISTERED PRACTICE 2024-2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A bat scoping survey was undertaken of three buildings at Croxton Farm by United Environmental Services (UES) Ltd on 7th July 2025. This survey included an internal and external inspection to search for evidence of bat activity and to assess the potential for the buildings to be used by roosting bats. Building 1 was assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats, whilst Buildings 2 and 3 were assessed as having low potential due to a reduced number of potential roosting features (PRFs). No evidence of bat activity was observed within any of the buildings during the bat scoping survey.

Subsequent bat presence / absence surveys were undertaken by UES of all three buildings in July 2025.The objective of the bat presence / absence surveys was to establish whether bats are using the buildings on site to roost, and if so to assess the type and importance of roosts in order to inform the planning process. The surveys were carried out to recognised guidelines, timings and weather conditions, with particular reference to Natural England and Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) publications.

Croxton Farm is located in an area consisting predominantly of agricultural land with hedgerow-lined fields, small pockets of woodland and scattered residential dwellings, therefore offering moderate quality habitat for foraging and commuting bats. The habitats on site provide low-quality foraging and commuting opportunities for bats and include three agricultural barn buildings surrounded by modified grassland, bare ground and hardstanding. A hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* dominated hedgerow and a mature sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* tree are also present on site. The development proposals include the renovation of the three buildings on site.

Four species of bat were recorded during the bat presence / absence survey: common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, *Myotis sp.* and noctule *Nyctalus noctula*. Activity was generally low with common pipistrelles recorded commuting and foraging during both of the surveys. *Myotis sp.* was only recorded during the second survey, when two individuals were recorded. Low levels of soprano pipistrelle and noctule activity was recorded, with individuals observed commuting over site.

Low levels of bat activity were recorded within Building 2 during the second half of the emergence survey, however this was considered to be foraging activity as a bat was initially observed entered and then exiting the building. There is no evidence (droppings or feeding remains) to suggest regular or sustained use of the building as a night roost or feeding perch. As such, it is considered that bats sporadically use the internal area of Building 2 and potentially the other buildings as a sheltered foraging area. This is common behaviour that is regularly observed in farm buildings of a similar construction with open internal areas and large open access points such as doors and windows. No evidence of roosting bats has been observed during the bat scoping or bat presence / absence surveys, and it is considered that the buildings are not in use by roosting bats.

As no evidence of roosting bats has been observed, it is considered that no further mitigation or compensation measures are required with regards to bats.

Historic evidence of breeding bird activity was observed within Building 2, and all three building have some potential to be used by nesting birds. Due to potential for breeding birds to be present at the time of the works, it is recommended that any initial destructive works or works to seal the buildings should take place outside of the breeding bird season and should not be undertaken from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible and works need to take place during this period, a breeding bird

nest survey should be undertaken prior to the commencement of works by a suitably experienced ecologist.

This report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 5, which provide visual representations of the survey results and statutory and planning context.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Author, surveyors and qualifications

This report is compiled and written by Josie Wynn BSc, UES Graduate Ecologist. Other surveyors include:

- Daniel Smith BSc MScRes, UES Ecologist. Daniel is licensed by Natural England to disturb, take and handle all species of bats under licence number 2024-12117-CL18-BAT (level 2).
- Nathan Rimmer UES Sub-contractor. Nathan is licensed by Natural England to disturb, take and handle all species of bats under licence number 2020-50733-CLS-CLS (level 2).
- Duncan Morrison BSc MSc, UES Graduate Ecologist
- Bethany Dineley BSc, UES Graduate Ecologist
- Mark Jeffries – UES Sub-contractor
- Hannah Taylor – UES Sub-contractor
- Rebecca Freeman – UES Sub-contractor
- Stephen Atkinson – UES Sub-contractor

All surveyors have the knowledge, skills and experience identified within CIEEM's "Competencies for Species Survey: Bats" (2013), or were under the supervision of a surveyor with the required competencies.

1.2 Survey objectives

UES was commissioned in to conduct site surveys which include the following activities:

- Conduct internal and external building inspections to look for field signs of bats
- Confirm bat presence or likely absence by conducting emergence and re-entry surveys of the buildings
- Assess the type and importance of the roost(s), if present
- Recommend appropriate mitigation and compensation, if applicable

1.3 Proposed development

The development proposals include the renovation of the three buildings on site.

1.4 Structure of the report

This report sets out the methodology, results, and recommendations in relation to a specific bat survey. Recommendations are in line with statutory legislation and planning policy objectives.

The report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 5, which give visual representations of the survey results.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

All surveys were carried out to recognised guidelines, timings and weather conditions, with particular reference to Natural England and BCT publications (see references for further information).

The habitats on site and in the surrounding area were assessed during a walkover survey and through studying aerial photographs, in order to gauge their suitability to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats.

2.2 Building inspection

An assessment of the buildings on site was carried out during a bat scoping survey undertaken by UES on 7th June 2025 by Daniel Smith and Duncan Morrison. The buildings were examined both externally and internally for bat presence and features associated with bat activity, as detailed in BCT guidance (Collins, 2023).

2.2.1 External inspections

The external inspection of the buildings was carried out from ground level using binoculars and also using ladders and an endoscope to investigate suitable gaps where present. The objective of the survey was to find and record any signs of bat use, for example:

- Bat droppings
- Feeding remains
- Grease staining / urine marks
- Corpses or skeletons

The following areas were also inspected where present:

- Roof and ridge tiles
- Lead flashing
- Eaves
- Boxed soffits
- Fascia and barge boards
- Windowsills and panes
- Walls
- Gaps under felt
- Cracks/holes in woodwork or behind cladding
- Gaps in brickwork and mortar
- Air bricks
- Grills
- Vents

2.2.2 Internal inspections

The internal inspection covered all of the accessible rooms within the buildings. Bats regularly utilise specific areas within roof spaces, which were searched for any field signs of bats using high-powered torches and an endoscope, where considered necessary by the licenced ecologist. The following features were searched, where present:

- Roof beams and junctions
- Gaps under felt
- Dividing walls
- Chimney breasts

- Gaps in brickwork and mortar
- Cracks / holes in woodwork
- Floor or other surfaces on which droppings could accumulate

2.3 Emergence surveys

Potential roost access points were identified during the building inspections. These points were covered by a surveyor during dusk emergence surveys.

Bat echolocation, flight and habitat characteristics were recorded where possible, in order to determine the species. The level and type of bat activity was also recorded to establish how bats are using the site.

2.3.1 Equipment

BATLOGGER M bat detectors and recorders were used during the survey. This device records bat echolocation calls across the full spectrum, with a sensitivity range of 10 – 150 kHz. The integrated heterodyne live monitoring also allows the observer to hear the echolocation calls in real time, with automatic tuning. The recordings are individually time/date, GPS and temperature stamped, and are of high enough quality to produce time expansion quality sonograms.

An Anabat Walkabout bat detector was used during the survey. This allowed the observer to hear bat echolocation calls and see the sonograms in real time, aiding identification. All registrations were automatically recorded onto a memory card and time/date stamped. The device can record and display both zero crossing and full spectrum bat echolocation calls and has a built-in GPS and mapping system.

An Echo Meter Touch 2 bat detector was used during the survey. The device connects to compatible tablets or phones and allows both heterodyne and frequency division live monitoring which allows the observer to hear the echolocation calls in real time. The device has a sample rate of 256k samples per-second at 16 bits. The EMT2 works in conjunction with a real time automatic identification app and allows for accurate plotting of call locations.

Canon XA11 Professional Video Cameras were used in conjunction with an infra-red LED illuminator to monitor part of the buildings during the surveys. The cameras were positioned to cover potential roost access points. Footage of the survey was recorded and reviewed post-survey.

A Guide TrackIR Pro19 Handheld Thermal Monocular was used during the survey. This monocular is optimised to have a 50Hz frame rate and include a thermal detector with a 640 x 480px (at 12µm) resolution. This provides sharp, dynamic, fluid imaging throughout the field-of-view and at significant distances.

Nightfox Whisker Night Vision Binoculars were used in conjunction with Nightfox XB5 940nm Low Glow Infrared LED Flashlights to monitor part of the buildings during the surveys. The Binoculars were positioned alongside surveyors to cover potential roost access points and recorded video footage to be reviewed post-survey. Surveyors can use the binoculars during the survey as a night-vision aid.

2.3.2 Weather conditions

Table 1 - Weather conditions and survey timings

DATE	SURVEY TYPE	TIMINGS	SUNSET/ SUNRISE	TEMP.	WIND	RAIN	CLOUD COVER
07/07/25	Emergence (Buildings 1, 2 and 3)	21:22 – 23:07	21:37	14°C	Light breeze	Dry	90%
29/07/25	Emergence (Building 1)	20:56 – 22:41	21:11	17°C	Light Breeze	Dry	100%

2.4 Survey limitations

The bat scoping survey and presence / absence surveys were undertaken at an appropriate time of year and there are considered to be no limitations.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Habitat assessment

The habitats on site include three agricultural buildings surrounded by modified grassland, bare ground and hardstanding. Part of the southern boundary of the site is demarcated by a native hawthorn hedgerow. A small area of scrub and a single sycamore tree are also present on site. These habitats offer low quality foraging and commuting opportunities to bats.

The immediate surrounding area (within 0.5km) comprises agricultural land fields bordered by hedgerows and tree lines. Scattered residential dwellings, poorly lit country roads and small patches of woodland are present throughout. These habitats offer moderate quality foraging and commuting opportunities for bats.

Pockets of higher quality foraging and commuting habitats are also present in the wider surrounding landscape (within 2km), although it predominantly remains similar in composition.

Alternative roosting opportunities are numerous within the local and wider area due to the number of mature trees, residential dwellings and farm buildings.

3.2 Building inspections

3.2.1 External Inspection

Building 1

Building 1 is a two-storey brick-built barn building with a pitched roof constructed from slate tiles. The building features open windows and doors, providing potential access points for bats (Appendix 3 - Photograph 1). Several potential roosting features were observed on the exterior, such as cracks in the brickwork, raised roof and ridge tiles and gaps in the lintels between the walls and doors (Photograph 2).

Building 2

Building 2 is a single-storey brick-built barn with a pitched roof of corrugated asbestos cement with sky lights (Photograph 3). A single-storey mono-pitched extension is present at the northern aspect, of breezeblock construction (Photograph 4). Several potential roosting features were observed on the exterior, including gaps behind lifted fascia boards (Photograph 5) and gaps in brickwork where mortar is missing.

Building 3

Building 3 is a single-storey barn building of mixed breezeblock and corrugated asbestos cement construction, with a gently-sloping mono-pitched roof. There are gaps in the corrugated asbestos walls, providing potential access for bats. (Photograph 6). A single brick-built wall is present at the northern aspect of the building.

No bat droppings or other field signs of bats were found during the external building inspections.

3.2.2 Internal inspection

Building 1

The interior features a traditional roof construction with wooden rafters and purlins, an open character and unlined slate tiles (Photograph 7). Gaps are present in the timber joints and beams, creating shallow PRFs for bats (Photograph 8). The brickwork on the interior also had numerous cavities and gaps in the missing mortar.

Building 2

The interior of Building 2 is very light with open windows and doors and features a traditional timber roof construction (Photograph 9). The walls are single-skinned and are coated with render. Heavy cobwebbing was present, and old bird nesting material was observed in the rafters. Internal PRFs are limited and all cavities observed were inspection and found to be superficial and broadly unsuitable to be used by roosting bats.

Building 3

The interior roof construction of Building 3 features wooden rafters and purlins (Photograph 10). Internally, the brick wall had one potential roosting feature in the form of a gap in the brickwork, however it was searched with an endoscope and was found to be superficial and broadly unsuitable to support roosting bats (Photograph 11).

No bat droppings or other field signs of bats were found during the internal building inspections.

3.3 Emergence and re-entry surveys

Table 2 – Survey results

DATE	SURVEY TYPE	SPECIES	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS	ROOST LOCATION	ACCESS POINT	TIMINGS
07/07/25	Emergence	Emergence (Buildings 1, 2 and 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
29/07/25	Emergence	Emergence (Building 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

3.4 Activity summary

Table 3 – Bat activity summary

DATE	SURVEY TYPE	SPECIES	NOTES
07/07/25	Emergence (Buildings 1, 2 and 3)	Common pipistrelle	Low levels of common pipistrelle activity were observed throughout the survey, including commuting and foraging. The first recording was at approximately 22:16.
		Soprano pipistrelle	Very low levels of soprano pipistrelle activity were recorded throughout the survey. Bats were heard but not seen, and the first recording was at 22.31.
		Noctule	Very low levels of noctule activity were recording during the survey. The first recording was at 22.08 and all recording were heard but not seen.
29/07/25	Emergence (Building 1)	Common pipistrelle	A common pipistrelle was recorded commuting from west to east on the northern aspect of Building 1 at 21.45. Another individual was recorded foraging around the eastern gable of Building 1 at 22.07. Occasional other recordings of common pipistrelle activity were recorded throughout the survey but were heard and not seen.
		Myotis	A single myotis was recorded commuting south past the eastern gable end of Building 1. Other occasional myotis activity was also recorded but it was heard and not seen.
		Soprano pipistrelle	A single soprano pipistrelle was observed commuting north to south around the western gable of Building 1 at 21.47. There were occasionally other recordings of soprano pipistrelle, but these were all heard and not seen.
		Noctule	Low levels of noctule activity were encountered during the survey, mostly being heard but not seen. A single individual was observed foraging on the northeastern side of Building 1 at 21.42. This was also the first instance of a noctule during the survey.

4 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Evaluation of results

Croxton Farm is located in an area consisting predominantly of agricultural land with hedgerow-lined fields, small pockets of woodland and scattered residential dwellings, therefore offering moderate quality habitat for foraging and commuting bats. The habitats on site provide low-quality foraging and commuting opportunities for bats and include three agricultural barn buildings surrounded by modified grassland, bare ground and hardstanding. A hawthorn dominated hedgerow, and a mature sycamore tree are also present on site.

Building 1 was assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats, whilst Buildings 2 and 3 on site were assessed as having low potential to support roosting bats. No evidence of bat activity was observed during the building inspections. PRFs present within the buildings include cracks in the brickwork, raised roof and ridge tiles, gaps behind lifted fascia boards and gaps in brickwork where mortar is missing.

Four species of bat were recorded during the bat presence / absence survey: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, *Myotis sp.* and noctule. Activity was generally low with common pipistrelles recorded commuting and foraging during both of the surveys. *Myotis sp.* was only recorded during the second survey, when two individuals were recorded. Low levels of soprano pipistrelle and noctule activity was recorded, with individuals observed commuting over site.

Low levels of bat activity were recorded within Building 2 during the second half of the emergence survey, however this was considered to be foraging activity as a bat was initially observed entered and then exiting the building. There is no evidence (droppings or feeding remains) to suggest regular or sustained use of the building as a night roost or feeding perch. As such, it is considered that bats sporadically use the internal area of Building 2 and potentially the other buildings as a sheltered foraging area. This is common behaviour that is regularly observed in farm buildings of a similar construction with open internal areas and large open access points such as doors and windows. No evidence of roosting bats has been observed during the bat scoping or bat presence / absence surveys, and it is considered that the buildings are not in use by roosting bats.

4.2 Mitigation and compensation measures

4.2.1 Bats

As no evidence of roosting bats has been observed, it is considered that no further mitigation or compensation measures are required with regards to bats.

4.2.2 Birds

Due to potential for breeding birds to be present at the time of the works, it is recommended that any initial destructive works or works to seal the buildings should take place outside of the breeding bird season and should not be undertaken from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible and works need to take place during this period, a breeding bird nest survey should be undertaken prior to the commencement of works by a suitably experienced ecologist.

5 CONCLUSION

Croxton Farm is located in an area consisting predominantly of agricultural land with hedgerow-lined fields, small pockets of woodland and scattered residential dwellings, therefore offering moderate quality habitat for foraging and commuting bats. The habitats on site provide low-quality foraging and commuting opportunities for bats and include three agricultural barn buildings surrounded by modified grassland, bare ground and hardstanding. A hawthorn dominated hedgerow and a mature sycamore tree are also present on site.

Building 1, was assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats, whilst Buildings 2 and 3 were assessed as having low potential to support roosting bats. No evidence of roosting bats was observed during the building inspections.

No bats were found to be roosting within the buildings during the bat presence / absence surveys. As such, it is considered that no further mitigation or compensation measures are required with regards to bats.

Due to potential for breeding birds to be present at the time of the works, it is recommended that any initial destructive works or works to seal the buildings should take place outside of the breeding bird season and should not be undertaken from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible and works need to take place during this period, a breeding bird nest survey should be undertaken prior to the commencement of works by a suitably experienced ecologist.

6 REFERENCES

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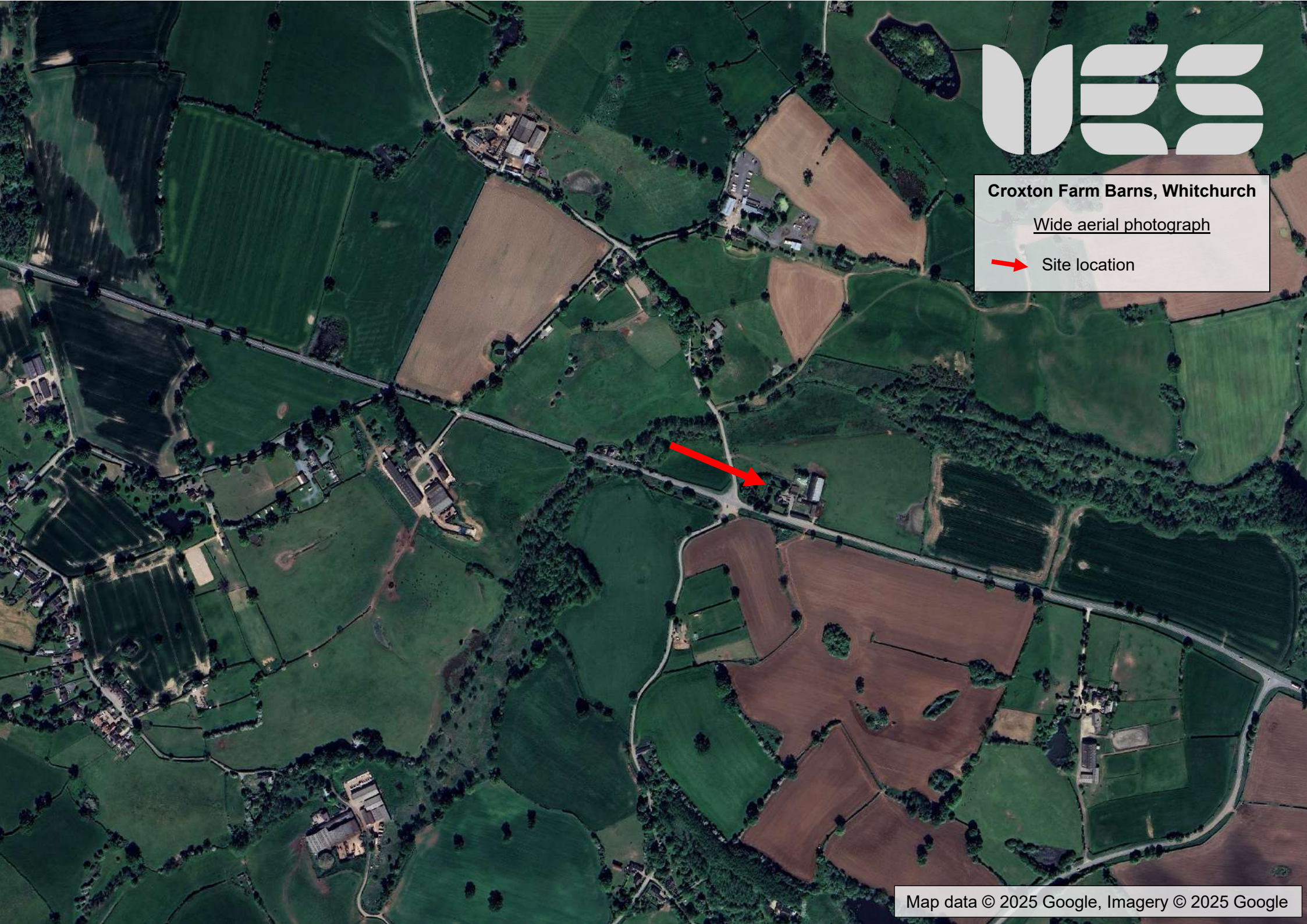
APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site plan


Croxton Farm Barns, Whitchurch
Site plan
Building 1
Building 2
Building 3
B1
B2
B3
Map data © 2025 Google, Imagery © 2025 Google

Appendix 2 – Aerial photographs


Croxton Farm Barns, Whitchurch
Close aerial photograph
Site boundary
Map data © 2025 Google, Imagery © 2025 Google


Croxton Farm Barns, Whitchurch
Wide aerial photograph
Site location
Map data © 2025 Google, Imagery © 2025 Google

Appendix 3 – Photographs



Photograph 1 – Looking southeast towards Building 1.



Photograph 2 – Eastern gable end of Building 1, showing gaps in the brickwork.



Photograph 3 – Southern Aspect of Building 2.



Photograph 4– Single-storey mono-pitched extension on northern aspect of Building 2.



Photograph 5 – Example of gaps behind lifted fascia boards on Building 2.



Photograph 6 – Eastern aspect of Building 3.



Photograph 7 – Interior traditional roof structure in Building 1.



Photograph 8 – Shallow gaps in timber joints in Building 1.



Photograph 9 – Interior view of Building 2 showing general character and roof construction of building.

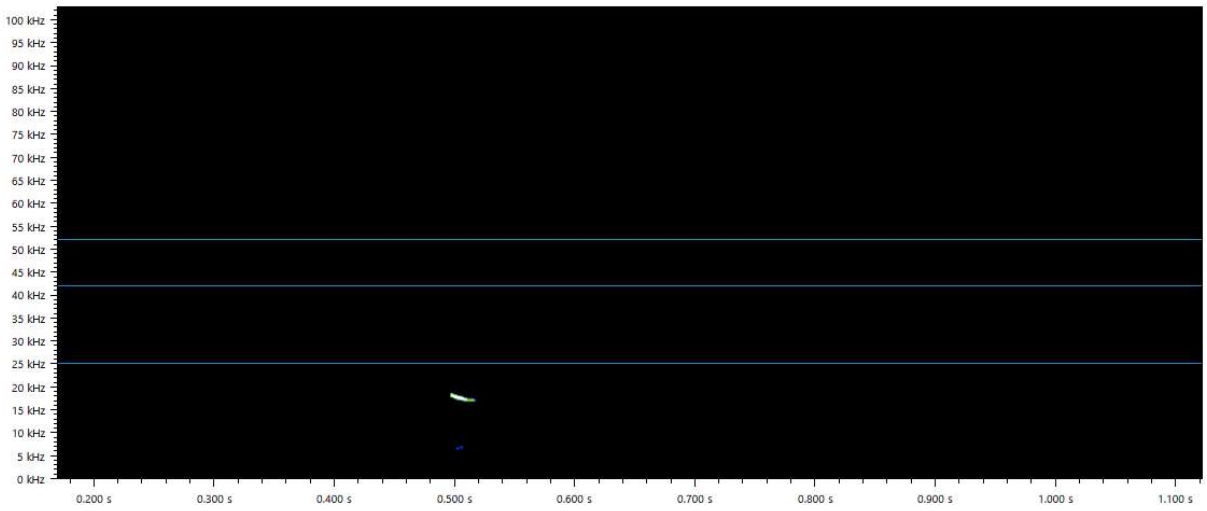


Photograph 10 – Interior view of Building 3 showing the general character and roof construction.

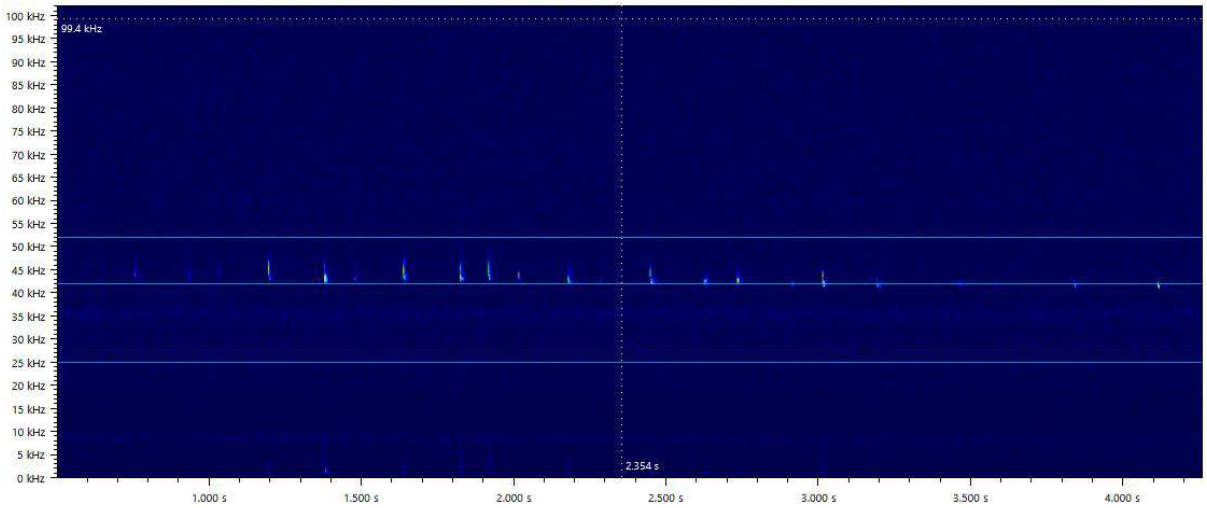


Photograph 11 - Superficial PRF in the internal brickwork of Building 3.

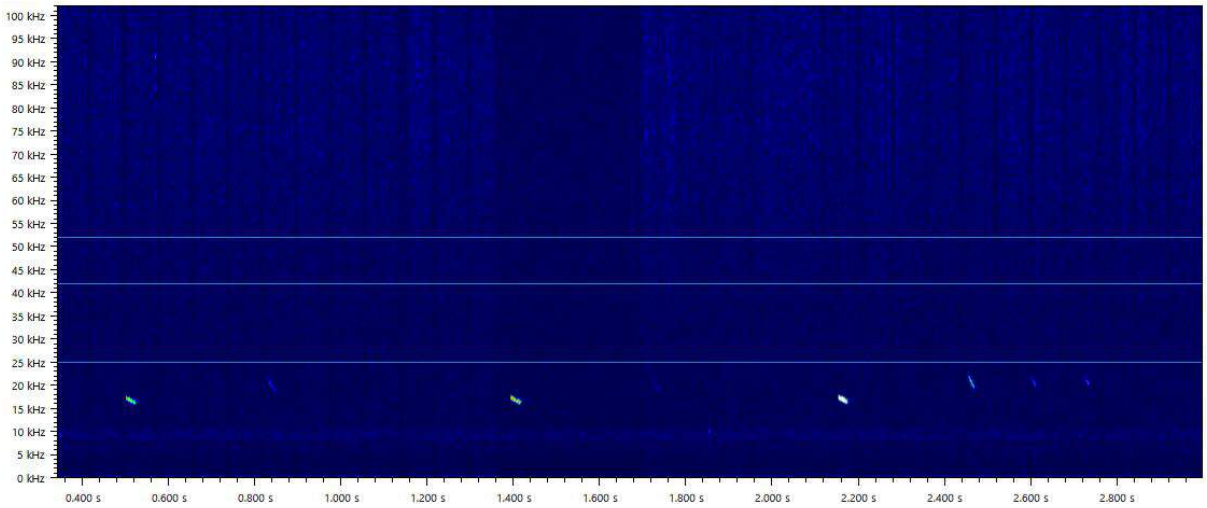
Appendix 4 – Results



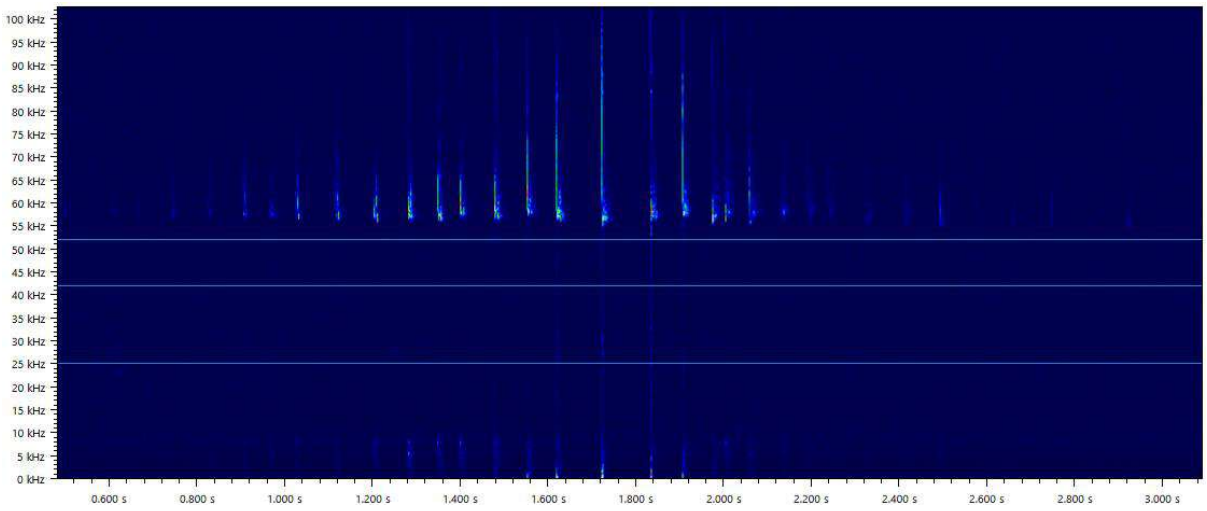
Sonogram 1. Noctule recorded at 22:07 on 7th July 2025.



Sonogram 2. Common pipistrelle recorded at 23:03 on 7th July 2025.



Sonogram 3. Noctule recorded at 21:42 on 29th July 2025.



Sonogram 4. Soprano pipistrelle recorded at 21:42 on 29th July 2025.

Appendix 5 – Statutory and planning context

Ecological assessments

Ecological assessments play an important part within the planning context; they include an initial assessment which highlights any specific interests of a site. From the initial site assessment, the surveyor assesses the suitability of habitats within the site to support protected species and makes recommendations for further survey works if required. The following paragraphs provide a brief interpretation of the legislative protection that is relevant to the findings of this report.

Bats

In the United Kingdom, all species of bat and their roosts are afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU exit) Regulations 2019 (known as the "Habitats Regulations"). The Wildlife and Countryside Act is the domestic implementation of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention) and was amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a bat
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (even if the bat is not present at the time)
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead bat, any part of a bat or anything derived from a bat

Under UK law, a bat roost is *any structure or place which any wild [bat] … uses for shelter or protection*. As bats often reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time of the activity taking place.

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

If an activity is likely to result in any of the above offences, a licence can be applied for to derogate from the protection afforded. These licences must provide appropriate mitigation and are issued by Natural England.

A Natural England mitigation licence application requires a Mitigation Method Statement and, in many cases, a Reasoned Statement of Application. The Mitigation Method Statement contains details of the proposed mitigation works. The Reasoned Statement needs to provide a rational and reasoned justification as to why the proposed development meets the requirements of the Conservation (National Habitats & c.) regulations 1994, namely Regulations 44(2)(e), (f) or (g), and 44(3)(a).

The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) provides guidance on the interpretation of the law in relation to the natural environment and development.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 lists the following bat species as species of principle importance under Section 41:

- Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*
- Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
- Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*
- Greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
- Lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

Section 40 requires every public body in the exercising of its functions 'have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity' (all biodiversity and not just section 41 species and habitats); therefore making these bats a material consideration in the planning process and requiring a detailed ecological bat survey before planning permission can be granted.

Birds

All wild birds, their nests and young are protected throughout England and Wales by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is illegal to kill, injure or take any wild bird, or damage or destroy the nest or eggs of breeding birds. The legislation applies to all bird species, common and rare.

In addition to the protection afforded to all wild birds, more vulnerable species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act receive enhanced protection when breeding. Schedule 1 species, including their dependent young, are protected from intentional or reckless disturbance whilst at or near the nest, in addition to the protection afforded the more common species.

The NERC Act offers further protection to the nests of some species that regularly re-use their nests, even when the nests are not in use.

The leading governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations in the UK have reviewed the population status' of 244 UK bird species. "Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the Red List for Birds" is the most recent publication summarising their findings. Three lists, Red, Amber and Green, have been produced based on the most up-to-date evidence available and criteria include conservation status at global and European levels and, within the UK: historical decline, trends in population and range, rarity, localised distribution and international importance. These lists are a valuable resource when considering conservation priorities.

Planning policy

National Planning Guidance is issued in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF). The most relevant section is 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Key relevant principles stated in 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment are;

187. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats, and hedgehogs;
e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

192. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity[68]; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation[69]; and
b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity

193. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons[70] and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.