

PROTECTED SPECIES: HAMELS PARK FARM

BARN CONVERSION MITIGATION FOR BATS

The site

Hamels Park Farm is located in the open countryside to the west of the A10 near Puckeridge, Hertfordshire. In 2002 the site comprised a number of redundant agricultural buildings within a former farmyard which were likely to fall into disrepair and possibly lose their listed building status.

To the north-east of the site is a pond situated within an area of rough grassland, shrubs, small woodland and a hard standing area. The barns supported a number of different bat species including Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) and the rare barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*) which are protected by law.

Enterprise Heritage commissioned Baker Shepherd Gillespie (BSG) to undertake a survey to determine the use of the buildings by bats and to advise on how the bats could be retained as part of a comprehensive scheme to convert the buildings to a series of new domestic properties.



BSG recommended:

- The retention and conversion of one area of derelict roof space to provide a new bat roost.
- The retention of part of the south barn as an open flight habitat and roosting site.
- The provision of a new roof void for bats above new communal garages.
- The installation of bat boxes and false mortice joints in the retained roof areas.

- The restoration of the pond on site as a foraging habitat for bats and the retention of mature trees to act as flight lines and foraging habitat.
- The provision of information about bats to new residents.
- The application for a licence from Natural England to allow construction work to proceed lawfully.



Mitigation

A method statement was developed in consultation with the Hertfordshire Bat Group and the Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre. This recommended methods of working that allowed the retention and enhancement of retained barns and roof voids and set out a programme for the works to avoid the most sensitive times of the year when bats are breeding or in hibernation.

All work on site relating to bats was supervised by BSG ecologists and site personnel were given an induction into the ecology of bats, their legal status and the methods of working required to avoid causing harm.

Residents were informed about the presence of bats through the production of a leaflet for all new homeowners.

Outcomes

In 2001 low numbers of each species of bat were recorded from the buildings. No breeding roosts were found and the former breeding colony of Natterer's bats was found to no longer be present, although small numbers of this species were still using the buildings.

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Conclusions

It is concluded that the site continues to support a good number of bat species, including the rare barbastelle. There is now an increased use of the site by bats and good potential for a breeding colony of common pipistrelles to become established.



A three year monitoring programme initiated in 2005 has been completed by BSG and through liaison with the local bat group monitoring is continuing beyond the required period.

The results to date indicate that the mitigation and habitat enhancement measures have had a positive effect on the local populations of bats.

Patty Briggs of Hertfordshire Bat Group reported the following observations in 2008:

In the South Barn

"At dusk, the following bats emerged: two common pipistrelles, two barbastelles and three Natterer's bats."

In the bat loft at No. 12 Hamels Park Barns

"Several of the original mortice joints and a couple of the Schwegler bat boxes are being used by pipistrelle species."

In the bat loft above the car port

"The long-eared bats appear to have been roosting at the ridge of the gable end. One brown long-eared bat was found in a Schwegler box nearest to the entry door."

At the pond

"The restored pond is a hot spot for feeding bats. There were so many that it was hard to differentiate the species. Most of the bats were common pipistrelles which were roosting within the exterior bat box at No. 12 Hamels Park Barns. There was also a serotine bat."

Patty Briggs suspected that whiskered or Brandt's bat are also present but this has yet to be confirmed.

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