



Bat Survey Report

**Barn at Rook's Nest Farm
Rook's Nest Lane
Therfield
Royston
SG8 9QX**

August 2024

For and on behalf of:
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Declaration

*This report has been produced following the guidelines published by
 The Bat Conservation Trust in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines
 4th Edition 2023*

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Special Note

Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure this report accurately identifies potential ecological constraints to development or the likely presence or absence of species and the spatial and temporal use of the site by such species, it must only be viewed as a snap shot in time and reflects the ecological status of the site at the time of survey.
 No liability can be assumed for ecological changes that may or may not occur on the surveyed site after the production of this report. The author of this report must be consulted as to the current applicability of the report if there are any seasonal delays in the use of this report.
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Executive Summary

This report details the results of an updated Bat Roost Assessment of a single traditional barn located at Rooks Nest Farm, Therfield, in Hertfordshire. The original Preliminary Roost Assessment PRA was completed back in 2011 and has since been reviewed and updated, in 2024. The updated PRA recommended further bat survey work, due to its low bat roosting potential.

Therefore, two evening bat emergence surveys were carried out on the 23rd of May 2024 and the 24th of June 2024. The surveys were undertaken by Natural England licensed and experienced bat surveyors from ELMAW Consulting.

One of the two bat emergence surveys revealed the emergence of a single common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) from the barn, as well as a low level of bat activity around the barn. Based on the results of these surveys, the barn was concluded to support a single non-breeding day roost of a single species of bat. It is therefore considered that the redevelopment works to the barn will potentially impact the roost, and as such, appropriate licensed mitigation measures are required to ensure the redevelopment of the barn can be carried out lawfully with regard to the presence of a protected species' place of shelter.

It is proposed that the loss of the roost will be facilitated through the use of a CL21 Bat Mitigation Class Licence (Low Impact), that requires the potential roosting features to be examined by the licensed ecologist for roosting bats prior to works and remove and exclude any roosting bats found. To compensate for the loss of the common pipistrelle day roost, a bat box suitable for common pipistrelle roosting will be erected on either an adjacent tree or building, within the ownership and responsibility of the applicant.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Prior to any proposed redevelopment work to a single traditional barn located within Rook's Nest Farm, Therfield, Royston, an up-to-date bat survey report is required.
- 1.1.2 In June 2011, an initial Preliminary Roosting Assessment (PRA) and Bat Survey Report was completed by ELMAW Consulting. This included an assessment of the likelihood of the application site's building's potential to support roosting bats, including further survey work as a result of the building being deemed to be of low to moderate roosting potential. At this time, a single bat species, common pipistrelle, was identified to be entering the barn, however there was no evidence of bats roosting inside the building, at that time.
- 1.1.3 Now, in 2024, an update to the PRA and bat data is required for the building, to establish its current roosting potential for bats. The barn is situated in the grounds of Rooks Nest Farm, just outside the village of Therfield, and is surrounded by arable land, trees and hedgerows. The aerial photo below indicates the location of the barn, in a wider geographical context.



Plate 1: Aerial photo showing location of the barn at Rook's Nest Farm

- 1.1.4 This report details the findings of the updated PRA and the results of the two observational bat activity surveys undertaken of the barn within the application site, in May and June of 2024, during the optimum bat survey season.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 Existing bat records from a radius of 2km around the barn have been sourced from the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC), on the 8th February 2024. Only those records from the last ten years have been included as it is considered that records older than this are not sufficiently recent to be relevant to this study.

2.1.2 Google Earth aerial photographs and DEFRA's Magic Map Application images have been examined of the barn and surrounding landscape, as have the relevant Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps at a 1:25,000 scale.

2.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment

2.2.1 The specified and adopted methodology for this aspect of the survey has been carried out following the guidelines published by The Bat Conservation Trust's *Best Practice Guidelines 4th Edition* (Ref. 1).

2.2.2 It must be acknowledged that whilst we endeavour to follow the guidelines, we reserve the right to adapt the survey methodology where appropriate as the aforementioned guidelines state that they should be interpreted and adapted on a case-by-case basis according to site-specific conditions and professional judgement and examples given are not prescriptive but descriptive.

2.2.3 Equipment used during the PRA of the barn are listed below;

- LEDLENSER P7R LED Torch
- Panasonic Digital Camera DMC-LZ30

2.2.4 The barn has been assessed for bat roosting potential based, in part, on the following factors which potentially increase the likelihood of roosting bats; more favourable roosting conditions may include features such as:

- Records of bats in the locality
- Surrounding bat feeding and foraging habitat
- The presence of architectural features within the building such as roof voids, lofts/attics, bargeboards, soffits, lead-flashing, hanging tiles, cavity walls, weather boarding, mortice and tenon jointed roof timbers

and ridge tiles and beams which may offer Potential Roosting Features (PRFs)

- Lined clay tile or slate roofs
- The presence of potential access points such as cracks, voids, crevices and flight openings
- Complex roofs, orientations and wall elevations
- Favourable internal environmental conditions and temperatures

2.2.5 The PRA (building inspection) was carried out on the 1st March 2024, by licensed surveyor Mr Keith Seaman BSc., DipHE, CertHE, CBiol, MRSB, MCIEEM and Ms Jasmine Stephenson BSc, in good weather conditions, with clear skies and a temperature of 12°C. No access restrictions were encountered during the assessment.

2.2.6 The potential for a building or landscape to support roosting or commuting and foraging bats is based on a number of factors which, when taken accumulatively, will result in a subjectively low, moderate or high bat roosting potential valuation.

Bat Roosting Potential Table

Suitability Potential	Features considered important in the bat roosting assessment
Negligible	No obvious PRFs, often found in areas of negligible or very low bat feeding, foraging and roosting habitat
Low	One or more PRFs which are more likely to be used by single or low numbers of opportunist or transient bats at any time of the year due to lack of space, shelter or appropriate conditions. Highly unlikely to be suitable for breeding or classic hibernation but may be used by non-classic hibernating individual bats
Moderate	Numerous PRFs that could be used by bats due to the size, space, shelter and conditions but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status such as maternity and classic hibernation
High	Numerous PRFs that support conditions that obviously favour higher numbers of bats, habitual roosting, breeding or classic hibernation of high conservation status, often found in association with high quality surrounding habitat.

Commuting and Foraging Evaluation Table

Suitability Potential	Commuting and Foraging Habitats
Negligible	No obvious habitat features habitat features likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats
Low	Limited quantity or diversity of habitat such as short or gappy hedgerows or isolated trees which are not well connected to surrounding landscape
Moderate	Connectivity of habitat within the landscape and wider countryside that may include flight-path features such as linked gardens, lines of trees, scrub and grassland
High	Continuous, high-quality habitat which maintains connectivity to the wider landscape which may include woodland, tree lined wetlands, parkland and river valleys. Sites that are often close to and connected to known roosts.

2.3 Limitations of the PRA

- 2.3.1 It should be acknowledged that the results of the PRA of the barn are based on the presence of features, both physical and environmental, generally considered to increase the likelihood of roosting bats and not necessarily on the finding of roosting bats or direct indicative evidence such as bat droppings. Whilst, in some circumstances, the bat roosting assessment can result in a positive conclusion as to the presence of roosting bats, further observational activity surveys may be considered necessary, to confirm any presence of roosting bats and to enable roost characterisation with any certainty.
- 2.3.2 With regard to establishing the presence of roosting bats, it must be further acknowledged that surveys carried out in accordance with industry standards endeavour to establish the presence of bat roosts appropriate to the time of year when the surveys have been carried out. Surveys completed within the optimum period, as required by Natural England, endeavour to establish the presence of non-breeding summer roosts or important summer maternity roosts. Surveys carried out at this time of the year cannot, with any certainty, establish the presence of spring/autumn transitory or winter roosts or seasonally occupied opportunist roosts by single or low numbers of bats.

2.4 Bat Roost Emergence Surveys

- 2.4.1 The results from the PRA determined the barn to be of low potential for roosting bats, requiring further survey work. The following specified and adopted methodology was carried out, following the guidelines published by The Bat Conservation Trust (Ref. 1).
- 2.4.2 In accordance with The Bat Conservation Trust's *Best Practice Guidelines 4th Edition* (Ref. 1), evening emergence surveys were commenced fifteen minutes before sunset and continued for one and three quarter hours after sunset, during the typical bat roosting emergence period. All elevations that contained PRFs were covered by Night Vision Aids (NVAs), maintained by surveyors.
- 2.4.3 The equipment used included Canon XA series infrared video cameras (XA10, XA25, and XA30) mounted on tripods. Additional Ward Optimal Extreme Limited Dark Sun Infrared torches were used for better vision in the darkest period. Echo Meter Touch 2 PRO (EMT2PRO) full-spectrum detectors were used, followed by an additional single Anabat Swift Bat Detector on the second bat roost emergence survey, to record bat echolocation. These were set on tripods and positioned close to the building. All cameras and detectors were time-synced at the start of recording. Each surveyor also carried their own EMT2PRO detector, as well as two-way radios to liaise with other surveyors during the survey. Surveyors monitored the site during the survey, to ensure all technology was running and recording correctly and to maintain the security of the equipment. A selection of end-of-survey still-shots from the infrared cameras are appended. Analysis of the bat echolocation recordings are undertaken using BatSound software.
- 2.4.4 With regard to establishing the presence of roosting bats, it must be further acknowledged that surveys carried out in accordance with industry standards endeavour to establish the presence of bat roosts appropriate to the time of year when the surveys have been carried out. Surveys completed within the optimum period, as required by Natural England, endeavour to establish the presence of non-breeding summer roosts or important summer maternity roosts. Surveys carried out at this time of the year cannot, with any certainty, establish

the presence of spring transitory or winter roosts, or seasonally occupied opportunist roosts by single or low numbers of bats.

2.5 *Assessment & Mitigation*

- 2.5.1 The resulting assessment and evaluation of the survey findings and subsequent mitigation and compensatory strategy are informed by the advice and guidance published by The Bat Conservation Trust and Natural England in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition 2023* (Ref. 1), *Bat Workers' Manual 2004* (Ref. 4) and *Bat Mitigation Guidelines 2004* (Ref. 3).

2.6 *Limitations of the Bat Roost Emergence Surveys*

- 2.6.1 The bat roost emergence surveys were conducted in appropriate weather conditions with temperatures of above 10°C without heavy rain or strong wind so the environmental conditions of the surveys did not constrain or limit the results. Survey methods, timings and equipment used were in line with industry standards, as advocated by Natural England and the Bat Conservation Trust.

3.0 Results

3.1 Biological Data Search Results

- 3.1.1 The data search and desk study revealed six species of bat with the 2km radius data search area around the application site, within the last ten years. Bat species recorded were; serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), Nathusius's pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) and an unidentified myotis species (*Myotis* sp.).

3.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment Results

Building No.	Building Description	Exterior Potential Roosting Features (PRFs)	Interior Potential Roosting Features	Indicative bat roosting or presence evidence
B1 - Barn	Traditional two-storey barn of traditional timber-built structure. Unlined, weather-boarded walls with brick plinth. Pitched, unlined corrugated tin roof with midstrey on southern elevation. 95% of the exterior is covered in common ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>). Internal conditions drafty and damp.	No visible PRFs, building covered in common ivy. Large gap in south-eastern elevation of the roof, allowing potential flight in and out of the barn.	A single clean open mortice joint - others were either blocked or dirty.	Feeding evidence suggesting a potential feeding perch. Few bat droppings found around clean open mortice joint. No discernable bat droppings on ground due to disrupted floor surface.



Plate 2: Exterior view of barn covered in common ivy

- 3.2.1 The barn is situated adjacent to open fields with connecting hedgerow habitat, offering good quality foraging habitat for bats. The interior flooring was disrupted, leading to difficulty in spotting bat droppings, although a small accumulation of feeding remains (butterfly wings) and some droppings located around a single clean open mortice joint would suggest use by a single/low number of transient bat(s). The barn lacked the features to likely support roosts of a high conservation status such as maternity and/or classic hibernation. Based on this information, along with its geographical surroundings, it was considered to be of low bat roosting potential.

4.0 Bat Roost Emergence Survey Results

- 4.1.1 As a result of the PRA determining the barn to be of low roosting potential, an initial single evening bat emergence survey was recommended and has subsequently been carried out by a licensed surveyor from ELMAW Consulting - Mr Keith Seaman (Natural England licence number is available on request) and experienced bat surveyor Ms Jasmine Stephenson – Assistant Ecologist with ELMAW Consulting. As detailed below, a single bat was identified to have emerged from the barn during the survey. As a result of this, a further bat evening emergence survey was carried out, to characterise the roost.

4.2 2024 Survey Results

Evening Emergence Survey – 23rd May 2024

- 4.2.1 The survey commenced fifteen minutes before sunset, which was logged at 21:00. The weather conditions were dry with a slight breeze. The temperature at the start of the survey was 12.6°C, finishing at the end of the survey at 10°C.
- 4.2.2 At 21:34 (34 minutes past sunset), a single common pipistrelle was observed emerging from the open hole in the roof on the southern elevation of the barn.
- 4.2.3 At 21:54 (54 minutes past sunset), a single brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) was recorded flying past one of the cameras, with a later contact recorded at 21:56 (56 minutes after sunset).
- 4.2.4 At 22:05 (one hour and five minutes past sunset), a single common pipistrelle contact was recorded, followed by a later fly-past filmed by a single camera, at 22:15 (one hour and 15 minutes after sunset).

Evening Emergence Survey (Roost Characterisation) – 24th June 2024

- 4.2.5 The survey commenced fifteen minutes before sunset, which was logged at 21:24. The weather conditions were clear, dry and with no wind. The starting temperature was 22°C, finishing at the end of the survey at 18°C. Based on the emergence from the previous survey, a single static detector was positioned

just below the open gap in the roof, to identify any bat species using this to enter or exit the barn.

- 4.2.6 At 21:57 (33 minutes past sunset), a single *Nyctalus* species contact was detected, but not observed within the site area.
- 4.2.7 At 22:15 (51 minutes after sunset), a single common pipistrelle was recorded flying from the hedgerow adjacent to the eastern elevation of the barn and into the hole within the roof, entering the barn. Two minutes later a single bat was observed flying out of the same hole in the roof and around the barn. This flight in and out of the barn occurred again when the single bat flew off to the right of the camera frame at 22:23 (59 minutes after sunset).
- 4.2.8 At 22:33 (one hour and nine minutes past sunset), a single bat was observed flying over the midstre of the barn and exiting the site to the east.

5.0 Evaluation and Impact Assessment

5.1 Evaluation of Bat Emergence Surveys

- 5.1.1 Based on the bat emergence surveys, it has been concluded that a single common pipistrelle non-breeding day roost has been identified - located inside the barn likely inside an open mortice joint. In the south-east and Anglian regions, the conservation status of common pipistrelles is regarded as widespread. The recently published UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines 2023 (Ref 3.) indicate that non-breeding day roosts of widespread species such as common pipistrelles are only of 'site' value and are not likely valued beyond the bounds of the site. Therefore, this is considered to be a roost of site value only.

5.2 Assessment of Impacts & Proposed Development Constraints

- 5.2.1 The unspecified proposed redevelopment works to the barn at Rooks Nest Farm may likely damage or destroy the common pipistrelle day roost inside the barn as it is highly unlikely the roost could be retained within the redevelopment of the barn. Whilst it is only valued at site level, all bat's places of shelter, their roosts, are protected under the Habitats Regulations from damage and or destruction and bats themselves are protected from harm as well as disturbance. Therefore, it is predicted that the redevelopment of the barn will likely result in the potential destruction of the common pipistrelle roost and may result in harm or disturbance to bat(s), should they be present at the time of construction. The Habitats Regulations do however provide a derogation of the legislation which permit otherwise illegal activities with regard to roosting bats. It will permit the disturbance to bats and the damage or destruction of bat roost(s); it will not however permit the harming of bats. The derogation, facilitated through either a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence or a CL21 Bat Mitigation Class Licence (Low Impact), is provided by Natural England once planning permission for redevelopment has been approved but only if mitigation measures are proposed that maintain the favourable conservation status of the local bat population.

Habitats Regulations Three Stage Test

5.2.2 Since January 2010, local planning authorities are obligated to consider any predicted impact on a protected species such as bats, and whether a European Protected Species Mitigation licence would be granted, assuming the Three Stage Test be met satisfactorily, thus allowing the granting of planning permission.

5.2.3 If bats are found to be present, then an assessment of the 2010 Habitat Regulation's three stage test will be carried out with respect to the third test (ecology). Local planning authorities have a statutory duty under Regulation 9 (5) of the Habitats Regulations 2010, to apply the following tests in respect of European protected species:

Test 3) 'That 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'.

5.3 Mitigation, Compensation & Enhancement

5.3.1 The common pipistrelle day roost is considered to be of low conservation significance. Natural England (Ref 3.) advise that to maintain their favourable conservation status, there can be flexibility in terms of the timing and type of compensation to be provided. The impact on the local bat population of the loss of a day roost of a common bat, such as the common pipistrelle, is considered to be low and as such, the loss of the roost can be facilitated through the use of the CL21 Bat Mitigation Class Licence (Low Impact). Under the use of this Class licence, there is no mandatory requirement for compensation. If it is provided however, Natural England expect it to be proportionate. As such, a single bat box, such as a Schwegler 1FF or similar and suitable for use by common pipistrelles, is to be installed on either the adjacent dwelling or a nearby tree on land within the applicant's ownership.

5.3.2 With regard to ensuring bats are not harmed during the proposed redevelopment works of the barn, prior to any works, a licensed bat Ecologist must inspect any open mortice joints for any roosting bats. Should bats be encountered, they will be carefully removed by hand and placed in a pre-erected bat box on a nearby tree. If this is not possible, or the PRF is not able to be fully inspected, it will be covered with Natural England-approved one-way

excluders. This will be conducted in appropriate weather conditions when temperatures are above 8°C. Excluders will remain in place for five consecutive days, to allow the bat to leave the roost but ensuring it is unable to return. Once the bat has been excluded, the PRF must be blocked immediately to ensure it is not reoccupied. This must be carried out before the winter period, as bats cannot be excluded or removed whilst in hibernation. It is important to acknowledge that *Pipistrellus* species are known for using summer roosting locations during the winter for hibernation and as such may still occupy potential roosting features within the building that are unable to be excluded or inspected in the winter months. These are known as non-classic hibernation roosts as they lack the stable thermal and humid conditions to support large numbers of hibernating bats. Due to the unpredictable nature of the species, preventing works between the months of November to March in case of a single winter-roosting bat would be impractical and disproportionate. Based on this, it is critical that any work that may impact a roosting bat or bats during winter should be conducted in appropriate consistent temperatures of above 8°C and under the supervision of the licensed bat ecologist. If a bat is found during this time, the licensed ecologist will remove the bat and relocate it to a pre-erected bat box on a nearby tree or building.

5.4 Further Considerations

- 5.4.1 All species of bat, to a greater or lesser degree, use their places of shelter in a temporal and spatial way, which may affect the status of a site or building at any given time. Roost sites which may appear temporarily vacated or abandoned could be re-occupied at any time in the future.
- 5.4.2 Therefore, following the production of this report, should the redevelopment of the application site be delayed for 12-18 months from the date of this survey, the building will be re-assessed and re-surveyed, if considered necessary, to ensure the current status of roosting bats on site is known and fully considered in the redevelopment of the site and subsequent EPSM licensing considerations. To obtain a derogation of the Habitats Regulations, a Bat Mitigation Class Licence will be required and, as such, the bat status of the current season of redevelopment will be required to support a licence application to Natural England.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1.1 Overall, the barn at Rooks Nest Farm was deemed to have low bat roosting potential, with the surrounding habitat offering good connectivity and foraging potential. The examination of the barn found a few interior PRFs with some bat feeding evidence however the floor space was disrupted creating difficulty in finding bat droppings and accumulations. A small accumulation of feeding evidence was identified within the barn suggesting use by a single or low number of transient bats. A single, open mortice joint was identified alongside a few droppings around the entrance, suggesting the potential presence of a roost.
- 6.1.2 Previous survey work completed by ELMAW Consulting in 2011 found that the barn had occasional use by a single species of bat (common pipistrelle) but did not identify a bat roost. The updated 2024 bat roost emergence surveys found evidence of a single common pipistrelle roosting in the barn. Additionally, three species of bat were recorded within the surrounding environment, suggesting its use by foraging and feeding bats but there was no evidence to suggest roosting by other species.
- 6.1.3 The proposed redevelopment of the barn will potentially result in the loss of the single common pipistrelle day roost. Whilst this roost is considered to be of low conservation significance and only of site value, as this is an occupied bat roost, both roost and bat are protected. There is also the potential for bats to be harmed due to the proposed works of the barn without the appropriate mitigation measures. To allow for the roost loss and potential disturbance to roosting bats, a CL21 Bat Mitigation Class Licence (Low Impact) will be required prior to any works and this will be applied for once planning permission has been granted. To ensure no bats are harmed during works to the barn, under the conditions of the licence, roosting bats will be searched for, removed and excluded by the licensed ecologist. To compensate for the loss of the day roost, a species-appropriate bat box will be erected on an adjacent tree, under the ownership of the applicant.

7.0 References & Bibliography

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

Ref. 2 Altringham, J.D. (2003). *British Bats*. HarperCollins Publishers. London.

Ref. 3 Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). *UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.

Ref. 4 Joint Nature Conservation Committee. (2004), *Bat Workers' Manual*, JNCC, Peterborough.

8.0 Appendix 1

8.1 *Legislation Relating to Bats*

8.1.1 All bats and their roosts in the UK are protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

8.1.2 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 or reproduce, rear or nurture their young, hibernate, migrate or affect significantly their local distribution or abundance
- 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

8.1.3 Bats' roosts (including resting places) are protected whether or not bats are present at the time. The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981(as amended) additionally makes it an offence to;

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

8.1.4 Finally, under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, a duty is placed on all public bodies to promote and enhance biodiversity in all its functions. There is a general biodiversity duty in the NERC Act (Section 40) which requires every public body in the exercising of its functions to 'have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. Section 41 draws up lists of species of principal importance to which special attention must be given and a number of bats are included in this list.

9.0 Appendix 2

9.1 *Example still-shots from the infrared cameras used during the surveys:*



10.0 Bat Emergence Survey Maps

