Coles Farm, Alcombe

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

August 2025

Client: WebsterHart
Report Ref: SEB3147_01 V2
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Non-Technical Summary

Site Location	Coles Farm, Alcombe, Box, SN13 8QL (grid reference: ST 81116 69196).
Scope of Works	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of the house and two outbuildings at Coles Farm, supplemented with a desk study, undertaken on 14th August 2025.
Survey Methods	Assessment and survey undertaken with reference to BCT (2023).
Lead Personnel	Kate Hayward MCIEEM, level 2 licensed bat surveyor and Emma Shaw, level 1 licensed bat surveyor.
The Proposal	The Grade 1 Listed property is the subject of a Listed Building application for renovation works, including internal works to the house and renovation of two outbuildings.
Description, Results and Evaluation	The site lies in a rural location between Corsham and Bath, approximately 1.4km north-west of the village of Box. The grounds of Coles Farm contain several buildings, formal gardens, trees, hedgerows and ponds. The site lies within the Consultation Zone for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation. The house is three-storey and constructed with a combination of Bath Ashlar and rubble stone with stone-tiled roofs. The two outbuildings are of similar construction, one with a clay-tiled roof and one with a slate-tiled roof. Internally, the house has two roof spaces. The outbuildings are open to the roofs. A low number of bat droppings were found in the main roof space of the house, confirmed by DNA analysis as belonging to brown long-eared bat. A moderate number of bat droppings were found in one of the outbuildings and confirmed by DNA analysis as belonging to brown long-eared and lesser horseshoe. A low number of bat droppings were found in the second outbuilding and confirmed by DNA analysis as belonging to lesser horseshoe. Both outbuildings supported swallow nests at the time of the survey.
Recommendations	Renovation of the outbuildings, will impact on roosting bats, including day/night roosts for low numbers of brown long-eared and lesser horseshoe bats. Three bat surveys of the outbuildings are recommended. The timing of works to the buildings will need to consider the nesting bird season, or a pre-works check should be undertaken. For any new lighting a sensitive lighting scheme will need to be demonstrated.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In July 2025, Seasons Ecology was instructed by WebsterHart, to undertake a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of Coles Farm, Alcombe, Box, SN13 8QL (grid reference: ST 81116 69196).

1.1.2 The Grade 1 Listed property is the subject of a Listed Building application for renovation works, including internal works to the house and renovation of two outbuildings.

1.2 Scope and Objectives of Survey

1.2.1 The survey was undertaken to identify the presence of and suitability for the buildings to support protected species, namely bats and nesting birds. Recommendations are made, as appropriate, to avoid potential harm to bats and nesting birds during the works to ensure compliance with legislation and licencing requirements.

1.2.2 This report is based on the findings of a survey undertaken on 14th August 2025.

1.3 Personnel

1.3.1 The survey was overseen by Kate Hayward MCIEEM who has produced this report. Kate is Principal Ecologist and Director of Seasons Ecology with 25 years' experience as a professional consultant. Kate is a level 2 licensed bat surveyor and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM).

1.3.2 The survey was led by Emma Shaw, Consultant Ecologist and Qualifying Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Emma is a level 1 licensed bat surveyor with over four years' experience in surveying protected species.

1.3.3 The survey was assisted by Luke McEvoy-Hughes, Seasonal Ecologist.

2. Legislation

2.1 Bats

2.1.1 Bat species in England and Wales are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) (EU Exit) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill bats;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats;
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place which bats use for shelter or protection; and
- Deliberately damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place.

2.1.2 With the exception of disturbance, this legislation applies throughout the year whether bats are present or not at the time of works being carried out and generally irrespective of planning permission being obtained or being required.

2.2 Nesting Birds

2.2.1 All wild birds in England and Wales are granted legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; and
- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

3. Desk Study

3.1 Method

3.1.1 A web-based desk study was undertaken in August 2025 prior to the survey to provide local information that may be relevant to the proposal. The following online resources were consulted:

- The MAGIC website[1], to obtain information on statutory designations with bats as a primary feature within 4km of the site, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones and Bat Consultation Zones affecting the site and details of any European Protected Species licences for bats issued within 2km.
- Google Maps[2], to view aerial photographs, maps and mapnik data, to assess the ecological context of the site.

3.2 Results

Statutory Designations

3.2.1 There are two statutory designations with bats as the primary feature within 4km of the site. Both designations are components of Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

- Box Mines SSSI is the nearest designation, located approximately 2km to the west. This is an extensive network of man-made tunnels, seasonally supporting up to 10% of the British population of the rare greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
- Browns Folly SSSI is located 3km to the south-west. This site includes the hibernation sites associated with 15% of the British greater horseshoe bat population and is selected on the basis of the importance of this exceptionally large overwintering population. Small numbers of Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii* have also been recorded hibernating in abandoned mines in this area.

SSSI Impact Risk Zones and Bat Consultation Zones

3.2.2 The site itself is not covered by any statutory designations but lies within the Impact Risk Zone for nearby SSSIs. Relevant to this proposal, consultation with Natural England is required on

[1] http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx

[2] http://acme.com/planimeter/

all planning applications where the development is outside or extending beyond existing settlements that increase lighting or impact trees, woodlands, waterbodies, rural buildings, or linear features (e.g. hedgerows, streams, rivers) through loss, fragmentation, or change of use. Therefore, consultation may not be required, the proposal being for existing buildings, although in a rural location.

3.2.3 The site lies within the Consultation Zone for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC.

European Protected Species Licences

3.2.4 There are two European Protected Species licences for bats issued within 2km of the site. The closest licence is for a location approximately 1km to the east, for the species, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus,* lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros,* greater horseshoe*,* Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii* and brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus.* The other licence is for a location approximately 1.7km to the south-west, for the species, lesser horseshoe.

Ecological Context

3.2.5 The site lies in a rural location between Corsham and Bath, approximately 1.4km north-west of the village of Box. The grounds of Coles Farm contain several buildings, formal gardens, trees, hedgerows and ponds.

3.2.6 Beyond the grounds of Coles Farm in all directions are arable and pasture fields with low-density, scattered residential properties, mature trees and patches of woodland. Approximately 100m to the north of the site is Briary Wood, a Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland and Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland.

3.2.7 The Bybrook River, a tributary of the River Avon, flows approximately 400m to the south of the site at its nearest point.

4. Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

4.1 Method

4.1.1 The survey was undertaken on 14th August 2025. Assessment and survey methods refer to BCT, 2023[3].

4.1.2 The buildings, including the house and two outbuildings, were assessed for their suitability to roosting bats. This assessment considered the style, construction and condition of the buildings (missing roof tiles, rotten beams, cracks in stonework and ivy cover, for example) and presence of any suitable access points. Based on these factors, the buildings are assessed as having *Negligible, Low, Moderate* or *High* suitability to roosting bats.

4.1.3 A visual inspection was then undertaken of the internal areas/roof spaces of the buildings to search for signs of bats, such as droppings, staining, scratch marks, feeding remains, and for actual bats. Any signs of nesting birds were also noted. A high-powered torch was used to aid the inspection.

Constraints to Survey

4.1.4 There were no constraints to the survey, all external elevations and the roofs of the buildings were able to be fully viewed, and all internal spaces were able to be accessed for inspection.

4.2 Building Descriptions and Results

4.2.1 Elevation plans are provided at Annexes 1 and 2 with Target Notes highlighting features of interest. Site photographs are provided at Annex 3.

4.2.2 The house and two outbuildings, Outbuildings 1 and 2, are described below.

The House

4.2.3 The house has a footprint of approximately 185m^2. It is three-storey and constructed with a combination of Bath Ashlar stone and rubble stone. The roofs are gabled, all with stone tiles and stone ridge tiles. There are three chimneys. Timber fascia boards and lead guttering follow the roofline. There are timber-framed windows and doors across all elevations.

4.2.4 The following external features and/or potential access points for roosting bats were identified:

- A high number of loose and raised stone tiles evident across all roof pitches.
- Gaps in stonework on the south-east elevation (Target Note 1, Annex 1).
- A gap at the apex on the north-west elevation (Target Note 2, Annex 1).

4.2.5 Internally, there is one large, L-shaped roof space and a smaller roof space over the kitchen. The L-shaped roof space is approximately 1.5m in height and 3m width. It has a combination of a traditional Bitumen-type liner and lath and plaster, both in poor condition with sections of the roof tiles visible, with gaps, and notably one large gap evident (Target Note 3, Annex 1). The roof space is uncluttered apart from one section containing a water tank.

[3] BCT (2023): Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (4th Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

4.2.6 A low number of bat droppings were found in the roof space (approximately ten) (Target Note 4, Annex 1). A sample of the bat droppings was collected for DNA analysis to confirm species.

4.2.7 The smaller roof space over the kitchen is approximately 2m height and 6m by 4m. There is no liner below the roof tiles and there is daylight entering via gaps between the tiles (Target Note 5, Annex 1).

Outbuilding 1

4.2.8 Outbuilding 1 has a footprint of approximately 125m^2. It is constructed with a combination of Bath ashlar stone and rubble stone with a clay, pan-tiled, gabled roof and a small section of flat, corrugated metal roof. There is a small, stone shed attached to the north-west elevation.

4.2.9 Externally, there are a moderate number of raised roof tiles (Target Note 6, Annex 2), a low number of gaps in the stonework on the north-west elevation (Target Note 7, Annex 2), gaps at the roofline on the south-west elevation (Target Note 8, Annex 2) and the south-east elevation is partially open-sided (Target Note 9, Annex 2). The shed has gaps around a timber door (Target Note 10, Annex 2).

4.2.10 Internally, the outbuilding and shed form one space and are open to the roof with no dark and enclosed spaces. There are a timber-framed roof structure and a traditional Bitumen-type liner, which is in poor condition with sagging and gaps.

4.2.11 Approximately 50 fresh bat droppings and approximately 500 old bat droppings were found within the outbuilding, and a swallow's nest was present (Target Note 11, Annex 2). A sample of the bat droppings was collected for DNA analysis to confirm species.

Outbuilding 2

4.2.12 Outbuilding 2 has a footprint of approximately 120m^2. It is constructed with a combination of Bath ashlar stone and rubble stone with a slate-tiled, gabled roof.

4.2.13 Externally, there are a low number of raised tiles (Target Note 12, Annex 2), there are a low number of cracks in mortar and gaps in stonework (Target Note 13, Annex 2), a hole in the south-east elevation (Target Note 14, Annex 2), the south-west elevation is partially open-sided (Target Note 15, Annex 2) and there are gaps around door frames on the south-east elevation (Target Note 16, Annex 2).

4.2.14 A bird box is attached to the south-west elevation (Target Note 17, Annex 2).

4.2.15 Internally, the space is open to the roof with no dark and enclosed roof spaces. It is well-lit from a skylight. There are a timber-framed roof structure and a traditional Bitumen-type liner, which is in good condition.

4.2.16 A low number of bat droppings were found inside, and two swallows' nests (Target Note 18, Annex 2). A sample of the bat droppings was collected for DNA analysis to confirm species.

Surrounding Habitats

4.2.17 Surrounding the house and outbuildings are formal, well-managed gardens and scattered mature and semi-mature trees, including an orchard. The garden contains two small, ornamental ponds.

5. Evaluation

5.1.1 The house and outbuildings at Coles Farm lie in a rural location surrounded by open countryside. They have *High* suitability to roosting bats owing to their ecological context, age, style and construction. Evidence for the presence of roosting bats was identified, including within the main roof space of the house and within both the outbuildings. DNA analysis of bat dropping samples collected from each location identified the following:

- Main Roof Space of House – DNA analysis confirmed bat droppings belonging to brown long-eared bat, indicating a day roost for low numbers of this species.
- Outbuilding 1 – DNA analysis confirmed bat droppings belonging to brown long-eared bat and lesser horseshoe, indicating day/night roosts for low numbers of these species.
- Outbuilding 2 - DNA analysis confirmed bat droppings belonging to lesser horseshoe, including a day/night roost for low numbers of this species.

5.1.2 The house and outbuildings are suitable to nesting birds. There is a bird box attached to Outbuilding 2 and both outbuildings supported swallow nests at the time of the survey.

5.1.3 The grounds of Coles Farm and the surrounding open countryside offer high-quality foraging and commuting habitats for bats, including landscaped gardens with mature trees and ponds, arable and pasture fields, woodlands and hedgerows.

6. Recommendations

6.1.1 The Grade 1 Listed property is the subject of a Listed Building application for renovation works, including internal works to the house and renovation of two outbuildings. Therefore, areas with suitability to roosting bats and the brown long-eared probable day roost in the main roof space of the house, will not be impacted. Renovation of the outbuildings, will impact on roosting bats, including day/night roosts for low numbers of brown long-eared and lesser horseshoe bats.

6.1.2 Works to the internal rooms on the ground, first and second floors of the house are unlikely to impact roosting bats. Works to the second-floor rooms may cause low-level disturbance to bats if present within the roof space above at the time of the works.

6.1.3 With consideration to the proposal, the following is recommended:

6.2 Bat Surveys

6.2.1 Three bat surveys should be undertaken of the outbuildings to provide further information on the identified bat roosts and to identify any other roosts that may be present. The bat surveys should be undertaken between May and mid-September and spaced three weeks apart.

6.2.2 The results of the surveys will inform an appropriate protection and mitigation strategy and European Protected Species Licence, which will be required for works to the outbuildings.

6.3 Great Crested Newt Surveys

6.3.1 Subject to the extent of any external works and landscaping, a presence/absence great crested newt survey of the two ornamental ponds on site may need to be undertaken. The survey would need to be carried out between April and June.

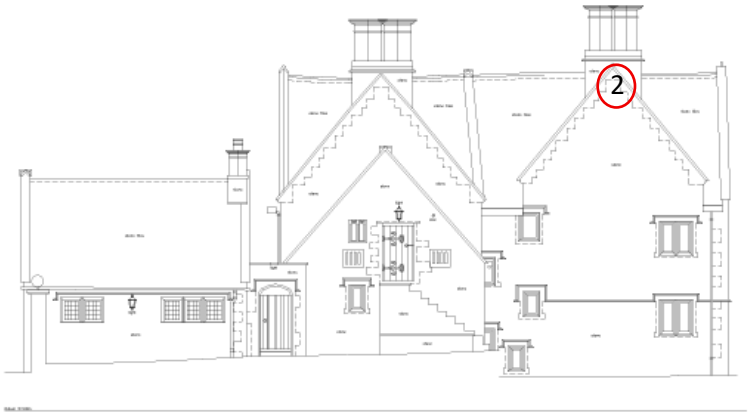
6.4 Nesting Birds

6.4.1 Should works to the buildings commence during the nesting bird season (generally this is considered to be from 1st March to 31st August) then a pre-works nesting bird check should be carried out by an experienced Ecological Clerk of Works.

6.5 Lighting

6.5.1 For any new external lighting, light spill should not exceed current levels, owing to the rural location of the site, the site lying within the Consultation Zone for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and the presence of bat roosts on site.

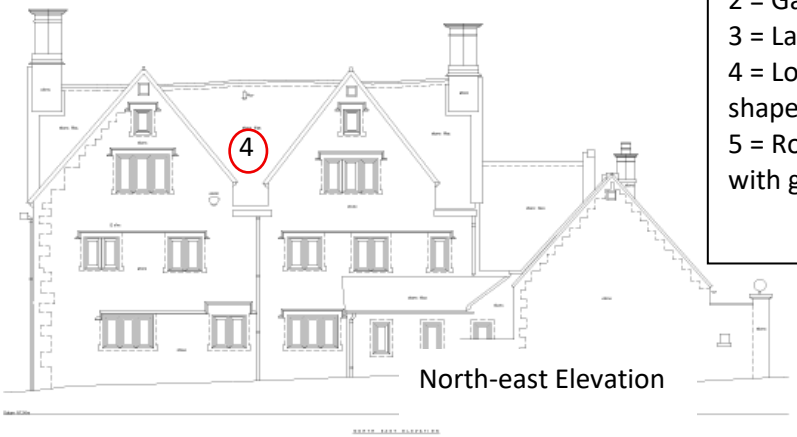
Annex 1: Elevations Plans - House



North-west Elevation

South-west Elevation

South-east Elevation



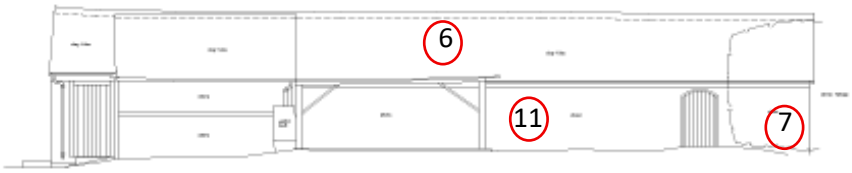
North-east Elevation

Target Note Descriptions

1 = Gaps in stonework
2 = Gap at the apex
3 = Large gap between roof tiles
4 = Low no. bat droppings in L-shaped roof
5 = Roof space above kitchen with gaps between tiles

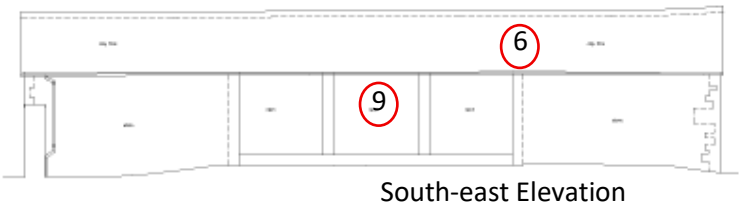
Annex 2: Elevations Plans - Outbuildings

Outbuilding 1



North-west Elevation

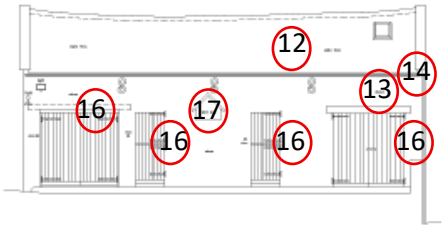
South-west Elevation



South-east Elevation

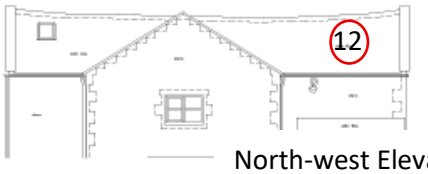
North-east Elevation

Outbuilding 2

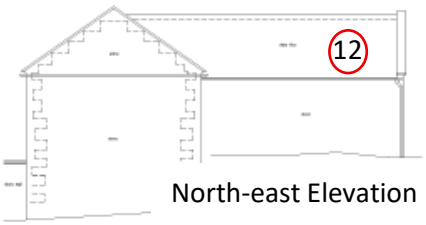


South-east Elevation

South-west Elevation



North-west Elevation



North-east Elevation

Target Note Descriptions

6 = Low no. raised roof tiles
7 = Gaps in stonework
8 = Gaps at roofline
9 = Partially open elevation
10 = Attached shed with gaps around door
11 = Moderate no. bat droppings and swallow nest
12 = Low no. raised tiles
13 = Cracks in mortar/gaps in stonework
14 = Hole
15 = Partially open elevation
16 = Gaps around door frames
17 = Attached bird box
18 = Low no. bat droppings and swallow nests

Annex 3: Site Photographs (August 2025)

Photograph 1: North-west elevation of the house.

Photograph 2: South-west elevation of the house.

Photograph 3: Part of the L-shaped roof space of the house.

Photograph 4: Partially open south-east elevation of Outbuilding 1.

Photograph 5: North-east and south-west elevations of Outbuilding 2.

Photograph 6: The internal area of Outbuilding 1.

Photograph 7. The internal area of Outbuilding 2.