

BAT SURVEYS AND PLANNING APPLICATIONS



Information for agents and applicants

2017 UPDATED VERSION – Adapted for use in Jersey

www.nurtureecology.com

INTRODUCTION

- Bat surveys are increasingly required as part of the local planning process where building works requiring planning permission may affect roof spaces or other areas used by bats, including non-commercial alterations to residential properties. This leaflet is intended to provide an overview and advice to assist applicants and agents who may require a bat survey to be undertaken.
- New good practice guidelines by the Bat Conservation Trust introduced in 2016 have been adopted by the Department of the Environment as best practice to follow. Architects / developers / project managers should be aware of the following processes and requirements in order to prevent any delays to applications and development projects.

WHY ARE BAT SURVEYS REQUIRED?

- Bats and their roosts are protected under local, national and international Law. Bats roost in a wide range of structures in rural and urban settings, and the legislation makes no distinction between size or type of development. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) and / or Department of the Environment (DoE) are obliged to request bat surveys as part of the planning application stage where there is a reasonable likelihood that bats are present, whether it is a commercial development or a householder application, e.g. for a loft conversion or extension.
- The LPA / DoE will expect a bat survey to be undertaken and a report to be prepared by a 'suitably qualified ecological consultant' (such as Nurture Ecology Ltd). Normally planning permission for the development will not be given until the survey / report, and any Species Protection Plan required, has been submitted and approved by the DoE.

WHAT DOES A BAT SURVEY INVOLVE?

- o The DoE request that all professional ecologists follow the new (2016) Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines. This can be accessed for free here; <http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/batsurveyguide.html>). Slight adaptations have been made to these guidelines in this leaflet, in line with local policy and legislation, as approved by the States of Jersey Natural Environment Team.

- o There are two levels of survey that may be required;
 - 1) **A Preliminary Roost Inspection** can be carried out at any time of year and is normally the first survey to be conducted, and is usually part of a general Initial Ecological Assessment of the property / site for the presence of protected species that is required at the Planning Application stage. This survey consists of a background data search and a full building inspection to look for evidence of bat use (i.e. droppings, urine staining, fur rubbings, feeding remains etc.) and to assess the *suitability* of the structure / tree to support bats, including an assessment of the surrounding habitat. Dependent on the results of this, further bat activity surveys may be required. Table 1 below details the general criteria as to how buildings (and trees) are determined to have low, moderate or high suitability for bats.

Table 1. Assessment Criteria for Structures and trees to contain bats. From Collins (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edn). Bat Conservation Trust. Table 4.1 page 35.

Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitats in structures and trees	Commuting & foraging habitats on / near site
NEGLECTIBLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Negligible roosting / habitat features on site likely to be used by bats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats
LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. o However these do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/ or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation) o A tree of sufficient size and age to contain 'potential roosting features' (PRFs) but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or un-vegetated stream, but isolated i.e. not well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat o Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree or patch of scrub

<p>MODERATE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A structure or tree 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 (With respect to roost type only – assessment made in this table irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. ○ Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
<p>HIGH</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continuous high quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge ○ High quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broad-leaved woodland, tree lined watercourses and grazed parkland. ○ Site is close to and connected to known roosts

- **2) Emergence / Re-entry surveys** are required if evidence of bats is found, or if bat use cannot be ruled-out by the initial inspection alone (i.e. due to access or Health and Safety restraints). Bat surveys are also required based on the *suitability* of a structure or tree to support bats, as per Table 1. Table 2 overleaf determines how many surveys are required, and the time of year that they need to be undertaken, based on the suitability of a structure;

Table 2. Further survey requirement for structures / trees with suitability to contain bat roosts. Adapted from Collins (2016), in line with usual practice in Jersey. Any deviation from original guidelines must be fully justified in our report. *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edn)*. Bat Conservation Trust. Table 7.1 page 51 & Table 7.3 pg 52.

NEGLIGIBLE roost suitability	LOW roost suitability	MODERATE roost suitability	HIGH or CONFIRMED roost suitability
<p>Further survey required;</p> <p>No further survey required – but workers reminded of the possibility of finding bats and the protocol to be followed if they are discovered</p>	<p>Further survey required;</p> <p>A minimum of one survey visit – this survey could either be a dusk emergence survey <u>or</u> a dawn re-entry survey.</p>	<p>Further survey required;</p> <p>A minimum of two separate survey visits. One dusk emergence survey and a separate dawn re-entry survey.</p>	<p>Further survey required;</p> <p>A minimum of three separate survey visits. At least one dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey. The third survey can be either a dusk or dawn survey.</p>
<p>Timing of further surveys; N/A</p>	<p>Timing of further surveys; May – August. No further surveys required for vegetation / trees</p>	<p>Timing of further surveys; April (weather dependent) to October, with at least one survey undertaken between May – August.</p>	<p>Timing of further surveys; April (weather dependent) to October, with at least two surveys undertaken between May – August.</p>

- o These further dusk / dawn surveys can only be undertaken between April and October (in Jersey, if weather conditions / minimum nighttime temperatures are suitable), and involve a number of surveys (defined by Table 2) at dusk and dawn to determine the presence, species, population and use of the site by bats. Surveys have to be spaced at least 2 weeks apart, and some will need to take place between May and August (see Table 2)
- o If emergence surveys are required, it is extremely important that they are carried out during the specified time period, regardless of the status of your planning application or permit. Otherwise, the start of works may be delayed for up to a further year; the LPA / DoE will not “let you off” if you have missed the required survey season, and works will not be permitted to commence until the survey has been completed.
- o **It should be noted here that if any bats are seen to emerge or re-enter the structure / tree during the recommended survey period, the suitability categorisation of that building / structure will be upgraded to ‘high / confirmed’ roost and the full survey effort will be required, in accordance with Collins, 2016 i.e. three survey visits.**

- It is particularly important that if a bat survey may be required or has been requested, that no clearance / demolition works occur until the survey has been completed, or that any access points for bats / birds are blocked up. This includes minor 'stripping out' of the roof voids / eaves and sweeping / clearing these areas. Doing this may compromise the survey and result in further investigative works / surveys being required.
- **Survey effort should always be proportionate to the immediate circumstances in terms of what features are present, and what the scope of the development is** (i.e. more surveys may be required for a full demolition of a structure as apposed to inserting localised dormer windows). This can only be assessed using professional judgment on a case-by-case basis, and guidance on survey effort should always be discussed and agreed with the DoE.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I HAVE BATS?

- The presence of bats does not mean that a development cannot proceed, but it may influence the details, timings and working methods. A 'Species Protection Plan' and / or 'Mitigation Strategy' will need to be written and implemented that will remove / reduce any identified negative impacts to the bats or roost. Replacement of confirmed roost may also be required.
- Any remaining impacts may be 'off-set' by enhancing the building to include features that bats can use i.e. bat access points and suitable roosting space. Please rest assured that the bats will have designated areas to use that will be separate from the main house / living areas! Also, bats do not cause structural damage to buildings i.e. they do not gnaw through wires nor produce wet droppings. The exact mitigation required will depend on the scale and scope of the development, and the species, population and use of the building by bats as determined by the surveys.
- If there is a bat roost present, certain roofing works can generally only take place during April/May or September/October, when bats are neither hibernating nor breeding. This can be a significant constraint on the progress of works, so it is as well to be aware of it from the outset. Again, this is all dependent on the actual findings of the surveys.

WHERE DO I GO TO GET A SURVEY DONE?

- Choose a reputable and experienced ecological consultant who will be able to help guide applicants through the process as smoothly as possible. Ensure that the consultant you choose is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and is experienced in bat surveys and mitigation. A consultant that already has a good reputation with the DoE / LPA can be invaluable in saving money, time and trouble in negotiating the system. Your architect or planning consultant may be able to recommend someone, or the DoE have a list of suitable consultants.

- **Nurture Ecology** can do all of the above; we are a very experienced and reputable company with loads of experience in ecological surveys, especially bats. Give us a call to discuss your bat survey needs and for no- obligation advice.

WHAT ABOUT COSTS?

- The need for a bat survey for non-commercial alterations to residential dwellings can come as a complete surprise – and an unwelcome additional cost - to householders. However, the standard of survey and reporting that is required by the DoE is the same whether the development is private or commercial, and therefore the cost to the client is the same regardless, and the consultant is powerless to alter this. Nurture Ecology will always aim undertake the minimum level of survey required to satisfy the guidelines that the DoE have requested we follow, in order to keep costs to a minimum.
- Please bear in mind that most ecological consultants (should be) trained and professionally qualified to a very high degree. Therefore it should be expected that a professional fee will be charged for a professional job. Actual costs will vary and, as with any profession, be cautious if one quote appears to be substantially lower than others. Obtain written estimates which break-down what is being estimated for, and when comparing them make sure you are comparing like for like; the survey must meet the DoE's requirements (i.e. the Bat Conservation Trust best practice guidelines 2016) otherwise you may have to do more work to address the shortfall.

WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER ADVICE?

- At Nurture Ecology Ltd. we are happy to give free, no-obligation advice on bats or other protected species and we can carry out the full range of surveys and mitigation; we are a highly experienced company and can offer competitive rates. Please feel free to contact us using the details below to discuss your survey needs or for some friendly advice in regard to bats (or any other local species / protected species surveys).
- The Department of the Environment (tel 441 600) and the Jersey Bat Group (www.jerseybatgroup.org.je) can also provide lots of information about bats / bat surveys



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