

**Stables to the rear of 44 High Street
Barkway
Herts
SG8 8EE**

Bat Assessment Report



Report Date: 27th April 2021

Survey and Report by

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Report quality management and constraints

This report has been compiled by Dr Jennifer Jones MCIEEM of Jones and Sons Environmental Sciences Ltd. The report format follows standard guidance produced by the British Standards Institute (2013), Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017) and Bat Conservation Trust (Collins 2016).

To achieve the study objectives the conclusions were based on the best information available at the time of the survey and within the limits prescribed by our client within the agreement contract.

It should generally be recognised that bat requirements change throughout the year. Roosts can be of a transient nature and bats may move from roost to roost. A single bat may use a large number and wide variety of roosts during a year. The survey therefore represents a ‘snap shot’ in time.

In the event of any significant delay in the development (for example over 18 months) an updated survey maybe required to ensure there has been no change to the report’s conclusions





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A Executive Summary

The 2021 report documents the results of a daytime bat assessment at 44 High Street, Barkway, Herts SG8 8EE. The survey focussed on the stables situated to the rear of the house at central Ordnance Survey Grid Reference TL 384357.

There are proposals to demolish the stables to enable the construction of a new residential building. At the request of the client (Mr Carl Smally) ecologists (holders of Natural England Bat Survey licences) from Jones and Sons Environmental Sciences Ltd undertook the daytime inspection and assessment on the 9th April 2021. The survey and report follow the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, J. 2016).

The habitats within the relatively rural area surrounding the stables are of moderate value for foraging bats with suitable flight connectivity from the site to the wider countryside. Three species of bat have been recorded within 500 metres of the property and it is therefore probable that bats fly along the trees within the area of the stables.

No bats or signs of bat use such as bat droppings were found during the inspection and the assessment concluded that the construction of the stables supports negligible suitability for roosting bats mainly due to: unsuitable general construction, unsuitable roof coverings and poor environmental conditions (relatively light interior due to windows/skylights, extensive cobwebs, disturbance from chickens and a lack of suitable roosting crevices).

Although bats are likely to be flying through the area, any current presence of roosting bats in the stables is assessed as unlikely. Demolition of the stables will therefore not impact on a current bat roosting site. Since there will be no impact on a roosting site, there are no restrictions to the development with regard to roosting bats.

If there is, however, any significant delay in development (for example over 18 months) there is always a chance that conditions may change resulting in the stables becoming more suitable for roosting bats. In these circumstances, a further check may be required to confirm the continuing negligible roost status of the stables.

No nesting birds were identified during the survey but it is recommended that either demolition be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season or checks be made for nesting birds prior to demolition to ensure that the legislation protecting birds is complied with.



B Introduction

A daytime assessment for bat roosting suitability and search for any signs of bat use was undertaken of stables at 44 High Street, Barkway, Herts SG8 8EE. The group of stables surveyed are situated to the rear of the house at central Ordnance Survey Grid Reference TL 384357.

Jones and Sons Environmental Sciences Ltd undertook the survey on the 9th April 2021 at the request of Mr Carl Smally.

There are proposals to demolish the stables to enable the construction of a new residential building.

Bats are species protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Given that bats are known to be present in the area and the stables may provide bat roosting habitat a bat assessment is required to provide information to the owner and Local Planning Authority on any impact the proposals may have on the bats within the local area.

The presence of protected species is a material consideration in the planning process (National Planning Policy Framework 2019), and therefore any adverse impact identified on bats will need mitigation proposals to be put forward to the Local Planning Authority to ensure that species populations are safeguarded and maintained at a favourable conservation status within the local area.

The main objectives of the survey on the 9th April 2021 were to:

- Survey the stables for any signs of bat use and assess any use/potential use of the buildings by roosting bats;
- Determine any potential impact of the proposals on the bat populations within the local area;
- If any potential impact is identified provide recommendations to ensure that bat populations are maintained at a favourable status within the local area and the building works comply with the legislation protecting bats.

The report includes: the qualifications and experience of the surveyors, methodology used, background research for the area, results of the daytime inspection and includes an evaluation of the findings with recommendations. The relevant legislation and plans are included within the Appendix.



C Survey Methodology

Surveyors and Experience

Ecologists from Jones and Sons Environmental Sciences Ltd undertook the daytime inspection on the 9th April 2021. Personnel included:

Dr Jennifer Jones BSc PhD - a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), holder of Natural England Bat Survey Licences for 30 years and has held numerous standard EPS Mitigation Licences for several species of bat and is also a Registered Ecological Consultant with Natural England for Low Impact WML-CL21 Licences). For 10 years Dr Jones worked as a county ecologist advising Local Planning Authorities on protected species

Mr Roger Jones BSc – a zoologist with considerable experience of bat surveys and holder of Natural England bat survey licences for 17 years. He is also Director of Jones and Sons Ltd

Background Research

To develop an understanding of the ecological context of the site, research was undertaken of the area prior to the visit. This included: habitat interpretation using aerial photographs and gathering information from the government MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) web site. Information was also available from previous bat surveys of the area undertaken by Jones and Sons Environmental Sciences Ltd.

Field Survey Methods

The surveys followed the Good Practice Guidelines published by the Bat Conservation (Collins, J. 2016).

A walk over of the site was undertaken to provide a broad-brush habitat survey of the area to assess the potential of the habitats to support a range of insects suitable for foraging bats and to identify features on the site that could be important as flyways for bats.

Photographs were taken of the buildings and habitats to aid visual interpretation.

Bats may roost in a variety of situations including within roof voids, behind wooden boarding, within gaps between bricks, within wooden beams or under roof tiles. Bat signs searched for included bat droppings on walls and the detailed inspection of timbers. Where suitable gaps were located (enabling bat access) the holes were examined in detail for any signs of oil staining from the bats fur, urine streaks or accumulation of droppings.



The floor areas of the stables were systematically searched for any bat droppings or insect wings. All bats are insectivorous and parts of bitten insects such as moth wings are frequently found below where a bat has been feeding.

In addition to searching for bat signs, the buildings were examined externally and internally, to assess the potential of the building to provide roosting sites for bats. Suitability criteria for the buildings include: construction details, stability of the temperature regime, protection from the elements, light levels, cobwebs, level of disturbance, potential roosting locations and potential bat access points. Places searched for potential bat access points included: gaps through the roof, openings in the wall and in any gaps present in external and internal timbers.

The overall suitability of the stables for roosting bats followed Table 4.1 on page 35 of the BCT Good Practice Guidelines (2016). This takes account of the suitability of the roosting habitats and the value of the site's commuting and foraging habitats for bats. The analysis is applied using the professional judgement of the experienced bat ecologist.

The building's suitability for roosting bats is divided into:

- Confirmed bat roost- bats observed or fresh droppings found within or around suitable roost location.
- High roosting suitability - a building with one or more suitable potential roosts sites that are obviously suitable for use by roosting bats with the potential to be used by large numbers of bats.
- Moderate roosting suitability -a building with suitable potential roost sites that could be used by bats but are unlikely to support a roost of high conservation significance.
- Low roosting suitability -a building with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically but are unlikely to be used on a regular basis or be suitable for a maternity site i.e., the presence of bats cannot be discounted.
- Negligible roosting suitability- while presence cannot be completely discounted, negligible/limited number of features likely to be used by roosting bats and any bat presence is considered unlikely.

Equipment used during the survey included a ladder, binoculars and powerful torches. Endoscopes were also available if required.

The weather conditions on the date of the survey were recorded as having a temperature of 11 °C, with no rain and virtually no wind. The weather conditions were suitable for the inspection.



Constraints/Limitations

Assessments of a building's potential for roosting bats can be undertaken at any time of the year. There were no major constraints to the daytime survey since full access to the building interiors and most of the exteriors was available

A minor constraint was the restricted visibility to the south elevation of the garage section of the stable 4 (elevation in adjacent property). Due to the nature of the building construction this is not considered to be a major constraint.

It should generally be recognised that bat requirements change throughout the year. Roosts can be of a transient nature and bats may move from roost to roost. A single bat may use a large number and wide variety of roosts during a year. The survey therefore represents a 'snap shot' in time.



D Survey Findings

D1 Location and habitats

The stables surveyed are situated in a relatively rural area within the grounds of number 44 High Street in the village of Barkway in North Hertfordshire. The location is shown in Plan 1 and the stables and adjacent habitats are illustrated in the aerial photograph (Plan 2) within the Appendix.

The habitats immediately surrounding the group of stables include:

- To the east, a garden of amenity grassland with flowerbeds, shrubs and scattered trees with the house and road beyond.
- To the south of the main group of stables a courtyard of hardstanding with flower beds, low level trees, chicken pens and a fence. To the south of the fence and stable/garage a neighbouring mature garden with a row of bordering tall mature trees.
- To the west by a wall, thin hedge, grassland, buildings set back and fields beyond.
- To the north by a fence, grassland, scattered trees and buildings.

Photograph 1: Barkway High Street



View south

Photograph 2: driveway and garden



View east
towards the
road

Photograph 3: view north from stable block



Photograph 4: view north across garden



Photograph 5-6: stable courtyard with flower beds, chicken pens and greenhouse



Habitats within the surrounding countryside include: gardens with mature trees and fields with boundary hedgerows that provide good flight connectivity to parcels of woodland within the wider area. Broadleaf woodlands in the area include Rokey Wood 900 metres to the west and Earls Wood 1km east.

Scattered ponds are present including a pond approximately 100 metres to the south of the stables. The river Quin is 300 metres to the east. Semi-natural habitats with mature trees and water are capable of supporting high concentrations of insects suitable for foraging bats.

Within 500 metres of the survey site, three species of bat have been recorded. These include: common pipistrelle bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus* and Serotine bat *Eptesicus serotinus auratus* with Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri*, and Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentoniid* known to be present within a 2km radius.

The surrounding habitats are assessed as supporting moderate suitability for bats and it is considered probable that bats fly along the tall trees within the area of the stables.

D2 Building description and suitability for bats

Four detached single storey stable blocks are grouped around a courtyard which includes chicken pens and flowerbeds. The buildings have a height ranging from 2.5 to 3.2 metres. The low height of the outbuildings reduces their suitability for roosting bats. Although bats will roost in buildings of a low height, generally bats prefer to roost in buildings exceeding 4 metres. The stable blocks layout are illustrated in Plan 2.

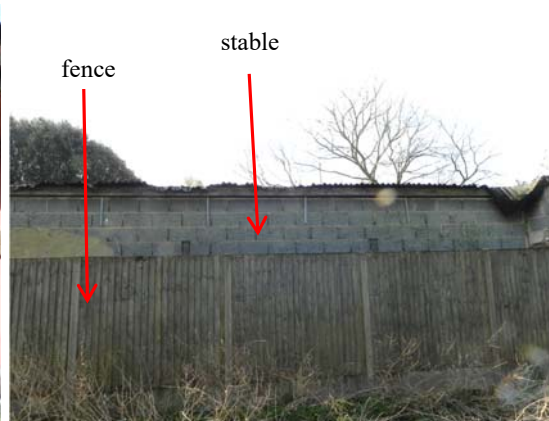
Stable Block 1

This stable block at the northwest end (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference TL 3841 3576) extends 15 metres in length (west to east) with a width of 5 metres.

Photograph 7: south elevation



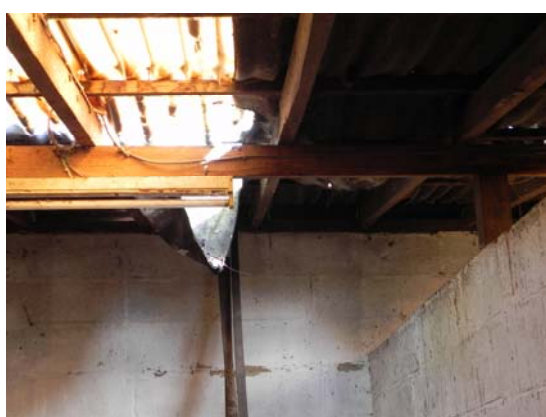
Photograph 8: north elevation



Photograph 9: onduline sloping roof



Photograph 10: interior



Internally the block is divided into 5 stable units with timber stable doors that have a wire grill across the upper front section. The stable has breezeblock walls (rendered at the front) with roof timbers supporting an angled flat roof clad with corrugated onduline (bitmastic felt). The felt is unlined and there are clear sections (skylights) enabling light to enter the stables. The stable has a height of 2.5 metres at the front increasing to 3.2 metres at the rear. Along the front is a wide overhanging plywood soffit. At the ends of the buildings are timber fascia boards. The structure of the soffit is of limited suitability

for roosting bats and the end fascia boards are full of cobwebs reducing their suitability for bats.

The stables are currently mainly used for storage although the owner stated that one stable is occasionally used to accommodate a horse.

Gaps enabling potential bat access are present along the rear eaves and through holes in the roof. The onduline roof is deteriorating and has a collapsed section of onduline at one end (photograph 10).

Internally the walls and timber surfaces are covered with cobwebs reducing the suitability of the surfaces for roosting bats and the openings and skylights create relatively light internal conditions during the daytime. In light conditions bats would need to seek warm dark crevices in which to roost. The onduline roof is unlined and there are no suitable brick or timber joints/crevices suitable for roosting bats.

No signs of any bats or bat use (such as bat droppings or bitten insect wings) were found during the search of the exterior and interior of the stables and taking account of the unsuitable construction any presence of bats is considered highly unlikely.

Stable Block 2

This is a shorter separate stable block between Stable 1 and Stable 3 (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference TL 3842 3576) that extends 6 metres in length (west to east) with a width of 5 metres.

Photograph 11: south elevation



Photograph 12: interior



Internally the block is divided into 2 stable units similarly with timber stable doors that have a wire grill across the upper front section. The stable has breezeblock walls (rendered at the front) with roof timbers supporting an angled flat roof clad with corrugated onduline. The felt is unlined and there are clear sections enabling light to enter the stables. The stable has a height of 2.5 metres at the front increasing to 3.2 metres at the rear. Along the front is a wide overhanging plywood soffit and there are timber fascia board at the ends of the building. The structure of the soffit is of limited

suitability for roosting bats and the end fascia boards are full of cobwebs reducing their suitability for bats.

The stables are currently used to accommodate chickens and guinea fowl. The disturbance created by the chickens would reduce the suitability of the stable block for roosting bats.

Gaps enabling potential bat access are present along the eaves. Internally the walls and timber surfaces are covered with dense cobwebs reducing the suitability of the surfaces for roosting bats and the openings and skylights create relatively light internal conditions with no suitable roosting opportunities identified that bats could retreat to.

No signs of any bats or bat use were found during the search of the exterior and interior of the stables and taking account of the unsuitable construction for bats any presence of bats is considered highly unlikely.

Stable Block 3

This stable block at the northeast end (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference TL 3843 3576) extends 9.5 metres in length (north to south) with a width of 5 metres.

Photograph 13: west/south elevation



Photograph 14: south/east elevation



Photograph 15: east/north elevation



Photograph 16: corrugated iron roof



The roof has a timber framed shallow pitched asymmetrical roof with a height of 3 metres to the ridge line. Internally the block is divided into 3 stable units with stable doors similar to the others. The stable block has breezeblock walls (part rendered externally) and supports a shallow pitched roof clad with corrugated iron and lined internally by a black Tyvek like membrane. The roof structure is of negligible suitability for roosting bats. The timber fascia boards at the gable ends have cobwebs and the front overhanging plywood soffit is similarly of limited suitability for roosting bats. There is some timber cladding on the north breezeblock end wall but this is also of limited suitability for roosting bats.

Photograph 17: interior



The stables are currently mainly used for storage.

There are windows creating light internal daytime conditions.

Openings enabling potential bat access are present along the eaves but internally the walls and timber surfaces are covered with cobwebs and roosting opportunities are negligible.

No signs of any bats or bat use were found during the search of the exterior and interior of the stables and taking account of the unsuitable construction for bats any presence of bats is considered highly unlikely.

Stable Block 4

This stable block with rendered breezeblock walls is at the south end by the driveway (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference TL 3843 3575).

Photograph 18: north elevation



Photograph 19: north end section interior



At the north end is a small lower flat roofed section with a plywood roof clad externally with asphalt felt (photographs 18 and 19).



The unit has an open door along the east elevation and window in the north elevation. Some deep cracks are present in the breezeblock wall. No signs of any bat use were found during the exterior and internal inspection and this section is assessed as supporting negligible suitability for roosting bats.

The 'L' shaped stable block supports a shallow pitched hipped roof clad with unlined onduline and incorporates a garage extending 3.5 metres to the east from the hip joint. The stable block has a length of 9.5 metres width of 5 metres and height to the ridge of approximately 3 metres.

Photograph 20-21: east elevation



The stables extending south are used for keeping chickens and storage and the garage extending eastwards with double timber doors houses cars. The walls are rendered breezeblock and doors along the east elevation include a timber stable door and a single timber door adjacent to the garage. A wide overhanging soffit extends along the front of the stables and there are timber fascias at the gable ends.

Photograph 22: interior



No gaps suitable for roosting bats were identified under the timber fascias and the soffits are of poor suitability for roosting bats.

Light can enter the building through roof skylights in the onduline and the construction of the building with: limited roosting opportunities, dense cobwebs and disturbance from chickens would reduce the suitability of the building for roosting bats.

No signs of any bat use were found during the inspection.

Other outbuildings

Photograph 23: shed by chicken pens



Other outbuildings in the stable courtyard include a glass greenhouse and a lean-to timber shed against the west brick wall within the chicken pen. The shed supports an unlined corrugated asbestos roof.

The other outbuildings were assessed as being of negligible suitability for roosting bats.

Any presence of nesting wild birds

All wild birds, their eggs and young are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Under this legislation it is an offence to take or injure any wild bird, take, damage or destroy any nest whilst it is in use or being built (from commencement of nest building to fledging) or take or destroy any egg of any wild bird.

During the inspection on the 9th April 2021, no evidence for any use by nesting birds were found.



E Evaluation and Recommendations

E1 Summary

The habitats around the stables are assessed as being of moderate value for foraging bats with good potential flight connectivity from the stables along the bordering tree lines to the wider countryside that includes ponds and parcels of broadleaved woodland (highly favourable bat foraging habitat).

Three species of bat have been recorded within 500 metres of the survey site and it is therefore considered probable that bats fly along the trees within the area of the stables.

Although it is considered likely that bats could be flying within the survey site, no evidence for any use by bats such as bat droppings or insect feeding remains was found during the inspection of the stable buildings.

The stable blocks are currently assessed as supporting negligible suitability for roosting bats due to: unsuitable general construction, unsuitable roof coverings and poor environmental conditions (relatively light interior due to windows/skylights, extensive cobwebs, disturbance from chickens and a lack of suitable roosting crevices).

No current evidence for any use by nesting birds was found.

E2 Potential Impact on Bats

With the current information available, the demolition of the stables to enable the construction of a new dwelling will not impact on a known bat roosting site. Since there will be no impact on a roosting site, there are no current restrictions to the development with regard to bats.

E3 Recommendations

If there is any significant delay in the development (for example over 18 months) although the buildings are currently regarded as being unsuitable for bats, there is always a chance that conditions may change resulting in the buildings becoming more suitable for roosting bats. In such circumstances, a further check may be required to confirm the continuing negligible roost status of the building.

Although no nesting birds were found it would be advisable to either undertake demolition outside of the bird breeding season between late September and January or if demolition is planned for the bird nesting season (February to September) a further check for nesting birds by the ecologist is advised. If nesting activity is identified demolition would need to be delayed until the fledglings have flown from the nest.



F References

British Standards Institution (2013) BS42020 Biodiversity-A code of practice for planning and development.

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017) Guidelines for ecology report writing.

Collins, J (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Department for Communities & Local Government (Feb 2019) National Planning Policy Framework.

HMSO (1981) The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The Stationary Office Ltd, Norwich.

HMSO (2017) The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 EU Exit 2019 amendment). The Stationary Office Ltd, Norwich.

HMSO (2006) The Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & A.P. McLeish (2004) The bat workers' manual. JNCC.

Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) (Interactive Map. Available from: <http://www.magic.gov.uk>



G Appendix

G1 Relevant Legislation and Policy

Legislation relevant to bats

All bats and their roost sites are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and through inclusion in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Amendments to the legislation means that legal protection for bats falls mostly under the Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (2019 draft EU Exit amendment).

In England the legislation makes it illegal to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Deliberately disturb a bat which is likely to impair their ability to survive, breed, rear young or hibernate or significantly affect their local distribution or abundance,
- Incidentally or deliberately damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat.
- Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale or exchange, any live or dead bat or any part of a bat.

Resting places used by bats are known as bat roosts. Because bats tend to reuse the same roosts, the roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time. Deliberately is interpreted as someone who, although not intending for example to harm a bat, performs the relevant action being sufficiently aware of the possible presence of bats. The Wildlife and Countryside Act additionally makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat at a roost
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost.

Building works that would contravene the protection afforded to bats under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 require an EPS Licence prior to the commencement of works. Natural England, under powers conferred by the Secretary of State, has authority to issue licences but only for certain purposes. The criteria that need to be satisfied prior to the granting of both planning permission for the development and a Natural England Licence are:

- 1 That the development is “in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment” (Regulation 53(2)(e)).
- 2 That there is no satisfactory alternative (Regulation 53(9)(a)) to the ‘do nothing’ option.



- 3 That the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range (Regulation 53(9) (b)).

Following on from a recent court cases, local authorities must consider all planning applications where European Protected Species are likely to be affected and an EPS licence is required. Regulation 9(3) of the of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) states that LPAs must have regard to European Protected Species when granting planning permission. The ruling refers to the three tests given above

Legislation relevant to birds

At all times wild birds, their nests and eggs are afforded legal protection through provisions in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence, with certain exceptions, to intentionally:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is being built or in use;
- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird; and
- Have in one's possession or control any wild bird (dead or alive), part of a wild bird or egg of a wild bird which has been taken in contravention of the Act, the Protection of Birds Act 1954 or the law of any EU Member State (which implements the EU Birds Directive 1979).

Relevant Policy

National Planning policies for England are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) updated on February 2019. The NPPF has a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In an environmental aspect sustainable development means developments should contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment and, as part of this, help to improve biodiversity.

The NPPF states that the planning system should “minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity”. To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity planning policies should “promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets”.

In addition, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 places a duty on all public bodies to promote and enhance biodiversity in all its functions. Section 40 of the Act states “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, as far as is consistent with the proper exercise of these functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”. Special attention is paid to species included on the Government’s list of species of principal importance that includes bat species.



G2 Plans

Plan 1: Site Location



Plan 2: aerial photograph of survey buildings

