

Halsnead Farm Updated Preliminary Roost Feature Inspection, DNA Analysis, Ground Level Tree Assessment and Emergence data Report.

Prepared for: Starship Grp/Onward Homes

Version Two. 15.06.2026

NAME OF SITE:	Halsnead Farm, Fox's Bank Lane, Whiston, Widnes, Prescot L35 3SU
PROJECT No:	12449
CLIENT NAME:	Starship Hub
SPECIALIST:	Amenity Tree Care Ltd
DATE PREPARED:	15.06.2026
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1.0 Introduction

1.2 Site description, location, context and development proposals.

1.3 This updated report (V2) is provided in response to Local Planning Authority (LPA) consultee comments provided by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) requesting further information and clarification on several points regarding bat species as detailed below:

- An updated Survey Report providing details of DNA analysis of the bat droppings found in the farmhouse;
- Confirmation of whether the roost identified was a single soprano or common pipistrelle day roost;
- Detailed information on the potential for the trees on site to support roosting bats;
- An updated bat mitigation strategy which accounts for the pipistrelle sp. And possible Brown-long eared bat roost.

1.4 The site is located on the southern boundary of the M62 and north of Symmetry Park. The survey area consisted of modified grassland (g4), urban introduced shrub (u-1160), urban buildings and sealed surfaces (u1b), other woodland (mixed) and urban trees.

1.5 5 The proposed development includes building and tree removal, and therefore a Bat Roost Assessment and a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) are required, as such proposals could have a direct impact on protected bat species.

1.6 The purpose of this report is to establish the potential of the affected buildings and trees to offer shelter and/or roost facilities to protected bat species.

1.7 The objective of the report is to be able to assess a range of factors, including a rated (none, negligible, low, moderate or high) potential of the buildings and Negligible, PRFI and PRFM for trees to offer shelter for bats, absence/presence of protected species, species affected, population numbers, potential access points, types of roost and their seasonality of use.

1.8 The objectives include the provision of any applicable mitigation measures and/or further survey recommendations in relation to the extent and use of the site by protected species as is required by the current BCT guidelines section (Collins, J. (ed) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good practice Guideline (4th Edn).

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Summary of survey methods

2.2 An initial external inspection was carried out on the building in relation to their potential use by bat species in accordance with the 2023 BCT guidelines section 5.2 preliminary roost assessment - structures (and in particular 5.2). This was carried out on the 9th May 2025 by Simon Brain (Managing Director) and Ryan Whitmarsh (ecologist). A second inspection of the buildings was carried out on 4th May 2026 to assess the buildings for maternity potential as requested by MEAS in their consultation response, and a further emergence survey visit has been undertaken in the maternity period with survey effort tailored to later emerging species.

2.3 In summary, this means an updated examination of the building was conducted, looking for any further signs of bat use, its potential to support a maternity colony and to quantify any field signs for their ecological significance. The inspection and report shall consider section 5.2 (complementary methods, timing and survey effort) of the 2023 BCT guidelines, including Table 4.2.

2.4 Pre-existing data on local bat species

The closest granted European Protected Species (EPS) license application by Natural England was for bat species (C-PIP;S-PIP;BLE;NATT) approximately 1390m from site. No granted European Protected Species are within a 1km radius of site. Given the site has been subject to emergence survey effort over two active survey periods (2025 and now 2026), local Bat groups and Environment Record Centres have not been contacted as recent use of the site by bats has been documented in detail.

2.5 Surveyor information

Simon Brain (Managing Director) has attained a Post Graduate Certificate in Biological Recording and has attended FSC Field Courses for Land mammals, Songbird identification, Barn Owls (CIEEM) and Advanced Bird Survey Techniques (Level M). He has twelve years experience in bat work holding an NE Class 2 license (2015-17334-CLS-CLS). He has attended courses for trees and bats, bat survey techniques, bat handling, bat mitigation and attended seven European workshops. Ryan Whitmarsh is an

ecologist experienced in bat surveys, holding a Zoology degree, and is an accredited agent on NE Class 2 license (2015-17334-CLS-CLS).

3.0 Results of updated site visit, DNA Analysis and emergence survey effort

Summary

- 3.1 Evidence of bat (segmented droppings, feeding remains and possible urine staining on the battens) were previously found in the 2025 PRA in the farmhouse, and subsequent emergence survey effort confirmed that the building was being used by a single Soprano Pipistrelle thus confirming presence. The previous Emergence Survey Report summarised in Section 6 that this was a Common pipstrelle which was a typing error and has been confirmed by reviewing the information provided by the surveyor who recorded the emergence using the following equipment, Echo Meter Touch 2, Night Fox Whisker IR Camera & IR Light.

The other buildings were previously identified as, B1, low potential building, a single emergence survey was undertaken with no presence confirmed .B2 a moderate potential building due to the number of PRF that were found during survey and emergence survey effort did not identify any roosting bats.

DNA analysis

- 3.2 DNA analysis of the droppings discovered in the loft space of the farmhouse has been undertaken and results provided by Swift Ecology which have confirmed the species identified are Common pipistrelle bat and Brown-long eared (BLE) bat (see results table on next page).

Analysis Results

Sample Code	DNA Extraction Code	Species Identified	ID Method	Ct value	% match
SEL-4165-1	EG-2026-0939	Pipistrellus pipistrellus (Common pipistrelle bat), Plecotus auritus (Brown long-eared bat)	qPCR	21/27	

Whilst these droppings are from different species of bat confirmed during the 2025 emergence surveys, the lack of presence of Common-pip and BLE suggest that these droppings are from small numbers of common species that have used the building historically.

Recent emergence survey results

- 3.3 A single emergence survey visit was undertaken in the pre-parturition period on 29th May 2026 to ensure that the 2 species confirmed via DNA analysis are not using the building as a maternity roost. No bats were observed emerging during this survey, and the survey effort was tailored to ensure that later-emerging species such as BLE would not be missed. This included positioning a surveyor in the loft space, as BLE often fly in loft spaces before emerging. Four surveyors were positioned around the outside of the building to ensure that any emerging bats which may not be using the loft space would be recorded if they emerged from any previously identified potential roost features (PRF).

Reassessment of farmhouse building for maternity potential.

- 3.4 A site visit was undertaken by Ryan Whitmarsh on the 4th of May 2026 to assess the suitability of the farmhouse building to support a maternity colony following receipt of MEAS comments. The results of which are provided below.

The building comprises a pitched slate roof, which provides suitable conditions for external crevice-roosting bats. However, the internal inspection identified a lack of suitable roosting features within the roof void, with the structure comprising predominantly of modern cladding and modern timber framing, restricting bat use primarily to external features. The roof void also lacked insulation, resulting in an unstable environmental

conditions unlikely to support a maternity roost. Furthermore, only small numbers of scattered droppings were recorded internally, with no accumulation of droppings, feeding remains, or other evidence typically associated with a maternity colony. Collectively, the evidence indicates the structure is likely to support roosting bats in low numbers only and does not provide suitable conditions for a maternity roost.

This updated information corresponds with the emergence survey data gathered over two separate years and covers the pre/post-parturition periods of the maternity season when higher numbers of bats would be expected if a maternity colony was established, and later in the summer period when transitional roosts are present and have been confirmed (single bat observed in 2025).

Potential of trees on site to support roosting bats.

An assessment of the potential of trees affected by the proposals to support roosting bats has been undertaken during previous site visits by Simon Brain as part of the initial PRA and subsequent visits to assess the ancient woodland parcels. None of the ancient woodland parcels are proposed for removal and are located outside of the red line boundary and associated buffers have been applied to the design layout, as a result trees proposed for removal within the red line boundary as detailed in the supporting Arboricultural Impact Assessment for the scheme were assessed following guidance provided and as detailed in the Ground Level Tree Assessment GLTA section of the 2023 BCT guidelines. Results are provided below.

- The structure planting belt to the northern boundary which provides a screen to the M62 motorway is considered to be too young to have the associated roosting features normally associated with bats and was classified as having negligible potential.
- Numerous trees are proposed for removal at the front of the site to accommodate the built form proposed, a new highways access and boundary treatments. Of the trees proposed for removal, two were identified for further inspection following the

GLTA survey and are detailed below along with images and a location plan of both trees.

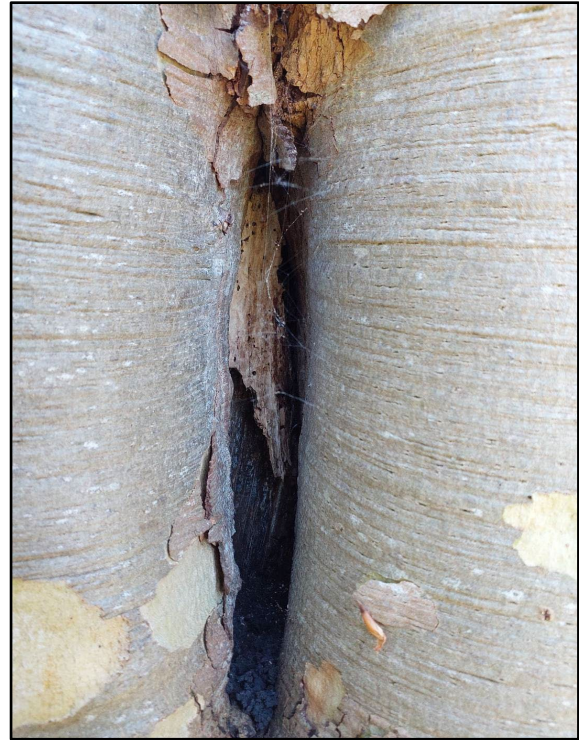
T2, Ash as identified in the AIA. Located to north eastern boundary south of the access road into site. A semi occluded wound as a result of historic limb failure is present on the northern leader, measuring approximately 340 mm in diameter. The wound is located on the south-western aspect of the leader at 7 m above ground level and extends to approximately 1.5 m in length, 10 cm wide, with an average depth of 5 cm revealing exposed heartwood.

Inspection using binoculars did not identify any evidence of decay or cavities extending into the stem of the leader or secondary access points associated with this feature. On this basis, the cavity is considered to have negligible suitability for supporting roosting bats. See below images.

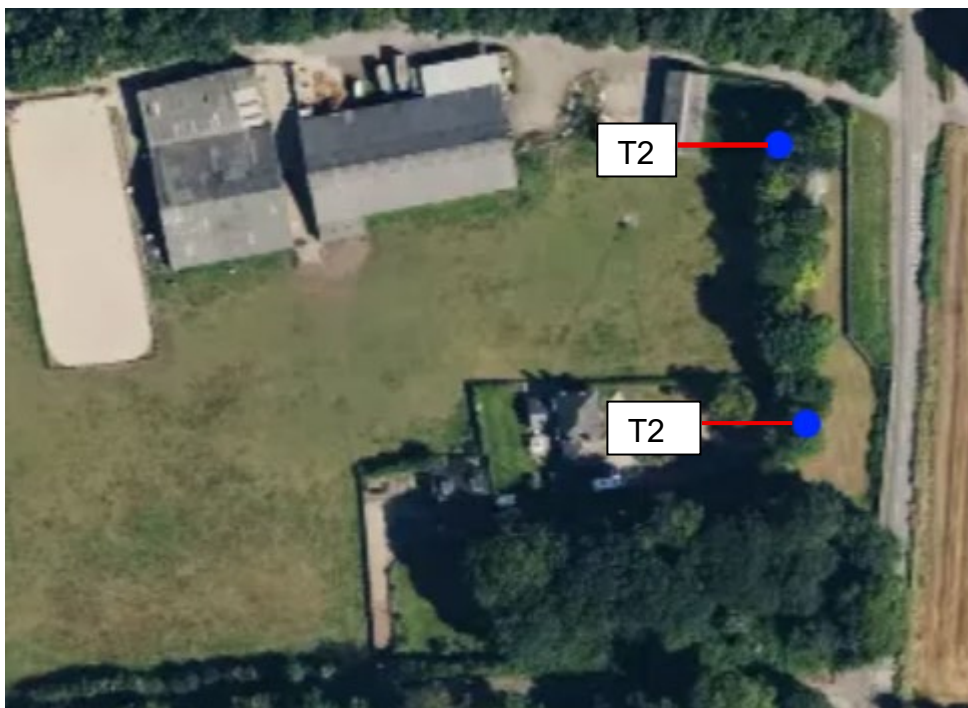


T2, Ash detailing location of PRF classified as negligible feature.

T21, London Plane, located adjacent to a hardcore based access track to the farmhouse, in front of the property. A partialy occluded wound is located on the north western aspect of the main stem measuring 360mm in diameter at 3 m above ground level. The feature measures 16 cm in length and 8 cm in depth. No decay or cavities were present to provide suitable shelter for roosting bats. As such, the feature is classified as negligible. See below images.



T21, Ash detiling location of PRF classified as negligible feature.



4.0 Assessment and Summary

- 4.1 The surveyor was able to inspect all parts of the building, both interior and exterior, as well as the affected trees. Evidence of bat activity was identified during the initial survey, e.g., bat droppings or staining where bats are accessing the building. The presence of bat species was confirmed in 2025, with a single Soprano pipistrelle recorded. DNA analysis of droppings has confirmed Common pipistrelle and Brown long-eared bat, but no emergence has been recorded from these species over the four survey visits.
- 4.2 The habitat surrounding the building, consisting of ancient woodland, is being retained, and flight/foraging corridors remain unaffected.
- 4.3. Affected trees have been assessed, and those not PRF-identified have been deemed negligible under the GLTA.

5.0 Recommendations and mitigation

5.1 Recommendations

Evidence of bats (segmented droppings, feeding remains and possible urine staining on the battens) was found in the farmhouse, and the presence of Soprano pipistrelle has been confirmed. The farmhouse is therefore a confirmed bat roost.

B1 is a low potential building, a single emergence survey required. B2 is a moderate potential due to the number of PRF that were found during survey.

5.2 Mitigation measures and mitigation licenses

Bats were recorded in one building (Farmhouse), and therefore measures are required to mitigate the effects of development on bats in this instance and to compensate for their presence. Bat roosts were identified during the survey, and therefore an EPS licence for the loss of a roost used by low numbers of common species is required for development to commence. This can be obtained if planning consent is granted.

Enhancement measures

There is loss of roost on the site as roosts were discovered on survey and roost mitigation is needed. The site is being used for commuting and feeding. Specific mitigation for loss of foraging and commuting routes is not required. Under the National Planning Policy Framework and the NERC Act 2006 there is a requirement to improve existing environment through enhancement.

The development proposals can maintain the ecological connection between the site and the locality. Where new planting is to be introduced native tree and shrub planting plan is preferred. Species of local provenance are recommended in preference to non-native, ornamental species. Planting of tree and shrub species that support a high insect biomass and provide a potential food source for bats throughout the bat activity period (spring to autumn) such as rowan, silver birch, alder buckthorn, dogwood, crab apple and wild plum are recommended..

Research has found that lighting can cause considerable disturbances to bats and may interfere with bat navigation during nocturnal commuting flights to suitable feeding sites. It is recommended by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Engineers that lighting at ground level should be below 3 Lux (BCT & ILE 2008). The site was found to be largely unaffected by lighting and the redevelopment will seek to ensure that lighting will be appropriately designed to ensure minimal light spill, particularly on the vegetated boundary of the site. This could be achieved by:

- Ensuring lights are only erected where they are needed, illuminated only during the time period that they will be used, and at levels that enhance visibility.
- Using narrow spectrum bulbs, to lower the range of species affected by lighting, and avoiding the use of light sources that emit ultraviolet.
- Ensuring that there are no bare bulbs or lights that point upwards.
- Ensuring that the spread of light is kept near to or below the horizontal plane.
- Reducing the height of the lighting columns since light at a low level reduces ecological impact.
- Ensuring only low level lighting that is as directional as possible is provided and that light emitted from these fixtures is below 3 lux at ground level.
- LED lighting, ideally amber LED (bat-lamps) that have a negligible UV component may be a preferred option since these show a low insect

attractiveness comparable to low pressure sodium lamps and they are more directional, thus reducing light spill

- Where possible, external lights should comprise sensor activated lamps) so that lights are only operational when they are needed.
- Avoiding the illumination of habitat features used by bats, notably the boundary tree and linear hedgerows.

Appendix One – Legislation

All bat species in the UK are fully protected under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2010 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 2 of the Act. Regulation 41 prohibits:

Deliberate killing, injuring or taking (capture) of bats

Deliberate disturbance of bats in such a way as to:

impair their ability to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young; or

affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of bat species; or impair their ability to hibernate or migrate

Damage or destruction of a bat breeding site or resting place i.e. roost

- Keeping, transporting, selling, exchanging or offering for sale whether live or dead or of any part thereof.

All bat species in the UK are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 5. Under this Act, it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct the access to any place of shelter or protection used by bat(s)
- Sell, offer or expose for sale, possess or transport a bat(s) for the purpose of sale.

A European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence issued by the relevant countryside agency (e.g. Natural England) will need to be applied for to allow derogation from the relevant legislation i.e. for works liable to affect a bat roost or for operations likely to result in a level of disturbance which might impair their ability to undertake those activities mentioned above (e.g. survive, breed, rear young, hibernate, migrate). In certain circumstances, important foraging areas and/or commuting routes can be regarded as being afforded *de facto* protection, for example, where it can be proven that the continued usage of such areas is crucial to maintaining the integrity and long-term viability of a bat roost.

Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 2010

The species protection provision of the EC Habitats Directive 1992, as implemented by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, comprises three “derogation tests” which must be applied by the Local Planning Authority when deciding whether to grant planning permission for a development that could harm a European Protective Species. The three tests are that:

- The activity to be licensed must be for imperative reasons of overriding public interest or for public health and safety;
- There must be no satisfactory alternative; and,
- Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) of the species must be maintained.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit sufficient information to address these tests when applying for planning permission. For development activities, an EPSM Licence application can only be obtained after planning permission has been granted. However, the granting of planning permission does not guarantee that a licence will be issued by the relevant countryside agency.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) sets out the Government's national policies on different aspects of planning in England. Section 10 paragraphs 109 to 125 details planning policies on the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Circular 06/2005 provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.

In summary:

The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: *'minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'* (NPPF Section 10, para 109)

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:

- If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused (Section 10, para 118).
- Proposed development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually or in combination with other developments) should not normally be permitted (Section 10, para 118).
- Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted (Section 10, para 118).
- Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged (Section 10, para 118).

7 Planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss (Section 10, para 118)

- Potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation, listed or proposed Ramsar sites and sites identified or required as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites, should be given the same protection as European sites (Section 10, para 118).
- The presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 14) does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined (Section 10, para 119)
- Planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation (Section 10, para 125).

Local planning authorities must take account of the conservation of protected species when determining planning applications. The presence of protected species is a material consideration when assessing a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. This requirement has important implications for bat surveys as it means that, where there is reasonable likelihood of bats being present and being affected by the development, surveys must be carried out before planning permission is considered' (BCR 2012). In order for

the Local Planning Authority to adequately assess a development proposal against National and Local Planning Policy, full comprehensive ecological surveys need to be carried out and suitable mitigation strategies compiled prior to the submission of any planning application. This information will be reviewed by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the relevant countryside agency and other conservation bodies.

Any developer should, in the first instance, consult the relevant Local Plans to assess the suitability of their proposal (refer to NPPF Section 10 paras 113 to 117).

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC)

Part 3, Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 states that ‘every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’, otherwise known as the Biodiversity Duty. Under Section 41 of the Act, the Secretary of State must publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitat which in the Secretary of State’s opinion are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. This list is based on those species listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) as priority species. The S41 list replaces the list published under Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000.

Biodiversity Action Plan

Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) set out actions for the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity at national, regional and local level. They consist of both Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs) and species and habitats listed within these are defined as being of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. Local authorities must consider these species and habitats when determining planning applications.

Appendix Two – 2026 emergence survey results.

Site:	Halsnead Farm		Start:	End:
Building/Structure/Tree:	House	Precipitation:	0%	0%
Visit No.:	V1	Temperature:	18°C	15°C
Date:	29/05/26	Wind Speed Beaufort (0-12):	1	1
Lead Surveyor:	Dawn Goodfellow	Cloud Cover (0-8):	1	1
Start Time:	20:55hrs			
Sunset:	21:25hrs			
End Time:	23:25hrs			



- = Surveyor positions
▲ = Camera positions

Surveyor:	Lucy Bazley	
Equipment:	Echo Meter Touch 2, Night Fox Whisker IR Camera & IR Light	
Position:	North face of House	
Time (hrs)	Species	Comment
21:49	S. Pip	Bat heard and observed near house, from North to South.
22:24	S. Pip	Bat heard but no visual.
22:55	S. Pip	Bat heard and observed near house, from East to West.

Surveyor:	Emily Traynor	
Equipment:	Anabat Scout, Nightfox Nova IR Camera & Nightfox IR torch	
Position:	East face of House	
Time (hrs)	Species	Comment
21:50	S. Pip	Bat heard but no visual.
22:11	S. Pip	Bat heard but no visual.
22:16	Noctule	Bat heard but no visual.
22:18	Noctule	Bat heard but no visual.
22:23	S. Pip	Bat/s heard and 2 x bats observed flying over the front garden (East of House).

22:26	Noctule & S. Pip	Bat heard and observed foraging over the garden, 1 x S. Pip foraging for several minutes.
22:30	C. Pip	Bat heard and occasionally observed foraging over the garden to the East of the house.

Surveyor:	Dawn Goodfellow	
Equipment:	Echo Meter Touch 2, Night Fox Whisker IR Camera & IR Light	
Position:	South face of House	
Time (hrs)	Species	Comment
21:30	S. Pip	Bat heard and observed passing along south face of the house (E to W) close to roof edge but no emergence.
21:50	S. Pip	Bat heard and observed flying close to roof over the house (foraging).
22:02	C. Pip	Bat heard but no visual.
22:15	S. Pip	Bat heard and observed foraging along the treeline to the south of the house.
22:18	Noctule	Bat heard but no visual.
22:22	C. Pip	Bat heard (social-calling) but no visual.
22:23	S. Pip	Bat/s heard and 2 x bats observed flying over the roof of the house.
22:25 - end of survey	Noctule & S. Pip	Bats heard and observed foraging along and over the trees/treeline to the south of the house.

Surveyor:	Tracey Minogue	
Equipment:	Echo Meter Touch 2 x 2, Night Fox Whisker IR Camera x 2 & IR Light x 2	
Position:	West face of House	
Time (hrs)	Species	Comment
22:18	Noctule	Bat heard but no visual.
22:29	C. Pip	Bat heard but no visual.
22:30	S. Pip	Bat heard but no visual.

Surveyor:	Phil Scurfield	
Equipment:	Echo Meter Touch 2, Night Fox Whisker IR Camera & IR Light	
Position:	Inside loft space	
Time (hrs)	Species	Comment
		No bats active/flying in loft space.

- No bats were observed emerging from the farmhouse building.