

Clough Farm, Prestwich Protected Species Survey

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Dunelm Ecology
consultant ecologists

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Dunelm Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a protected species survey at Clough Farm, Prestwich. The survey was undertaken in support of proposals to demolish the farmhouse and to build a new dwelling in its footprint. Taking into consideration the proposals and the site's character/location, the survey principally focused on bats and breeding birds although evidence of/the potential for other protected species (including Schedule 9 plant species) was also noted. Great crested newts were scoped out owing to an absence of ponds within 250 m of the site while habitats were not subject to detailed survey as they mainly comprise an overgrown vegetated garden, while trees within the site would be retained. It is understood that as a self-build scheme, the proposals are exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 1.1.2 The main objective of the survey was to identify if bats are using the buildings as roost sites, and if so, to establish the species and numbers of bats present, and type of roost(s). This report provides a brief overview of the legal protection afforded to bats in the UK. It includes a detailed description of the survey methods used and the results of the study. The implications of the survey findings are discussed; with an assessment of potential impacts provided and recommendations given as to what further measures are considered necessary.

1.2 Legislative and Planning Context

Bats

- 1.2.1 All British bat species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, which has been amended by later legislation, including the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Taken together, the above legislation makes it an offence to:
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection.
 - Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a bat.
 - deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat,
 - deliberately disturb bats, in such a way as –
 - i) to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear their young, or
 - ii) to hibernate or migrate, or
 - iii) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of bats;
 - damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.

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- 1.2.2 Under the 2019 Regulations it is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place whether a bat is in occupation or not.

Birds

- 1.2.3 All wild species of breeding birds and their nests are protected under Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, as amended by later legislation including the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Part 1 (Section 1:1) of the WCA states that it is an offence to intentionally:

- (a) kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- (b) take, damage or destroy a nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- (c) take or destroy an egg of any wild bird,

- 1.2.4 Part 1 (Section 1:5) of the WCA (amended by the CROW Act 2000) refers to specific birds listed on Schedule 1 of the WCA including barn owl, and makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- (a) disturb any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or
- (b) disturb dependent young of such a bird.

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- 1.2.5 Seven native British bat species are listed as 'Priority Species' and are referred to as 'species of principal importance' for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales within Section 74 of the CROW Act 2000 and Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

- 1.2.6 The effects of developments on protected species are considered in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Section 15 of the NPPF states that Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment through a range of measures including 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. Local authorities in England are required to ensure that where significant harm resulting from development cannot be avoided (through locating on alternative sites with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for; planning permission is refused.

- 1.2.7 Finally, Circular 06/2005: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System* states that protected species and habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.

2 Methods and Approach

2.1 Field Survey

Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 2.1.1 A PRA of buildings within the site was carried out during daylight hours on 15 January 2026 following the methodology outlined in the *Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins 2023). The survey involved searching the interior and exterior of the buildings for bats and their field signs with the aid of close-focusing binoculars (Opticron Countryman BGA 8x42) and a powerful torch (Clulite 1M candle-power). The buildings were assigned to a roost potential category based on the criteria presented in Table 1 (Collins 2023). No trees would be affected by the proposals.

Table 1 Roost Assessment Criteria

Roost Potential Category	Description of Roosting Habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats, however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site but could be used by individual hibernating bats).
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only such as maternity or hibernation – the categorisation in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation roosts e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.

2.2 Personnel

- 2.2.1 The survey was carried out by Jon Guarnaccio MCIEEM who has 23 years continuous experience as a professional ecologist and has held a Natural England bat survey licence since 2005 (2015-15066-CLS-CLS).

2.3 Survey Constraints

- 2.3.1 The survey was carried out at an appropriate time of year with access to all of the site. It should be noted that species such as bats are unpredictable and may not conform to standard patterns recorded in scientific literature. Therefore, this report cannot predict with absolute certainty that bats will occur in apparently suitable locations or habitats, or that they will not occur in locations or habitats that appear unsuitable. Owing to the high mobility of some species such as bats and birds, survey data are only valid for a limited amount of time and therefore typically have a shelf life of 12 – 18 months (CIEEM 2019).

3 Results

3.1 Bats

- 3.1.1 The results of the bat survey are shown in Table 2 below. In summary no evidence of bats was recorded during the survey although the farmhouse was assessed as having moderate bat roost potential owing to the presence of several PRF and proximity of suitable foraging habitat. The site is located within the greenbelt, which is characterised by broadleaved woodland some of which is ancient in origin. As such, bat roosts are likely to be common within residential properties in the locality.

Table 2 Daytime Inspection Survey Results

Building ref	Building Description	Roosting Opportunities & Signs of Bat Use	Roost Potential
B1	Detached former farmhouse dating from mid-late late 19 th century. Constructed from brick cavity walls (two elevations have been rendered) set under two pitched roofs clad with blue slate. The two roof voids are unlined and have floor to apex heights of 2.35 m and 1.45 m, while cobwebs are prevalent throughout. A single storey lean-to (most recently used as an outhouse) with a felt roof protrudes from the southeast elevation while the southeast outrigger gable wall has been rebuilt in the late 20 th /early 21 st century. Timber fascia boards are present on two elevations with uPVC fascias and soffits on the northwest gable wall.	No evidence of bats was recorded during the survey. The building is in poor condition with gaps recorded the main and outrigger gable end verges on the southeast elevation of the building. Gaps also exist behind timber fascia boards on the south and north sides of the building but the latter are completely cobwebbed indicating no current use by bats. Gaps exist under ridge tiles on the main and outrigger's roof.	Moderate
B2	Mid 20 th century garage/workshop with asbestos clad walls and roof (felt is also present on the roof).	No evidence of bats was recorded and no crevice roosting opportunities were identified.	Negligible
B3 and B4	Two small timber shed structures with pitched felt roofs	No evidence of bats was recorded and no crevice roosting opportunities were identified.	Negligible

3.2 Other Species

- 3.2.1 Evidence of old jackdaw and passerine nests was recorded within the roof void while the features mentioned above for bats also provide suitable nesting habitat for species such as bluetits and wrens.
- 3.2.2 A well-used badger pathway passes through the site with evidence of foraging recorded in the property's garden. No Schedule 9 plant species were recorded within the garden although variegated yellow archangel is ubiquitous within woodland on the opposite side of Clough Lane.

4 Discussion

4.1 Assessment and Recommendations

- 4.1.1 There is no evidence to suggest that any of the site buildings are used by roosting bats although the farmhouse is assessed as having moderate roost potential. Some bat species such as pipistrelle spp. are itinerant in their roosting habits and often leave no clues of their presence, particularly when only low numbers of bats are present. The possibility of a non-breeding roost(s) occasionally used by solitary or low numbers of bats should therefore not be discounted. It is however unlikely that the building is used as a maternity roost as at least some droppings would have been expected if the building was used in this capacity, while the building is in a dilapidated state making it less suitable for use by a maternity colony despite the high value foraging habitat surrounding the site. The buildings lack the stable and humid temperature conditions required for hibernation.
- 4.1.2 Further survey effort in the form of two dusk emergence surveys is therefore recommended to give confidence in the initial negative survey result and to comply with best practice guidelines (Collins 2023). Such surveys can only be undertaken between May and August during suitable weather conditions i.e. warm (>10°C), light winds and dry, with at least three weeks between each survey.
- 4.1.3 Should further survey confirm the presence of bats, then demolition will need to be completed under licence from Natural England. Roost sites for bats should be incorporated into the scheme whether bats are present or not, in accordance with the NPPF which seeks net gains in biodiversity. This could be achieved by incorporating integral bat roosting units within outer walls of the new dwelling, these being installed high in gable end walls.
- 4.1.4 Nesting birds could be disturbed or harmed if demolition was undertaken during the nesting season which would constitute an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). If works cannot be undertaken outside the nesting season which lasts from March to August inclusive, then a pre-works check should be undertaken no more than 48 hours of work commencing. If breeding was confirmed, then works within 5 m of the nest would need to be postponed until chicks had fledged the nest. This approach is recommended to avoid infringement of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which protects all wild birds and their nests. Artificial nesting features for birds should also be provided for birds in the form of swift and sparrow units; these being positioned on north or shaded elevations e.g. under the eaves.
- 4.1.5 Reasonable avoidance measures should also be undertaken to prevent harm to badgers and hedgehogs which pass through the site. This would involve placing scaffold boards in any steep sided excavations overnight to allow any animals that enter to escape while building materials and waste should be kept in pallets and skips respectively. Machinery should also be cleaned before and leaving site to prevent spread of any invasive plant species seeds or roots that may be present.
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5 References

CIEEM (2019). Advice note on the lifespan of ecological reports and surveys. CIEEM, Ampfield .

Collins J (ed) (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. Fourth Edition. BCT, London.



Plate 1 Main roof void



Plate 2 Outtrigger roof void



Plate 3 Gaps around verges at southeast gable



Plate 4 Gaps exist under ridge tiles and fascia board



Plate 5 B2



Plate 6 B3 and B4