Land to rear of Sherwood, Nutts Lane, Hinckley

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT FOR BATS AND BARN OWL SURVEY

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Site Details

Report	Preliminary Roost Assessment for Bats and Barn Owl Survey
Site Address	Land to rear of Sherwood, Nutts Lane, Hinckley, Leicestershire. LE10 3EG
Central OS Grid Reference	SP 40910 92642
Client	Mr Jim Smith

Document Control

Author	Reviewed By	Comments	Report Version	Issue Date
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Croft Ecology was commissioned by Mr Jim Smith to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment for Bats and a Barn Owl Survey on an area of land to the rear of Sherwood, Nutts Lane, Hinckley in relation to a forthcoming planning application for the demolition of the existing structures and construction of two residential properties and associated gardens at the Site.
- The Preliminary Roost Assessment for bats and barn owl survey was undertaken by appropriately qualified and experienced personnel on 31 July 2025.
- The Site comprised a shingled yard, at the western end of which was a building comprising a single storey gabled garage from which flat roofed extensions extended to the northern boundary. Four mobile homes were also present on the Site.
- The outbuildings were inspected internally and externally and were considered to have negligible potential for roosting bats due to a lack of suitable roosting features for bats. The pitched section of the garage had profiled metal roof panels and an MDF lining, with the profiled metal not considered to have the thermal stability to support a bat roost. Damp was evident on the internal surfaces of the lining, further reducing the suitability of the space for roosting bats, and no evidence of bats was found within the building. The extensions were flat roofed with a combination of corrugated metal panels and felted roofs; and while internal access was available no potential roosting features were noted internally. The static caravans did not have any suitable features for roosting bats. The buildings on Site are not considered to support roosting bats and works can proceed without the need for further survey with respect to bats.
- The buildings of the Site were considered to have negligible potential for barn owl. The gabled section of the garage is understood to be locked when not in use and there was no access available for a barn owl if the doors were closed. The remaining structures were not suitable for use by nesting barn owl.
- A record of nesting barn owl was located within a metal framed barn in the adjacent field, 10m from the Site boundary. This record is within the 30m buffer zone within which works can be deemed to be disturbing for nesting barn owls, and as such it is recommended that demolition and excavations for the proposals are undertaken between October and February (inclusive) to avoid barn owl nesting season. Should demolition works be undertaken in the nesting season, access to the adjacent barn should be sought and a check for nesting barn owls undertaken by a licensed ecologist.

- In the very unlikely event roosting bats are found during the works, works should cease immediately, and further advice sought from a suitably qualified ecologist and Natural England.
- Avoidance and mitigation measures with respect to bats , barn owl and nesting birds are set out in this report.
- Proportionate enhancement measures for the installation of bat and bird boxes at the Site are also included in Section 4 of this report.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Croft Ecology was commissioned by Mr Jim Smith to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats and a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* survey on an area of land to the rear of Sherwood, Nutts Lane, Hinckley (central grid reference: SP 40910 92642), hereafter referred to as the Site, in relation to a forthcoming planning application for the demolition of the existing structures and construction of two residential properties and associated gardens at the Site.

1.1 Aims

The aims of this report are to:

- identify the potential for/evidence of bats, barn owl and nesting birds within the Site;
- identify further surveys that may be required to fully understand likely impacts on bats;
- identify any mitigation measures or protected species licensing likely required; and
- identify any opportunities for biodiversity enhancements.

1.2 Site Location

The Site was located on the southern fringes of Hinckley in Leicestershire. The Site was immediately surrounded by a mix of residential and industrial properties, with open land 50m to the northeast and northwest; and 100m to the south beyond the A5 corridor from which hedgerows and pockets of vegetation across the farm landscape provided connectivity to the wider landscape which could be used by a range of species. A railway corridor ran east to west 200m north of the Site, while the Ashby de la Zouch Canal was located 400m east. A sewage treatment plant was located 600m east of the Site beyond the canal corridor.

Figure 1. Site Location Plan

1.3 Planning and Legislative Context

Bats

Both UK legislation together with national and local planning policies provide varying levels of protection to bats.

All British bat species (*Rhinolophidae* and *Vespertilionidae*) are legally protected in the UK under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are fully protected under Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The latter piece of legislation resulted in them being known as “European Protected Species” (EPS). This means that it is illegal to deliberately take, injure, or kill the animal; to intentionally or recklessly disturb the animal whilst they are in a 'place used for shelter or protection' or damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (even when the animal is not present). It is also illegal to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a place of shelter or protection; or to possess, control, sell, or transport live or dead individuals or their body parts.

If you cannot avoid disturbing these species or damaging their habitats, you may be required to apply to Natural England for a licence to carry out such works under the close supervision of a licensed ecologist.

Birds

In the UK, the law protects all wild bird species, as well as their eggs and nests, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Intentionally harming or taking wild birds, damaging or destroying their nests while in use or under construction, taking or destroying their eggs, or possessing, controlling, or transporting live or dead wild birds is considered an offence. Some birds, including barn owl *Tyto alba*) receive additional protection under Schedule 1, Part 1 of this Act and are protected by special penalties at all times. For these bird species, it is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb them while they are nesting, building a nest, near a nest with their young, or disturbing their dependent young.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Personnel

The Preliminary Roost Assessment and Barn Owl survey and reporting was undertaken by Jeff Grant CEnv MCIEEM, Principal Ecologist at Croft Ecology. Jeff has over 12 years of experience working in ecology and has undertaken and reviewed dozens of Preliminary Roost Assessments, Preliminary Ecological Appraisals and Ecological Impact Assessments for projects of a range of scales. Jeff holds a level 2 protected species survey licence for bats (2022-10527-CLS-CLS). While Jeff does not hold a barn owl survey, he has done numerous barn owl surveys with Anna Scott-Swift and is authorised under Anna's licence. Anna Scott-Swift MCIEEM, Director of Ecology at Croft Ecology has over 20 years of experience working in the field of ecology and has undertaken and reviewed dozens of Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, Ecological Impact Assessments and Preliminary Roost Assessments. Anna also holds a barn owl licence (CL29/00392).

2.2 Data Search

The Government's website MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk) was accessed on 28th August 2025 to conduct an initial search for designated nature conservation sites, priority habitats, EPS mitigation licences issued within 1km of the Site, and to assess whether the Site was located within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) impact risk zone (IRZ).

Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre was contacted for details on bat species and barn owl records within a 1km radius of the Site boundary. Additionally, aerial photography was viewed to assess habitat connectivity around the Site's locale, which may be important to ecological features present on Site and for the consideration of suitable ecological enhancements.

2.3 Survey Date and Conditions

The Site was visited for the Preliminary Roost Assessment and barn owl survey on 31 July 2025 and included all land within the red line boundary (see Figure 1). Weather conditions at the time of survey were overcast with a light breeze and no rain. The air temperature was 22°C.

2.4 Preliminary Roost Assessment

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken in accordance with the methodology described within the Bat Survey Guidelines 4th edition (Collins, 2023). This included a daytime inspection, comprising both an external and internal check to assess the construction of any buildings on Site and whether there were any potential bat access points or roosting opportunities. It also included an assessment for any evidence of bats (internally or externally) such as droppings, staining or scratching around access/egress points, any individuals, or any audible 'chattering' (more typical in maternity colonies).

A high-powered LED torch was used together with 8 x 42 binoculars, where necessary, with a dental mirror available for searching in difficult-to-reach places and a Rigid SeeSnake endoscope CA-350.

The descriptions in the table below were used in assessing the roosting potential of the building.

Table 2. Assessment of bat roosting potential[1]

Roosting potential	Description
None	A complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all levels above ground and underground.
Negligible	No obvious features on site likely to be used by roosting bats BUT a small degree of uncertainty remains for opportunistic bats to make use of unsuitable features on occasion.
Low	The structure has one or more potential roost site that could be used by individual roosting bats BUT conditions within the structure and the habitat surrounding the site are sub-optimal, hence the site is unlikely to be used as a maternity roost.
Moderate	The structure has a small number of potential roost sites that could be used by small numbers of roosting bats and more than one bat species BUT conditions within the structure suggest and/or the habitat surrounding the site indicate that a maternity or roost is unlikely.
High	The structure has many potential roost sites that could be used by a maternity roost or hibernation roost of bats, with additional roosts of other bat species likely to be present.

[1] Based on Table 4.1 in the BCT Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, J. 2023).

2.5 Barn Owl Assessment

A Barn Owl assessment was undertaken in line with the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Barn Owl Survey Protocol (Leicestershire County Council, 2022). The barn owl assessment involved a thorough internal and external check of the buildings at the Site for evidence of barn owl. This could include the following:

- Suitable cavities/ chambers for potential nest sites;
- Evidence of roosting barn owls such as droppings, pellets, feathers, individuals or audible hissing/'snoring' from chicks.

This survey can be taken at any time of year. A high-powered LED torch was used together with 8 x 42 binoculars, where necessary, with a dental mirror available for searching in difficult-to-reach places and a Rigid SeeSnake endoscope CA-350.

2.6 Survey Limitations

The external walls of the western buildings could not be assessed as no access was available to adjacent land. As internal access was available, this is not considered to present a notable constraint to the survey effort.

In addition, the mobile homes could not be accessed internally at the time of the survey, though based on their construction this was not considered to provide a constraint to a robust ecological assessment of the Site.

2.7 Evaluation of Constraints and Opportunities

All potential ecological constraints to the Proposed Development were identified. In the context of the Mitigation Hierarchy[2], consideration was then given as to how any significant effects

[2] "*The overarching aims of ecological work used to inform the planning process are to minimize harm and to maximize benefits for biodiversity resulting from development. The generally accepted way of doing this, now embedded within the planning system, is to follow the "mitigation hierarchy". This seeks as a preference to avoid impacts then to mitigate unavoidable impacts, and, as a last resort, to compensate for unavoidable residual impacts that remain after*

could be avoided, minimised or mitigated. Following this, appropriate compensation and enhancement measures were outlined. Where additional surveys are required to better understand the likely presence of, and hence impact of the proposed development on, a given ecological feature, these are detailed in Section 4. Lastly, opportunities for enhancements have also been provided in Section 4.

avoidance and mitigation measures." Biodiversity: Code of practice for planning and development (BS 42020:2013)

3 RESULTS

3.1 Species Records

The data search returned 49 bat records within 1km of the Site. These included 29 records of Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii,* two records of common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and the remainder of unidentified Chiroptera species. All of these records were associated with the Ashby de la Zouch Canal corridor, except one record of a common pipistrelle at Beams Meadows 250m northwest of the Site. No roosting records were returned, all bats were recorded in flight by a detector. The most recent records dated from 2015.

No EPS bat mitigation licences were identified within 1km of the Site.

A single record of barn owl was returned, dating from 2021 and nesting within a barn owl box in a farm barn 10m west of the Site. No access was available to this barn, though the record is believed to be associated with the metal framed and ivy covered barn which can be seen in the rear of Photo 2.

The landscape around the Site was largely dominated by urban development to the north, east and northwest, while to the southwest beyond the A5 road corridor the landscape opened out to a rural landscape of open farmland. The nearby canal, field hedgerows and a number of small brooks provided connectivity to pockets of trees and woodland in the wider landscape. The urban area offers numerous potential roosting features for a variety of bat species, with the wider landscape offering a range of connectivity to habitats which could be used by a variety of bat species and barn owls for foraging, commuting and roosting.

3.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment

The Site comprised a shingled yard, at the western end of which was a building comprising a single storey gabled garage (Photo 1) from which flat roofed extensions extended to the northern boundary (Photo 2). Four mobile homes were also present on the Site.

The main garage comprised a gabled brick structure, with single skin walls and as such no cavity present. A tightly sealed glass window was present on the northern gable. Wooden fascia and barge boards were present, though on the southern gable end there was evidence that ivy had been growing under the barge board and had been removed. Ivy stems filled the gaps along much of the length, with the rest of the gap between the board and brickwork appearing cobwebbed. The roof comprised corrugated metal panels lined with MDF boarding supported

by a prefabricated wooden truss. No ridgeboard was present. Gaps at the eaves and behind the soffit provided access into the gap between the roof panels and the MDF lining; however, the metal roof would experience thermal fluctuations with weather that was considered to reduce its suitability for roosting bats. Evidence of damp was present across the internal roof and was considered such that any roosting potential would be reduced, and the trusses were cobwebbed.

Another garage adjoined the northern wall of the main section. This was a brick structure with a roof of corrugated metal panels. An MDF ceiling was attached to the roof joists, creating a gap approximately 10cm high between the ceiling and the roof panels. No evidence of bats was identified within this section of the building.

An additional single storey section, comprising brick walls and a flat felt roof, extended to the north. This comprised four rooms, three as bedsits and a fourth storage room. No loft space was present within this section. A uPVC fascia board was present on the eastern elevation, with small gaps noted along its length which could provide an access point for bats, however, no evidence of bats were noted around these features.

Four static caravans were present on the Site. These had no loft spaces, access or features suitable for roosting bats.

No evidence of roosting bats (in the form of droppings, urine staining, individuals etc.) was found during the PRA in any of the buildings assessed.

Photo 1: Main garage of the Site, with extensions on the northern elevation

Photo 2: Flat roofed section at the north, with mobile home typical of the Site also visible to the right of shot.

Left: Photo 3 – Roof void of the main garage. The roof was lined with MDF boarding, with evidence of damp throughout.

Right: Photo 4 – Interior of flat roofed garage showing the void between ceiling and roof panels.

The internal areas of the building were thoroughly inspected and no evidence of roosting bats was identified within the potential roosting features noted. The exterior of the building had a small number of potential roosting features, with gaps at the eaves and barge board providing potential access to the cavity between the roof panels and the MDF lining below; though these features were choked with ivy on the southern extent and cobwebbed elsewhere, reducing their suitability for roosting bats and not showing evidence of recent faunal use. Due to the unstable microclimate provided by the metal roof, and evidence of damp throughout the building, the suitability of the main garage for bats was considered to be reduced. The extensions could be fully inspected, with the flat roofed garage considered to have no suitable roosting features for bats and the felt roofed section having negligible potential behind the uPVC fascia board.

Based on the features identified in the PRA, the existing buildings were determined to have **negligible potential** for roosting bats (Collins, 2023). Due to the structure of the static caravans at the Site their suitability for roosting bats was considered to be none.

3.3 Barn Owl Assessment

No evidence of barn owls was identified on site during the surveys The felt roofed extensions had no suitability for barn owls. The joists and wall plate of the garages were too narrow to support a barn owl nest, and the doors of the garage were tightly sealed when closed. It is understood that the garages are locked when not in use and as such no ingress would be available to barn owls unless the building was in active use. Such use would disturb barn owls and deter the species from nesting. In addition, barn owls typically prefer taller buildings and the single storey structures on Site reduce the suitability for the species. Therefore the Site is considered to have **negligible potential** for barn owls.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Proposed Development

The proposals involve the demolition of the existing buildings and removal of the static caravans to facilitate the construction of two residential properties and associated gardens at the Site. For the purposes of this report, Lawrence Finley Architects drawing NJ420_PL-03_Illustrative Site Plan has been used to assess the impacts of the proposed design.

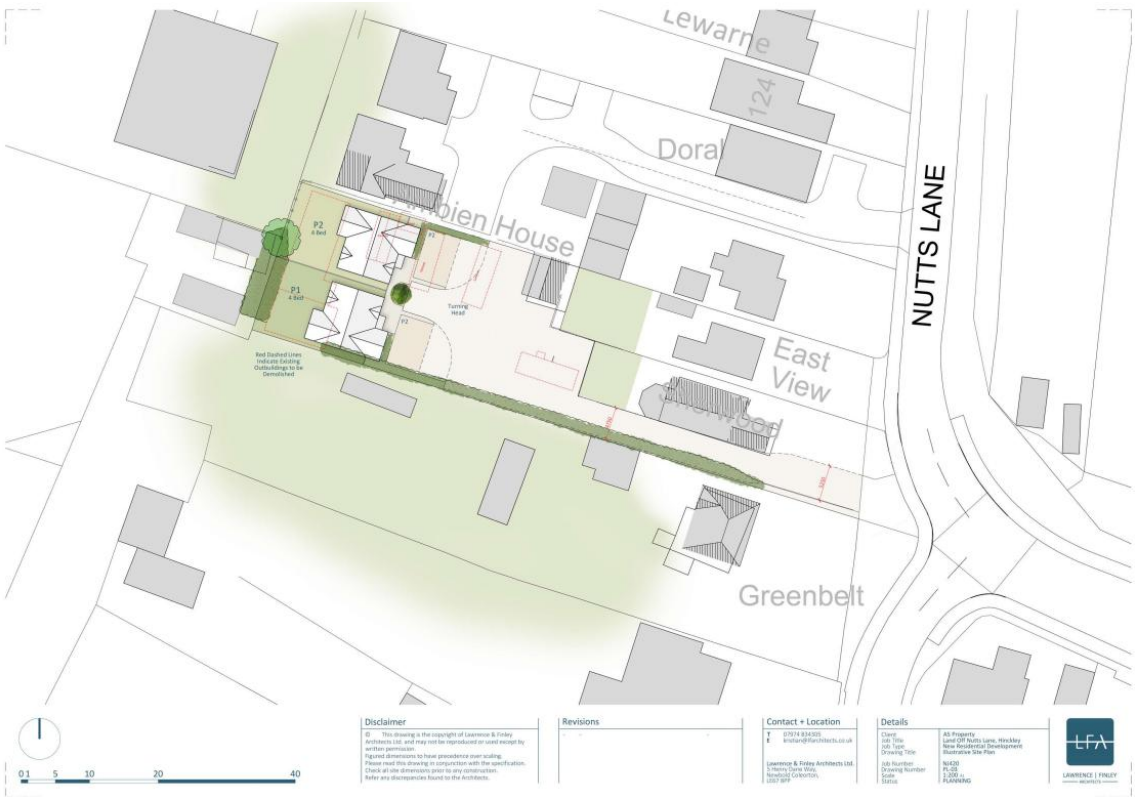

Figure 2: Proposed Site plans

4.2 Assessment of Potential Impacts to Bats

No evidence of roosting bats was identified during the PRA. While a number of access points were noted, the internal structure and microclimate of the buildings were considered to be unsuitable for roosting bats and coupled with a lack of any evidence or nearby roosting records there was considered to be negligible potential for roosting bats to use the buildings.

Therefore, no impacts to bats are anticipated from the proposed works and no further survey effort is required.

Should the works take place more than 2 years from the date of these surveys, further advice should be sought from an ecologist to confirm whether an update is required.

4.3 Birds including barn owl

A nearby record of nesting barn owl was identified within a barn owl box in a barn in the field, located approximately 10m west of the Site boundary. This barn can be seen in the rear of Photo 2 and west of the Site on Figure 2. No access was available to this land parcel or the barn within which the barn owl had been recorded; though based on the appearance of the barn and the immediate surroundings it was considered that barn owls using the structure would exit the barn to the north or west to forage over the open field in that direction; rather than flying to the urban areas to the south and east.

The proposed site works will not impact this nesting location directly, but the demolition of the existing buildings will occur within 10m of the barn; and excavation of the new foundations will occur within approximately 20m of the adjacent barn. Indirect impacts from noise and vibration of these works are considered to have the potential to disturb nesting barn owls, as a 10m distance is well within the typical 30m disturbance zone of nesting barn owl. Due to the lack of access to the barn to check for nesting barn owl, mitigation measures for barn owl are set out in section 4.5 below.

No nesting birds were identified at the Site during the time of survey. The buildings on Site were considered to have negligible potential for nesting birds as it was understood that the doors are kept locked when not in use, and the interior of the buildings provided the only potential roosting or nesting opportunities. Should access be available, birds are known to roost in roof structures (although those on Site were considered unsuitable for use by barn owl) and so sensitive timing and working methods, or pre-works check by a competent person, are required to ensure that potential disturbance impacts to nesting birds are avoided during construction works, if present.

4.4 Summary of Further Surveys Required

No further survey work is required.

4.5 Mitigation and Compensation Requirements

4.5.1 Barn Owl

- Demolition and foundation works should be scheduled between October-February to avoid the bird nesting season (considered March-September, inclusive). These elements

of the works are considered disturbing to nesting barn owl due to the noise and vibration generated. Other works (i.e. construction of the proposed houses) are not considered disturbing and so can proceed outside of this seasonal window.

- Should works have to be undertaken within the nesting period, access to the barn should be sought and checked immediately prior to works by a licensed ecologist. Should nesting barn owls be identified works must cease until chicks have fledged and permanently left the nest. A check of the on site buildings should be undertaken at the same time for nesting birds by a competent person.

4.5.2 Bats

- No night-time work is anticipated and therefore disturbance to foraging/commuting bats from light/vibration/noise is not considered further within this report. An ecologist should be contacted for advice should this no longer be the case.
- Any external lighting to be installed as part of the Proposed Development should use warm white LEDs to reduce the blue light component and use a motion-senser, where possible, to limit artificial light exposure. Further advice concerning light-spill and glare should be discussed and agreed with an ecologist.
- In the very unlikely event roosting bats are found during the works, works should cease immediately, and further advice sought from a suitably qualified ecologist and Natural England.

4.6 Opportunities for Enhancement

- Inclusion of bat boxes on the new dwellings should be considered, to provide enhanced roosting opportunities for bats. Boxes could be installed on the southern or western elevations at least at eaves height, and away from artificial light sources. Further details on box type and location should be discussed and agreed with the architect and ecologist.
- There was no evidence of barn owls at the Site, and no suitable opportunities for the installation of a barn owl box. Installation of bird boxes on the building or within the garden would enhance nesting opportunities for other birds. The boxes should be installed on the buildings between the north and east aspect, at least at eaves height. Further details on box type and location should be discussed and agreed with the architect and ecologist.

5 CONCLUSION

The PRA and barn owl survey of land at Nutts Lane, Hinckley identified negligible potential for both roosting bats and barn owls. As such the proposed works can proceed without further survey.

Mitigation measures (including sensitive timings and lighting design) have been included within this report to ensure compliance with relevant environmental legislation and planning policy.

In addition, the inclusion of bat and bird boxes has been suggested to provide on-site biodiversity enhancements in line with the National Planning Policy Framework[3] (NPPF, 2024).

[3] Paragraph 174 (d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states: "*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: … (d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity…".*

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