



Sparrow Farm, Wiltshire
Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA)
For James Bloomer

23rd March 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 Commission

Ellendale Environmental Limited was commissioned by LPC (Trull) Ltd., on behalf of their client Mr James Bloomer, to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for a barn ('the target building') at Sparrow Farm, Lanhill, Chippenham, SN14 6LX ('the site'). The PRA was undertaken to support a planning application for the conversion of the barn to a residential dwelling ('granny annex') adjacent to the main property at the farm.

1.2 Site Details

The target building is located in Lanhill in Wiltshire, approximately 2.5km west of Chippenham, at OS grid reference ST 87607 75076.

1.3 Bat Conservation

British bats

There are 18 species of bats resident in Britain, 17 of which are known to breed. These are from two families, namely the Rhinolophidae (the two horseshoe bat species) and the 15 species of vesper/evening bats (the Vespertilionidae). All British bats are insectivorous and locate their prey using ultrasonic calls through a biological system known as echolocation.

During summer months, female bats form nursery colonies in trees and buildings, where they raise infants. In the winter, males and females hibernate in trees, buildings and underground structures.

Conservation status of British bats

The general consensus in Britain and Europe is that virtually all bat species are declining and are vulnerable. Our understanding of population status is poor, as there is very little historical data for most bat species. Certain species, such as the horseshoe bat, are better understood and have well documented contractions in range and population size.



Given this general picture of decline, the UK Government (within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan) has designated eight species of bats as priority species (these being soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelle (Wales only) greater and lesser horseshoe bats, barbastelle, Bechstein's, noctule and brown long-eared bat). These plans provide an action pathway whereby the maintenance and restoration of former population levels are envisaged.

Legal status of British bats

All bats and their roosts in England were originally protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Subsequent amendments to the legislation for England (and Wales) has removed bats from most of the provisions of the Act; however, it remains an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; and/or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place that a bat uses for shelter or protection.

All British bat species are listed in Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive and are fully protected through The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994. All bat species found in England are classed as European protected species. They receive full protection under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended).

These regulations make it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure, or kill a bat;
- Harass a bat or group of bats;
- Disturb a bat in a roost (any structure or place it uses for shelter or protection);
- Disturb a bat while it is rearing or otherwise caring for its young
- Obstruct access to a bat roost or otherwise deny an animal use of a roost;
- Disturb a bat in a manner or in circumstances likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species; and/or



- Disturb a bat while it is migrating or hibernating.

The legislation, although not strictly affording protection to foraging grounds, does protect bat roost sites. Bat roosts are protected at all times of the year, regardless of whether or not bats are present at the time.

It's also an offence to:

- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal (whether or not deliberately or recklessly); and/or
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any wild bat (or any part or derivative of one) obtained after 10th June 1994.

Where development is proposed that would result in an offence under the Habitats and Species Regulations, a European Protected Species (EPS) licence needs to be granted by Natural England (NE) to permit an act that would otherwise be unlawful. This provides for a specific derogation from the legislation, to prevent a legal infringement occurring. To obtain an EPS licence for development it must be demonstrated that the purpose of the act to be licensed is for:

- *"Preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment"* (Regulation 55(2)(e)).

In addition, NE will not grant an EPS licence unless they are satisfied that:

- *"There is no satisfactory alternative"* (Regulation 55(9)(a)); and
- *"The action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range"* (Regulation 55(9)(b)).



1.4 Nesting Bird Legislation

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended) affords all wild breeding birds protection by making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- Kill, injure or take a bird;
- Take, damage, destroy or interfere with a nest of any bird while it is in use or being built;
- Obstruct or prevent any bird from using its nest; and/or
- Take or destroy an egg of any bird.

Reckless acts would include disregard of mitigation aimed at protecting birds, resulting in the killing, injury and/or disturbance of any bird or bird resting place.

This legislation means that birds are fully protected in the UK, and that any planned activity, which may affect them, requires prior consultation with the appropriate statutory nature conservation organisation (in this case NE).



2. Methodology

2.1 Overview

Survey work undertaken in relation to a proposed development needs to be conducted under a scientific/conservation licence issued by, in this case, NE. The work is normally conducted by an environmental consultant on the behalf of the developer and the consultant will advise on the necessary course of further action with respect to licences, mitigation and compensation measures.

A number of recognised survey techniques are available to the consultant, such as:

- Natural England guidelines (A.J. Mitchell-Jones [2004], *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*, English Nature. ISBN 1 85716 781 3), which provide generic technical advice on bat mitigation; and
- Hundt L (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*, 4th Edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London. ISBN-13: 978-1-872745-96-1.

The developer must:

- Demonstrate that adequate surveys have been undertaken to establish the presence or absence of bats, to predict the potential impact on them, their resting sites or breeding roosts;
- If bats or their roosts are discovered, bring proposals forward that will integrate provision for bats into any design that will compensate and mitigate for any impact during development; and
- Provide sufficient survey information that will support a licence application under the Habitats Directive should bats be discovered.

Where bat species are using a site, it will be necessary to mitigate the impacts of the development upon the population(s). These would include measures that remove or reduce any damaging effects on the animals or their roosts.



In most cases a package of compensation measures will be required to accommodate any loss of breeding or resting-places, and the timing of works will need to be synchronised with the life-cycles of the effected species.

This collective package of mitigation and compensation measures should allow the conservation status of the animals to be at least maintained by the development. With careful thought, the conservation status may even be enhanced by development. This is usually most easily achieved by early ecological input.

In the case of sites where bats are present, a development licence from NE will be required to conduct works affecting bats.

2.2 Bat Survey Licence

The survey was undertaken by Christopher Parsons, Associate of Ellendale Environmental. Christopher holds a bat survey licence (Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 (Bat Survey Level 2), registration number CLS-2025-85808-CL18-BAT), with respect to the Conservation Regulations 1994. The licence is valid for all counties of England, until 31st December 2030. Christopher has over 10 years' professional experience of undertaking ecological surveys and working with bat species across the UK.

The survey was assisted by Douglas Fraser, Consultant Ecologist at Ellendale Environmental. Douglas is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and has over six years' of environment sector experience including bat emergence and re-entry surveys (BERS) and PRAs.

2.3 Survey Objectives

On the basis of the brief provided by the client, Ellendale Environmental conducted survey work to fulfil the following needs:

- Obtain baseline information on the habitat features suitable for bat species;
- Determine the presence/likely absence of bat species within the site and any activity at or near the site; and
- Determine the type, extent and pattern of detected usage.



In practice this was achieved by a physical inspection of the target building, a search for live animals and/or other signs indicating their current or previous presence.

2.4 Survey Methodology

A physical internal and external inspection of the target building was conducted on Monday 9th March 2026. The internal and external areas of the building were searched for signs of bats and evidence of them roosting.

Table 1: Survey weather conditions for physical surveys

SURVEY DATE	TEMPERATURE (°C)	WIND SPEED (MPH)	CLOUD COVER/ PRECIPITATION
09/03/26	14.0	Avg. 0.1 Max. 0.6	40% cloud cover & dry

All suitable features were assessed externally and internally. A CLU-10 searchlight and an endoscope was used to search dark areas, crevices and potential bat roosting locations. The survey included a search for bats, and other signs of bats that give an indication of past or present occupancy, including droppings (which are characteristic and can often be speciated), signs of staining, characteristic odours and/or accumulations of prey items.

2.5 Data Search

Publicly available databases, including the NBN Atlas, were consulted for historical evidence of bats within 5km of the target building.

2.6 Constraints

While the roof structure was inspected internally and externally, due to the health risks from an asbestos roof, no boards were removed along the internal structure in case this dislodged asbestos material and micro fibres. However, gaps in the plasterboard enabled the cavity space to be seen and assessed for signs of bats.

Whilst no biological survey can guarantee that all cues and signs of protected or notable species will be recorded, Ellendale Environmental is confident that all key fauna present during the survey were noted.



3. Results

3.1 Data Search

A 2km data search for existing designated sites including those with particular importance for bats and birds was undertaken using MAGIC¹ and the NBN Atlas².

Statutory designated sites

No statutory designated sites are located within 2km.

The site is in the Impact Risk Zones for several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), namely West Yatton Down, Rack Hill, Dank's Down and Truckle Hill, the closest of which is located 2.1km to the north-west. It is also in the Impact Risk Zones for Honeybrook Farm, Colerne Park and Monk's Wood SSSIs, the closest of which is located 2.6km to the south-west.

Non-statutory designated sites

The site is in the Great Western Community Forest area.

Local biodiversity sites

The site is within 2km of BAP Priority Habitat Inventory areas and wider valuable habitats, including wood-pasture and parkland, traditional orchard, ancient woodland, purple moor grass and rush pasture, lowland meadows, lowland calcareous grassland, and good quality semi-improved grassland.

¹ Magic database. <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> Accessed on 04/03/26.

² NBN atlas database. [NBN Atlas - UK's largest collection of biodiversity information](#). Accessed on 04/03/26.



Bats

The following bat species were identified within 5km of the site boundaries by the data search:

- Greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*³ (five records, the most recent of which is located 4.1km west of the site, recorded in 2002);
- Whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus*⁴ (two records, the most recent of which is located 4.4km east of the site, recorded in 2013); and
- Serotine bat *Cnephaeus serotinus*⁵ (16 records, the most recent of which is located 1.9km south-west of the site, recorded in 2025);

An additional eight species of bat have been recorded within 5km of the site; however, due to licensing restrictions, the locations of these species cannot be included in this report: Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, noctule bat *Nyctalus noctula*, Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Natterers bat *Myotis nattereri* and barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*.

Birds

Approximately 79 bird species have been recorded within 2km of the site and are shown on the NBN Atlas; however, none of these species are located within the site boundary.

³ NBN Trust (2026). *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* on the NBN Atlas: [Rhinolophus ferrumequinum](https://ror.org/00mcxye41) on The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas. <https://ror.org/00mcxye41> [Page visited 04/03/26].

⁴ NBN Trust (2026). *Myotis mystacinus* on the NBN Atlas: [Myotis mystacinus](https://ror.org/00mcxye41) on The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas. <https://ror.org/00mcxye41> [Page visited 04/03/26].

⁵ NBN Trust (2026). *Cnephaeus serotinus* on the NBN Atlas: [Cnephaeus serotinus](https://ror.org/00mcxye41) on The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas. <https://ror.org/00mcxye41> [Page visited 04/03/26].



3.2 Site Description

The target building comprises a barn with a small garage space in the central area, and two small stable areas on either side. It is approximately 20m long by 5m wide with a pitched roof, and all spaces are currently used for storage.

There is an access road hardstanding area to the south of the building, and to the north there is an area of semi-improved grassland (mown and managed) and a hedge. The wider landscape is primarily agricultural with areas of hedgerow, woodland, grassland, wood pasture and parkland, some residential properties, and the A420 approximately 300m to the south.

Figure 1: target building & red line boundary (Google Earth Pro latest imagery 06/08/2023)





3.3 Physical Bat Survey

The external walls of the target building are constructed primarily from stone with a concrete block upward extension, and the walls have been rendered on the southern side. These external walls are intact with no visible cracks or gaps where bats could gain access for roosting.

The external roof is constructed of corrugated cement sheets, with some areas covered in moss and lichen, suggesting that it is wet. There are no sections of the roof that had lifted or appeared loose from a ground-level inspection; however, there is a gap to the east at the apex of the gable where the roof overhangs the end wall of the building.

Photograph 1: showing external view of the target building (facing north-west)



No evidence of bat activity was found on the external area of the target building to indicate that bats are using these areas for roosting.



The central garage area has a timber barn door on the northern side of the building but is open to the south. There are wooden doors to the stable areas.

The internal roof structure of the building is constructed from a traditional timber frame that has been painted. The ceiling is comprised of painted plasterboard panels, some of which are broken and have gaps exposing the single layer of corrugated cement sheets above. The plasterboard ceiling panels and timber frame shows signs of damp and mold, indicating water ingress from the cement sheets above making them unsuitable for roosting bats that require dry and stable conditions for roosting.

Photograph 2: showing an internal view of the target building (facing west)



Between the stable areas, there are timber board partitions/dividers, which are around 2m tall. The lower sections of these walls appears to be the same timber board structure as the stable partitions, but with the addition of plasterboard panelling above to the ceiling, and a supporting metal structure.



These plasterboard walls had some large cracks and gaps. There is clay brick flooring throughout the building, and at the time of the survey, all the building areas were being used for storage.

Photograph 3: showing gap in a ceiling panel within central garage area



No signs of bats were found anywhere internally or externally around the building, such as staining, feeding remains or droppings. This included on some surfaces such as a white plastic sheet over a storage box on the floor beneath the ridge beam (where bats could roost), which had accumulated dust, dirt and cobwebs over time, but did not have any bat droppings that would likely be highly visible. Animal droppings were found near the external wall on the northern side of the building in the interior of the stable area to the west, but these were too large to be bat droppings and were most likely left by rats *Rattus sp.* were found. This further reduces the suitability for bats as rats will predate roosting bats.

In addition, the presence of dense areas of cobwebs in the plasterboard panel gaps suggests that these are not used by bats to access the roof space.



Given the absence of ideal roosting features along the corrugated asbestos roof, the open and exposed structure, the cold and damp internal conditions, and no signs of bat activity, the target building is assessed as providing Negligible Roost Potential for bats.

Nesting birds

At the time of the survey, bird foraging activity in the immediate area of the site was minimal; however, a robin *Erithacus rubecula* was seen and heard on the roof of the barn. No signs of active nesting were recorded during the survey; however, three old birds' nests were found in both stable areas and in the central garage area. Two of these appear to be barn swallow *Hirundo rustica* nests, while another is likely a wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* nest, based on the size, shape, nesting materials and locations.

No old or active birds' nests were found around the exterior of the target building.

Photograph 4: showing an old birds' nest in the stable area, most likely barn swallow





Photograph 5: showing an old birds' nest, most likely wren





4. Conclusions

4.1 Conclusion

The PRA included external and internal inspection of the target building which is comprised of a small central garage area and two stable areas. The building has a timber frame and beams, corrugated asbestos roof and plasterboard ceiling, stone masonry walls with concrete block upward extension that have been plastered and painted, and clay brick flooring.

The building has many access/egress points including a gap at the gable apex, and broken plasterboard ceiling panels; however, it is open to the south, has poor thermal insulation properties and has areas of damp and mold. As such, the internal environment is likely too unstable, wet and cold for bats. In addition, the corrugated asbestos roof does not offer bats a suitable structure to cling onto. No signs of bats were found such as droppings, staining or feeding remains. The target building is therefore assessed as having Negligible roosting suitability for bats, and no further survey are recommended.

The presence of foraging individuals of bird species and three old birds' nests, including barn swallow, in the eastern stable area indicates that the target building offers some habitat opportunities for birds.

4.2 Main Recommendations

General

Site personnel should be made aware of protected species and if any are recorded on site, all works should stop, and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted.

Bats

Given the findings of the survey, it is very unlikely that bats are roosting in the target building. Notwithstanding this, it is advised that precautionary working methods are undertaken during works to the building, including:



- Site personnel will be made aware of the potential presence of bats and nesting birds through toolbox talks;
- If a bat or nesting bird is found, or the presence of these is suspected, all work must stop immediately, and a licensed bat worker and/or a suitably experienced ecologist must be contacted for advice;
- Bats must not be handled under any circumstances, and active nests must not be destroyed; and
- An ecologist will assess a potential roost space (if identified/found) and/or active nest and inform NE of the proposed actions to be undertaken.

In addition to these avoidance and mitigation measures, to enhance roosting opportunities for bats, it is recommended that a Beaumaris Woodstone® Bat Box⁶ is installed on the western gable of the target building.

This box is made entirely from Woodstone®, a robust material comprising concrete and wood fibres. This means that the box has excellent insulating properties maintaining a more consistent temperature throughout the year and provides excellent protection from predators. The Beaumaris box has a single narrow entrance, making it suitable for crevice-roosting bats such as common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Nathusius's pipistrelle, Brandt's bat and whiskered bat. The box's interior has a rough surface for bats to cling to and the front of the box features a subtle but attractive imprint of a bat in flight.

⁶ [Beaumaris Woodstone® Bat Box | NHBS Practical Conservation Equipment](#)



Figure 2: showing a Beaumaris Woodstone® bat box



Nesting birds

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Should nesting birds be found within the target building prior to the commencement of works, these areas would need to be protected from disturbance until the young have fledged naturally.

Physical measures could be considered to prevent access for birds and deter nesting prior to the nesting season (i.e., from March) following best practice guidance. Old bird nests that are not in use can be removed outside of the breeding bird season.

Nesting opportunities could then be provided, upon completion of the works, with the addition of bird boxes, to be placed along the eaves and ridge of the converted barn.



As such, it is recommended that a bird box for house sparrow *Passer domesticus* is installed on the northern façade of the building, which would provide nesting opportunities for this red-listed species of conservation concern.

The RSPB Sparrow Terrace Nest Box⁷ with 32mm entrance holes is recommended. This box can fit three families of sparrow and is designed to prevent intruder birds from perching at the entrance. It is constructed of FSC-certified pine wood grown in the UK that contains natural resins that protects and preserves the wood. The pine wood and the design of the box also creates an internal environment that is well ventilated and insulated.

Figure 3: sparrow terrace nest box (from RSPB website)



⁷ [RSPB Sparrow terrace nest box](#)