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Inspection & Assessment in relation to Bats & Breeding Birds

November 2024

Project Reference: PR-0317-24

Ferns Farm

Turton Road

Tottington

BL8 3QH

National Grid Reference: SD76811375



Ferns Farm, Turton Road, Tottington, BL8 3QH
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Executive Summary

As part of a proposed planning application with Bury Metropolitan Borough Council concerning Ferns Farm in rural Tottington, Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd carried out a daytime preliminary roost assessment in relation to bats with an inclusive inspection for breeding birds in September 2024.

The survey was commissioned by Julia Gaddes; the scope of proposals is understood to involve the erection of a replacement dwelling.

Detailed methods, findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented throughout the report; however, the reader should be aware of the following **Key** points:

Biodiversity Gain

Based on the information gathered during the diurnal assessment and provided to the author, Ferns Farm is **exempt** from the Biodiversity Gain Planning Condition; the site meets the Householder Application exemption.

Bats:

Based upon the findings of the DBW and associated GLTA, covered through sections 5.0 – 6.0 of the report and supported by **Appendix I**, B1 (the dwelling) at Ferns Farm is duly categorised as pertaining to a bat roost suitability of '**Moderate**', in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023), triggering the requirement for further surveys.

Table 7.2. Recommended minimum number of survey visits for presence/absence surveys to give confidence in a negative result for structures (also recommended for trees but unlikely to give confidence in a negative result).		
Low roost suitability or PRF-I	Moderate roost suitability	High roost suitability or PRF-M
One survey visit. One dusk emergence survey ^a (structures). No further surveys required (trees).	Two separate dusk emergence survey visits ^b .	Three separate dusk emergence survey visits ^b .

*It is recommended that **two dusk emergence surveys** are conducted at the site within the active season of bats (May – August, extending into September in some cases), in order to establish if / how the building is being used by bats, and if so, identify the species present, abundance, roost locations and flight lines around the site following emergence. A total of **three surveyors** would be required to cover the potential roosting features as described for each survey, and the surveys must be spaced a minimum of three weeks apart in accordance with current BCT guidance.*

Breeding birds:

Regarding wider breeding bird species, evidence of nesting swallows was observed within the various B3 stable structures, which are likely to be actively used within the nesting bird season of March – August, inclusive.

As such, the demolition of any of the stable structures should therefore be carried out outside of the breeding bird season, typically March – September inclusive. For works within the breeding bird season, any areas that can support nesting birds should be checked by a professional Ecologist for nesting birds within 48 hours or less prior to works commencing.

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1.0 Introduction & Reasons for Survey

- 1.1 As part of a proposed planning application with Bury Metropolitan Borough Council concerning Ferns Farm in Tottington, Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd carried out a daytime preliminary roost assessment in relation to bats with an inclusive inspection for breeding birds in September 2024.
- 1.2 The survey was commissioned by Julia Gaddes; the scope of proposals is understood to involve the erection of a replacement dwelling. See **Figure 1.1** for an approximate red line boundary of the site as seen from satellite imagery.



Figure 1.1 – Approximate red line boundary of the site © Google Earth Pro 2024

- 1.3 The aim of the survey was to ascertain if the structures onsite are of value to bats, whilst an assessment of nesting and general suitability for birds was also carried out. If any potential roost features (PRFs) were found to be suitable for bats, or signs of use were observed, where suitable habitats and / or bat records exist in the locality, then more detailed surveys would be recommended i.e. dusk emergence surveys during the main active season of bats which is May – August (extending into September).
- 1.4 If additional surveys are required following the initial site visit, this report will outline the details of those further requirements, in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023).
- 1.5 If it was determined that bat(s) or their roost / place of rest / shelter will be subsequently impacted by the works then a European Protected Species (EPS) licence would be legally required to proceed with the development.

- 1.6 If evidence indicated breeding birds may be impacted by proposals, tailored recommendations would be made accordingly, species pending.
- 1.7 As part of the local authority's planning policies and obligations to the Planning Framework, ecological surveys are generally required prior to planning permission being granted where protected / priority habitats and species are, or may be present, that could be affected by the proposals for which the application seeks consent. Where more detailed surveys are recommended by the ecologist, following an initial daytime investigation, then Local Planning Authorities (LPA), on the advice of their ecological advisors, will not grant permission until such time that all relevant information is gathered.

2.0 Protected Species & Their Requirements

Bats

- 2.1 All British bats and their **roosts are afforded full protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and are listed in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019) (EU Exit). When dealing with cases where an EPS (all UK bats) may be affected, a planning authority is a competent authority within the meaning of Regulation 7 of the Regulations, and therefore has a statutory duty, as the local authority, to have due regard to the provisions of the Regulations in the exercise of its functions.

2.2 Uses of Buildings by Bats

- a) Summer breeding roost (May – August)
- b) Hibernation roost (October – March)
- c) Transitional or temporary roost (other months)

- 2.3 Roost selection is often closely correlated to suitable foraging habitat within a reasonable commuting distance from the roost and different sites are used depending upon insect densities and abundance; climatic conditions can also affect their ability to successfully forage. All British bats are insectivorous.

*** The term roost is generically referred to as a place that bat/s use for the any of the above reasons, however it should be noted that under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019) (EU Exit) (Regulation 43 (d) the term roost is not used but refers to “a breeding site or resting place of such an animal” and is afforded legal protection. The roost, breeding site or resting place of bats, which ever terminology is used is legally protected whether or not bats are in occupation.*

- 2.4 Up to ten bat species have been recorded within Greater Manchester to date, most of which use built structures, notably occupied residential buildings, for roosting. The most frequently encountered bat species is the common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and its abundant status in Manchester is reflected throughout the UK.

Breeding birds

- 2.5 All wild birds, no matter how common, their eggs, young and nests, whilst being built or occupied, are protected under both the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA 1981) and Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC Act 2006).
- 2.6 Any work that would damage an occupied nest, eggs or young of breeding birds, regardless of priority status, must be avoided; any damage to nests that may occur as a result of the development should be outside of the main breeding bird season (March – August). On occasions nests can become unoccupied during the breeding season but the status of the nest(s) should be determined by a suitably experienced ecologist / ornithologist.
- 2.7 Birds listed on Schedule 1 (Sch.1) of the WCA 1981, for example barn owl (*Tyto alba*), are afforded a greater level of protection and are safeguarded also from disturbance. This raptor is known to inhabit urban environments, where suitable nesting sites, such as churches, cathedrals and other taller structures, coincide with an abundance of prey items in the form of urban bird species, including feral pigeon.

Policy

- 2.8 Paragraph 186 of the National Policy Planning Framework (as revised in December 2023) states:

“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 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.”

- 2.9 This national focus on the conservation of the natural environment is echoed in Policy EN6 of the Adopted Bury Unitary Development Plan (2022), which states:

“The Council will retain, protect and enhance the natural environment of the Borough, particularly in relation to areas of ecological, wildlife and geological importance.”

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 2.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), revised in December 2023, legislates net gain in biodiversity through paragraphs 180(d), 185(b) and 186(d). An effort should be made, therefore, through the development design to provide ecological enhancement in order to deliver an overall increase in biodiversity, and opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.
- 2.11 The Environment Act 2021 ('The Act') came into force in November 2021. Aspects of the Act relating to BNG came into force on the 12th February 2024, whereby BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).
- 2.12 The Act is supported by secondary legislation, consisting of six statutory instruments laid within law, of which the relevant legislation includes:
- The Environment Act 2021 (Commencement No. 8 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024¹
 - The Biodiversity Gain Site Register Regulations 2024²
 - The Biodiversity Gain Site Register (Financial Penalties and Fees) Regulations 2024³
 - The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024⁴

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/44/contents/made>

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/45/contents/made>

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/45/contents/made>

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/47/contents/made>

- The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024⁵
- The Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) (Modifications and Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024 ⁶

Priority Habitats & Species

- 2.13 In the United Kingdom, legal protection and otherwise legislative recognition is afforded to particular habitats and species based on a variety of ecological factors. These are typically referred to as priority habitats and species, and can be identified under a variety of legislation and local policy, notably the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP), Section 41 (s.41) of the NERC Act as well as under Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPS).

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/48/contents/made>

⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/50/contents/made>

3.0 Survey Methodology

- 3.1 As part of the Inspection & Assessment in relation to Bats & Breeding Birds report, a desk-top and field-based study is conducted. Methods for both components of the appraisal are given below.

Desktop study

- 3.2 Prior to a site visit, a desktop study was conducted using online resources to obtain information pertaining to any sites afforded statutory (e.g. SSSI) and non-statutory (e.g. LWS) designations for nature conservation within 2.0 kilometres of the site boundary. To do so, the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGiC – provided by DEFRA) was accessed to gather such information; this particular interactive mapping service was also used to locate any locally granted European Protected Species Mitigation Licenses (EPSML) and species records to further inform conclusions concerning such species in the context of the study site and its proposed development.
- 3.3 Historic satellite imagery was reviewed using sources such as Google Earth (© 2023/24) to help establish past use of the land and determine the nature of adjoining and extending habitats; such information aids in the understanding of how the site might interact with its surroundings ecologically and its value in that context, and how the development may impact at a wider scale.
- 3.4 In addition, the Bury Council 'Planning – Public Access' online function was utilised to help inform the desktop study by analysis of existing publicly accessible ecological survey results that have been carried out locally within the previous five years.
- 3.5 A commercial data request to the Local Environment Records Centre serving the area – in this case Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC) – has not been sourced and is justified through application of the following recent guidance:

1) The Guidelines for Accessing, Using and Sharing Biodiversity Data in the UK (CIEEM, 2020) states:

"It is generally expected that a desk study, including a data search, will be a key part of the ecological surveys or reports produced to inform a planning application. Freely available web-based sources of data and contextual information should always be used; in some cases, it may be acceptable to not undertake a data search with the LERC or other relevant NSS or local interest groups, for example:

- ii) Situations where the **data search would be extremely unlikely to provide information needed to inform the assessment, due to the scale and location of the proposed development**. The appropriateness of excluding a data search will need to be judged on a case-by-case basis as, in most situations, it will be essential to carry out such a search even if the development is very small or is likely to have a low impact. It can be very difficult to demonstrate that a data search would not have provided relevant information without obtaining and reviewing those data.*
- iii) In some cases for Preliminary Roost Assessments of buildings in **low impact / small-scale scenarios**, such as an extension to a residential property, loft conversions (full or partial), installation of Velux/dormer windows, single modern agricultural or similar building conversion or demolition; however, it should not be assumed that data searches are never required for such scenarios and this must be judged on a case by case basis and justified accordingly.*

- 3.6 As exemptions as made **bold** above can be applied at the site, whilst following best practice, it is considered unnecessary to conduct a commercial data request following the desk study effort and daytime assessment at this time, which offers a proportionate level of survey effort. If, however, a data search is considered necessary by the Local Authority advisory body to inform the ecological impact assessment following any further surveys recommended in this report, a proportionate data search should be commissioned with results interpreted into the conclusions and recommendations of a re-issued / updated report.

Field survey

- 3.7 In context with the above, a diurnal inspection and assessment of the building and the immediate environment in relation to bats and breeding birds was conducted on 4th September 2024 in bright conditions (13°C), wind 1/12 (Beaufort scale), 50% cloud, by the following surveyor (see **Table 3.1**):

Table 3.1 – Site surveyor credentials

Name	Description of most relevant credentials
Mr. H. Mulligan Qualifying CIEEM	- Consultant Ecologist with two years of training and experience, - MBiolSci in Biological Sciences (Zoology), - Accredited agent on the (Class 2) Natural England bat licence of Mrs. K. Wilding (CLS-14227). - Meets the requirements of CIEEM's Competency Framework Section S (Surveying) to Capable level.

Bats

- 3.8 Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023), states:

“The guidelines should be interpreted and adapted on a case-by-case basis according to site-specific factors and the professional judgement of an experienced ecologist. The questions should not be whether the guidelines were followed, but were the defined objectives of the surveys met? Where examples are used in the guidelines, they are descriptive rather than prescriptive.”

- 3.9 The site was assessed for bats; a daytime bat walkover (DBW) was undertaken to observe, assess and record any habitats or features suitable for usage by bats, either as commuting, foraging or roosting provision. Wider connectivity to other habitats was also considered during the DBW.
- 3.10 Buildings and other permanent / semi-permanent structures (where present) were subject to a preliminary roost assessment (PRA), to identify potential areas which may be of value to bats and to determine evidence of use. This typically involves a systematic search of the external aspects of any structure(s), comprising an investigation of features known to be used by bats (for example roofing material, soffits, fascia, lead flashing hanging tiles) using a high-powered torch and close-focus binoculars, where necessary. An internal assessment of the structure(s) was also carried out, with the aid of a high-powered torch and endoscope, where necessary, to identify any evidence of bat use of a structure. Field signs of bats typically comprise bat droppings, urine splashing, fur-oil staining, incidental animal presence, dead specimens and / or the presence of prey items, such as moth wings.
- 3.11 Trees (where present) would be subject to a ground level tree assessment (GLTA) using equipment such as close-focus binoculars and a high powered-torch. Potential roost features (PRFs) can include woodpecker holes, rot holes, hazard beams, other vertical or horizontal

cracks or splits in stems and branches, partially decayed lifted bark, knot holes, man-made holes, tear-outs, cankers in which cavities have developed, other hollows or cavities, including butt-rots, double-leaders forming compression forks with included bark, gaps between overlapping stems or branches, partially detached climbing species with stem diameters in excess of 50mm or pre-existing bat / bird boxes. These PRFs can then be determined as PRF-I or PRF-M, dependent on their suitability for individual / low numbers of bats or their capability to host multiple bats.

- 3.12 Criteria for roost assessment are based upon the determinants given in the Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023): (see **Figures 3.1 – 3.3** overleaf).

Birds

- 3.13 The site and any built structure(s) on site were inspected for evidence of nesting and suitability for relevant species. Bird species observed and heard were recorded on site, and a search was made for nest material, or areas suitable for nesting – this can take the form of searching structures, woody vegetation, semi-aquatic vegetation such as reeds and / or ground flora. Elevations of any buildings or structures on site were inspected for evidence of birds that show a high dependency upon built structures, many of which are in a state of decline. These might include the following species for example (list non-extensive):
- **Starling** (*Sturnus vulgaris*): Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) red status
 - **House sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*): BoCC red status
 - **House martin** (*Delichon urbica*): BoCC red status
 - **Swift** (*Apus apus*): BoCC red status
- 3.14 Additional to the site's capacity to support generally common species for breeding, the area was also subject to an assessment for wider capacity to support species with extra protection under Sch.1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended), as well as those listed in s.41 of the NERC Act and on the Greater Manchester BAP.
- 3.15 The results, conclusions and recommendations are based on a number of factors i.e.
- Practical experience of the surveyor,
 - Knowledge of bat / bird species relevant to the site location and geographical range,
 - Nature of the immediate / surrounding habitat in relation to foraging / commuting opportunities,
 - Presence / absence of roost potential and the general condition of the structure / tree,
 - Presence of loft spaces and / or cellars and reasonable practicality of use,
 - Value and types of roost potential, if present (i.e. – maternity, hibernation, transitional).
- 3.16 The results, conclusions and recommendations of this report have been assessed by Mrs. K. Wilding, the Director of Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd, and her assessment is consistent with that of the surveyor Mr. H. Mulligan.

Table 4.1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.

Potential suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	Potential flight-paths and foraging 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).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).
Negligible ^a	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.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions ^b 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 ^c).	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight-paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^b and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
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 ^b and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight-paths such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.
a Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant'. This category may be used where there are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute) but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute). b For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance. c Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten <i>et al.</i>, 2016 and Jansen <i>et al.</i>, 2022). Common pipistrelle swarming has been observed in the UK (Bell, 2022 and Tomlinson, 2020) and winter hibernation of numbers of this species has been detected at Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland (National Trust, 2018). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK, but ecologists should be aware of the potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in prominent buildings in the landscape, urban or otherwise.		

Figure 3.1 – BCT guidelines extract

Table 4.2. Guidelines for assessing the suitability of trees on proposed development sites for bats, to be applied using professional judgement.	
Suitability	Description
NONE	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present

Figure 3.2 – BCT extract on tree roost suitability criteria

Table 6.2. Guidelines for categorising the potential suitability of PRFs on a proposed development site for bats, to be applied using professional judgement.	
Suitability	Description
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

Figure 3.3 – BCT extract on tree roost categorisation criteria

4.0 Limitations

- 4.1 The survey took place within the optimal season for both bats and breeding birds, therefore there was a good chance of encountering direct evidence of both species such as through fresh droppings or feeding remains for bats, or through the identification of bird nests or breeding behaviour for signs of breeding birds. Thus, timing is not considered a constraint in this instance.
- 4.2 Of the four separate loft spaces within the dwelling onsite only one could be accessed, with two of the hatches being sealed shut, and another being above the height of the surveyor's ladders. While this is accepted as a limitation, a precautionary approach has been taken in categorising the building to ensure that the lack of access is not a significant constraint, and there were no external visual constraints.
- 4.3 In considering all potential survey constraints, no significant limitations were experienced that might adversely influence the results, conclusions, and recommendations of this report.

5.0 Desk Study Results

- 5.1 The site of the proposed works (referred to in-part as “the application site” and “the site”) is situated north of Turton Road on the rural fringe of Tottington, approximately 4.7km north-west of Bury town centre (see **Figure 5.1** below). The site broadly comprises a large, detached dwelling with several stables and outbuildings, a large, landscaped garden and a horse manège.



Figure 5.1 – Location of the red line boundary within the landscape, with coloured dots indicating Tyrer data records © Google Earth Pro 2023/24

- 5.2 The immediate environment is largely ruralised in nature, with land use in all directions comprised predominantly of pasture fields divided by hedgerows, tree lines and scattered farm developments; a large woodland block is present approximately 0.1km to the north, which follows the meanders of a river. Approximately 0.2km to the south-east the town of Tottington begins, and thus land use becomes suburbanised with large housing developments dominating.

Relevant planning history

- 5.3 A single previous planning application has been undertaken concerning the site, an unsuccessful 2022 application (Ref.: **69172**) concerning the demolition of the stables onsite and erection of a new dwelling. As part of this application, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken by Verity Webster, which is readily available online; this report concluded that the buildings to be demolished (denoted as **B2** and **B3** within this report) were of negligible potential for roosting bats but highlighted the presence of swallow nests within the buildings, while it also made recommendations to minimise impacts to Wood at Bottoms Hall Site of Biological Importance (SBI) located 150m north of the site, as well as to badger likely to be present in the wider environment.

Designated sites

- 5.4 Two statutory designated sites for nature conservation are present within a 2.0km search radius of the site (see **Table 5.1** for information and **Figure 5.2** below for a visual aid).

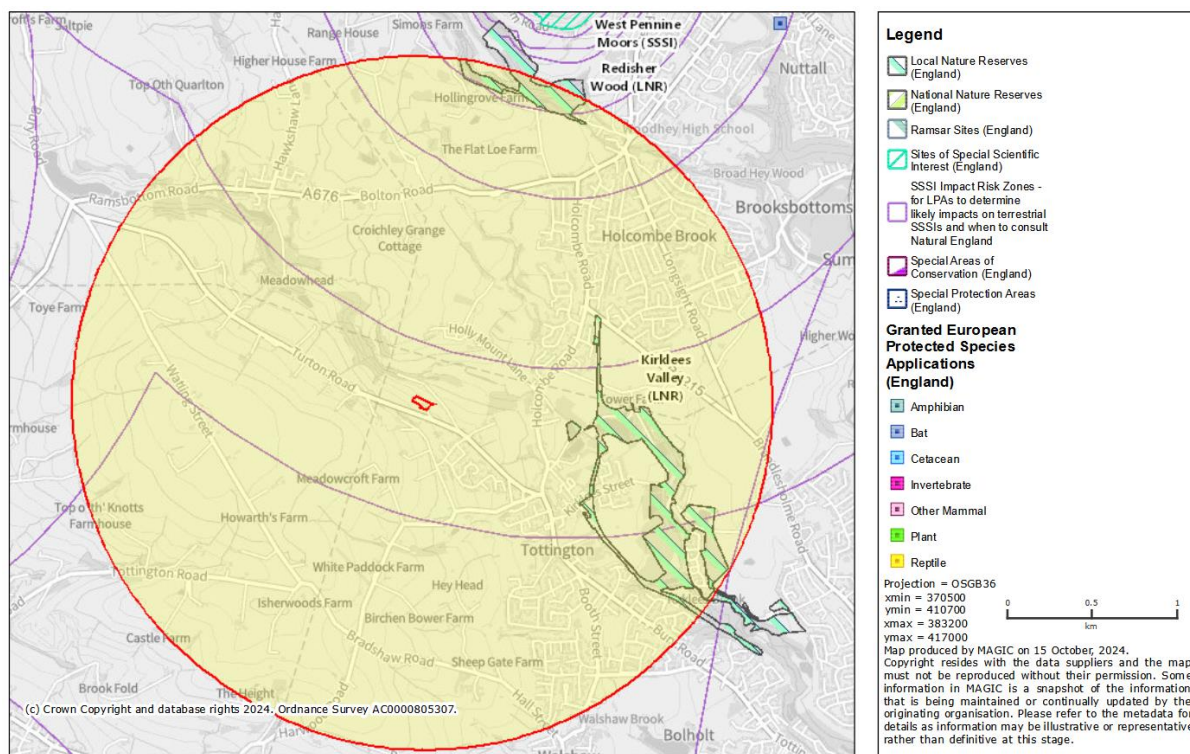


Figure 5.2 – Designated site and EPSML data for the area within 2.0km of application site © MAGiC Maps 2024

Table 5.1 – Statutory Designated Sites within 2.0 kilometres of application site and reasons for designation

Site name	Designation type	Interest features
Kirklees Valley (0.8km east)	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Natural England Citation states: “The habitats to be found with Kirklees Valley are varied including woodland, grassland, heathland, ponds, lodges and streams. Wildlife includes a variety of birds, amphibians and bats. Roe deer have been seen on occasion.”
Redisher Wood (1.8km north-east)	LNR	Natural England Citation states: “One of the best ancient woodlands in the Borough with a good display of bluebells in the spring. It is home to a number of important woodland birds. Holcombe Brook runs through the wood and has stone loach and aquatic insects such as mayflies. The shallow ponds have interesting plants including marsh marigolds and common valerian. Habitats include semi-natural broad leaved woodland, scrub, neutral grassland, acid grassland, acid heath, marshy grassland, standing water/running water, swamp and bracken.”

- 5.5 The site is also positioned within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for West Pennine Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the wider environment, located approximately 2.3km to the north. Based on the IRZ information available on MAGiC Maps, the site does not fall under any of the categories which would trigger further consultation with Natural England. It is also considered unlikely that works to the property would increase residential disturbance on the surrounding designated sites, and NE are unlikely to need be consulted in this regard.
- 5.6 Where no impact to SSSI's is predicted, NE issue the following advice within their standing guidance on SSSI impact zones (NE, 2019):

"It is important to note that the SSSI IRZs only indicate Natural England's assessment of likely risk to the notified features of SSSIs. Where they indicate such a risk is unlikely, this does not mean that there are no potential impacts on biodiversity or the wider natural environment."

Habitats

- 5.7 An online search of MAGiC Maps identified the following priority habitats within a 2.0km search radius (see **Table 5.2** below).

Table 5.2 – Priority habitats located within 2.0km buffer

Habitat Type	Designation	Distance to site
Ancient & semi-natural woodland	Ancient Woodland	0.4km south
Deciduous woodland	Priority Habitat Inventory	0.1km north
Good quality semi-improved grassland	Priority Habitat Inventory	1.8km south-east
Lowland dry acid grassland	Priority Habitat Inventory	1.3km south-east
Lowland fens	Priority Habitat Inventory	0.8km east
Purple moor grass and rush pasture	Priority Habitat Inventory	0.4km north
Traditional orchards	Priority Habitat Inventory	0.3km north

Bats

- 5.8 An online search of MAGiC Maps revealed an absence of European Protected Species Mitigation Licenses (EPSMLs) for bats granted within a 2.0km radius of the site boundary (see **Figure 5.2** for visual aid).
- 5.9 Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd have previous and ongoing projects involving bats within the 2.0-kilometre area surrounding the site – as such, the following biological data (see **Table 5.3**) is readily available to the Ecologist from the company database – all data has been previously submitted to the local ecological records centre (LERC) serving the area, which, in this case, is Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC).

Table 5.3 – Records of bats held by Tyrer Ecological Consultants located within 2.0km of the site

Year	Distance from Site	Context (where relevant)
2016	0.7km east	Common pipistrelle activity.
2021	0.9km north-west	Common pipistrelle activity.

- 5.10 Habitats in the immediate vicinity of the site provide high value foraging opportunities for bats, with hedgerows, scattered trees and tree lines in proximity offering connectivity between the site and the nearby woodland extending to the north. The habitats present are considered to offer suitability for a variety of bat species, such as the brown long-eared which is generally associated with woodland and ruralised habitats, alongside species associated with roosting in occupied dwellings such as the common pipistrelle.

NB: *Where quality habitat is present close to buildings then the percentage use of those buildings, by bats, increases given that roost opportunities are available and vice versa.*

Birds

- 5.11 Given the presence of open agricultural land and rough grassland in proximity to the site, a variety of bird species are considered likely to exist in proximity to the site, including raptors such as barn owl (*Tyto alba*) and ground nesting species such as curlew (*Numenius arquata*) and lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), alongside more common garden and woodland species. The mosaic of farmland and woodland interspersed with native hedgerows and tree lines likely supports a moderate diversity of bird species.
- 5.12 The aforementioned linear and area features suitable for bats would also afford connective habitat for bird species in the wider landscape.

Biodiversity Gain

- 5.13 The Bury Council Online Policy Map⁷ was accessed and used to assess the strategic significance of the site in terms of the local policy, in lieu of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The map revealed that the application site does falls within the Adopted Green Belt.

⁷ See: <https://maps.bury.gov.uk/externalwebmap/Map.aspx?MapName=PA#>

6.0 Field Study Results

Bats

- 6.1 A number of buildings occur within the site boundary, the main dwelling (**B1**), a modern enclosed stable structure (**B2**) and several open stable buildings of similar character and structure (collectively denoted as **B3**); see **Figure 6.1** for the location of the buildings.



Figure 6.1 – Locations of B1 – B3 onsite (Adapted from Google Earth Pro 2023-24)

B1 (Dwelling)

- 6.2 B1 is the main dwelling onsite; this is an occupied two-storey, stone-built and partially rendered detached dwelling with a multi-pitched, slate roof and a flat-roofed extension to the north-east, to approximate maximum dimensions of 28m x 15m x 8m (length x width x height). Structural components include stone sills, UPVC doors, windows and fascia, integrated skylights to the west, and dormer windows to the south which feature UPVC cladding. While the surveyor is not qualified to assess structural integrity of buildings, it was considered to be in a fair aesthetic condition with no major external damage noted, but some areas of minor degradation likely due to the building's age.
- 6.3 Internally, as stated in **Section 4.0**, while four separate loft spaces are present in the structure, only one could be entered to the east of the building; it is considered however that the spaces are likely to be of a consistent structure and character throughout. The accessible space was noted to be of a purlin and rafter construction, with an apex of approximately 2.0 metres, and was dark, warm and non-draughty, with rockwool insulation present on the floor. Other parts of the structure, particularly to the south where the dormer windows are present and west where the skylights are present, are converted and thus feature no loft space.
- 6.4 B1 is therefore considered broadly suitable for the breeding requirements of loft-dwelling bats such as the brown long-eared; this species prefers warm, dark, undisturbed and dry loft spaces with room for free flying when selecting maternity roosts. No evidence of this group was identified during the survey, but could feasibly be present in any of the inaccessible loft spaces.

- 6.5 A breathable roofing membrane (BRM) is present beneath the roof slates within the accessed loft space; where present, roof linings typically improve a building's value to bats, notably for crevice-dwelling bats, whereby the bats roost between the roof slates and lining, whilst a lack of a lining can reduce the value of a structure for members of this genus. However, despite improving the building's likelihood of use by crevice-dwelling bats, BRM can also be dangerous for bats, whereby their claws become entangled within the fine fibres of this lining and prevent escape, leading to deaths.

NB: The breeding roosts of Pipistrelle bats are proportionally higher in occupied residential dwellings where the warm, dry conditions favour the requirements of a maternity colony but other structures are also used, especially for hibernation or by male bats which do not need the same conditions as a maternity colony.

- 6.6 Externally, the building was noted to have a number of potential roost features (PRFs) throughout; gaps are present beneath the roof slates at each of the gable verges, several fascia are slightly lifted throughout the structure providing potential access at wall-plate level, a small number of slates are raised on the various roof pitches, and mortaring was noted to be absent beneath a small number of ridge tiles, providing potential crevices beneath.
- 6.7 Given the presence of various PRFs, the suitability of the accessed loft space and lack of access to other loft spaces within the structure, and the highly suitable habitats in proximity, B1 is duly categorised as pertaining to a bat roost suitability of **'Moderate'**, in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023).

B2 (Modern stable)

- 6.8 B2 is a modern single-storey brick-built and fully rendered structure with a mono-pitched metal roof, and structural components including integrated skylights, timber doors, UPVC windows and stone sills; the building is to maximum dimensions of 8.0m x 6.0m x 5.0m, and is in a good aesthetic condition, with no damage to the structure noted given its modern build.
- 6.9 Internally, no loft space is present, with the structure open to the roof; the building is brightly illuminated due to the integrated skylights, and is cool, draughty and relatively cramped. As such, this structure is considered broadly unsuitable for loft-dwelling bat species.
- 6.10 No roof lining is present within this structure, and no evidence of any bats was observed. Externally, no PRFs were noted, with the various structural elements tightly fitted and offering no potential ingress or crevice-dwelling opportunities; as such, B2 is categorised as pertaining to a bat roost suitability of **'None'**.

B3 (Various open stable structures)

- 6.11 A number of simple stable structures are present to the west of the site, which have collectively been denoted as B3; these structures are all single-storey and of timber construction, with pitched corrugated asbestos roofs. The interiors are all cool and draughty, with some of the structures entirely open on one aspect while others featuring stable doors, and they were each noted to be in a fair condition with no damage to the structure observed. Given their structure, they are all considered to be entirely absent of bat roosting potential, lacking any structural components frequently utilised by bats and with no suitability internally or externally. As such, B3 are collectively categorised as pertaining to a bat roost suitability of **'None'**.
- 6.12 While a number of trees are located at the boundaries of the garden area, it is understood that none will be affected by the proposals. As such, no PRAs in relation to trees were undertaken.

- 6.13 From a habitat suitability assessment in relation to bat activity, the landscaped garden habitats onsite are likely of moderate value for commuting bats, with hedgerows and trees along the boundaries linking to a recognisable corridor of connectivity offsite, linking to wider woodland blocks in the wider environment.

Breeding birds

- 6.14 In relation to WCA Schedule 1 specially protected bird species such as barn owl (*Tyto alba*), the site provides no suitable nesting platforms, direct evidence, or evidence of historic nesting, despite favourable hunting habitat being present within the surrounding area. Direct impacts to specially protected bird species can likely be ruled out as a result of the proposals.
- 6.15 In relation to more common bird species, a number of swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) nest cups and faecal splashing were observed throughout the various B3 structures, with each of the open stables providing suitable nesting platforms.

7.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

Bats

- 7.1 Based upon the findings of the DBW and associated GLTA, covered through sections 5.0 – 6.0 of the report and supported by **Appendix I**, B1 (the dwelling) at Ferns Farm is duly categorised as pertaining to a bat roost suitability of '**Moderate**', in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023), triggering the requirement for further surveys (see **Figure 7.1** below).

Table 7.2. Recommended minimum number of survey visits for presence/absence surveys to give confidence in a negative result for structures (also recommended for trees but unlikely to give confidence in a negative result).		
Low roost suitability or PRF-I	Moderate roost suitability	High roost suitability or PRF-M
One survey visit. One dusk emergence survey ^a (structures). No further surveys required (trees).	Two separate dusk emergence survey visits ^b .	Three separate dusk emergence survey visits ^b .

Figure 7.1 – BCT extract on 'Moderate' suitability criteria

- 7.2 It is recommended that **two dusk emergence surveys** are conducted at the site within the active season of bats (May – August, extending into September in some cases), in order to establish if / how the building is being used by bats, and if so, identify the species present, abundance, roost locations and flight lines around the site following emergence. A total of **three surveyors** would be required to cover the potential roosting features as described for each survey, and the surveys must be spaced a minimum of three weeks apart in accordance with current BCT guidance.
- 7.3 The applicant should be aware that, if during further surveys, evidence is gathered that confirms bat(s) or their roost(s) are found on site and will be impacted upon, then a Protected Species licence may be required to legally commence with the proposals.
- 7.4 Natural England provides information and guidance about licensing and the following extract is included in that guidance:

"If you intend to apply for a licence for development, you are advised to seek the guidance of a consultant ecologist. Natural England's view is that a licence is needed if the consultant ecologist, based on survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, considers that on balance the proposed activity is reasonably likely to result in an offence under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

If the consultant Ecologist, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, considers that on balance the proposed activity is reasonably unlikely to result in an offence being committed then no licence is required. However, in these circumstances Natural England would urge that reasonable precautions be taken to minimise the effect on European protected species should they be found during the course of the activity. If European protected species are found, cease the work until you have assessed whether you can proceed without committing an offence. A licence should be applied for if an offence/s is unavoidable, and the work should not commence until a licence is obtained.

The application should be completed by the developer and a consultant ecologist. The ecologist will need to be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of Natural England that they have the relevant skills and knowledge of the species concerned.

- 7.5 Where more detailed bat surveys are recommended by the Ecologist, following an initial daytime investigation, then Local Planning Authorities, on the advice of their ecological advisors, may not determine the application until such time that all relevant information is gathered, i.e., by conducting dusk / dawn surveys. The advice that is provided by the ecological advisors is also in accordance with the obligations placed upon Local Authorities by way of its duties under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Therefore, it would be prudent to make enquiries to the relevant departmental Planning Officer before submitting a Planning Application that includes an ecological survey report that recommends more detailed surveys.
- 7.6 The other buildings onsite (**B2 – B3**) are categorised as pertaining to a bat roost suitability of '**None**', in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023) (see **Figure 7.2** below).

Table 4.1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.		
Potential suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	Potential flight-paths and foraging 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).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).

Figure 7.2 – BCT extract on 'None' suitability criteria

- 7.7 No further surveys or supervisory works are required in relation to trees, with it understood that none will be affected by the proposals.
- 7.8 Installation of overly harsh artificial lighting as part of any development that exceeds current levels may have a negative impact upon foraging / commuting bats in the landscape, subject to their presence, particularly if increased light spillage occurs in areas of that are currently free from illumination, particularly including the trees at the site boundaries. A bat-sensitive lighting plan is therefore recommended in order to avoid potential impacts to bats that may use the surrounding treelines. Several options to consider have been listed below, though the reader is referred to the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night' guidelines (August 2023) for further information.

Appropriate luminaire specifications: Light sources, lamps, LEDs and their fittings come in a myriad of different specifications which a lighting professional can help to select. However, the following should be considered when choosing luminaires and their potential impact on Key Habitats and features:

- All luminaires should lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, compact fluorescent sources should not be used.
- LED luminaires should be used where possible due to their sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability.
- A warm white light source (2700Kelvin or lower) should be adopted to reduce blue light component.
- Light sources should feature peak wavelengths higher than 550nm to avoid the component of light most disturbing to bats (Stone, 2012).
- Internal luminaires can be recessed (as opposed to using a pendant fitting) where installed in proximity to windows to reduce glare and light spill.
- Waymarking inground markers (low output with cowls or similar to minimise upward light spill) to delineate path edges.

- Column heights should be carefully considered to minimise light spill and glare visibility. This should be balanced with the potential for increased numbers of columns and upward light reflectance as with bollards.
- Only luminaires with a negligible or zero Upward Light Ratio, and with good optical control, should be considered - See ILP GN01.
- Luminaires should always be mounted horizontally, with no light output above 90° and/or no upward tilt.
- Where appropriate, external security lighting should be set on motion-sensors and set to as short a possible a timer as the risk assessment will allow. For most general residential purposes, a 1 or 2 minute timer is likely to be appropriate.
- Use of a Central Management System (CMS) with additional web-enabled devices to light on demand.
- Use of motion sensors for local authority street lighting may not be feasible unless the authority has the potential for smart metering through a CMS.
- The use of bollard or low-level downward-directional luminaires is strongly discouraged. This is due to a considerable range of issues, such as unacceptable glare, poor illumination efficiency, unacceptable upward light output, increased upward light scatter from surfaces and poor facial recognition which makes them unsuitable for most sites. Therefore, they should only be considered in specific cases where the lighting professional and project manager are able to resolve these issues.
- Only if all other options have been explored, accessories such as baffles, hoods or louvres can be used to reduce light spill and direct it only to where it is needed. However, due to the lensing and fine cut-off control of the beam inherent in modern LED luminaires, the effect of cowls and baffles is often far less than anticipated and so should not be relied upon solely.

Birds

- 7.9 No impacts are applicable in relation to any Sch.1 (WCA) specially protected bird species such as barn owl, and no further surveys or recommendations are necessary in relation to specially protected birds, with no viability of nesting within the site boundary.
- 7.10 Regarding wider breeding bird species, evidence of nesting swallows was observed within the various B3 stable structures, which are likely to be actively used within the nesting bird season of March – August, inclusive.

NB: *All wild birds (with only minor exceptions) and their nests whilst being built or containing eggs or dependant young are protected from destruction, damage and disturbance under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is a punishable offence to interfere in any way with an active nest.*

- 7.11 As such, the demolition of any of the stable structures should therefore be carried out outside of the breeding bird season, typically March – September inclusive. For works within the breeding bird season, any areas that can support nesting birds should be checked by a professional Ecologist for nesting birds within 48 hours or less prior to works commencing.

Point 3.24 of the British Standards Publication 42020:2013 defines a professional ecologist as: *“a person who has, through relevant education, training or experience, gained recognised qualifications and expertise in the field of ecology and environmental management.”*

- 7.12 Where / if active nests are / have been located by the Ecologist, then any works which may affect them would have to be delayed until the young have fledged and the nest has been abandoned naturally, this can be aided, for example, via implementation of appropriate buffer zone(s) around the nest site (typically 5 – 10 metres) in which no disturbance is permitted until the nest is no longer in use. This would have to be coordinated through the expert judgement of the professional ecologist and species pending.

8.0 Biodiversity Statement

- 8.1 Based on the information gathered during the diurnal assessment and provided to the author, Ferns Farm is **exempt** from the Biodiversity Gain Planning Condition; the site meets the Householder Application exemption.

9.0 Bibliography

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Appendix I: Site Photographs



Plate 1 – *Southern aspect of dwelling (B1)*



Plate 2 – *Further view of southern aspect of B1*



Plate 3 – *B1 as seen from the west*



Plate 4 – *Eastern elevation of B1*



Plate 5 – *Character of accessed loft space in B1*



Plate 6 – *BRM within loft space*



Plate 7 – *Gaps at gable verges of B1*



Plate 8 – *Gaps beneath fascia of B1*



Plate 9 – *Example of PRF beneath ridge tiles of B1*



Plate 10 – *Example of small number of lifted slates of B1*



Plate 11 – *Character of B2*



Plate 12 – *Example of B3 structures to west of site*



Plate 13 – *Further B3 structure*



Plate 14 – *Swallow nest cup observed within B3*



Plate 15 – *Further swallow nest cup within another B3 structure, with faecal splashing beneath*



Plate 16 – *Proximity of woodland to the north of the site*

Appendix II: Biodiversity Enhancement: General Recommendations

Breeding Birds – House Sparrow

The sparrow terrace has been designed to help redress the balance of falling house sparrow numbers. The current UK population is now half of what it previously was in 1980 and this is widely attributed to habitat destruction and lack of suitable nesting spaces. House sparrows are social birds and like to nest in company, therefore, this terrace provides ideal nesting opportunities for three families. The terrace can be fixed on to the surface of a suitable wall or incorporated into the wall. It is suitable for all types of buildings.



Breeding Birds – Starling

Starling populations have declined dramatically in recent years and are now on the Red List of birds of high conservation concern. Loss of habitat is one of the major pressures on this species and household renovations and new buildings offer much fewer nesting sites than have previously been available. Providing these birds with a safe and secure habitat and nesting environment is a great way to help ensure their future survival.

This Vivara Pro WoodStone® Starling Nest Box has a 45mm diameter entrance hole which makes it ideal for starlings. It should be sited on an external wall or tree at a height of at least 1.5m using an aluminium nail or screw and wall plug (not included). Site near to vegetation if possible as this will provide additional protection and cover.



Breeding Birds – Other

This traditional design has proved to be highly effective in attracting Robins, as well as other small species such as Black Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher and Wren. It is designed to be installed on the walls of houses, barns, garden sheds or other buildings and should be hung so that the entrance is to one side (at an angle of 90° to the wall). The front panel can be easily removed for cleaning.

This type of box should not be made conspicuous on a tree or bush because small predators can enter through the unprotected opening. By hanging on a wall, predators won't be able to reach the box. Alternatively hide the box in Ivy, Honeysuckle or other climbing plants.



Invertebrates - Bee bricks

The Bee Brick can be used in place of a standard brick or block in construction to create habitat for solitary bees. Alternatively, it can be used as a standalone bee house in your garden or wild patch. It will provide much needed nesting space for solitary bee species such as red mason bees and leafcutter bees, both of which are non-aggressive.



Each Bee Brick contains cavities in which solitary bees can lay their eggs before sealing the entrance with mud and chewed-up vegetation. The offspring will emerge the following spring and the cycle will begin again. Each cavity goes part way into the brick, which is solid at the back. Bee Bricks should be placed in a warm sunny spot on a south-facing wall at a minimum height of 1m, with no vegetation obstructing the holes. It is highly recommended that bee-friendly plants should be located nearby so that the bees using the bricks have food, otherwise it is unlikely that the brick will be used. Available in a choice of four colours: white grey, dark grey, yellow and red.

Specification:

- * Material: Concrete
- * Origin: Cornwall, UK
- * Dimensions: W 215mm x D 105mm x H 65mm
- * Weight: 2.9kg
- * Colours: White grey, yellow, dark grey and red

Native Planting and/or Landscaping

New feature landscaping should incorporate native woody plants as opposed to non-native species that are of significantly less benefit to biodiversity. Species such as Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) are native and will provide a valuable resource for a myriad of wildlife as opposed to non-native, exotic species which are generally much less effective, particularly to pollinator groups including bees, butterflies and moths.

Suitable Trees	Suitable Woody Shrubs
English Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>)
Rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)	Honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>)
Wild Service Tree (<i>Sorbus torminialis</i>)	Guelder Rose (<i>Viburnum opulus</i>)
Silver Birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>)	Elder (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>)
Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	Wild Privet (<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>)
Goat Willow (<i>Salix capraea</i>)	Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>)
Beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)	
Wild Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i>)	