# Bat Survey: Silver Birches, Market Road, Parc Seymour, NP26 3AE

Instructed by: Tony Phillips

Reported by: Ecological Services Ltd
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| Author | Date | Version |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Watkins | June 2025 | V1.0 |

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# CONTENTS



**Warning! The building is now a confirmed bat roost.**

**No works can be undertaken that may impact or disturb the roost without the legal owner being in possession of a European Protected Species License. Please refer to section 4 and section 9 of the report for further details.**

**If there is any doubt of what is permissible please contact the author on: Tel:07866461726 or Email rich@ecologicalservices.wales prior to any works commencing.**

**Disturbance or destruction of a bat roost is a criminal offence that may result in any granted planning permission being revoked, the legal owner receiving a fine and or a prison sentence.**

## 1.0 Background and Purpose

**1.1** Silver Birches is a detached property situated within a rural environment in the hamlet of Parc Seymour, to the north west of the village of Penhow. The property is currently derelict and planning permission is sought to lift the roof off; raise the height of the walls and re-roof the property. Additionally it is proposed to create a side extension. This report will investigate if there is potential to disturb bats and will be used to assist in the planning process.

**1.2** To support the planning application a bat report has been commissioned to investigate if bats use the current property in any capacity during the maternity season, and for any evidence suggesting that bats use the property at other times of the year.

**1.3** The report is prepared and undertaken by Mr. Richard Watkins BSc., an experienced Natural Resources Wales licensed bat ecologist with 15 years experience, license number S0931358-1.

**1.4** A data search was undertaken with SEWBReC (0245-669) to provide information on local bat and bird species in the area. The data search did not identify any historic records of bats being present within the building. The nearest recorded roosts are approximately 235m from the property which is an historic record for a Pipistrelle Species *(Pipistrellus sp.)* day roost from 1991; 510m from the property which is an historic record for a Pipistrelle Species day roost from 1985 and 535m from the property which is a record for a Lesser Horseshoe Bat *(Rhinolophus hipposideros)* and Common Pipistrelle *(Pipistrellus pipistrellus)* maternity roost from 2010.

**1.5** There are various non roosting records for bats, the nearest being approximately 1km from the property for a Common Pipistrelle; Lesser Horseshoe Bat and Whiskered Bat *(Myotis mystacinus)* bat group record.

**1.6** No records for nesting birds were returned as part of the data search within 500m of the proposed development site.

**1.7** The property is within 10km of 1 designated SAC (Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites) and 2 SSSI (Mwyngloddfa Mynydd-Bach and Wye Valley Lesser Horseshoe Bat Site) for bats, however, due to the localised nature of the proposed works, these protected sites will not be adversely affected.

## 2.0 Site Description

**2.1** Silver Birches is a detached, rendered property which is two storeys in height with a pitched tiled roof and a single brick chimney. There are timber barge boards; fasciae and soffits present and there are plastic verge protectors present. There is likely to be a cavity wall in the building.

**2.2** The property dates back to in excess of 60 years and is situated in a rural environment. There is unlikely to be any ambient lighting within the vicinity of the property.

**2.3** The nearest significant watercourse is the River Usk, approximately 2.6km to the west of the property at its nearest point. Additionally, Wentwood Reservoir lies approximately 2.4km to the north east of the property.

**2.4** Silver Birches is situated within a rural environment in the hamlet of Parc Seymour, to the north west of the village of Penhow. The property is immediately surrounded by substantial amounts of open agricultural fields and areas of forestry. There is excellent ecological connectivity for bats to the wider environment.

**2.5** The National Grid Reference of the site is approximately: **ST 4064 9198**

## 3.0 Report Constraints

**3.1** Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the presence of plants and animals such as the time of year; migration patterns and behaviour. The survey methods employed can provide evidence for the potential presence of bats at the times when the site was visited. Although the methods follow best practice guidance and were carried out in such a way as to maximise the chances of detection, failure to detect the target species cannot be considered as definitive proof of their absence.

**3.2** The report is solely concerned with bats in relation to this building. Trees and other buildings not mentioned directly have not been included in this report.

**3.3** Even though bats are habitual creatures they can still move to new roosts if more suitable. Therefore this report cannot predict the status of the structure in regard to bat occupancy in the future. This report should be acted upon as soon as practical and will be valid for eighteen months from the date of issue. If planning or building works are delayed, it is the responsibility of the client to discuss and gain approval from the *author* before work commences. Natural Resources Wales will only consider reports up to eighteen months old.

## 4.0 Legal Constraints

**4.1** Bats, and any place a bat uses for breeding or shelter, either currently occupied or unoccupied are protected by European and British law, predominantly by **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017**, which are the principal means by which the Habitats Directive is transposed from European directive into law in England and Wales.

**4.2** In summary this law states that it is an offence to:

- **Deliberately capture or kill a bat**
- **Deliberately disturb a bat**
- **Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat**
- **Keep; transport; sell; exchange or offer for sale or exchange a living or dead bat or any part of a bat**

**4.3 '**Deliberately' may also be interpreted, as not intending to injure or kill a bat but having done so due to being insufficiently informed and unaware of the consequences of the action.

**4.4** For a more comprehensive description and exact wording of the legislation please refer to:
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/contents/made

**4.5** Where there is a risk that a bat roost may be present, it is incumbent upon the owner to commission a specialist bat survey to identify bat roosts before any work commences. Maximum penalties for offences relating to disturbance to bats or their roosts can amount to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or fines of up to Level 5 on the standard scale under the Criminal Justice Act 1982/1991 (i.e. £5000 in April 2001) per roost or bat disturbed or killed, or to both.

**4.6** If a bat roost is discovered, no work that could affect the roost can be undertaken until Natural Resources Wales grants a licence endorsing the work. A thorough method statement and adequate mitigation proposal will need to be submitted to support any licence application.

**4.7** The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 puts an onus onto responsible bodies such as Local Planning Authorities to not only preserve, but also to enhance biodiversity meaning that planning applications must offer an element of ecological gain as well as preserving any aspects of ecological importance.

## 5.0 General Information

**5.1** Bats are unable to build roosts themselves but instead rely on both man made and naturally occurring features to provide suitable accommodation. Bats generally prefer older buildings built with traditional materials, as traditional building methods provide more opportunities for gaps and entrances to buildings. Traditional cut roofs are preferred to a roof with trusses. Bats also prefer to roost where the external roost area has access to sunlight during the day such as south facing roof elevations.

**5.2** Bats can utilise the following features on a building; end tiles, barge boards, soffit, gable ends, porches, lead flashing, hanging tiles**,** ridge tiles**,** broken tiles**,** eaves**,** sash window frames**,** wood cladding**,** fascia boards**,** window sills and internal roof spaces and timbers. Although this list demonstrates the most popular roosting sites it is by no means definitive. Bats can use apertures as small as 10mm in diameter to gain access.

**5.3** The U.K bat population is divided into two distinct families, Rhinolophidae and Vespertilionidae. In general, Rhinolophidae (Horseshoe) bats differ in their roosting requirements to Vespertilionidae (the remainder of UK bat species). Horseshoe bats prefer to roost in large areas such as internal attic spaces and hang in the open from the roof of the roost. They tend to roost in visible clusters to maintain the high temperatures that a maternity colony needs. Horseshoe bats also prefer free flight access and egress into the roosting area. Horseshoe bats tend to be more light averting to other UK bat species, and routinely fly around the internal roosting area to warm up before exiting. It is noted that Plecotus (Long Eared) bats share some of these preferences. Vesper bats are, on the whole, crevice dwelling bats who squeeze into small apertures to access the roost. These, like Horseshoe bats, will cluster in maternity colonies, but are normally hidden from view. Vesper bats, with the exception of Long Eared bats, do not require a large internal roost to fly around before exit. Long Eared bats, although part of the vesper family, are very light averting and will, on occasions share the roosting patterns of both Horseshoe and crevice dwelling species.

## 6.0 External Scoping Survey

**6.1** The external scoping survey was undertaken on the **26th October 2024** in conditions of good natural light. All external aspects of the building were comprehensively evaluated for roost potential. Evidence was also sought for any staining or droppings which could suggest bat occupation.

**6.2** The building was inspected for overt evidence of bat presence and occupation such as:

- Staining around the entry of roosting point caused by oils secreted by the bat into its fur
- Scratching on surfaces caused by the bat in the acts of take off and landing
- Bat droppings on walls; floors; roof voids; window sills or panes and barge boards
- Urine stains below a possible entrance site, within the entrance to a cavity or on timbers used for roosting

- Bats can produce chatter on warm evenings prior to leaving the roost. A heterodyne bat detector is used to help determine this
- Flies around the entrance or on the floor of possible roosts, which may be attracted to bat guano

**6.3 Due to the age and condition of the building, there were a number of opportunities present for bats to access and use the building and those that were available were deemed as having moderate to high potential for roosting bats. There were raised and missing ridge tiles; areas of raised flashing around the chimney; a number of raised roofing tiles; apertures underneath the plastic verge protectors and apertures underneath areas of fascia.**

**6.4 No droppings or evidence of bats were discovered on any external features.**

**6.5 No evidence of nesting bird use of the building was observed during the scoping survey.**

**6.6 Examples of apertures allowing access to cavities in the building:**

**7.0 Internal Scoping Survey**

**7.1** The internal scoping survey was undertaken on the **26th October 2024** by Mr. Richard Watkins BSc., an experienced Natural Resources Wales licensed bat ecologist with 13 years experience, license number S0931358-1.

**7.2** The majority of the upper storey ceilings had been removed and therefore the attic space above was visible from the upper storey of the property. The space was lined and of a trussed design.

**7.3 There were a number of bat droppings indicative of a Pipistrelle Species *(Pipistrellus sp.)* of bat within the attic space and the upper storey of the property.**

**8.0 Emergence Surveys**

**8.1** The emergence surveys were carried out during the maternity season and adhered to current best practice guidelines. These surveys were conducted from half an hour before sunset until two hours post sunset. The surveyors used are all experienced bat counters who have undergone sufficient training in basic bat ecology and bat activity. All sound analysis was undertaken by Richard Watkins.

**8.2** The emergence surveys gave extra consideration to the features identified during the external scoping survey which could be utilised by bats.

**8.3** First Emergence Survey on **8th May 2025**

- Sunset: 20:47
- Weather: Dry and calm with approximately 25% cloud cover
- Temperature: 14 degrees celsius
- Surveyors: James Day; Allen Harvey; Keith Watkins and Richard Watkins

**No bats were observed emerging from the building.**

**8.4** Second Emergence Survey on **9th June 2025**

- Sunset: 21:27
- Weather: Dry and calm with full cloud cover
- Temperature: 15 degrees celsius
- Surveyors: Adam Hughes; Matthew Kedward; Ryan Offers; Debbie Parry and Caitlin Smith

**2 Soprano Pipistrelles *(Pipistrellus pygmaeus)* were observed emerging from a hole in the wall to the southern elevation of the building.**

**8.5** The weather conditions were dry and calm with little wind and no rain and therefore conducive for bat activity. The temperature was above 10 degrees celsius during the emergence surveys.

**8.6** The best viewing conditions were obtained.

**8.7** Echo-meter Touch 2 Pro bat detectors were present to acoustically record any bat calls. Nightfox Night Vision Goggles with record features were also used alongside additional infrared spotlights. These were positioned with the surveyors.

**8.8** Analysis of sound recording on bat detectors:

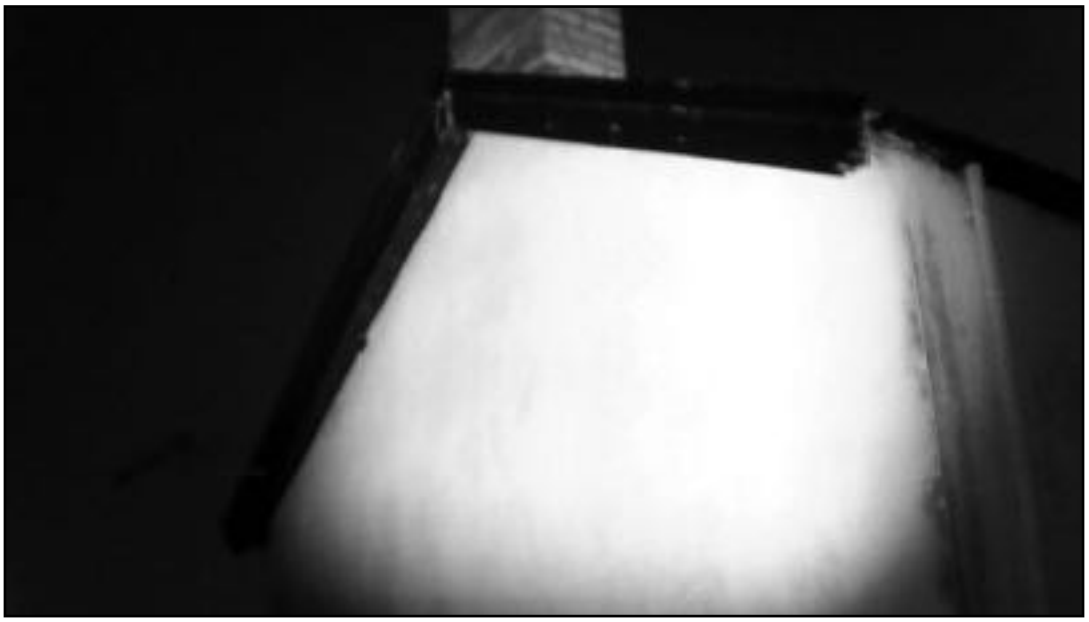
| **Species of Bats Recorded Emerging from the Building:** | |
|---|---|
| Soprano Pipistrelle | *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* |

| **Species of Bats Recorded in the Area:** | |
|---|---|
| Common Pipistrelle | *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* |
| Noctule | *Nyctalus noctula* |
| Soprano Pipistrelle | *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* |

**8.9** During the first emergence survey, a low number of bat calls were recorded. A small number of Common and Soprano Pipistrelles were observed feeding along the road to the immediate west of the property and a Noctule was detected but was not observed.

**8.10** During the second emergence survey, a low number of bat calls were recorded. 2 bats were observed emerging from the building and a small number of Common and Soprano Pipistrelles were observed feeding along the road to the immediate west of the property.


**8.11 Examples of NVA Still Shots:**



## 9.0 Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

**9.1 During the emergence surveys, bats were observed using the building as a day roost.**

**9.2 Soprano Pipistrelles *(Pipistrellus pygmaeus)* were observed emerging from the building during the second emergence survey. Soprano Pipistrelles are a common species of bat and are often found roosting in buildings. These types of bats are more tolerant to light disturbance than other species of bats.**

**9.3 Throughout the surveys, a low number of bat calls were recorded and a maximum of 2 bats were observed using the building as a day roost during any emergence survey.**

**9.4** The emergence surveys did not identify a significant maternity roost. The bats using the building as a day roost are probably male or non breeding females.

**9.5** The property is located in an area with excellent ecological connectivity for bats to the wider environment.

**9.6** There was no ambient lighting within the vicinity of the property.

**9.7 The building was assessed as having moderate to high potential for roosting bats and offered a number of opportunities for bats to access and use the building.**

**9.8** The building does not offer significant hibernation potential for bats.

**9.9** No evidence of nesting bird use of the building was observed during the surveys.

**9.10 The building is now a confirmed bat roost. No work that could affect the bat roost is permitted by law, without the permission from Natural Resources Wales, including any works to the roof. Direct illumination of the building is also not permitted, as this could constitute disturbance. (Please see Section 5 of this report for further information).**

**9.11 As the building is proposed to be fully renovated, the confirmed bat roosting location will be destroyed. Therefore a European Protected Species Licence, issued by Natural Resources Wales will be legally required to destroy the roosts.**

**9.12 If planning is approved, the legal owner must apply and be in possession of a European Protected Species Licence to destroy the roost, this is issued by Natural Resources Wales. This will take approximately 40 working days to be issued. This licence would have to offer a methodology to ensure that any loss of roosting sites be replaced and preferably enhanced in the new build and the project be undertaken in a way which minimises any risk to bats. An ecological clerk of works will be appointed and retained for the duration of the project.**

**9.13 A bat box will be erected prior to works in a suitable location by a suitably qualified ecologist. This will be used to relocate any bats found during an ecological soft strip of the building under European Protected Species Licence.**

**9.14 A detailed external lighting plan will be required to minimise any external light disturbance to the bats using the building and surrounding area. Any new external lighting must not directly illuminate any roosting location. Any external lighting must be downward angled and activated by passive infrared. The lights will be baffled to avoid any unnecessary lateral or vertical light spill. The lux levels of any external lights will be as low as required for health and safety purposes.**

## 10.0 Proposed Mitigation

**10.1** To comply with Natural Resources Wales and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, ecological gain will be included into the scope of works. **All proposed mitigation must be shown on architectural drawings.** This will consist of:

*3 Raised Ridge Tiles and a self contained ridge roosting area for bats along the entire ridge line of the new roof.*

*2 Vivara Pro WoodStone Sparrow Nest Boxes, built integral into the block work. Care must be taken not to obstruct the entrance holes.*

***If the above products are not available, then further advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist regarding a suitable replacement product.***

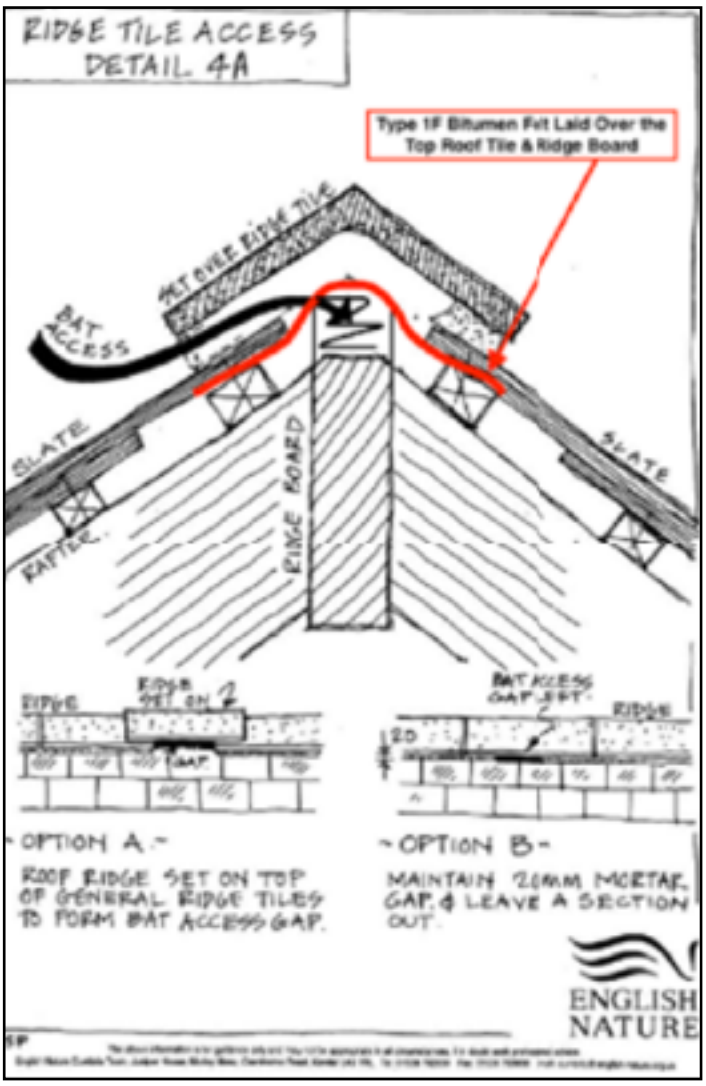
**10.2** Permanent mitigation will comprise 3 raised ridge tiles and a self-contained roost area under the entire ridge line of the building.

**10.3** The raised ridge tiles will have two access apertures measuring 100mm long by 25mm high; one on the front elevation and one on the rear.

**10.4** The roosting area will benefit from uninterrupted access to the sun on its southern aspect. This along with the heat generated from the living space will create a favourable temperature range for bats. The roosting area will be sufficient in size for a maternity colony to establish.

**10.5** Bats will be restricted to the void in the underside of the ridge tile by using a continuous piece of 1F bitumen felt as a base liner. This will be fixed in location over the top rafters as per the below image.

**10.6 Breathable membrane is dangerous for bats, therefore it is essential that the detail contained in the below drawing is followed exactly and is to be fitted under direct ecological supervision by a suitably qualified ecologist.**




**10.7** Two Vivara Pro WoodStone House Sparrow Nest Boxes will be built into the block work on the eastern elevation of the building. **These will not be situated on a south facing elevation. Care must be taken not to obstruct the entrance holes.**

**10.8 Any nesting bird enhancements will not be suited on the south elevation as this may experience excess heat from the sun.**

**10.9 Direct and prolonged illumination of the building, especially near any roost entry points or bird boxes must be avoided as this will cause disturbance.**

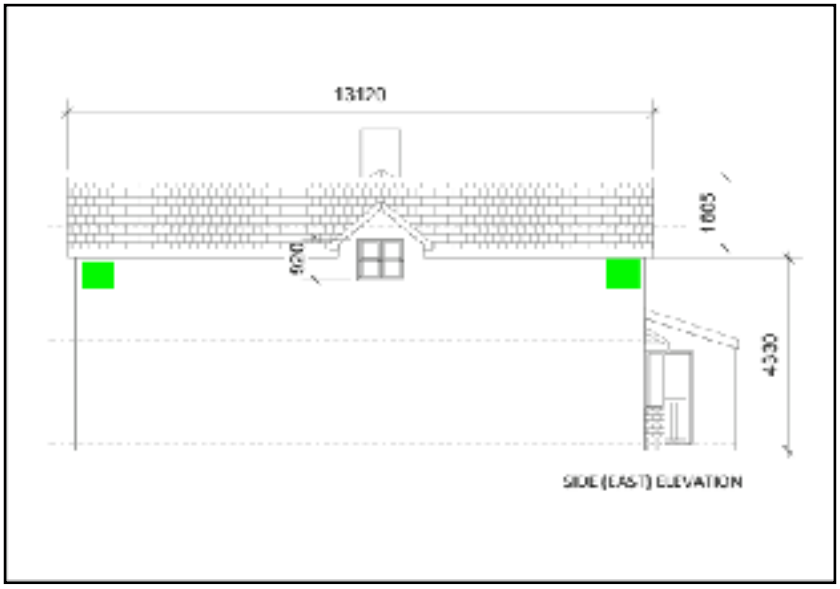
**10.10 Where practical, all bat features should be located far enough from any windows to avoid any direct light spill, at least a minimum of 2 metres away.**

**10.11 On occasions the suggested mitigation can be in short supply. Please order the mitigation as soon as practical to avoid supply issues during the building phase. If supply is depleted please seek advice from a suitably qualified ecologist on a suitable replacement prior to the purchase.**

**10.12 Recommended Locations of Bat and Bird Mitigation:**

**Location of Vivara Pro WoodStone House Sparrow Nest Box**

**Location of the Raised Ridge Tiles**


***Signed:*** *Richard Watkins* ***Date: June 2025***

**11.0 Appendix**

**Aerial Site Photographs**

**OS Map**

**Surveyor & NVA Positions**

## Appendix 1 Aerial Site Photographs

**The site in its immediate environment.**

**The site in its wider environment offering excellent ecological connectivity to the surrounding habitat.**

**Appendix 2 OS Map National Grid Reference ST 4064 9198**


**Appendix 3 Surveyor & NVA Positions**