



Church Farm, Lower Seagry, SN15 5EP

Preliminary Roost Assessment

A report for Heather Waddington

February 2023

Report Reference: 263/R1/2023/V1

Rev No.	Status	Author	Date
1	Draft for Review	CG	24/02/2023
1	Final	CG	24/02/2023

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Herdwick Ecology was commissioned by Heather Waddington to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment at Church Farm, Lower Seagry, SN15 5EP (Grid Reference: ST95878084). The proposals include the conversion of one of the existing agricultural barns and adjoining open fronted sheds into a new residential unit.
- 1.2 This report has been prepared to support a planning application and aims to:
- Describe and evaluate the buildings and its potential to support bats and whether further surveys are required;
 - Identify potential bat mitigation measures for incorporation into the design;
 - Set out further opportunities for net gain and ecological enhancements in line with relevant planning policy, legislation and other published guidance.
- 1.3 This report has been prepared by Ceri Griffiths, Director at Herdwick Ecology, who is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Reference is made to the Good Practice Bat Survey Guidelines¹ and BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of practice for planning and development²

2.0 Legislation and Planning Policies

- 2.1 In carrying out this assessment relevant legislation, planning policies, and best practice guidelines were consulted and include:
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
 - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
 - Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000;
 - Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;
 - National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF);
 - Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy 50

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021

- 2.2 National planning policy on biodiversity and conservation is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This emphasises that the planning system should seek to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity wherever possible as part of the Government's

¹ Collins, J (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd. Ed.) The Bat Conservation Trust, London (p.35)

² BSI (British Standards Institute) BS4202:2013 *Biodiversity – A code of practice for planning and development*. BSI, London.

commitment to halting declines in biodiversity and establishing coherent and resilient ecological networks. Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, is of particular relevance to this report as it relates to ecology and biodiversity. Relevant policies are set out below:

- 2.3 Paragraph 179: *“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; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; 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...”*
- 2.4 Paragraph 180 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) Relates to developments affecting SSSIs*
 - c) Relates to developments affecting irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland*
 - d) “Development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.”*
- 2.5 The Government Circular 06/2005, which is referred to by the NPPF, provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.6 The Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document ('the plan') was formally adopted on 20 January 2015. The plan provides a positive and flexible overarching planning policy framework for Wiltshire for the period up to 2026. Policy 50 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' states that: *'Development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. There is an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term.... All development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the*

lifetime of the development. The policy goes on to state that all developments should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

Species Protection

- 2.9 All species of bat found in the UK are listed under Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are afforded protection under Section 9(4) (b&c) and Section 9(5) of Part 1 of the Act.
- 2.10 Under this legislation, a person is guilty of an offence if a person intentionally or recklessly:
- disturbs any bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection;
 - obstructs access to any structure or place which any bat uses for shelter or protection.
- 2.11 In addition the protection afforded through UK legislation, further protection is provided to a small group of species, commonly referred to as 'European Protected Species' under the Conservation of Habitats and Species 2017 (as amended) (also known as the Habitats Regulations). Relevant species for this site that are included within this legislation include great crested newts.
- 2.12 With regards to European Protected Species listed under Schedule 2 of the Act, it is an offence to:
- Intentionally or deliberately capture or kill, or intentionally injure the animal;
 - Deliberately disturb the animal or intentionally or recklessly disturb them in a place used for shelter or protection;
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place;
 - Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection.
- 2.13 The NERC Act also listed species of principle importance under Section 41 of the Act. This places further duties on the LPA to have due regard for the conservation of these species, such as hedgehog or certain bird species, which may be present on-site.

3.0 Methodology

Data Search

- 3.1 A data search was undertaken to look for designated sites and records of protected and notable species. This can provide important contextual information to gain an understanding of the site and

surrounds. Online sources were reviewed, such as MAGIC³ and NBN Gateway⁴. In addition, the Wiltshire Council planning portal was searched for nearby applications.

- 3.2 A data search request from the local environmental records centre was not considered necessary to inform this report due to the scale of the proposals and size of the site.

Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 3.3 A Preliminary Roost Assessment was undertaken on 16th February 2023 and included an inspection of agricultural barn and adjacent open sided sheds, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Each building was systematically inspected, and the exterior assessed, with the aid of binoculars (Pentax 10 X 36), endoscope and high powered torch, where necessary. A description of the building was made, and the location of any potential access points or roost locations were noted.
- 3.4 The surrounding habitat was also assessed for its suitability for foraging and commuting quality.
- 3.5 The internal assessment involved a search to look for bats, or evidence of bats such as droppings or staining around common roost locations. A high-powered torch and endoscope were used where necessary to inspect the building more closely.
- 3.6 Any evidence of nesting birds were also noted.

³ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

⁴ <https://nbnatlas.org/>



Figure 1: Site plan illustrating location of the barn within wider farm complex

- 3.7 Following the inspection, an assessment was made of the building's suitability to support a bat roost, following the criteria set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Suitability Assessment⁵

Suitability	Roosting Habitat
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. 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

⁵ Collins, J (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd. Ed.) The Bat Conservation Trust, London (p.35)

	basis or by larger numbers of bats
Moderate	A building 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
High	A building 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.

- 3.8 In many situations it is not possible to inspect all locations where bats may be present, or any bats that may be present, may not be visible at the time of the survey. Hence, an absence of bats does not necessary mean that a roost is not present and further activity surveys may be required to confirm presence or absence.

4.0 Baseline Conditions

Site Location

- 4.1 The site lies in a rural location to the south of the village of Lower Seagry. The wider farm complex comprises the main farmhouse and Grade II listed gatehouse/tithe barn with a number of modern agricultural barns within a large farmyard. The agricultural barn proposed for conversion lies on the northern edge of the farm complex. The River Avon lies 300m to the south of the barn.
- 4.2 The wider landscape predominately comprises agricultural and equestrian land, with a mix of arable and pasture/silage crop, interspersed by intensively managed hedgerows, with scattered mature trees. The M4 lies 900m to the south. A parcel of deciduous woodland and woodpasture/parkland – a priority habitat – lies 1.2km to the east, with parcels of floodplain grazing marsh to the north and south along the River Avon corridor.



Plate 1: Site Location (Google, February 2023)

Data Search

- 4.3 There are no designated sites within 2km of the site and the site does not lie within any specific bat consultation zones or SSSI risk area.
- 4.4 Three bat European Protected Species (EPS) licences were identified within 4km of the site. These included:
- Brown long-eared roost resting place 2.8km to the southwest (dated 2018-2019);
 - Common and soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat resting place 2.29km to the north (dated 2016-2021); and
 - Common and soprano pipistrelle bat resting place 2.8km southwest dated (2015)

Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 4.5 The barn is constructed of single skin breeze block with a shallow pitched asbestos sheet roof. There are large metal doors and timber windows on the southern elevation. The asbestos barge boards on the gables are well sealed albeit with ivy growth on the western gable.



Plate 3: Front (southern) elevation of the main barn



Plate 4: Interior view of main barn

- 4.6 Internally, the barn is light and open to the asbestos roof, with the timber rafters. There is no separate roof void or any potential day roosting opportunities. No bats or evidence of bats was identified and the barn is considered to have negligible potential for bats.
- 4.7 The open sided sheds adjoins the main barn on the eastern elevation. There are two sheds divided by a breeze block wall. They are of the same construction as the main barn, with metal supports along the open fronted section. The sheds lack any potential roosting features and no bats or evidence of bats were noted. The sheds are considered to have negligible potential for bats.



Plate 5: Open sided barns to the east of the main barn

- 4.8 No bird nest were noted within the buildings, although the open fronted sheds could offer potential for species such as swallows. Precautionary working methods and enhancement measures have been included in the following section.

5.0 Avoidance, Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

- 5.1 The buildings are considered to offer negligible potential for roosting bats and hence no further surveys are required to inform a future planning application.
- 5.2 In line with National and Local planning policies, developments should seek to ensure the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations. Therefore the following section sets out avoidance and mitigation measures that should be implemented, together with enhancement opportunities, with the aim of delivering a net gain in biodiversity. There will be no anticipated habitat

loss as a result of the proposals and there are significant opportunities to improve and enhance the wider habitats through a sensitive planting/habitat management scheme, together with provision of habitat boxes for bats and birds.

- 5.3 It is recommended that two wall mounted bat boxes⁶ are placed on the western elevation of the main barn, close to the gable apex and away from any disturbance from light. Sparrow nest boxes⁷ should be placed on the northern elevation, overlooking the adjacent fields.
- 5.4 In addition, swallow nest cups⁸ can be placed within any retained open barns.
- 5.5 Any new lighting will need to be sensitively designed to avoid all impacts to the hedgerows/trees and adjacent buildings to ensure a dark continuous corridor is maintained. Any lighting should adhere to the principles set out in the ILP Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK⁹.

Other Mitigation Measures

- 5.6 The following measures should also be incorporated into the design and construction approach:
- It is not anticipated that the proposals will require any vegetation clearance. Should this change and the removal of scrub or denser areas of vegetation, then these works should avoid the nesting bird season (which generally runs from March to August – although swallows can nest into September), If works are to be undertaken during the active nesting season then a pre commencement inspection should be undertaken. If a nest is identified, an appropriate buffer will need to be implemented, or works should wait until the checks have fledged.
 - Should any vegetation/site clearance be required, the areas should first be inspected and a sensitive clearance approach adopted.
 - Foundation trenches and all excavations must either be covered overnight or must have scaffolding boards, or similar, placed within them to ensure that any animals that fall in are able to escape.
 - Raise stored materials (that might act as temporary resting places for species such as amphibians and reptiles) off the ground, e.g. on pallets.
- 5.10 Taking the above into account, no ecological constraints have been identified and hence it is considered the proposed development does not contravene the local planning policies and will seek to deliver a net gain in biodiversity in line NPPF.

⁶ [1FF Schwegler Bat Box With Built-in Wooden Rear Panel | NHBS Practical Conservation Equipment](#)

⁷ [Woodstone Sparrow Nest Box \(wildcare.co.uk\)](#)

⁸ [WoodStone Swallow Nest Bowl \(Plywood board mounted\) | NHBS Practical Conservation Equipment](#)

⁹ <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>