

**Report of Bat Survey
(including Barn Owls)**

**conducted
on stables and a barn
at
Wandleys Farm
Walberton
on
16th January 2008**



Survey undertaken by:-

Sue Harris
Oak Tree Cottage
Bignor Park
Pulborough
West Sussex
RH20 1HQ

Natural England Bat Licence Number 20082290

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2 Background

It is proposed that a range of brick stables built around three sides of a stable yard and a barn situated on the fourth side of the yard are converted into accommodation for holiday let with an area of stabling on the north side being converted to office space. A small block of three stables lay to the south and were also considered. A day time bat survey was undertaken to support the planning process.

The Bat Conservation 'Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines' have been taken into account to determine the extent of the investigative work required on this site.

3 Location

Map reference

SU 954 066

Address

Wandleys Farm

Wandleys lane

Walberton

West Sussex

BN18 0QR

4 General Description of Site

The site consisted of a brick built stable block built around three sides (north, west and south) of a stable yard. A barn made up the north end of the east side of the yard. A house had previously joined the southern end of the barn enclosing the yard but the house has been demolished.

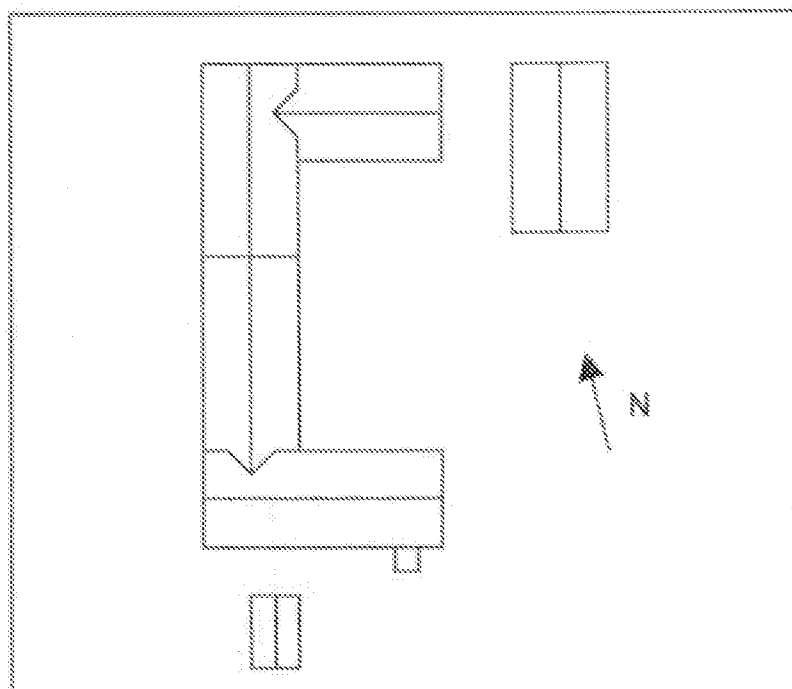


Diagram of stable block with barn on the north east corner and a small separate block of three stables to the south west of the main block. Diagram shows roof lines and is not to scale

The stables were attached single storey buildings with gable ends under pitched roofs which were covered with unlined slate tiles and clay ridge tiles. The roof of one small area that had previously been a tack room on the north end of the block had been lined with painted wooden planking. The brick walls were solid with stable doors and windows fitted looking into the yard and a small number of windows on the outer wall.

One section of the stable block on the north end of the west side of the block had a significantly higher roof with gable ends.

The stables had not been used for keeping horses for some time and some were used for small levels of storage.

The detached rectangular brick barn was significantly higher than the stables but also had an unlined slate roof. The east facing walls had large wooden doors fitted along the whole length.

A small brick block of 3 stables with a gable ended pitched clay tiled roof lay to the south of the main stable block.

5 Building Work required

It is proposed that the buildings are converted to accommodation for holiday letting to include an area of office space. A small section of the stables on the west side will be removed to provide an entrance driveway.

6 Surrounding Habitat

The stable block laid along side a lane in a rural position with a new detached house lying close by to the east and a small number of houses alongside the lane immediately to the north of the site.

Pasture surrounded the stables and houses. A great deal of this appeared to be currently used for horses to graze.

The lane was bounded by trees many of which appeared to be mature. These connected to habitation to the north where there is foraging for bats in gardens. There is a small area of woodland to the east of the site which may provide foraging.

A large pond lay to the south east of the stable block but was open with no tree cover.

There are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Nature reserves within a 2 kilometer radius of the site. Fairmile Bottom a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Local Nature reserve lies three kilometers to the north east. The busy A27 lies between the stables and this site.

7 Bat Legislation

All species of bat and their breeding sites or resting places (roosts) are protected under Regulation 39 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 (amended 2007) and Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. European protected animal species and their breeding sites or resting places are protected under Regulation 39. It is an offence for anyone to deliberately capture, injure or kill any such animal or to deliberately take or destroy their eggs. It is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding or

resting place of such an animal. It is also an offence to have in one's possession or control, any live or dead European protected species.

The threshold above which a person will commit the offence of deliberately disturbing a wild animal of a European protected species has been raised in the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 (amended 2007). Now, a person will commit an offence only if he deliberately disturbs such animals in a way as to be likely significantly to affect (a) the ability of any significant groups of animals of that species to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young, or (b) the local distribution of abundance of that species.

A Natural England, European Protected Species Licence is required to permit otherwise unlawful activities, and can only be granted for certain purposes under Regulation 44(2)(e) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, for works to be carried out to a bat roost.

In circumstances where best practice guidance either cannot be followed or is not applicable, licences can be obtained to allow persons to carry out activities that would otherwise be prohibited, without committing an offence. Natural England has powers to grant licences in England for the purposes below:

- Preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and where beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment
- Preventing the spread of disease;
- Preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber or any other form of property or to fisheries;
- Science or education, conservation, ringing or marking;
- Possession of species or derivatives.

Natural England can only issue a licence if it is satisfied that the activity meets one of the above purposes **and** is also satisfied that there is :-

- Regulation 44(3) (a) that there is no satisfactory alternative, **and**
- Regulation 44(3) (b) that the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range

Evidence of the proposed provisions to accommodate the bats in the future would be required for a licence to be granted where needed—for example, an alternative roost may need to be provided.

8 Objectives of Survey

- To establish if there is evidence that bats use the stables and barn for roosting
- To investigate any areas that appeared to be used by bats for roosting in the stables and barn if relevant
- To investigate the species of bat using the stables and barn for roosting if applicable
- To consider the type of bat roost if applicable
- To consider access points used by bats if applicable
- To consider the implications of the proposed change of use to any bats roosting within the buildings if appropriate

- To provide recommendations and advice should evidence or evidence of potential bat roosting be identified
- To consider if there was any evidence of Barn Owl activity including nesting

9 Methodology

- A detailed inspection of the barns was undertaken by the surveyor.
- The buildings were searched for evidence of bat activity by eye and with torches from the ground and from a ladder
- The external structure of the building, including the roof was surveyed carefully and thoroughly by eye and with binoculars. Consideration was given to any possible access points open to bats
- Digital photographs were taken and considered for evidence of bat activity following the survey
- The surveyor checked for any evidence of bats including oil stains formed during entry and exit of possible roost sites, urine stains, droppings and for bats
- Evidence of Barn owl activity was considered including owl pellets, droppings and nesting material and feathers
- Equipment used included torches, digital camera, binoculars and ladder. Mirrors and a fibrescope and were available for use.
- Satellite imagery was considered for suitable habitat for bats in the area
- Appropriate websites were searched for information on the surrounding habitat

10 Weather on morning of survey

Approximately 8 degrees centigrade. Overcast. Light wind. Small amount of drizzle during the survey.

11 Survey findings

11.1 Large Stable Block



Southern end of large stable block



Northern end of large stable block

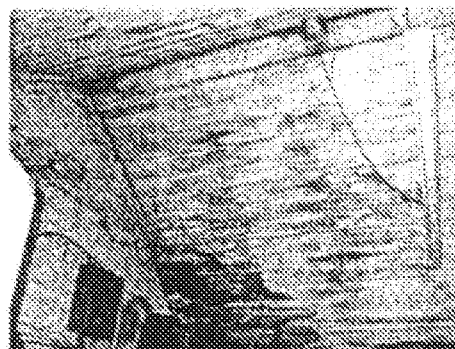
11.1.1 Roof

The roof of the stables was of unlined slate tiles with the exception of one small area which had previously been used as a tack room on the north end of the block which had a painted timber planked lining. The slate tiles appeared to fit tightly onto battens. Small areas of the roof had plastic sheeting fitted into it.

There were no opportunities for numbers of bats to roost in the unlined roof and there was no evidence seen to suggest they were doing so.

Some of the clay ridge tiles were missing and it could be seen that they were fitted tightly onto concrete which did not appear to offer any space for bats to roost.

The small section of roof which had been lined over a tack room could be viewed well from the ground due to its low height. The slate tiles were tightly fitted and no evidence could be seen externally to suggest that bats were accessing this area in any numbers. There was a small space into the ridge but there was no evidence to suggest that this was accessed by numbers of bats. Internally the boarding was poorly fitted at the eastern end and was damaged. There were no bat droppings falling from these areas.



11.1.2 Walls

The brick walls externally were generally in good repair and did not appear to have any cracks or crevices suitable for bats to roost

There were two large cracks in the corners of stables on the southern end large enough for bats to enter, one is shown below.



These were considered and no evidence was seen to suggest that bats had or were accessing these spaces which were very dusty, with cobwebs and debris within them

The eaves were tightly fitted with bricks in places and in others offered good access to bats as did the doorways. Most of the doorways were fitted with a lower stable door only offering easy access to animals into the stables.

11.1.3 Internally

The stables were generally light due to the light entering from doorways, perspex sections in the roof, windows and all the walls including the partition walls were painted white. It was possible to read and write in all of the stables without torchlight.

There were significant levels of air movement in all of the stables due to the absence of an upper half of the stable doors, to air movement through window apertures and in the south eastern end due to part of a wall being missing.

The stables were divided by wooden partition walls fitted to the eaves as shown below and brick walls between the main stable sections.



The partition walls appeared to be a wooden supporting structure with planking either side providing a wooden cavity. This cavity was accessible to animals where the partition wall butted up to the outer brick walls but the surveyor did not see any evidence to suggest that bats were accessing this space most of which appeared to be very dusty and well cobwebbed. Most of the partition wall was in good condition with planks fitting tightly.

There was some damage to the partition walls on the west side particularly in stables 4-8 but these areas of damage had amounts of wood shavings within them which would have been used as horse bedding in the past and did not offer a suitable environment for bats.

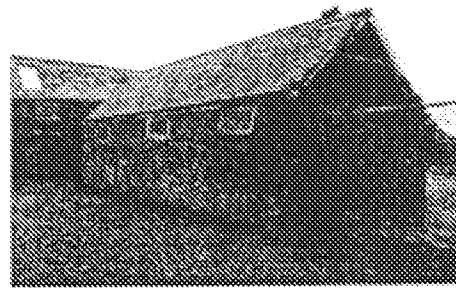
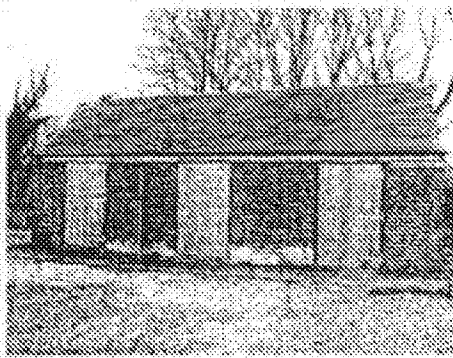
The partition walls in stables 1, 2, and 3 on the southern end of the block had had a doorway cut into them. The end of the timber structure could be seen clearly. Birds had nested within these but there was no evidence of bats roosting and the environment appeared too light and open to disturbance.

The top of the wooden partition walls, brick walls and eaves were considered closely from a ladder. There was considerable amount of undisturbed dust and no bat droppings were seen.

There was some potential roosting between brickwork and tiles at the gable ends but no evidence was seen of bat activity and generally the areas viewed were well cobwebbed and very dusty.

The supporting tie beams, king posts and braces were in good condition and were tightly fitted and did not offer roosting opportunities to bats and no evidence of bat activity in the form of bat droppings was seen on these timbers which were very dusty and undisturbed.

11.2 Small stable block



A small rectangular block of three stables lay along side the lane and to the south of the large stable block. The walls were brick and the gable ends to the north and south of the building were damaged and open from the eaves up to the ridge as shown in the photo on the right above.

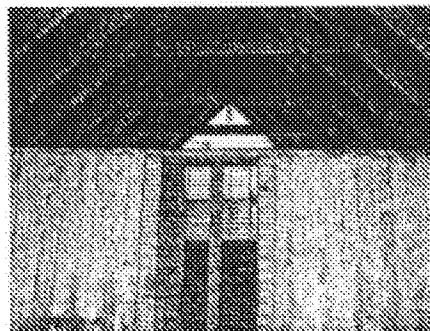
The two northern stables were separated by painted wooden partition wall to the eaves and the southern two by a partition wall of wooden planking to the eaves and hardboard to the ridge.

Windows were fitted into the rear (west) side of the stable block. These together with damaged end walls provided a significant amount of light into the stables which were very draughty.

The roof pitch was covered with clay tiles and was unlined. The ridge board was well cobwebbed.

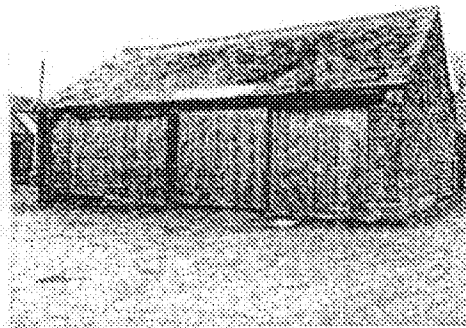
The solid brick walls did not offer opportunities for bats to roost in cracks or crevices.

There was no evidence of any bat activity within the stables and the opportunities for roosting appeared to be limited to the ridge. Large old cobwebs hung from this suggesting that there had not been any bat activity within the stable.

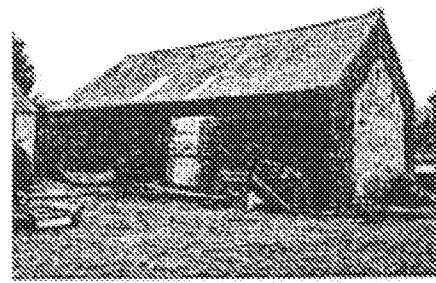


A damaged box which appeared to be an owl box was fitted into the southern end of the stables. This was completely open due to the loss of the end of the wall and there was no evidence seen to suggest that this was utilised by owls currently.

11.3 Barn



East facing side of barn with wooden doors



West facing elevation

11.3.1 Roof

The pitched roof was covered with unlined slate tiles with some Perspex sheeting allowing light into the barn. The ridge was in good condition.

11.3.2 Walls – externally

The walls were generally in good repair and did not appear to have any cracks or crevices suitable for bats to roost.

There was some damage to the brickwork on the southern and northern ends of the west facing wall and to the southern wall where a building had previously been attached but there was no evidence seen to suggest that bats were utilising these areas.

11.3.3 Internal

The barn was divided by a partition wall to the eaves but the main roof area was open. The barn was actively used.

The timbers did not offer roosting opportunities to bats. There was no evidence seen to suggest that bats roosted in the building which did not provide good roosting opportunities in the form of cracks and crevices. Cobwebs were very evident at the gable ends.

11.4 Barn Owls

There was no evidence seen to suggest that barn owls utilised any of the buildings surveyed. There were no owl pellets or evidence of droppings, nesting areas or feathers to suggest the buildings were used by Barn owls.

Some of the stables had been swept which may have removed evidence of owl pellets but the timbers, which could be used for perching were covered with undisturbed dust and there was no evidence of droppings on them.

12 Constraints

The bat survey was undertaken in the winter when maternity roosts have dispersed and evidence of significant bat activity in the form of bat droppings externally, will have been reduced or lost by weather. In view of the simple structure of these buildings enabling the surveyor to see the buildings very fully it was not felt that this was a significant factor.

The buildings are used for some storage and the floor space of some areas had been cleared out recently which would have removed evidence of bat droppings and owl pellets on the ground. The eaves, tie beams and other roofing timbers and the top of partition

walls were not disturbed and could be viewed thoroughly. It was therefore felt that there were sufficient areas in the stables that had been undisturbed for many years to enable a good picture of bat or barn owl activity to be seen.

13 Summary

The range of brick stables considered provided few opportunities for bats to roost within crevices and all of the buildings were relatively light and draughty. The slate roofs were almost all unlined and the roof timbers in good condition offering no crevices for bats to roost. One small area of lined roof was viewed closely and there was no evidence to suggest that this was utilised by numbers of bats.

There were limited opportunities for bats to roost in cracks in the corner of the walls in the stables at the southern end of the large stable block and in damaged areas of brickwork on the west and south side of the barn but there was no evidence that these were utilised by bats.

There was no evidence of any bat activity in the stables or barn surveyed. No bat droppings or bats were seen.

There was no evidence seen to suggest that barn owls have or are accessing the buildings.

14 Conclusions, Recommendations and Advice

There was no evidence of bat activity within any of the stables or barn surveyed and no bats were seen. There was no evidence seen to suggest that bats used the buildings for roosting or any evidence seen to suggest that the buildings are or have been used as a significant roost by bats. The opportunities for bats to roost were very limited and not suited to providing roosting to numbers of bats to utilise the buildings for significant roosting.

The only potential roosting space that could not be seen clearly was a small area of roof over one small section on the north of the large stable block that was lined with wooden planks but due to its low height the roof was considered very carefully and there was no evidence to suggest that this supported a bat roost.

There were opportunities for bats to roost on the ridge boards in the roof throughout the stables and in the barn but due to the light and draughty environment these are unlikely to be used for anything other than night roosting or as a feeding roost but there was no evidence to suggest that these were used for this purpose by bats.

The potential roosting available in the property could be viewed in detail due to the structure of the property and the absence of roof lining in all but one small area. It is not felt that any further investigative work is necessary.

It would not appear that the development of this property will be of significance to the local or national bat population.

It is not felt that the work on these buildings need be supervised by a bat worker or that the timing of the development would be significant to bats. It is always advisable where single bats have an opportunity to hibernate in a building to avoid commencing work in the winter months however the environment in these buildings seemed unsuitable for hibernation.