

Protected Species Survey Report

Site: Land at 2 Shepherds Close, Sibford, Banbury, OX15 5RJ

Client: Harry Brown



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QUALITY CONTRL

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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* (4th edition, Collins, 2023). If there has been deviation from recognised practice, justification/explanation has been given.

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SUMMARY

In September 2025, Paxford Ecology Ltd was instructed to carry out a protected species survey of land at 2 Shepherds Close in Sibford, Oxfordshire. On 30th September 2025 a visit was made to the site to check for signs of protected species.

The site comprised a gravel driveway, concrete pad and a small area of vegetated garden. The latter was planted with introduced flowers. The site was partially enclosed with a wall.

The suitability for roosting pipistrelles *Pipistrellus sp.* within the north gable end of 2 Shepherds Close was negligible, as there were no suitable gaps or crevices. Indeed, the gable end would not be suitable as an entrance point for roosting bats.

Furthermore, no evidence of bat activity or occupation was found in or around the gable. As such, no further surveys or mitigation measures for bats were considered necessary.

There were no trees within the site to support features such as decay cavities, woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that would be considered suitable for bat roosting and/or hibernation.

The site is unlikely to be used by foraging bats, as it was very small in extent and there was little to attract prey items. Furthermore, the proposed works will likely increase foraging potential for bats through increased shrub and flower planting. Lighting should be kept to an absolute minimum and should be low level and low lux.

A total of two species of bird were observed during the visit, both of which were Species of Low Conservation Concern (RSPB Green list).

No old or in use birds' nests were noted, and there were no suitable nesting opportunities within the site.

Nevertheless, since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any tree and shrub removal that is subsequently required, should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the trees and shrubs to be removed should be undertaken prior to clearance.

Work should not be carried out within a minimum of 5.0 metres of any in-use nest, although this distance could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species.

There were no signs of Badger *Meles meles* activity within the site, nor was there any evidence of Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* or Otter *Lutra lutra* and they are considered to be absent.

The site was considered unsuitable for Great Crested Newts, as there were no permanent still water features, no foraging opportunities and no potential refugia or hibernacula.

Reptiles are also unlikely to be encountered for the same reasons.

Nevertheless, care will be taken at all times during any vegetation removal and topsoil stripping, as small mammals could be present. Any small mammals disturbed or uncovered will either be caught by hand and relocated to a safe area, or left to vacate the work site in their own time.

It was also possible to assess the potential importance of the habitats within the application site to invertebrates. Since the majority of the site was developed land, it was concluded that there was low potential for invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

If excavations are to be undertaken, it should be noted that open trenches could potentially trap wildlife, especially if these fill up with water. If trenches cannot be infilled immediately then they should either be covered overnight or escape routes should be provided. These can be in the form of branches or boards placed on the bottom of the trench, with their upper ends above ground level and touching the sides, or sloping ends left in trenches.

1. INTRODUCTION

In September 2025, Paxford Ecology Ltd was instructed by Harry Brown, to undertake a bat survey of land at 2 Shepherds Close in Sibford, Oxfordshire. On 30th September 2025, a visit was made to the property to carry out a diurnal inspection of the building to check for signs of bat occupation.

The results of the inspection are 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'.

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.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to fully assess bat occupation of a particular site, the Bat Conservation Trust (2023) 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 emergence surveys.

The preliminary roost assessment (PRA) is usually in the form of a diurnal walkover and can be carried out at any time of the year. It provides an opportunity to check for signs of bat occupancy and/or the suitability for bat roosting.

Evidence of bat activity includes droppings, scratch marks, feeding remains, carcasses, or even roosting animals, whilst suitability is determined by the type and number of potential roost features (PRFs) typically used by bats.

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.

Where bats are found, or there is evidence of bat occupation or activity, i.e. that bat use is confirmed, a roost characterisation survey is undertaken. The results are used to inform the impact assessment and design of mitigation measures. Roost characterisation includes nocturnal emergence surveys, unless sufficient information has already been collected using robust survey methods with no significant constraints.

Nocturnal emergence surveys allow numbers and species of bats to be confirmed, and should only be undertaken when bats are out of hibernation and in their summer roosts.

The bat active period is generally considered to be between April and October, although particularly cold weather will affect the level and extent of bat activity. Indeed, the air temperature at the start of each survey should be at least 10°C or above, with no strong wind or heavy rain. The survey starts 15 minutes before sunset and continues for one and a half to two hours after sunset.

Visits will be a minimum of three weeks apart, and the number of surveys and timing is dependent on the evidence found or the suitability of the site to bats. This will be determined by the ecologist. In general, at least two emergence nocturnal surveys will be carried out, but a third visit may be necessary if the results are inconclusive or further information is required.

Nocturnal emergence surveys 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, moderate or high.

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

For moderate suitability a minimum of two visits are needed between May and September, of which one must be in the period May to August.

With high suitability, three visits will be necessary between May and September, of which two must be in the period May to August.

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

The number of surveyors and/or the use of night vision aids (NVAs) is determined by the ecologist, and is dependent on the complexity of the structure. For simple structures just one surveyor using an appropriate number of NVAs will be sufficient, but for larger sites and/or more complex or irregularly shaped structures, e.g. those with multiple elevations and/or roof slopes, more surveyors will be required.

On 30th September 2025, a thorough inspection of land at 2 Shepherds Close was made by Mollie Paxford (Natural England bat licence No. 2020-47378-CLS-CLS), including the exterior and interior walls, roof coverings, eaves, gable, 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.

The result of the inspection is detailed in Section 3.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Desk Study

In view of the small scale 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 background data search was not carried out in this case.

3.2 Location

Sibford is a village located approximately 8.0 km southwest of Banbury, in Oxfordshire. Shepherds Close is situated on the corner of Acre Ditch and Hawk's Lane. Number 2 is at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SP 35745 37827 (Appendix 1).

3.3 Site Description

The site comprised a gravel driveway, concrete pad and a small area of vegetated garden, to the north of 2 Shepherds Close (Figs. 1 and 2). The latter was planted with introduced flowers. The site was partially enclosed with a wall.



Figs. 1 & 2 Survey area

The site was set within a rural village, surrounded by arable and pastoral farmland.

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

3.4 Bats

The daytime inspection was carried out on 30th September 2025, commencing at 17:30. The weather conditions during the time of the survey were recorded and are presented in Table 1 below.

Parameter	Value
Temperature (°C)	17.0
Cloud cover (%)	10
Precipitation	None
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	0

Table 1 Weather conditions during the diurnal survey

The survey focused on the north gable end of 2 Shepherds Close (Figs. 3 and 4). The chimney was sealed with cement. The roof tiles were all tightly overlapping along the verges, with none raised, missing, broken or dislodged (Figs. 5 and 6).



Figs. 3 & 4 Gable end



Figs. 5 & 6 Roof verges

The roof ends were sealed with cement, with no gaps (Figs. 7 and 8).



Figs. 7 & 8 Roof ends

There were no signs of bat activity or occupation around the gable end, and it was not considered to be a bat entrance point.

There were no trees within the site to support features such as decay cavities, woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that would be considered suitable for bat roosting and/or hibernation as they were all too young.

The site is unlikely to be used by foraging bats, as it was very small in extent and there was little to attract prey items.

3.5 Badgers

There were no signs of Badger activity within the site.

3.6 Birds

A total of two species of bird were observed during the visit, both of which were Species of Low Conservation Concern (RSPB Green list).

No old or in use birds' nests were noted, and there were no suitable nesting opportunities within the site.

3.7 Reptiles and Amphibians

The site was considered unsuitable for Great Crested Newts, as there were no permanent still water features, no foraging opportunities and no potential refugia or hibernacula.

Reptiles are also unlikely to be encountered for the same reasons.

3.8 Invertebrates

It was also possible to assess the potential importance of the habitats within the application site to invertebrates. Since the majority of the site was developed land, it was concluded that there was low potential for invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.9 Other Species

There were no signs of any important or protected species. The only vegetation on site was a small bed of introduced flowers (Fig. 9). The rest of the site was gravel (Fig. 10) and concrete (Fig. 11). The site was partially enclosed with a wall (Fig. 12).



Figs. 9 & 10 Survey area



Figs. 11 & 12 Survey area

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 there were no suitable gaps or crevices which could be used for roosting or accessing the roof space.

There were no trees within the site to support features such as decay cavities, woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that would be considered suitable for bat roosting and/or hibernation.

The site is unlikely to be used by foraging bats, as it was very small in extent and there was little to attract prey items. Furthermore, the proposed works will likely increase foraging potential for bats through increased shrub and flower planting. Lighting should be kept to an absolute minimum and should be low level and low lux.

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5. REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Location plan

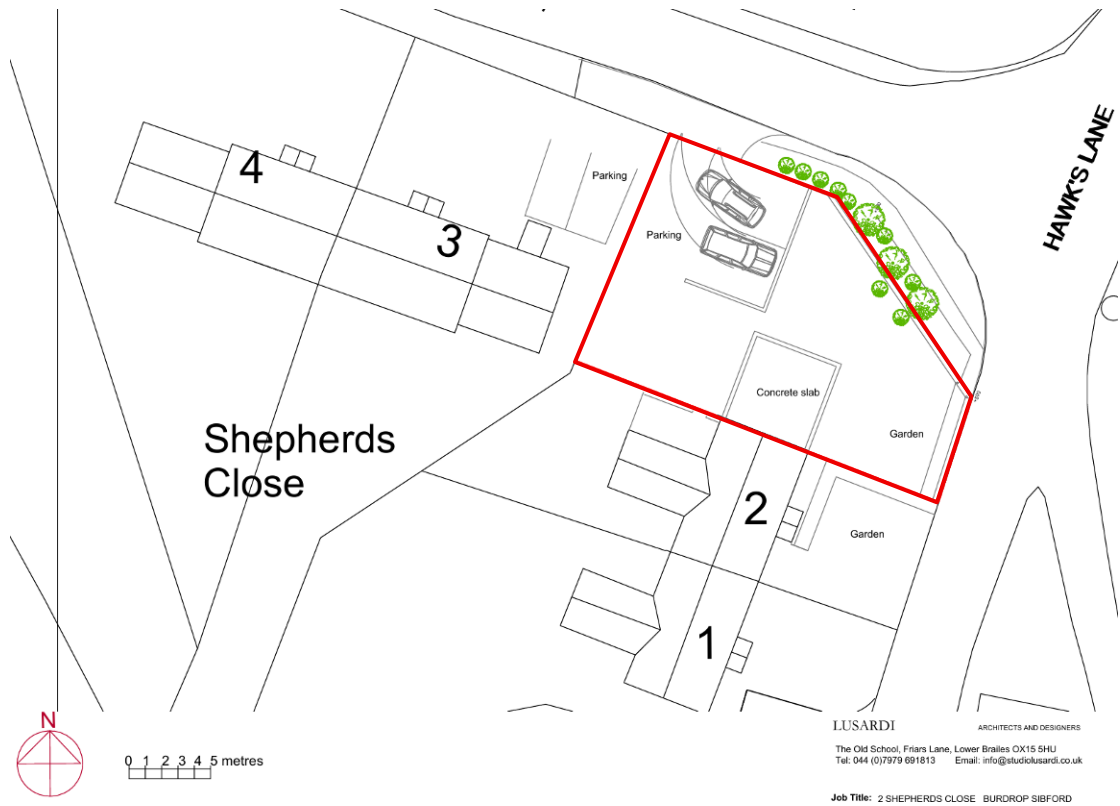
Appendix 2: Site layout

Appendix 1: Location plan



2 Shepherds Close, Burdrop

Appendix 2: Site layout



Land at 2 Shepherds Close, Sibford