
**Jouldings Farm
Farley Hill**

Report for:
Mr R Smith
Jouldings Farm
Jouldings Lane
Farley Hill
Berkshire
RG7 1UR

INTRODUCTION

Overview

In accordance with your instructions, AA Environmental Limited (AAe) carried out a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the above building on Thursday 26 September 2024. The purpose of the survey was to assess the presence or likely absence of bats utilising the building and provide appropriate mitigation measures, as necessary. A series of photographs has been attached for reference.

The proposals, which are considered relatively minor with the vast majority of the site remaining unaffected, are to construct a two-storey extension to replace the existing single-storey extension. This will result in the removal of the existing single-storey extension and outbuilding. The works will be restricted to the existing built footprint, with the garden and established vegetation remaining unaffected by the works.

LEGISLATION

Currently there are 17 species of bat known to breed in the UK. All species and their roosts are protected under Regulation 41 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. As a signatory to the *Bonn Convention (Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe)* the UK is also required to protect their habitats. This legislation makes it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts and protection from damage or disturbance of important feeding areas. Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

METHODOLOGY

Baseline Data

As certain baseline data is now readily available on the internet, the Multi-agency website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk) was consulted to determine whether any part of the site or nearby habitats have been statutorily or otherwise designated and whether any European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats have been granted within 1 km of the site. In addition, a review of Google Earth's satellite imagery (http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/index.html) was completed to determine past land uses of the site and surrounding land.

Walk-over Site Survey

A visual survey of the site was completed to record any evidence of bats or features that could provide potential roosting opportunities following the guidelines provided by the Bat Conservation Trust¹ and by an experienced and licensed ecologist². A thorough internal and external examination of the existing buildings were carried out, with any access points inspected for evidence of bats. All internal roof voids/spaces, where present, were accessed to check for any evidence of bats.

¹ Collins, J. (ed) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

² The lead surveyor was Alan Beaumont, BSc (Hons), MSc. MCIEEM.

The surrounding habitat was also surveyed to identify any important features such as mature trees with suitable features for roosting bats and any established lines of vegetation that might provide important flightlines.

Evidence of bats is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- the presence of bat droppings, which tend to accumulate under established roost sites or at roost entrances;
- the accumulation of large numbers of moth wings, which have been discarded by feeding bats;
- areas of staining by urine or from fur rubbing; and
- the presence of bats themselves or their corpses.

The visual survey was facilitated by the use of binoculars, ladders, powerful torches (1M candlepower) and a Ridgid Micro CA-350 Inspection Camera endoscope. A heterodyne bat detector (Pettersson D200) was also used to record any bat calls during the inspection.

In accordance with good practice, the site was checked for any evidence of other protected species or species of particular note.

RESULTS

Baseline Data

According to the Multi-agency website, there are no statutory ecological designated sites located on or adjacent to the site. The nearest statutory designated site is Bramshill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which forms part of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), located approximately 0.33 km to the south-west of the site. There are no Habitats of Principal Importance (HPIs) located on or adjacent to the site. The nearest HPI is an area of Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, located approximately 0.03 km to the south of the site. The site is also located within a Network Enhancement Zone 1³.

According to the Multi-agency website, two bat licences have been granted within the 1 km study area. the nearest EPSL being for the damage of a resting place for brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) (reference: 2019-41408-EPS-MIT), located approximately 0.91 km to the north of the site.

Google Earth imagery shows that the site has remained largely unchanged since at least 1999, with the site being dominated by the existing residential dwelling and outbuildings with associated hardstanding and well-maintained garden area.

Site Description (Photographs 1 - 4)

The site is located off Jouldings Lane in Farley Hill, Reading and centred at National Grid Reference: TQ 753634. The site comprised the existing residential dwelling and outbuildings with associated hardstanding and vegetation. The site is bordered by Long River to the south, and fields to all other sides.

The main property was of a mock tudor framed construction with masonry walls and rendered in-fill panels on the front gables, which had been extended over the years. The single-storey extension was of masonry construction, with a pitched and hipped engineered tiled roof. Timber soffits/fascias were present and appeared well-sealed. Internally, the extension had no separate roof space with some new timber supports installed to reinforce the old timbers. The roof was lined with a bitumen-based felt. The outbuilding was of masonry construction with a pitched clay tiled roof. Internally, the outbuilding had no separate roof space, with the roof lined with a bitumen-based felt.

³ Land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats which is likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat.

Bats

No evidence of bats was recorded during a careful internal and external inspection of the single-storey extension and outbuilding which are scheduled to be demolished. The masonry and roof tiles were generally in good-condition with no obvious access points and/or evidence of bats recorded. Internally, neither building had a separate roof space/void, with some repair works to the roof structure of the single-storey extension completed. The outbuilding was heavily cobwebbed throughout.

Bats are known to roost within the main attic space of the property (pers. comm.) by the owner and confirmed during the survey. However, no works are proposed to the main house and therefore the main attic space will remain unaffected.

The works are limited to the existing built footprint, with all of the existing garden areas and established vegetation to be retained, which will maintain current foraging opportunities for bats and other wildlife.

Other Wildlife

Apart from a few common species of birds, either recorded on the site or flying overhead, no other species of any note were recorded.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposals are limited to the construction of a two-storey extension, resulting on the demolition of the single-storey extension and outbuilding. The works will be restricted to the existing built footprint, with the garden and established vegetation remaining unaffected by the works.

There are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly affected by the proposals. The site, comprising a residential plot, is of overall limited ecological value, with the majority of the species recorded described as common or abundant and found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of bats recorded using either building to be demolished.

Although there are considered to be no over-riding ecological constraints to the proposals, a series of generic mitigation measures, as detailed below, should be implemented to reduce any impact the development proposals may have on local wildlife. There is also an opportunity to implement some enhancement measures to increase the nature conservation value of the site in the long term in accordance with Government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023⁴.

The main attic space used by bats will remain unaffected by the works and can be fully protected with roosting opportunities maintained. The works will only affect buildings that have no evidence of roosting bats. However, as bats have been confirmed roosting in the main house, albeit away from the works, it is recommended as a precaution that key works are completed under the following soft strip protocol:

- all site operatives will be given a toolbox talk on the possibility of encountering bats and the legal protection they and their roosts are afforded (copy attached has been attached at Appendix A for reference);
- no contractors will be permitted to access the loft space used by bats which will also be retained and protected;
- the appointed contractor will remove the roof tiles of the extension and outbuilding carefully, with the tiles removed by hand, lifting them clear with two hands rather than lifting the front and rolling the tile backwards which may crush any bats beneath; and
- tiles will also be checked underneath before being stacked or discarded as bats sometimes cling to the undersides of tiles.

⁴ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (2023). *National Planning Policy Framework*. London.

In the unlikely event that any evidence of bats is encountered, works will cease immediately and AAe and/or Natural England contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided (**N.B. a European Protected Species Licence may then be required to permit the works to continue**).

It should be noted that all species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Although no current or old bird nesting material was recorded during the survey with very limited areas of potential nesting habitat to be removed/affected, a check should be carried out prior to any works to ensure there are no active nests present.

Although the works are restricted with limited opportunities to implement any enhancement measures, a series of wildlife boxes (such as bat and bird boxes) could be installed onto the site (within the same land ownership) to provide enhanced roosting and nesting opportunities.

The effects of lighting on plants and animals are difficult to assess, but it is thought that lighting can adversely affect invertebrates, birds and bats. As the site already experiences some lighting from on-site sources there should be no change in current light levels from the proposed works.

Overall, the findings of this survey confirms that there are no ecological constraints to the redevelopment proposals to preclude planning permission being granted. A range of specific and generic mitigation/enhancement measures have been suggested and, if implemented effectively, would reduce the impact of the works on local wildlife and avoid contravention of current legislation and increase the nature conservation value of the site in the long term, in accordance with Government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework.

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Photograph Record Sheet



Photograph 1: Showing the front of the single-storey extension.



Photograph 2: Showing the front of the outbuilding.



Photograph 3: Showing the internal structure of the single-storey extension.



Photograph 4: Showing the inside of the outbuilding, which was heavily cobwebbed throughout.

Rev.	Details	Drawn Chkd.	Date
PROJECT			
Jouldings Farm Farley Hill			
TITLE			
Photograph Record Sheet			
 AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T: 01235 536042 F: 01235 523849 info@aae-ltd.co.uk www.aae-ltd.co.uk			
Scale	Date	Drg No.	Rev.
NTS	18.10.24 Drawn NAB	243307/01 Chkd. ARB	

Appendix A
Toolbox Talk (Bats)

TOOLBOX TALK:

BATS

Did you know?

- Bats are the world's only flying mammal.
- There are 17 species of bat known to be breeding in the UK, 6 of which are endangered or rare and 6 are classed as vulnerable.
- Bats can be found across the country in urban and rural locations.
- They are often sighted at dusk as they leave their roost, flying around hedgerows, woodland and waterbodies, feeding on insects.
- Throughout the year bats will often change their roost, depending upon the season.
- Usually a pregnant female will only have one baby a year, this makes colonies vulnerable to population decline.
- During the winter bats hibernate and may not wake up, even if disturbed. Therefore it's important not to work on sites with bats during these months.
- Bats may not use the same roost throughout the year, however they are legally protected with or without a bat occupying them.

Identification

- You may find bats in any number of places, they tend to prefer dark, quiet spots with good shelter, such as holes and cracks in trees, roofs and walls of buildings, under bridges, old tunnels and in caves.
- Signs of bat presence include discarded moth wings, staining around crevices and small mouse-like droppings which crumble easily.

Legislation

- All bats and their roosts are protected by UK and European Law. This makes it **illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats** or obstruct access to, damage or destroy their roosts and protects important feeding areas from damage or disturbance.
- Under law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

Site Controls

- There is always a **risk** that bats, as they move between different roost sites and occupy new roosts, could be encountered during site works.
- **If any bats are encountered during works the following controls must be applied to avoid breaking the law:**
 1. If bats are discovered/suspected works must stop **immediately** with any bat left in-situ and AAe immediately contacted (contact details above).
 2. If any injured bats are found during the works AAe would care for them and where possible be released in the same location once recovered.
 3. During works staff must wear gloves in case of accidental contact with bats.
 4. Any roof tiles will be lifted straight up, rather than being rolled over, minimising the risk of harming bats which may be sheltering underneath.
 5. Areas must be fully checked for any bats or their evidence prior to filling any gaps and repointing any brickwork.
 6. Any lighting must be installed must avoid illuminating vegetation and or bat boxes/access points.

These controls have been put in place to protect all site operatives from breaking the law. You're not expected to be able to identify bats or their presence so remember, **if in doubt shout and contact the relevant person.**

Key Contacts

AA Environmental Ltd, Units 4-8 Cholswell Court, Shippon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6HX
Tel: 01235 536042



Brown long-eared bat.



Lesser horseshoe bat in rail tunnel.



Common pipistrelle bat.