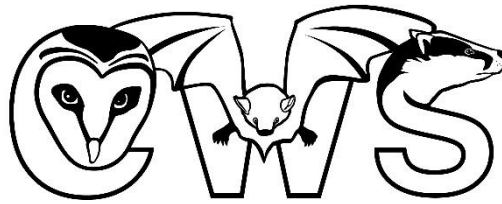


Bat Mitigation Strategy for Barns at Crockwell House Farm, Manor Road, Great Bourton



Cotswold Wildlife Surveys

January 2023

**Planning Reference No. 19/00250/OUT
Reserved Matters Determination 30.06.20 – Condition 7
And 05.05.21 – Condition 11**

QUALITY CONTROL

Date	Version	Name
30.01.23	Report prepared	Caroline Warren – BSc (Hons) Director
05.02.23	Checked	Andy Warren – BSc (Hons), MA (LM), Tech Cert (Arbor A), MCIEEM, TechArborA Director
06.02.23	Reviewed and issued	Andy Warren – BSc (Hons), MA (LM), Tech Cert (Arbor A), MCIEEM, TechArborA Director

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* (3rd edition, Collins, 2016). If there has been deviation from recognised practice, justification/explanation has been given.

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1. INTRODUCTION

At Crockwell Farm in Great Bourton, Oxfordshire, Outline planning permission (ref: 19/00250/OUT) has been granted for the conversion of existing barns and agricultural buildings into residential dwellings. The works also include the demolition of a large, open barn at the northern end of the site.

On 30th June 2020 a Reserved Matters determination included condition 7 as follows:

No development shall commence unless and until full details of a scheme for the location of bat boxes have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The bat boxes shall be installed on the site in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the development and shall be retained as such thereafter.

Reason - To ensure that the development does not cause harm to any protected species or their habitats in accordance with Policy ESD10 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Part 1 and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

On 5th May 2021 a Reserved Matters determination included condition 11 as follows:

No development shall commence unless and until full details of a scheme for the location of bat boxes have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The bat boxes shall be installed on the site in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the development and shall be retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not cause harm to any protected species or their habitats in accordance with Policy ESD10 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Part 1 and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

This report details the measures that will be undertaken to protect and mitigate for bats during the development.

2. ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS

On 15th April 2016, a diurnal bat survey was undertaken by Andy Warren from Cotswold Wildlife Surveys. Further diurnal surveys were undertaken on 6th September 2020 and 29th March 2021.

Nocturnal bat surveys were undertaken on 8th and 24th September 2020, 6th May 2021 and 1st June 2021.

The suitability for roosting pipistrelles *Pipistrellus sp.*, was considered to be negligible, as there were no suitable external cavities.

Although no evidence of pipistrelle activity was found, during the 2016 survey a single Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus* was found within a gap in a timber rafter in the open barn. The bat was originally considered to be hibernating as there was no evidence of any droppings, urine stains or feeding remains nearby. Having reviewed the observation in lieu of the 2019 surveys, it was considered to be roosting rather than hibernating.

In 2019 a roosting Brown Long-eared Bat was again present in a rafter gap in the open barn, but a different gap to 2016.

On 8th September 2019, the Brown long-eared Bat was still roosting, and was observed and detected as it emerged from the open barn. At least two Common Pipistrelle Bats *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* were recorded as they flew onto the site from the village, and a Natterer's Bat *Myotis nattereri* was also noted, again flying in from elsewhere.

On 24th September 2019 the Brown Long-eared Bat was again present, and again two Common Pipistrelle Bats were recorded on site. In addition, a Whiskered/Brandt's Bat *Myotis mystacinus/M. brandtii* was detected as it flew into the garage block and began foraging around inside. A Noctule *Nyctalus noctula* also flew over.

On 6th May 2021, a pre-survey inspection found no signs of the Brown Long-eared Bat. During the survey just a single Noctule was recorded flying overhead.

On 1st June 2021, one or two Common Pipistrelle Bats were recorded flying past, with one or more Noctule Bats passing over intermittently. Despite a thorough search no evidence of bat activity was found, and no roosting bats were present.

Taking all the surveys into account, the status of bats at Crockwell Farm is considered thus:

- Brown Long-eared Bat – day roost for a single animal;
- Common Pipistrelle – foraging site only;
- Natterer's Bat – foraging site only;
- Whiskered/Brandt's Bat – foraging site only;
- Noctule Bat – overflying only.

In the absence of mitigation the proposed works will cause the loss of the bat roost, so a licence from Natural England will be required. To mitigate for the bats, a large open timber garden store will be constructed at the northern end of the site, this will provide a replacement roosting opportunity for the single Brown Long-eared Bat found on site.

The structure will contain two Schwegler 1FF bat boxes, or equivalent, one in each gable end. These will act as hibernation/roosting sites, whilst the garden store will also provide a replacement nest site for Swallows *Hirundo rustica* which have also been found at the site.

As an enhancement, bat boxes for pipistrelle bats will be incorporated into or fitted onto the barn conversions when they are constructed.

3. BAT PROTECTION MEASURES

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) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC), which add 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 (the Habitats Regulations), which defines 'European protected species of animals'. In England this is the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, in Scotland the Habitat Regulations 1994 (as amended), and in Northern Ireland the Conservation Regulations 1995.

All bats are also protected under the Bern Convention Appendix II, the Bonn Convention Appendix II, and the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.

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.

The conservation significance of the roost at Crockwell Farm is low for the Brown Long-eared Bat.

Given the type of development, and the provision of new roosting opportunities, Natural England's recommendations for mitigation/compensation in this scenario are:

- ❑ Avoidance of disturbance, killing or injury;
- ❑ Minimal timing constraints;
- ❑ Minimal monitoring requirements.

To ensure compliance with the recommendations, the mitigation strategy overleaf will be implemented.

4. BAT MITIGATION MEASURES

As the proposed works will result in the loss of the Brown Long-eared Bat roost site, appropriate mitigation will be needed, along with a licence from Natural England consenting to the loss of the roost.

Given the presence of a roosting bat, and the low status of the roost, the site is eligible for registration under Natural England's Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) scheme.

Mitigation measures will include a 'toolbox talk' by a Registered Consultant (RC) to contractors about bats and what to do if one is unexpectedly encountered, a pre-works inspection of the gaps in the open barn by the RC, supervision of the destructive roof works by the RC, the latter undertaken by hand, and the provision of a Large, Multi-Chamber bat box on a retained tree at the site in which to relocate a bat if one is discovered before or during demolition.

It should be noted that under BMCL there will be no timing constraints, and an ecologist will be present at all key stages to ensure the replacement roosting provision is correctly installed.

In addition, a large timber garden store, with an open front will be erected at the northern end of the site.

The structure will contain two Chillon bat boxes, one in each gable end, to act as hibernation/roosting sites for the Brown Long-eared Bat.

Fig. 1 below shows the type of suitable garden building, though the finished structure would have a tiled, slated or shingle roof.



Fig. 1 Open-fronted garden store

Enhancement for pipistrelle bats will be the provision of two Harlech Bat Boxes fitted to the finished barn conversion in the positions marked in Fig. 2.

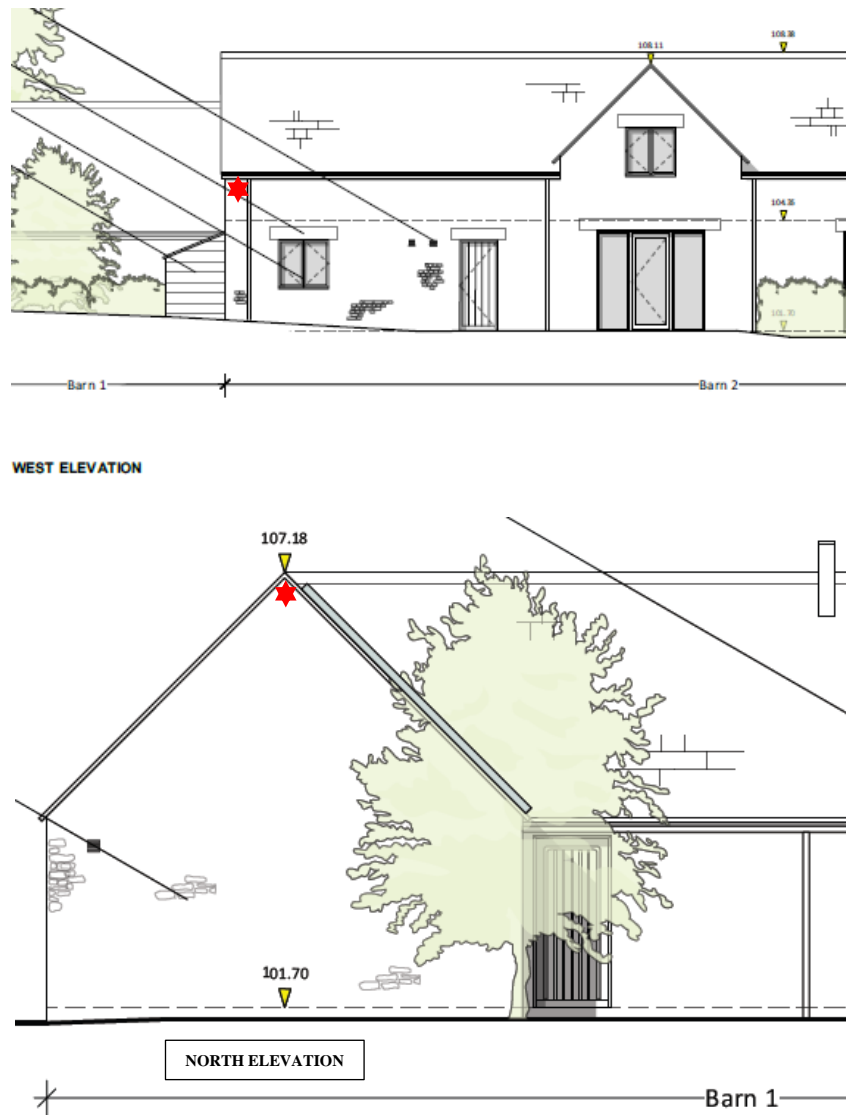


Fig. 2 Positions of Harlech bat boxes ★

Harlech woodstone bat boxes (Fig. 3) are maintenance-free as the entrance slit is at the bottom. The dimensions are 150 x 275 x 160. The weight is 4.0 kg. No painting is required, but if necessary a natural breathable paint can be used.



Fig. 3 Harlech woodstone bat box

The Chillon (Fig. 4) is a large crevice-style bat box that can accommodate small colonies. The capacity of this particular box is 35 mm deep which is suitable for up to 15 pipistrelles.



Fig. 4 Chillon bat box

Key features:

- ❑ Woodstone box: insulated and maintains an even temperature;
- ❑ Painted black: holds the heat;
- ❑ Wooden backplate for attachment;
- ❑ 85 mm long textured landing board;
- ❑ Textured interior to aid bat movement;
- ❑ 20 mm entrance slot;

The Large, Multi-Chamber bat box (Fig. 5) is a large woodstone bat box that offers excellent insulation and minimum condensation for roosting bats. It is suitable for wall or tree mounting and is available as a small cavity bat box or larger crevice box.



Fig. 5 Large, Multi-Chamber bat box

Key Features:

- 11 x 19 x 11 cm inner chamber
- Removable wooden grooved board that provides two c. 28 mm wide crevices if required.
- Additional wooden crevice of c. 20 mm wide on the front panel.

- Two entrance slots, one at the front (approx. 20 x 70 mm) and one on the base (approx. 30 x 85 mm) of the box.
- Internal baffle on the front entrance to discourage birds from using the box.

It is not anticipated that the bat mitigation measures will be affected by future activities at the site, as the fitted bat boxes will last for many years.

However, if maintenance is required, it is noted that any disturbance of bats might need to be carried out under licence.

In order to assess the success, or otherwise, of the mitigation strategy, a monitoring plan is required. Given the significance of this development on bat populations (low), it is recommended that a single visit is made during the first summer after completion of the works, in June or July.

The visit will be conducted during optimal conditions, and in good weather.

The survey will consist of a daytime visit to check the bat boxes for signs of usage, e.g. presence of fresh droppings, insect remains, or a bat in residence.

Cotswold Wildlife Surveys has been commissioned to advise on, and inspect the mitigation works.

Cotswold Wildlife Surveys Limited

Company Reg. No. 6864285 (England & Wales)

**Andy Warren BSc (Hons), MA (LM), Tech Cert (Arbor A),
MCIEEM, TechArborA
Withy Way, Charingworth, Chipping Campden,
Gloucestershire, GL55 6NU**

Tel: 01386 593056/07879 848449

andy@cotswoldwildlifesurveys.co.uk

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