

Slate Pitts, Slaithwaite
PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT

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KNIGHT SKY ECOLOGY
PRACTICAL ECOLOGY SOLUTIONS

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1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Instruction and Report Aims.....	1
1.2	Site Description.....	1
2	METHODS.....	2
2.1	Desk Study	2
2.2	Survey Personnel.....	2
2.3	Overarching Guidance.....	2
2.4	Site Survey.....	2
2.5	Assessment Comments	2
3	RESULTS	3
3.1	Desk Study	3
3.2	Site Assessment	3
3.3	Nesting Birds	5
3.4	Other Ecological Considerations	6
4	EVALUATION & CONCLUSIONS	7
4.1	Roost Suitability Evaluation & Impact Assessment	7
4.2	Nesting Birds	7
5	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	8
5.1	Bats.....	8
5.2	Nesting Birds	8
APPENDIX A. LEGISLATION FOR BATS		9
APPENDIX B. PHOTOS		10



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Instruction and Report Aims

Knight Sky Ecology was commissioned to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment of the dwelling and outbuildings at Slate Pitts, Chain Road, Slaithwaite, HD7 5TY. The assessment was undertaken in relation to the proposed residential development at the site which would require the demolition of the existing buildings.

The aim of this report is to inform the proposals of all considerations relating to bats. This includes presenting information to determine the likelihood of the presence or absence of a bat roost at the property, providing recommendations to mitigate any potential impacts to bats where appropriate and providing guidance should any further detailed assessment be required. Appendix A provides details of the legislation afforded to bats for further context.

In addition to bats, all other potential ecological constraints to the proposal including nesting birds were also documented where found.

1.2 Site Description

The property is situated within a rural location at grid reference SE 07669 12556. It comprises a single dwelling with several attached buildings including a garage and a former vehicle workshop. The property includes a large front garden and grounds to the rear which appear to have been used in relation to the workshop. There is a vehicle inspection pit on the east side of the property.

The property is surrounded by pasture land bound by dry stone walls and is approximately 285m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). Slaithwaite is 1.2km north. Figure 1.1 provides an aerial image of the property location.

Figure 1.1. Property location (imagery dated 16/06/2021)





2 METHODS

2.1 Desk Study

West Yorkshire Bat Group Records

West Yorkshire Bat Group (WYBG) were contacted to request bat records within a 2km radius of the property.

Other Data Sources

The 'Granted European Protected Species Applications' dataset in respect of bats was searched with use of the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk>) to gather further information of bat roosts and bat species within a 1km radius of the property.

2.2 Survey Personnel

The preliminary bat roost assessment was undertaken by Ryan Knight MCIEEM who holds a Level 2 Natural England Class Licence (ref. 2015-12611-CLS-CLS) and has held this licence for over 11 years. Ryan has also acted as the named ecologist on numerous European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences issued by Natural England which covered several bat species and roost types.

2.3 Overarching Guidance

The preliminary bat roost assessment was primarily based on the methods described in '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.' (Collins, J., (ed.) (2023). Any deviation from standard practice is justified where required.

2.4 Site Survey

A preliminary bat roost assessment of the property was undertaken on 8th May 2024. The assessment involved a visual inspection of the property to search for bats and evidence of bats (e.g., droppings) and an appraisal of the extent and suitability of any potential bat roost features present. The assessment included the use of binoculars, a torch and ladders. A digital endoscope was available for use but not required.

Other considerations which would influence the suitability of the property for use by bats were also taken into account. This included the site location, expected night time lighting levels and the suitability of the surrounding habitats. This information was gathered from the site survey and web-based mapping sources (i.e., Google Earth).

Following the assessment, the building was assigned a bat roost suitability category of none, negligible, low, moderate, high or confirmed roost based on the collated information.

2.5 Assessment Comments

The assessment was undertaken within the main active season for bats (April to October) when signs of a bat roost are most evident. The property was fully accessed throughout aside from one of the two lofts in the dwelling. Overall, no significant limitations to achieving the aims of the assessment were encountered.

This report will remain valid for a period of 18 months from the date of issue. An ecologist should be contacted for advice on the revalidation requirements of the report if planning permission is not obtained (if required) or works do not commence within this time period.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Desk Study

WYBG Records

WYBG provided 39 bat records dating from 1989 to 2016. The records included common pipistrelle, pipistrelle species, noctule bat, Myotis bat species, serotine (unconfirmed) and species unidentified to species level. A total of 31 of these records were from the same location and comprised bat activity recordings. Of the 8 other records, most were located from within Slaithwaite (1.2km north). No records were within 250m of the site.

Table 3.1. Records of bats within 2km as provided by WYBG.

Grid Ref	Location Name	Date	Common Name	Abundance	Record Type
SE0812 (31 records)	Holt Head near Slaithwaite	2000 - 2012	Noctule, Common Pipistrelle, Pipistrelle Bat species, Eptesicus	NA	aural bat detector
SE0766214145	Bank Gate Mills, Bank Gate, Slaithwaite, HD7 5D?	15/07/1989	Pipistrellus	51-100 Count of Adult	Roost (maternity)
SE07651395	Kirklees, 10 Howgate Road, Slaithwaite, Huddersfield, HD7 5AY	23/05/2000	Vesper Bat species		field record
SE084142	Spa Mill	29/08/2001	Common Pipistrelle	1 Count of Adult	Roost (possible)
SE0829414430	19 Ingfield Terrace, Slaithwaite	14/07/2006	Pipistrelle Bat species	150 Count of Adult	Roost
SE076142	Hill top, Slaithwaite SE076142	24/07/2006	Nyctalus Bat species		aural bat detector
SE076142	Hill top, Slaithwaite SE076142	24/07/2006	Pipistrelle Bat species	3 Count of Adult	aural bat detector
SE0789913897	Slaithwaite	01/03/2016	Myotis Bat species		auditory record
SE0789913897	Slaithwaite	01/03/2016	Common Pipistrelle		aural bat detector

EPS Mitigation Licenses

No EPS mitigation licenses for bats were identified within a 1km radius.

3.2 Site Assessment

3.2.1 Building Descriptions and Potential Bat Roost Features

Photos of the property are provided in Appendix B for a general overview and an illustration of any identified potential bat roost features. A total of four buildings are located at the site. A layout of the buildings is provided in Figure 3.1. It should be noted that there were also several containers and a timber shed to the direct north; however, these buildings did not offer any potential for use by bats.

Figure 3.1. Building layout



A – Dwelling

The dwelling comprised two connected sections and each section had a shallow pitched, gable roof with traditional stone slates. As is typical of such roof types, there were numerous gaps under and between the stone slates.

The property had been rendered on the west elevations. The render appeared solid, particularly around the roof verges. There was a single, relatively large gap on the corner of the roof of the northern section of the dwelling. This gap was possibly too open and exposed for suitability by bats but could not be viewed closely.

On the south elevations (front), the only potential roost feature (excluding the roof slates) comprised a gap (15-20mm) under the timber eaves board.

On the east elevation, the stonework appeared in good repair. However, there were gaps under the roof verge slates towards the ridge of the roof due to broken / missing mortar.

No potential roost features were observed on the north elevation. The roof of the attached workshop (Building C) is just under the roof verge height of the house.

The dwelling had two lofts. One loft was inaccessible. The other loft was relatively small and shallow (1-1.2m from loft floor to ridge). The loft including the roof had been insulated with a rock wool type insulation. The roof underside had also been partially clad with timber boards. No light gaps within the roof were observed.

B – Outbuilding

The outbuilding comprised a large, metal framed shed previously used as a games room. The outbuilding was clad entirely with corrugated metal sheets (including the dome shaped roof) and such construction types are not typically associated with bat roosts. No potential roost features were observed.

C – Workshop

The workshop is attached to the north side of dwelling. It comprised a stone-built structure with a flat, metal roof. There was a large roller door on the north aspect. There was a large gap in the stonework on

the north elevation; however, this did not lead to any suitable crevices. The only potential roost feature observed was a gap under the timber eaves board along the east elevation. Internally, the building did not have any loft spaces and the roof underside was clad with timber sheets. The structure had concrete block walls and no potential roost features were observed internally.

D – Garage

The garage is attached to the east of the dwelling and was of a similar construction type as the workshop with a flat, metal roof (with timber board underlining). The stonework and roof verge capping all appeared in good repair and no potential roost features were observed on the external elevations. Internally, the garage was divided into two rooms. Both had concrete block internal walls. No potential roost features were observed on the inside of the building.

3.2.2 Habitat Description

The property is within a rural location and surrounded by a network of pasture fields bound by stone walls. Habitats of value to bats within the site are limited to the garden with ornamental shrub planting and a low number of trees. There is a tree line 40m to the north which will provide a sheltered foraging feature. There is also a wooded valley area, 350m north-east which will provide a habitat of value to bats and there are also woodland belts around Slaithwaite to the north.

The property is at an elevation of 285m and bat activity levels are generally less at such elevations and above. It can be confirmed that the property is outside of Kirklees bat alert area. Bat activity levels are expected to be low within the locality. However, overall, there are no significant restrictions to the presence of bats at the site.

3.2.3 Evidence of Bats and Bat Roost Suitability

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the findings and a bat roost suitability categorisation for each building.

Table 3.1. Assessment summary

Building reference	Summary of potential roost features	Bat roost suitability
A – Dwelling	• Gaps between roof slates. • Gaps under the verge slates (east aspect). • Large gap on corner of roof (west elevation). • Gap under eaves board.	Moderate
B- Outbuilding	No potential roost features observed.	None
C - Workshop	Shallow gap under eaves board (east elevation)	Low
D – Garage	No potential roost features observed.	None

3.3 Nesting Birds

No direct evidence of nesting birds was observed. Of all the buildings at the site, the dwelling contained features of potential for use by nesting birds (i.e., via gaps in the roof).



3.4 Other Ecological Considerations

No other potential constraints to the proposed development were identified. A biodiversity net gain assessment is to be submitted separately.



4 EVALUATION & CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Roost Suitability Evaluation & Impact Assessment

No evidence of a bat roost was encountered during the preliminary roost assessment. A comprehensive inspection was completed.

Dwelling

A number of potential roost features were observed in the dwelling and this was categorised as moderate in its suitability to support bats. Moderate suitability is defined by the following description:

- *'A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status' (Collins, 2023).*

The demolition of the dwelling will result in the loss of all potential bat roost features identified during the preliminary roost assessment. In respect of the roost suitability classification, there is considered to be a moderate risk that the proposed development would result in contravention of the legislation afforded to bats including The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (see Appendix A for context).

The potential presence of bats is a material consideration when a local planning authority is considering a development proposal and the local planning authority has a biodiversity duty to consider potential impacts to bats. Therefore, the presence or absence of bats needs to be established prior to any planning decisions being made. Recommendations relating to this are provided in Section 5.

Workshop

One potential roost feature was observed on the workshop. The building was categorised as low in its suitability to support bats. This potential roost feature can be easily covered during the surveys recommended for the dwelling (see Section 5).

Garage and Outbuilding

No potential bat roost features were observed on the garage or outbuilding and therefore, bats do not present a potential constraint to the demolition of these buildings. No further survey or mitigation measures are required.

4.2 Nesting Birds

Whilst no direct evidence of nesting birds was observed, the dwelling did have suitable features to support nest sites. The proposed development should therefore be aware of the legislation afforded to nesting birds:

- *All wild birds in the UK are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or its eggs.*

The nesting bird season is generally accepted as March to September.



5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Bats

Further Survey Requirements

Dwelling & Workshop

In accordance with good practice guidelines (Collins, 2023), it is recommended that further surveys are required to establish the presence or absence of a bat roost. These surveys would comprise dusk emergence surveys which can be undertaken between May and August (inclusive). A minimum of two surveys are required for the dwelling in order to provide a sufficient level of confidence that a bat roost is absent (one for the workshop). The first and second survey on the dwelling would need to be spaced at least three weeks apart.

Enhancements

The development presents a good opportunity to increase roosting provision for bats via the fixing of bat boxes within the site. It is advised that a bat box scheme is incorporated into any follow up report for the surveys detailed above.

5.2 Nesting Birds

Any works which will potentially impact bird's nests should be undertaken outside of the main nesting bird season of March to August (inclusive). If this is not possible, any works potentially affecting bird's nests must be preceded by a nesting bird check, undertaken by a suitability qualified ecologist. If an active nest is found, it must be left in-situ until no longer in use.



APPENDIX A. LEGISLATION FOR BATS

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

All bat species in England are listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Section 9 of the Act make it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take any wild animal included in Schedule 5. In addition, it is an offence to (intentionally or recklessly):

- Damage or destroy any structure or place which any wild animal specified in Schedule 5 uses for shelter or protection;
- Disturb any such animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; or
- Obstruct access to any structure or place which any such animal uses for shelter or protection.

In addition, under this legislation there are offences relating to sale, possession and control of bats.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

Bats are listed within Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the Habitats Regulations) as European Protected Species of animals. Part 3 (Protection of animals); Regulation 43 (1) of the Habitats Regulations make it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European protected species;
- Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species;
- Deliberately take or destroys the eggs of such an animal; or
- Damages or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.

For the purposes of the legislation, the disturbance of wild animals includes any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or to reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

In addition, under this legislation there are offences relating to possession, control sale and exchange of European Protected Species.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. There are 56 habitats and 943 species of principal importance, often referred to as priority habitats and priority species respectively, which were initially identified as requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and which continue to be regarded as priorities under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. The Section 41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 “to have regard” to the conservation of biodiversity in England when carrying out their normal functions. Bat species listed under Section 41 and known to be present within the north of England comprise soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat and noctule bat.

An amendment to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act) section 40 duty, provided for in the **Environment Act 2021**, extends the biodiversity duty on public authorities to include the enhancement of biodiversity alongside conservation by way of creating “the general biodiversity objective”.

APPENDIX B. PHOTOS

Photo 1.
East
elevations
of garage
(left of
photo),
dwelling
(centre)
and
workshop
(right).



Photo 2.
Gaps at
ridge of
dwelling
(east
elevation)





Photo 3.
South
elevation
of dwelling



Photo 4.
Numerous
gaps in
roof of
dwelling.





Photo 5.
Gap under
fascia
board of
dwelling
(south
aspect).



Photo 6.
View of
dwelling
roof and
garage
roof.





Photo 7.
West
elevations
of
dwelling.



Photo 8.
Large gap
on corner
of roof of
dwelling.



Photo 9.
Workshop
(left) and
outbuilding
(right)



Photo 10.
Loft of
dwelling.





Photo 11.
Garage.

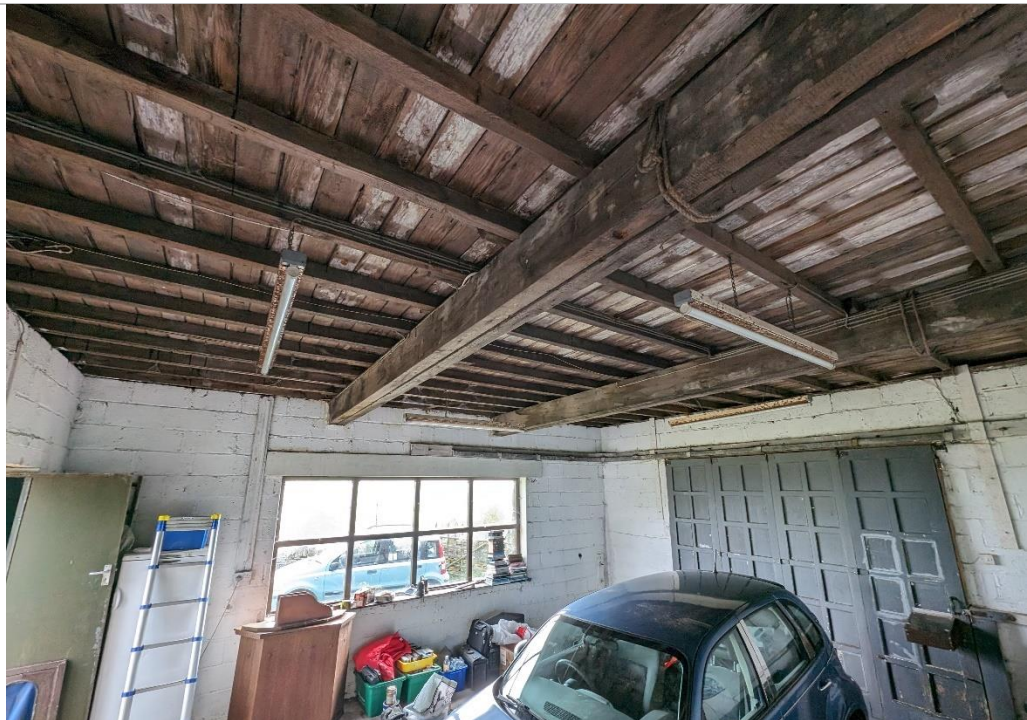


Photo 12.
Workshop.

