

**WOOLAW FARM,
NORTHUMBERLAND**

**PROTECTED SPECIES
REPORT**

BATS & BARN OWLS

March 2021

GW *Ecology*

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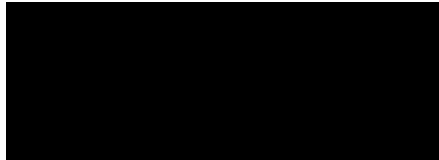
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1. INTRODUCTION

The proposed work is the removal of three buildings at Woolaw Farm Northumberland. GW Ecology was asked to carry out an assessment of building with regards bat roost potential and Barn Owl presence.

I am an ecologist with over 25 years survey work experience and have worked within local authorities as a Biodiversity Officer/County Ecologist, NGOs including managing a Local Environmental Record Centre and private consultancies including my own and David Dodds Associates. I have a good all round knowledge with a special interest in mammals, including bats, otter and badger.

Further information may be obtained from the author:



Graeme Wilson

Ecologist

GW Ecology



2. SUMMARY

- The corrugated metal shed has negligible bat roost potential.
- The asbestos shed has negligible bat roost potential.
- The wooden barn is in poor condition and is not weather proof and has negligible bat roost potential.
- No evidence of bat presence was found.
- No records of bats within 1km of the site were found in data search.
- If a bat is found then all work stops and Natural England contacted.
- No evidence was found of Barn Owl using any of the buildings.
- Though no disused nests were found any work should take place outwith the bird breeding season (March-August) but if not possible then site should be checked by a suitably qualified ecologist before commencing to ensure no nesting birds are present.

3. LEGAL PROTECTION

3.1 Protection of bats

All bat species were designated as European Protected Species (EPS) by Article 12 of **The European Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (1992)**. Protection is provided in English Law by **The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)** (as amended); **The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)**; **The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)**; and by **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010)**.

3.2 Possible offences

The following actions constitute criminal offences:

- 1. Capturing or killing bats.** This is an absolute offence – there is no need for the prosecution to demonstrate an intention to commit the offence to secure conviction.
- 2. Harassing bats.**
- 3. Disturbing bats:**
 - a. Affecting their ability to survive, breed or rear young.**
 - b. Affecting their local distribution or abundance.**
 - c. Whilst rearing or caring for their young.**
 - d. Whilst occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection.**
- 4. Obstructing bats from accessing a breeding site or resting place.**
- 5. Damaging or destroying a breeding site or resting place used by bats.**
- 6. Possessing any live bat, dead bat or part of a dead bat.**

In addition, the following are also offences:

- 7. Attempting to commit one of the above offences**
- 8. Knowingly causing or permitting someone else to commit one of the above offences.**

Maximum fines for committing one of the above offences are **£5,000 per animal**.

3.3 Avoiding committing an offence

Most of these offences (excluding 1) can be committed recklessly as well as deliberately, meaning that ignorance of the presence of bats is not a defence: you are expected to do all you can to find out whether bats (or other protected species) are present and whether you are at risk of committing an offence. In practice this

means instructing a consultant ecologist to carry out surveys and taking account of their professional advice.

3.4 Breeding Birds

Under **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)** it is illegal to disturb breeding birds or their nests, whilst nest is still in use.

3.5 Disclaimer

The author of this report is not a lawyer and cannot offer a legal opinion. It is strongly recommended that legal advice be sought before taking any action which might expose you to a risk of prosecution.

4. SURVEY METHODS

4.1 Desk Study

NBN Atlas was checked for bat records and Barn Owl records within 1km of site. The area searched can be seen in Appendix 1. Based on the results of the NBN Atlas search and the result of the site visit the author did not feel it was justified to ask client to spend money on a data search by the North East Environmental Record Centre.

1:25 000 and 1:10 000 Ordnance Survey maps were consulted, together with satellite pictures, in order to assess the surrounding habitat.

4.2 Site Visit

The site was visited on 8 March 2021 and walked round to identify any potential for bat roosts and look for any signs of bats using building, as well as any sign of breeding birds, including Barn Owl.

4.3 Survey limitations

The survey was carried out in early spring and, as all British bats are peripatetic and move between different roosting sites through the seasons and sometimes within seasons, the absence of bats on a particular occasion does not necessarily rule out their presence at other times. An absence of physical signs does not always indicate the absence of a roost. It is also important to note that though a structure is deemed to have negligible bat roost potential it is always possible that a single bat may roost in a totally unsuitable structure.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Desk Study

Records from NBN Atlas did not highlight any bat records within 1km of the site and a single record of a Barn Owl from BTO dataset from 2017 for the km square to the west of the buildings.

The subject site lies within the Northumberland National Park boundary and the River Rede to the north of the site does offer some good bat foraging habitat. The rest of the habitats surrounding the site offer minimal foraging opportunities.

5.2 Site Visit

The small corrugated metal shed (Photographs 1&2) is deemed unsuitable for both bats and Barn Owl.

The asbestos shed (Photographs 3-5) is deemed unsuitable for both bats and Barn Owl.

The wooden barn (Photograph 6) potentially is more likely to be more favourable for bats and Barn Owls to use so a careful examination of the structure was undertaken.

The internal walls and part of the roof is corrugated metal and the rest of the roof is slates nailed onto slats of wood rather than onto boards giving no places for bats to roost. (Photographs 7-10) Some of the slate roof has already collapsed and the author assessed more will collapse in the near future letting in more wind and rain to structure.

One end of the wooden barn (Photograph 11) has a double skin of wood but with large gaps between internal slats of wood. The author inspected these closely and determined that the gaps between slats and also the distance between external and internal skin is too large to give bats any roosting opportunity.

The garage area that is integrated into the wooden barn structure (Photographs 12&13) was also examined closely. The roof is the same slates on slats rather than boards and therefore offered no bat roosting opportunities and the walls are corrugated metal which is unsuitable for bats.

There is no evidence of Barn Owls being present or using the wooden barn structure.

All three structures have the potential to be used by breeding birds other than Barn Owl.

5.3 Photographs



Photograph 1: Corrugated metal shed



Photograph 2: Corrugated metal shed with asbestos shed behind



Photograph 3: Asbestos shed



Photograph 4: Interior of asbestos shed



Photograph 5: Interior of asbestos shed



Photograph 6: Wooden barn



Photograph 7: Interior of wooden barn



Photograph 8: Interior roof of wooden barn



Photograph 9: Interior roof of wooden barn



Photograph 10: Exterior of roof of wooden barn



Photograph 11: Interior gable end of wooden barn



Photograph 12: Separate garage on right that is part of wooden barn



Photogrpah 13: Interior of garage

6. Discussion & conclusions

Both the corrugated metal shed and the asbestos shed are unsuitable for bats to roost in therefore have negligible roost potential.

The wooden barn in theory should have some bat roost potential as wooden structures usually have some areas that can be used by bats. However this structure is in extremely bad repair and the slates in roof are nailed onto thin slats of wood rather than boards, giving bats no opportunity to roost under slates. The roof also has large holes in it and is letting in both wind and rain which makes for quite varied temperature and humidity levels. The roof is also in danger of collapsing more in the near future meaning even more wind and rain getting in. The internal walls and some of the roof are made from corrugated metal which is unsuitable for bat roosting. The only real potential could be the double skinned gable end of the barn. However the distance between the external and internal wooden skin is too large to give bats any roosting opportunity and the internal skin has large gaps between each slat and the external skin also has small gaps letting in wind and rain meaning the gap is not attractive as a roosting option for bats. It is the considered opinion of the author that the wooden barn's structure and current state of repair makes it have negligible roost potential.

As no evidence of bats was found, there are no records of bats within 1km of the site and the author deems all three buildings to have negligible roost potential there is no need for any further bat surveys to be carried out. However it is impossible to guarantee that a single bat may not be using any of the structure on site despite them being deemed to have negligible roost potential therefore if a bat is found during removal of the buildings then all work must stop and Natural England contacted.

There was no evidence of any presence of Barn Owl on site but all three buildings could potentially be used by small birds to nest in. For this reason any demolition work should be carried out outwith the bird breeding season (March-August) but if not possible then site should be checked by a suitably qualified ecologist before commencing to ensure no nesting birds are present.

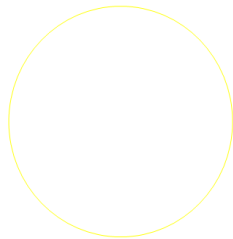
Other than checking the buildings for nesting birds if demolition is to take place during the bird breeding season there are no further wildlife issues to consider.

APPENDIX I – SITE LOCATION

National Grid Reference: NT48298747



● Woolaw Farm



Data search area