

**Updated Baseline Ecological Survey &
Baseline Bat Survey
The Becks
Wellington Heath
Herefordshire**

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UPDATED BASELINE ECOLOGICAL SURVEY & BASELINE BAT SURVEY- THE BECKS – THE COMMON – WELLINGTON HEATH - HEREFORDSHIRE

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an updated baseline ecological survey of The Becks, The Common, Wellington Heath, Herefordshire, HR8 1LY.

Current proposals are for partial demolition of the southern – older part of the property with retention of the more modern northern section. The section to the south of the existing house has been sold off as a separate building plot.

The updated baseline report includes a description, an assessment of the potential of the site to contain protected species, an evaluation, and recommendations.

As part of the existing property will be demolished and was found to be suitable for bats a bat survey was also undertaken, the results of which are included in appendix 1.

Site photographs are included in appendix 2. A desk data search has also been obtained by contacting the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre – appendix 3.

2. METHODOLOGY

The baseline ecological survey used the extended Phase 1 habitat survey methodology. This is based on the Phase 1 habitat survey methodology developed by the former Nature Conservancy Council (1990), a nationally accepted standard method for baseline ecological survey. Phase 1 habitat survey codes are used to classify habitats in the text below.

The original baseline survey of the site was carried out on the 21st of April 2015, with subsequent evening bat surveys undertaken on the 11th and 30th of June 2015.

An update baseline survey and evening bat survey was also undertaken on the 1st of August 2018 on the by an Ecologist of 25 years standing – also an experienced licenced bat worker. Each bat survey was undertaken with the assistance of a second experienced licenced bat worker.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

J1.2 Amenity grass / J1.4 Introduced Shrubs / J2.1 Intact Hedge

The site is in a rural village location to the north of Ledbury. There are further residential properties to the east, north and south of the property. To the west on the other side of the road is an area of scrub on steeply sloping ground.

There are wooded areas a short distance away to the south-east on Ochre Hill and to the south-west, west and north. There is pasture land beyond the village to the east and north-east.

The garden consists of lawn areas with ornamental shrubs and trees. There are hedgerow / tree borders on the east and west boundaries.

In the back garden is a small Crab Apple *Malus sylvestris* tree, a small conifer and Gooseberry *Ribes uva-crispa* and Apple canes. A small log pile and a small pile of brash were also noted.

To the south of the house there are concrete paving slabs, a wooden shed and a small metal outbuilding. The latter has been used as a wood store.

There is also a short ornamental hedge in this area adjacent to the Becks consisting of shrubs such as Lilac *Syringa sp* and Privet *Ligustrum ovalifolium*. Beneath is a low stone wall.

Adjacent to the concrete paving area in the front garden are small ornamental trees and shrubs including Magnolia, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, an ornamental Maple *Acer sp.* and a further small conifer.

To the front of the house are lawn areas, flower beds and a small rockery.

In the south-west corner is a small area of scrub and previously felled coniferous trees. Remaining shrubs / scrub includes *Rhododendron ponticum*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* with Nettle *Urtica dioica* and Cleavers *Galium aparine* in the field layer. A few piles of grass clippings have also been placed in this area.

Primrose *Primula veris*, Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Lords and Ladies *Arum maculatum* and Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum* were also noted very occasionally in the garden.

The eastern boundary is lined with a Leyland Cypress *Cupressocyparis leylandii* hedge. Some logs have been placed along this hedgeline where it has been thinned. There is Nettle and Bramble below along this hedgeline.

The western boundary alongside the Common has a low hedge consisting of Privet, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*.

There is also a hedgeline alongside the southern boundary with "Oakwell" unaffected by the proposals.

When the survey was updated in August 2018 garden areas remained largely as previously but some areas were a little more overgrown.

The Becks is a part tiled, part slate roofed property. It appears to have been added to over time. Originally a tiled roofed cottage, there is a more modern

tilled roofed addition to the property to the north. There are also slate roofs to the rear, as well as a flat roofed addition. The property has wooden barge boards and soffits around the exterior.

Internally there is only one accessible central roof void (above the front door). This had a skylight on the north facing aspect and is not lined internally. There is wooden floor to the loft with no loft insulation.

There is a single storey, pitched tiled roofed brick garage adjacent to the house to the north. Tiles had been stripped from the roof by the time the update survey was undertaken in August 2018

When the survey was updated in August 2018 the main property remained as previously but with some limited deterioration in condition. Copper had also been taken from the loft spaces and other parts of the property. The property is currently unoccupied.

4. DESK DATA SEARCH

A desk data search was carried out by Herefordshire Biological Records centre.

This revealed records for garden surveys undertaken in 2009 of this site (SO713406) and nearby gardens. Records included Slow Worm, Grass Snake, Great Crested Newt, Palmate Newt, Smooth Newt, Common Frog, Toad, Badgers and Bats. The surveys were undertaken by a local naturalist group and members were encouraged to submit records for their own gardens.

There are no sites of designated conservation interest in close proximity to the site.

5. ASSESSMENT OF THE POTENTIAL FOR PROTECTED SPECIES

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017 (as amended) provide protection for the following species against killing, injury, disturbance or sale. The legislation also protects their places of shelter, protection, breeding and resting sites.

Bats

The Becks was noted to have suitable opportunities for crevice dwelling bats where there are gaps under tiles particularly on the west facing side of the building in the central areas above the front door. This is the older part of the property. Opportunities were also noted around dormers, particularly on the south facing side of the building. The barge boards and soffits appeared well sealed and in good condition.

Conditions remained similar when the update survey was undertaken.

No evidence of bats or droppings were noted inside the accessible roof void in the central part of the property, which was more like an attic room. This remained the case when the survey was updated.

However it should be noted that crevice dwelling species can use the exterior of a building without leaving droppings in the loft space.

Inspections of the trees were made. There are no trees in the garden with suitable cavities for roosting bats; most are too young to be suitable.

The hedges and shrubs provide some suitable foraging habitat for bats along with nearby gardens and areas of scrub and trees beyond the site boundaries.

This remained the case when the survey was updated.

Birds

The trees around and within the garden provide some limited nesting opportunities for birds as well as food sources. Minimising their loss is recommended.

Precautionary recommendations with regard to nesting birds have also been made below because of their legal protection.

Badgers

- Badgers are protected under the protection of Badgers act 1992.

The site was searched for evidence of badger activity in the form of setts, latrines, snuffles holes and track ways and no evidence was found. This was still the case when the survey was updated in August 2018.

Reptiles

The garden provides some habitat for reptiles in the form of a small log pile, a wood shed, a pile of brash and some limited piles of grass clippings. However the areas of suitable habitat are limited and are typical of what might be found in any traditional well-established garden.

This remained the case when the survey was updated in August 2018.

Precautionary recommendations have been made below because of the legal protection which reptiles receive and because of the presence of records for Slow Worm and Grass Snake for the area as noted above.

Great Crested Newts

There was no evidence of a pond in the garden of the property or the adjacent property "Oakwell". There is also no evidence that a pond has been filled in, in recent years.

This remained the case when the garden was resurveyed.

Studies of aerial photographs and large scale ordnance survey maps did not reveal any evidence of ponds in the vicinity of the site.

Searches of the nearby scrub on the other side of the road also did not reveal any evidence of a pond and most properties in the vicinity have steeply sloping gardens.

However the records centre details records for amphibian species including Great Crested Newts in the vicinity (garden surveys conducted by members of a local naturalist group).

As far as the site itself is concerned, the log pile, brash and grass clippings detailed in the section on reptiles also provide potentially suitable terrestrial shelter habitat for GCN's and other amphibians. There is also a small stone wall and rockery area which also provide potential hibernacula.

Precautionary recommendations have therefore also been made below because of the legal protection which Great Crested Newts receive.

Other Protected Species

It is not considered that the site is likely to provide high quality habitat for any other protected species. This remained the case when the survey was updated in August 2018.

6. CONCLUSIONS

It is intended that the Becks is partially demolished and rebuilt on a similar footprint. A second house will also be built to the south of the existing property and has been sold off as a separate building plot.

Opportunities for crevice dwelling bats were identified on the exterior of the Becks, under tiles and slates and around dormers, therefore two evening emergence surveys were conducted at the peak of season for undertaking bat surveys (11th and 30th of June 2015). An update survey was also undertaken on the 1st of August 2018. Weather conditions were excellent on all three occasions and the surveys were undertaken by two experienced licenced bat workers. The full survey results are detailed in appendix 1.

A single Common Pipistrelle emerged from under a slate on the east facing gable on the 11th of June 2015 but there was no emergence on the 30th of June 2015 or 1st of August 2018. Based on the evidence it appears that the property is used for casual roosting.

In the circumstances a method statement (or risk avoidance strategy) is proposed, as the roost is low status, which minimises the risk of bats being harmed during the demolition process.

Recommendations for alternative provision for bats in the new properties have also been detailed below as consistent with relevant legislation and planning policy guidance.

A desk data search was undertaken for the property by contacting Herefordshire Biological Records centre. This revealed records for garden surveys undertaken in 2009 of this site (SO713406) and nearby gardens. Records included Slow Worm, Grass Snake, Great Crested Newt, Palmate Newt, Smooth Newt, Common Frog, Toad, Badgers and Bats. (The surveys were undertaken by a local naturalist group and members were encouraged to send in records for their own gardens).

The garden of the Becks contains limited suitable habitat for reptiles and terrestrial habitat for amphibians. However there is no evidence of a pond or of a pond having been filled in. Searches of the surrounding area on the ground where access was possible and via aerial photographs and large scale ordnance survey maps did not reveal any evidence of ponds in close proximity.

Precautionary recommendations with regard to reptiles and Great Crested Newts have been made below because of their legal protection and the biological records centre data, but it is not considered that the site provides significant habitat for either species.

This remained the case when the site was resurveyed in August 2018.

Otherwise the site contains small trees and shrubs, many of which are non-native. The trees were inspected for their suitability for roosting bats but no cavities were found. This remained the case when the update survey was undertaken.

However the trees and shrubs provide some limited habitat for nesting birds and foraging habitat for bats. The regular foraging activity of Common and Soprano Pipistrelle bats over the garden was noted during all bat surveys.

Precautionary recommendations with regard to their removal have been made below because of the legal protection which nesting birds receive. It is recommended that loss of trees and shrubs from the existing gardens is minimised. Recommendations with regard to compensatory planting have also been made. Native trees, shrubs, hedges in particular should be retained wherever possible.

Searches of the garden for evidence of badgers were made but none found. This was still the case when the update survey was undertaken in August 2018.

It is not considered that the garden provides significant habitat for any other protected or notable species. This was still the case in August 2018. No further survey has been recommended.

7. METHOD STATEMENT

Bats

1. A single Common Pipistrelle emerged from the property on the 11th of June 2015. The risk of harming any casually roosting bats can be best avoided or minimised by undertaking the demolition of the relevant part of the Becks at a time of year when bats are least likely to be present – October to March. As the roosting opportunity which the bat was using (under a slate on the roof apex) appeared superficial it is considered unlikely the bat would be using this location to hibernate during the winter months, as it is too exposed. (The loft space is not lined internally).
2. Alternative provision for crevice dwelling bats should be provided by inserting two purpose designed woodcrete bats tubes into east, west or south facing walls, as high up as possible at a gable apex where the tube will receive plenty of sunlight. These are durable and designed so that they do not require any maintenance.

Amphibians & Reptiles

3. As a precautionary measure the log pile, brash pile, grass clippings and rockery should be dismantled by hand by a suitably qualified Ecologist before any site clearance or construction works proceed in-case Reptiles or Amphibians are found. This should be undertaken between

April and September when species are active and avoid the winter hibernation period when they would be vulnerable to disturbance. This would allow any reptiles to disperse naturally. These measures are recommended because of the legal protection which Great Crested Newts and Reptiles receive.

4. If Great Crested Newts are found works could not proceed until an EPS licence is obtained and a fencing and pitfall trapping exercise undertaken. A suitable receptor site would also need to be found. This is because of the greater level of protection which Great Crested Newts receive.
5. During construction, materials such as bricks, sand etc. should be stored off the ground on palettes.
6. Any areas not directly affected by construction should be regularly strimmed during the construction process to discourage, Great Crested Newts / Reptiles from using the site.
7. Rubble or earth should be reused as soon as possible after demolition / excavation of foundations etc. and not left around the site, as this provides attractive shelter habitat for both species. (Or stored off the ground).
8. It is recommended that small log / brash piles are retained / re-created along the eastern boundary of the site post construction as a small scale mitigation measure to compensate for any loss of habitat.

Birds

9. It is recommended that broad-leaved shrubs / trees / hedges are retained wherever possible for the benefit of nesting birds and foraging bats.
10. Any trees / shrubs to be removed would be best cleared outside the nesting season in the winter period (October to February). During the nesting season a check should be made for nesting birds. However it should be borne in mind that any trees shrubs containing nests could not be removed until young have fledged.
11. It is recommended that replanting with native hedgerow species is undertaken around the site boundaries by way of compensation for the loss of trees and shrubs on the site. Suggested species would be Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel, Holly, Field Maple, Crab Apple and Privet. There would be opportunities on the northern and southern boundaries.
12. In view of the rural location, directional / cowled / muted lighting will need to be used around the new property as nesting birds and foraging bats as well as other wildlife are deterred by strong lighting.

13. It is recommended that sustainable drainage techniques including such measures as porous paving are employed to reduce and slow down run-off wherever possible.

8. REFERENCES

Nature Conservancy Council (1993). *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey*. JNCC, Peterborough, UK.

APPENDIX 1 - DUSK BAT SURVEYS

1. INTRODUCTION

As opportunities for crevice dwelling bats were identified on the exterior of the property and particularly because of the properties rural location, two evening bat emergence surveys were carried out on the 11th and 30th June 2015 to establish whether bats are using the building.

The surveys were also updated on the 1st of August 2018.

Details of the methodology used, survey results, conclusions and recommendations are given below.

2. LEGISLATION

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017 (as amended) provide protection for Bats against killing, injury and disturbance. The legislation also protects their places of shelter, protection, breeding and resting sites.

3. BAT BEHAVIOUR AND CONTEXT FOR PROTECTION

Bats may use a variety of buildings of modern and older construction, caves, mines, hollow trees *etcetera* as roosts.

Bat roosts serve different purposes and different conditions are required for hibernation, mating and breeding. Other roosts may be used as overnight stops during summer feeding. Female bats gather in maternity roosts in June and July to give birth and rear their young.

The seasonal changes in roost sites means that a roost may be unoccupied for a large part of the year; however it is still protected by law when unoccupied.

Bats are considered to be of conservation concern because of significant declines in numbers, with some species having become very rare. Reasons for this include loss or degradation of foraging habitats, loss of roost sites, poisoning from timber treatment, predation and persecution by man.

4. METHODOLOGY

Ultrasonic bat detectors were used to detect bats around dusk on the 11th and 30th of June 2015 and the 1st of August 2018. Bat box duet and Petterson D230 bat detectors were used for carrying out the surveys.

The surveys were undertaken by Elizabeth McKay with the assistance of David Worley and Neil McLean – all experienced licenced bat workers.

On all three occasions one surveyor was positioned to the west of the property and one to the east in such a way as all angles could be viewed. The rear garden slopes upwards providing a good vantage point to the east of the building.

Timing

The evening emergence survey was started approximately 15 minutes before sunset and continued for 1 hour and 30 minutes past sunset or until activity had declined significantly, or it was no longer possible to see.

Weather Conditions

The surveys were carried out under very good weather conditions at the peak of the recognised bat survey season.

11th June 2015 – 0/8 cloud. Dry, light breeze / still. Temperature 16°C at sunset. Finish temperature 14.5°C.

30th June 2015 – 1/8 cloud. Dry, light breeze. Temperature 20 °C at sunset. Finish temperature 19°C.

1st of August 2018 – 1/8 cloud. Dry, light breeze. Temperature 17.5 °C at sunset. Finish temperature 17 °C.

5. RESULTS

11th June 2015

The survey commenced at 21.15 (sunset 21.28) and ended at 23:00.

Bat activity was recorded as follows:-

East of Property

Time	Species	Details of Activity
21.28	Common Pipistrelle	Emerged from east facing gable apex, from under a slate where mortar is missing. (Photograph 1).
21.35	Common Pipistrelle	Flying south to north past rear of building.
21.40	Soprano Pipistrelle	Flying east to west across site.
21.55, 22.02, 22.10	Common Pipistrelle	Heard briefly.
22.10 – 22.17	Soprano Pipistrelle	Regular passes over garden.
22.13 – 22.20	Common Pipistrelle	Regular foraging passes over garden.
22.20	Common Pipistrelle	Two bats flying west to north-east

22.22 – 23.00	Common Pipistrelle	Regular foraging activity over garden.
22.25 – 23.00	Soprano Pipistrelle	Occasional foraging activity.
22.38	Common Pipistrelle	Four bats seen at one time.

West of Property

Time	Species	Details of Activity
21.28	Common Pipistrelle	Flew over roof from east to west.
21.32	Common Pipistrelle	Heard briefly.
21.39, 21.53	Soprano Pipistrelle	Heard behind surveyor on lane.
22.08	Soprano Pipistrelle	Flying west to east past side of house.
22.11	Common Pipistrelle	Two bats foraging around garden.
22.15 – 22.28	Soprano Pipistrelle	Feeding constantly in garden.
22.29 – 23.00	Common Pipistrelle	Feeding in front garden.

30th June 2015

The survey commenced at 21.15 (sunset 21.34) and ended at 22:55.

Bat activity was recorded as follows:-

East of Property

Time	Species	Details of Activity
22.02	Soprano Pipistrelle	Flying south to north across garden.
22.10	Common Pipistrelle	Could be heard distantly.
22.15	Soprano Pipistrelle	Three foraging around garden.
22.20	Soprano Pipistrelle	Foraging in garden.
22.25, 22.27	Common Pipistrelle	Flying north west to south-east across garden.
22.28	Common Pipistrelle	Flying south-west to north-east over house.
22.30	Common Pipistrelle	Heard briefly.
22.35	Soprano Pipistrelle	From south foraging over garden.
22.42, 22.43	Common Pipistrelle	Heard briefly.
22.44	Common Pipistrelle	North to south across garden.
22.45, 22.47, 22.50, 22.51	Common Pipistrelle	Heard briefly.

West of Property

Time	Species	Details of Activity
22.03	Soprano Pipistrelle	Flying south to north over garden.
22.14	Soprano Pipistrelle	Flying east to west past side of house.
22.19	Soprano Pipistrelle	Heard briefly along lane.
22.23	Common Pipistrelle	Flying to north of building.
22.27 – 22.32	Common Pipistrelle	Flying around front garden – feeding buzzes.
22.32, 22.38	Soprano Pipistrelle	Passes over front garden.
22.41	Common Pipistrelle	Flying south to north across front of house.
22.43, 22.45, 22.49	Common Pipistrelle	Flying around garden.

1st August 2018

The survey commenced at 20.45 (sunset 21.00) and ended at 22:30.

Bat activity was recorded as follows:-

East of Property

Time	Species	Details of Activity
21.44, 21.45, 21.50, 21.55	Common Pipistrelle	Heard briefly foraging passes – audio only
22.02	Soprano Pipistrelle	Heard briefly – audio only
22.05	Myotis species	Commuting across garden east to west
22.06	Soprano Pipistrelle	Heard distantly
22.15	Common Pipistrelle	Heard distantly
22.20	Common Pipistrelle	Heard briefly

West of Property

Time	Species	Details of Activity
21.15	Common Pipistrelle	Foraging to west of property
21.15	Common Pipistrelle	Flying over roof from east to west
21.19	Soprano Pipistrelle	Heard not seen - foraging
21.33	Soprano Pipistrelle	Heard not seen - commuting
21.47, 21.52, 21.56	Common Pipistrelle	Heard not seen – commuting / foraging
21.58	Noctule	Heard overhead briefly
22.04	Myotis species	Heard foraging briefly

22.08, 22.25	Common Pipistrelle	Heard not seen – brief foraging passes
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APPENDIX 2 – SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF SITE LOCATION



**PHOTO 1 – FROM SOUTH-EAST CORNER – LOOKING NORTH-WEST –
LOOKING TOWARDS THE BECKS – EASTERN ASPECT**



PHOTO 2 – FROM SOUTH-EAST CORNER LOOKING WEST



PHOTO 3 – LOOKING ALONG EASTERN BOUNDARY FROM NORTH



PHOTO 4 – BACK GARDEN FROM NORTH



PHOTO 5 – SMALL LOG PILE AND BACK GARDEN LOOKING EAST



PHOTO 6 – AREA TO SOUTH OF BUILDING



PHOTO 7 – AREA TO SOUTH OF BUILDING LOOKING EAST



PHOTO 8 – LOOKING SOUTH ACROSS FRONT GARDEN



PHOTO 9 – SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF SITE



PHOTO 10 – LOOKING SOUTH ALONG WESTERN BOUNDARY OF SITE



PHOTO 11 – THE BECKS – FRONT FROM WEST



PHOTO 12 -THE BECKS – NORTHERN ASPECT

APPENDIX 3 – DESK DATA SEARCH