

**Ecological and Bat Survey Report for  
Shortlands Park Stud, Hook Norton Road,  
Sibford Ferris, Oxfordshire, OX15 5QR**



**Cotswold Wildlife Surveys**

**16<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

## QUALITY CONTROL

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The information in this report has been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Professional Conduct. The conclusions and recommendations expressed are reasoned judgements based on the evidence.

Every reasonable attempt has been made to comply with BS42020:2013 *Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development*, CIEEM *Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing* (CIEEM, 2017) and Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Collins, 2016). If there has been deviation from recognised practice, justification/explanation has been given.

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## SUMMARY

At Shortlands Park Stud on Hook Norton Road in Sibford Ferris near Banbury, planning permission is being sought for a replacement dwelling.

As this could impact on features typically used by bats as roosting places, a diurnal inspection was undertaken on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021, to assess the building for signs of bat occupation.

All the internal and external structures, especially those associated with the roof and walls of the building were examined.

No signs of bat activity or occupation were found, and the suitability for roosting pipistrelles *Pipistrellus spp* was considered to be negligible. The interior was inaccessible to bats.

The building was not identified as a bat roost or hibernation site, and as such no further surveys or mitigation measures are considered necessary.

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A pair of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* were nesting in a verge gap, but there were no other old or in-use birds' nests, and none were found in the trees or bushes around the garden.

There were no signs of Badger *Meles meles* activity, and the formally landscaped grounds were unsuitable for reptiles and amphibians.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In June 2021, Cotswold Wildlife Surveys was instructed by Tyack Architects, on behalf of their client Mr Mark Adams, to undertake a bat and ecology survey of Shortlands Park Stud on Hook Norton Road in Sibford Ferris near Banbury. On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021, a visit was made to the property to carry out a diurnal inspection of the building to check for signs of bat occupation, with a wider appraisal of the grounds to look for evidence of other protected species.

The result of the inspection is contained in this report.

In England, Scotland and Wales, all bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended), through inclusion in Schedule 5. In England and Wales this Act has been amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW), which adds an extra offence, makes species offences arrestable, increases the time limits for some prosecutions, and increases penalties.

All bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994, (or Northern Ireland 1995) (the Habitats Regulations), which defines 'European protected species of animals'.

The above legislation can be summarised thus (Mitchell-Jones and McLeish, 2004):

- ❑ *Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) bats*
- ❑ *Deliberately disturb bats (whether in a roost or not)*
- ❑ *Recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts*
- ❑ *Damage or destroy roosts*
- ❑ *Possess or transport a bat or any part of a part of a bat, unless acquired legally*
- ❑ *Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats, or parts of bats*

The word 'roost' is not used in the legislation, but is used here for simplicity. The actual wording is 'any structure or place which any wild animal...uses for shelter or protection' (WCA), or 'breeding site or resting place' (Habitats Regulations).

As bats generally have both a winter and a summer roost, the legislation is clear that all roosts are protected whether bats are in residence at the time or not.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

In order to fully assess bat occupation of a particular site, the Bat Conservation Trust (2016) recommends that information gathered from a desk study of known bat records, and a daytime site walkover, is used to inform the type and extent of future bat survey work, potentially including nocturnal surveys.

The diurnal walkover provides an opportunity to check for signs of occupancy, such as droppings, scratch marks, feeding remains, carcasses, or even animals in residence, whilst nocturnal surveys (if required) allow numbers and species of bats to be confirmed. The latter are also used to determine the presence or absence of bats, where signs of bat activity are indeterminate or absent but the suitability for bat roosting is considered to be low, medium or high.

Roosting places vary depending on the species. Pipistrelles usually inhabit narrow cracks or cavities around the outside of buildings, but they will roost in similar niches inside larger barns. Typical sites include soffit spaces, gaps behind fascia boards and end rafters, crevices around the ends of projecting purlins, under warped or lifted roof and ridge tiles, or in gaps in stone and brickwork where mortar has dropped out.

Larger species such as Brown Long-eared Bats *Plecotus auritus*, Myotis bats (Natterer's *Myotis nattereri* and Whiskered/Brandt's *M. mystacinus/M. brandtii*), and Lesser Horseshoes *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, like to roost in the roof voids of buildings, and can often be found hanging singly or in small groups from ridge boards or roof timbers, especially where these butt up against gable walls or chimney breasts. They especially favour older structures with timber frames. Here they squeeze into tight crevices making them difficult to observe.

Diurnal walkovers can be carried out at any time of the year, but nocturnal surveys should only be undertaken when bats are out of hibernation and in their summer roosts. The recommended period is from May to September inclusive, with May to August optimum and September sub-optimum. The season can be extended into October, although particularly cold weather will render this inadvisable. Indeed, the air temperature at the start of each survey must be at least 10°C or above.

Visits will be a minimum of two weeks apart, and the number of surveys is dependent on the evidence found or the suitability of the site to bats.

Where bats are found, or there is evidence of bat occupation or activity, i.e. that bat use is confirmed, the number and timing of visits will be decided by the ecologist, and will be appropriate for the type of roost. In general at least two nocturnal surveys will be carried out, both of which can be emergence surveys, or one emergence and one dawn re-entry.

Where there is no evidence of bat presence, and no suitability for roosting, no nocturnal surveys will be needed.

For a site with no evidence but low suitability, just one nocturnal emergence survey is required, this to be in the optimum period.

For medium suitability a minimum of two visits are needed, of which one must be in the optimum period, and one must be a dawn re-entry survey. With high suitability, three visits will be necessary, of which two must be in the optimum period. At least one of these must be a dawn re-entry survey, with the third visit either an emergence or a dawn re-entry.

For sites < 5 ha in size, and/or regularly shaped structures, at least two surveyors must be present, with more surveyors at larger sites and more complex buildings, e.g. those with multiple elevations and/or roof structures.

On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021, a thorough inspection of the house was made by Andy Warren (Natural England bat licence No. 2015-16489-CLS-CLS), including the exterior and interior walls, roof covering, roof space, eaves, gables, fascias, roof and ceiling timbers, window casements and door frames.

10x42 Nikon binoculars and a Fenix TK75 torch were used for the inaccessible/unreachable areas. On this occasion an endoscope was not used, as there were no crevices and cavities that could not be inspected with a torch or by use of binoculars.

A check of the wider site was also made to look for signs of activity by other protected or notable species.

The result of the inspection is detailed in Section 3.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Desk Study

In view of the proposed works, the likely low impact on bats, and in line with current guidance on accessing and using biodiversity data (CIEEM, 2016), a detailed background data search was not carried out in this case.

However, within 3.0 km of Shortlands Park Stud, the following development licences for bats were issued by Natural England:

EPSM2010-1903 2.5 km northeast for Brown Long-eared Bat.

EPSM2009-867 2.9 km southwest for Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and Brown Long-eared Bat.

In addition, personal observations at a site 2.5 km southwest in May/June 2020 have included Common Pipistrelles, a maternity roost of Brown Long-eared Bats, and Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*.

#### 3.2 Location

Sibford Ferris is a village located approximately 10.7 km west-southwest of Banbury in Oxfordshire. Hook Norton Road runs due south out of the village, with Shortlands Park Stud situated 600 m from the village centre. The Ordnance Survey Grid Reference is SP 35588 36709 (Appendix 1).

#### 3.3 Site Description

The survey site comprised a two storey detached stone house with a multiple pitched clay tiled roof (Figs. 1 and 2).



**Figs. 1 & 2 House – south elevation (L) and west elevation (R)**

The building was set within a formally landscaped garden, this consisting of a gravelled driveway and parking area, close mown lawns, a few scattered trees, ornamental hedgerow, and flower and shrub beds (Figs. 3 and 4).





**Figs. 3 & 4 Formally landscaped garden**

The layout of the site is shown in the aerial photograph in Appendix 2.

### 3.4 Building Survey

The daytime inspection was carried out on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021, commencing at 10.00. The weather conditions during the time of the survey were recorded and are presented in Table 1 below.

Parameter	Value
Temperature (°C)	15.5
Cloud cover (%)	90
Precipitation	None
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	0

**Table 1 Weather conditions during the diurnal survey**

#### 3.4.1 Bats

The roof of the house comprised a series of interconnected pitched sections, these covered by clay tiles. All the tiles were tightly overlapping, with none raised, broken, dislodged or missing (Figs. 5 and 6).



**Figs. 5 & 6 Roof tight**

Some mortar had dropped out from the bottom of the ridge tiles, but this did not create a gap leading under the ridge (Fig. 7). The roof verges were fully pointed with no gaps (Figs. 8 and 9).



**Figs. 7 & 8 Mortar crumbling at the ridge but verge fully pointed**

The eaves were clipped and the chimney base was sealed to the tiles by cement with no cracks (Fig. 10).



**Figs. 9 & 10 Verge and chimney base fully pointed**

The stone walls were sound throughout, with no cracks or crevices, and all the window casements and door frames were tightly fitting.

No signs of bat activity were found around the outside of the building.

Internally the house had several roof voids, these all lined with either tarred felt or modern membranes (Figs. 11 and 12 overleaf).

There was no light penetration and quite heavy cobwebbing in places (Fig. 13 and 14 overleaf).

No evidence of bat occupation was discovered inside the house, and the roof voids were considered to be inaccessible to bats.



**Figs. 11 & 12 Roof voids**



**Fig. 13 & 14 Roof voids**

### 3.4.2 Other species

A pair of House Sparrows were nesting in a gap where the verge met the eaves (Figs. 15 and 16). This did not open into the roof void, so there was no internal bat access.



**Figs. 15 & 16 Male House Sparrow (L) and nest site (R)**

There were no other old or in-use birds' nests, and none were found in the trees or bushes around the garden.

There were no signs of Badger activity, and the formally landscaped grounds were unsuitable for reptiles and amphibians.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bats tend to be seasonal visitors to properties, and are not usually in occupation all year round. The females normally form maternity colonies during May or June and then leave for adjacent trees and/or woodland during July or August once the young bats are able to fly and become independent. Here they will spend the winter months in hibernation before returning to the house or barn the following spring.

Male bats generally live alone and have a number of favoured roosts. During the summer they visit each of these for a few days at a time, before moving to their chosen hibernation site in mid-late October.

Different species have different habits, but this seasonal movement is common to all.

Bats choose their roosts carefully. During the summer they look for sites which are warmed by the sun, and as a result are most often found on the south and western side of buildings.

Pipistrelles, our smallest and commonest bats, prefer to roost in very confined spaces around the outside of buildings, typical places being behind hanging tiles, weather boarding, soffit, barge and eave boarding, between roof felt and roof tiles or in cavity walls. As such they can be difficult to find, so suitability for roosting was also assessed.

This was considered to be negligible, as the house contained no suitable crevices or cavities. The gap at the verge was blocked with a House Sparrow nest, and there was no access into the roof structure at this point.

Another bat frequently encountered in buildings is the Brown Long-eared. This is also a common species, but unlike pipistrelles, they prefer the dry, warm space of the loft or roof void, and can often be found hanging from roof timbers, especially rafters and the ridge board next to chimney breasts.

No signs of void dwelling bats were found, and the interior of the building was not accessible to bats for roosting.

The house was not identified as a bat roost or hibernation site, and as such no further surveys or mitigation measures are considered necessary.

\*

As noted, a pair of House Sparrows were nesting in a verge gap.

Since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any works which affect buildings should ideally be undertaken outside the period March to August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the buildings affected will be undertaken prior to clearance. Work will not be carried out in close proximity to any in-use nest, and a minimum buffer of 5.0 metres will be established, although this could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species. Any in-use nest will be allowed to fledge before it is disturbed.

## 5. REFERENCES

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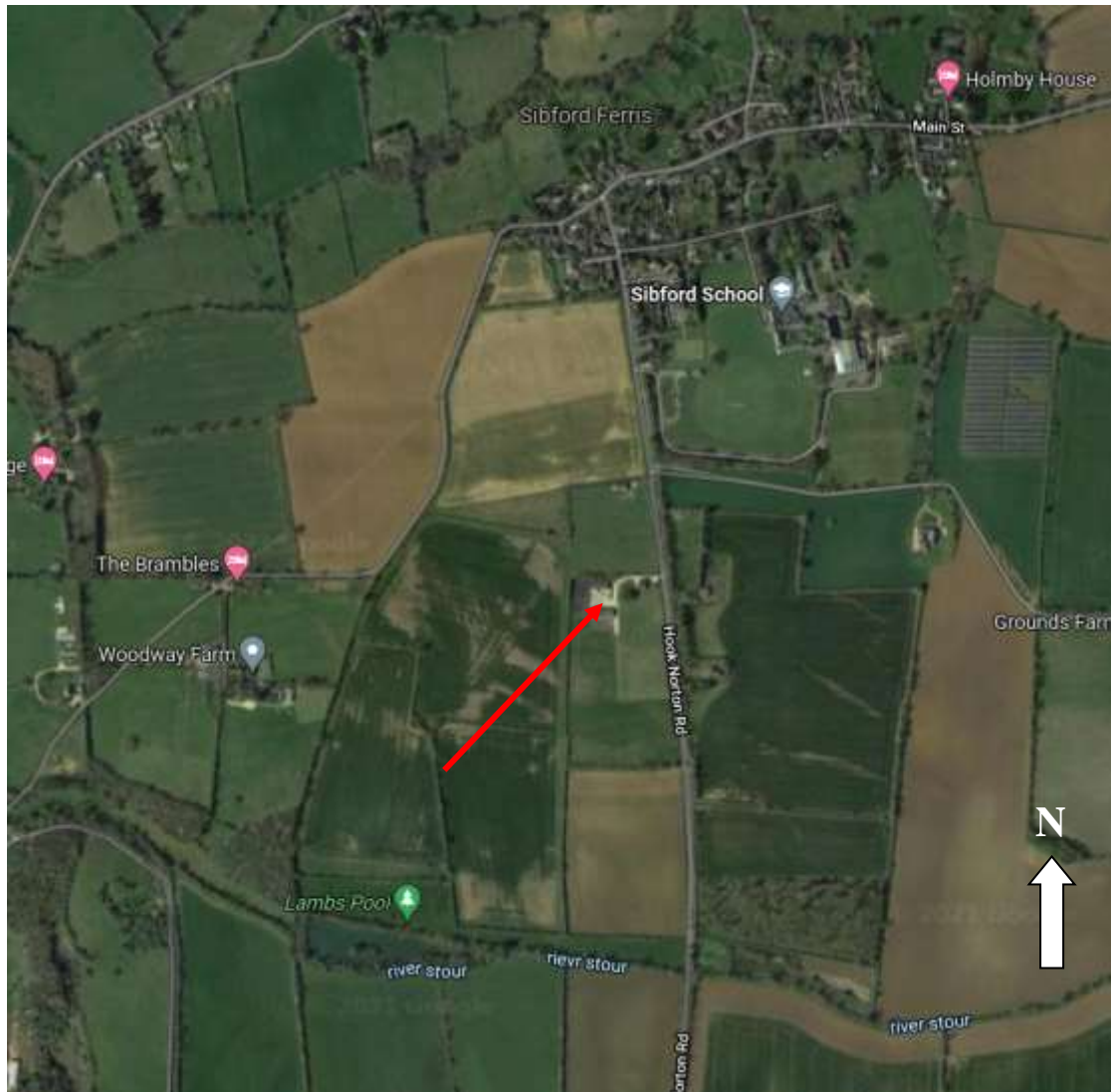
## APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Location plan

Appendix 2: Site layout

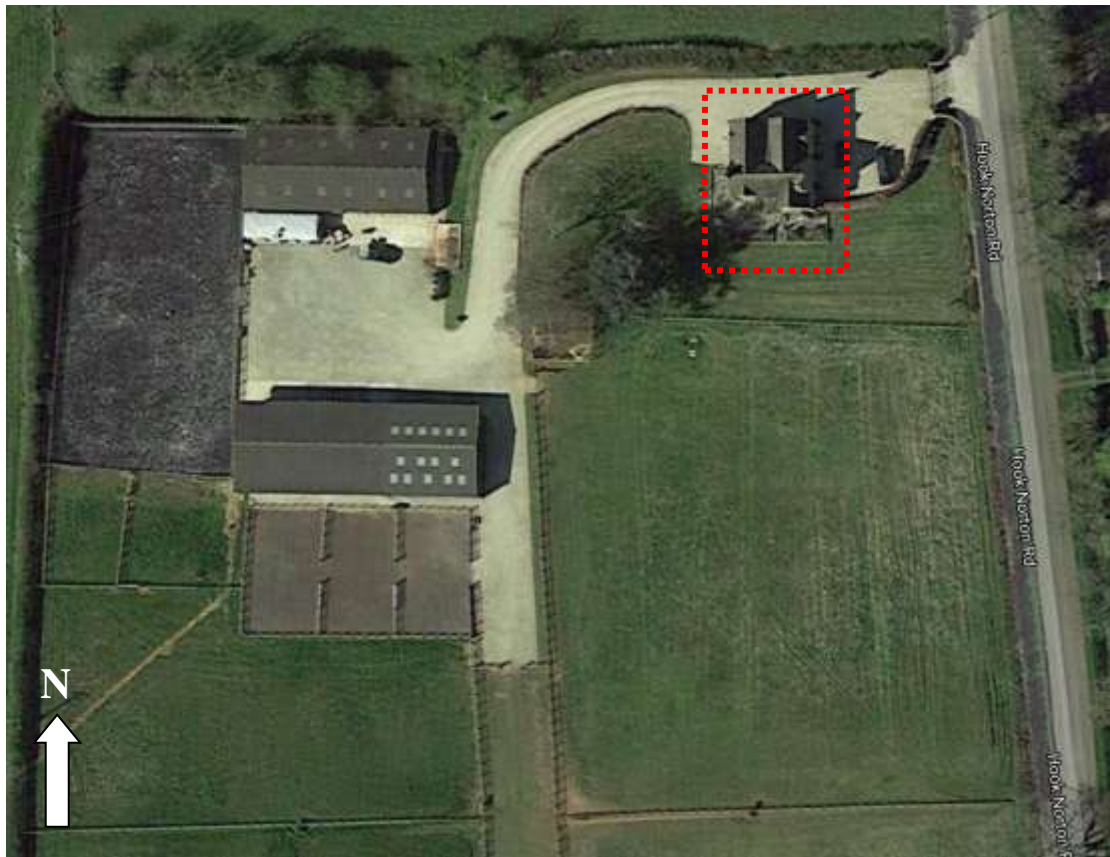


## Appendix 1: Location plan



**Shortlands Park Stud, Sibford Ferris**

## Appendix 2: Site layout



**House at Shortlands Park Stud**

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