'Providing honest, sound ecological advice and excellent service'

SAP Ecology & Environmental Ltd.

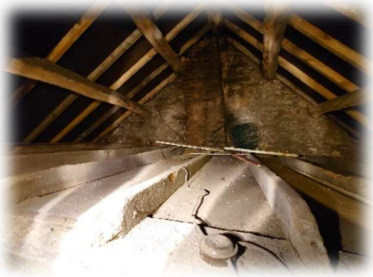
enquiries@sapecology.co.uk

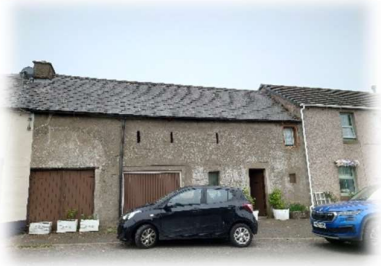
www.sapecology.co.uk

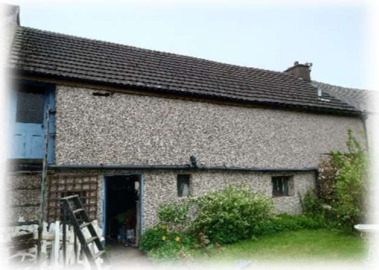
M: 07392758835

Preliminary Building Assessment and Activity Survey - Bats

Steel House, Sandwith







Prepared for

Richard J Lindsay – Calva Design

S.A.P Ecology and Environmental Ltd

Registered in England & Wales: 9766763

Registered address: 9 Market Place, Hedon, East Yorkshire, HU12 8JA

Office address: 2 Dunloe Terrace, Eaglesfield, DG11 3PD

Quality Assurance

Report Reference	Revision Number	Date of issue	Author	Checker	Approver
RJL109/001	001	8th June 2025	Lesley Grey	Sarah Parkin	Stephen Parkin

Disclaimer

This report has been produced by S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd on behalf of our contracted client for the purpose outlined in section 2.1. No part of this report can be modified or replicated without the express written consent of S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd. Should this document or any part of it be used outside of its intended purpose S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd accept no liability.

The information, results and observations recorded within this document were accurate at the time of survey. We accept no liability for any errors or activities and changes to the survey area which may have occurred post survey.

S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd will submit any records of protected species to the appropriate biological records centre on an annual basis.

Contents

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Summary

S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd were contacted by Richard J. Lindsay of Calva Design, regarding the proposed conversion of the existing barn adjoined to Steel House, Sandwith.

S.A.P Ecology and Environmental Ltd were commissioned to undertake a preliminary bat assessment of the property, to assess its suitability to support roosting bats. Potential roosting features were recorded on the property and the property was assigned a 'low' level of suitability to support roosting bats. A subsequent bat activity survey was therefore commissioned to confirm if any potential roosting features were being used by bats.

A dusk activity survey was undertaken on Wednesday 28th May 2025, with no bats recorded emerging from within the property. In general, the activity levels were low with occasional foraging by both Common and Soprano pipistrelles around the garden, yard and along the hedgerow of the field immediately to the rear of the garden (East). The vantage point on the western aspect afforded no activity.

A desk study was also completed which highlighted no records of bats within 1km of the property.

Based on the results of the survey, the proposed conversion is not likely to have any negative impact on roosting bats or their commuting and foraging behaviour.

No active bird nests were recorded internally on the ridge beams or walls.

1.2 Recommendations

- Due to the absence of roosting bats works can proceed without the need for a European Protected Species Licence. However, if any bats are found during works, then all works must stop, and a licenced bat ecologist should be contacted.
- If works are to be carried out during the breeding bird season (March – August, inclusive), a breeding bird check should be undertaken no more than 48 hours prior to works commencing. If breeding birds are found, works will need to be postponed until birds have fledged.
- If works have not commenced within 18 months of the date of activity survey, a survey update will be required to confirm that the situation regarding bats has not changed.

2. Introduction

2.1 Project background

S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd were contacted by Richard J. Lindsay of Calva Design, regarding the proposed conversion of an existing barn property on Geelong Terrace at Sandwith. Steel House will be referred to as the 'property' in the remainder of the document.

The property is located at grid reference NX 96464 14812, situated at the approximate centre of a rural coastal village of Sandwith, and 1.2 km southwest of the town of Whitehaven. The property is surrounded by residential properties, domestic gardens and mixed agricultural fields. Two watercourses are located nearby, Rottington gill is 841 m south of the property, and Thorney Beck is approximately 715m to the southeast of the property.

2.2 Project brief

S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd were commissioned to carry out a preliminary building appraisal of the property for bats. The brief was to:

- Conduct a ground level day time assessment of the existing property at Steel House, Sandwith during which a licenced ecologist will:
  - Look both internally and externally for bat feeding signs, signs of bats and bats themselves.
  - Take photographs of all potential access and egress points and map the locations for use within the report.
  - Conduct a single bat activity survey following the preliminary assessment;
  - Produce a detailed report of the preliminary building assessment and activity survey, outlining relevant methodologies, results and any legal and planning policy issues and our recommendations for how these may be overcome.
  - The report to be supported by appropriate digitised mapping.

3. Methodology

3.1 Desk Study

Biological records within 1km of the property were checked using the S.A.P Ecology & Environmental bat roost database and public records. Results were compared with the Cumbria Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.2 Preliminary Building Assessment

The preliminary building assessment was undertaken during daytime hours of Monday 28th April 2025. The assessment comprised of both an internal and external building inspection to assess the level of suitability the property has, to support roosting bats. The surveys were carried out with the aid of high-powered binoculars, a high-powered torch, and an endoscope (Rigid CA100) to ensure that all accessible features could be adequately assessed.

The survey was conducted in line with the BCT Good Practice Guidelines, 4th edition (Collins, 2023).

External Inspection

A thorough external inspection was conducted to look for any signs of past or current use by roosting bats. As evidence of bats is not always easy to find on the external of a building, due to adverse and changing weather conditions, the inspection also recorded areas which may have the potential to support roosting bats. Specific attention was given to:

- Any gaps in the wall and their external structure.
- Gaps at the wallheads.
- Roof ridge and roofing gaps.
- Door frames/window frames and lintels.

Any areas which offered bat roosting potential were recorded and mapped to ensure adequate coverage for any required activity surveys.

Internal Inspection

Where considered safe to do so, the internal structure of the property and its roof spaces were entered and searched for areas which offered roosting potential and for evidence of bats and bats themselves. Within the roof space and storage area, specific attention was given to:

- Any exposed beams and floor surfaces located below them.
- Gaps within the internal roofing structure such as mortice/wood joints.
- Tops of gable ends or dividing walls.
- Internal structure of ridge.
- Cavities in the wall and roof structure.

All potential roosting features, evidence of bats or bats themselves were recorded and compared to that which was found in the external inspection. This combined information can be used to advise any required activity surveys.

3.3 Surveyors

The preliminary building assessment was undertaken on Monday 28th April 2025 by Sarah Parkin BSc (Hons), Natural England bat license number 2015-115809-CLS-CLS and Nick Gorman assistant surveyor. The subsequent emergence survey was completed by the surveyors Lesley Grey and Chris Grey on the evening of 28th May 2025

3.4 Limitations

The surveys were undertaken at the correct time of year for this type of survey.

4. Results

4.1 Desk Study

The desk study highlighted no records of bat species within 1km of the property. The surrounding habitat is suitable to support a number of UK bat species.

4.2 Preliminary Building Assessment

The property is a linear two storey barn which adjoins residential dwellings on either side. The property dates from the 1900s and is built of a combination of brick and sandstone and roughcast has been applied to the eastern aspect. The roof structure is a simple a frame, with a slate roof at the roadside of the property and tile roof at the rear. The property is currently being used for storage on the ground floor only.

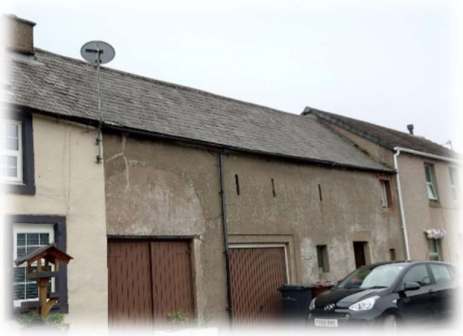


Plate 1:Western Aspect

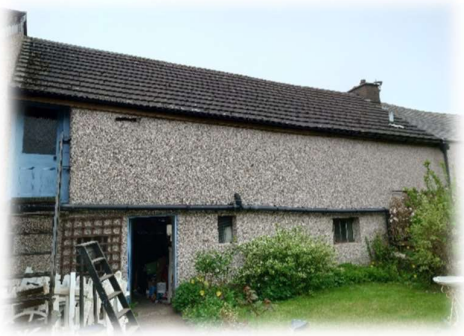


Plate 2: Eastern Aspect.

External Inspection

Several access/egress features were recorded on the external of the property that could provide bats access to roosting opportunities. These included gaps in the roof ridge (plate 3), missing and slipped slates (plate 4 and 5), gaps at the wallheads (plate 6), a crack and a gap in a window (plate 7) and space between a wooden fascia and the wall (plate 8).

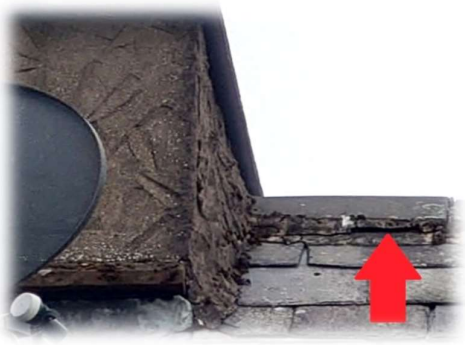


Plate 3: Gap under ridge (W. aspect).

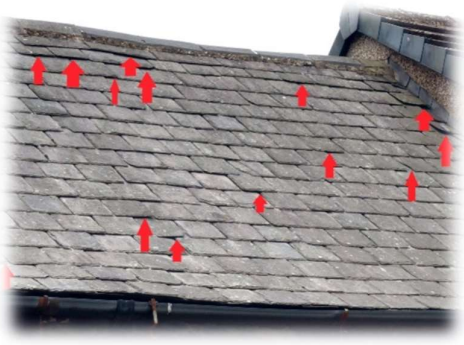


Plate 4: Gaps/slipped/missing slates (W aspect).

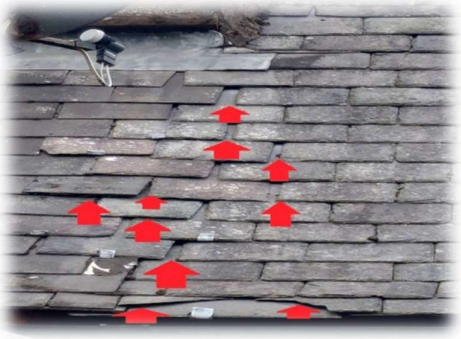


Plate 5: Slipped slates close to chimney and adjoining property.

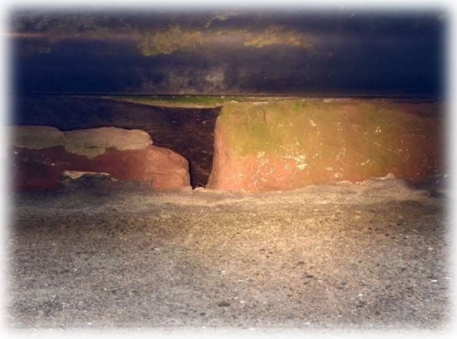


Plate 6: Gap at wallhead/tabling.

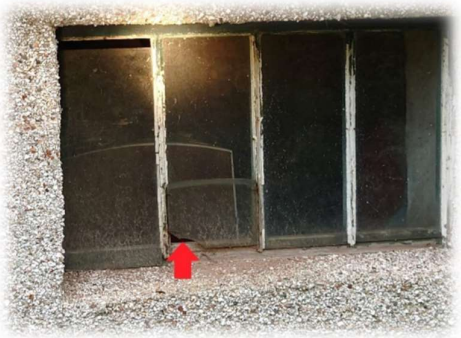


Plate 7: Crack and gap at top of window (E. aspect).

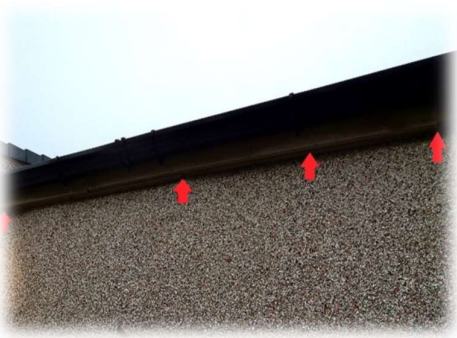


Plate 8: Space between wooden fascia (E aspect).

Internal Inspection

The internal of the property comprises of four storage areas which are split over two storeys (plate 9 & 10). All areas were accessible or easily viewed with a torch. The original A frame roof structure is open and easily viewed from the upper story which is currently not being used for storage. It was apparent that the roof batons had been relatively recently replaced and were in good condition. A bitumen felt lining was present on the western aspect underneath the slates. On both the western and eastern aspects the wall heads were sealed providing no direct access from the wallheads to the internal of the roof space. Access to the upper story is gained via an external staircase and door, above which a wooden lintel recorded gaps considered suitable for occasional roosting. No direct evidence of bats, such as droppings, was found within the property.

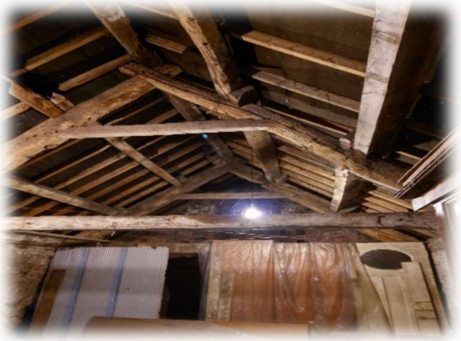


Plate 9: Internal roof void.

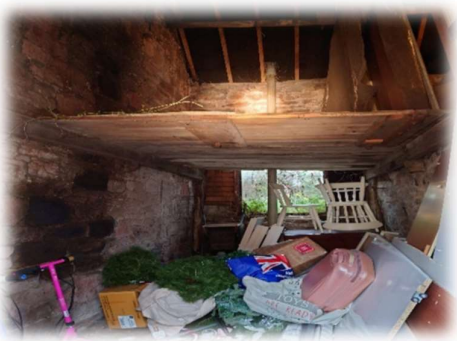


Plate 10: Ground floor used for storage.

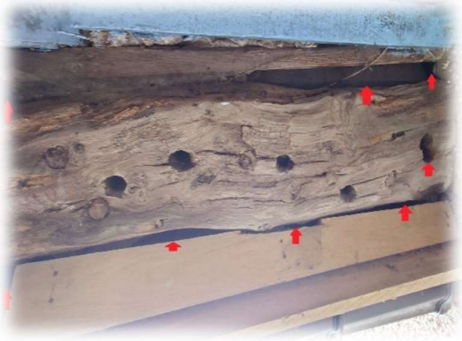


Plate 11: Gap under door lintel.

4.3 Breeding Birds

No active bird's nests were recorded within the interior of the property or the exterior.

4.4 Emergence Survey

Dusk Emergence Survey Wednesday 28th May 2025

No bats were recorded emerging from the property during the survey. Activity during the survey was low with foraging bats recorded on the east side of the property along a hedgerow immediately to the east. Bats recorded as active in the area during the survey were both Common (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and Noctule bats (*Nyctalus noctule*).

Table 1 provides a summary of survey conditions.

Table 1: Summary of survey temperature and conditions.

Type of Survey	Date	Sunrise/ Sunset Time	Temp Start (°C)	Temp Finish (°C)	Relative Humidity (%)	Notes
Dusk	28/05/2025	21:33	13	10	84 - 90	Dry, a steady breeze and 100% cloud.

5. Discussion & relevant legislation

5.1 Preliminary Building Assessment Summary

The property is situated within a rural village environment of residential buildings, farm buildings, farming fields and hedgerows. The presence of gardens and two watercourses within the surrounding area provides excellent foraging and commuting habitat for a number of UK bat species. The presence of other buildings within the vicinity also provides bats with additional roosting opportunities.

No evidence of bats was recorded within the interior or on the exterior of the property during the Preliminary Building Assessment (PBA). Access/egress features were recorded which included gaps under the ridge tiles, missing or lifted slates, gaps at wallheads, gaps in lintels and broken windows. These features could allow bats to access potential roost sites or be a roost location themselves.

Based upon the results of the preliminary building assessment, when considered in conjunction with the suitability of the surrounding environment, the building has been assigned a **low** suitability to support roosting bats.

In line with good practice guidelines, **one** dusk emergence survey should be undertaken on the property within the bat active period (May – September), to confirm if bats are using any of the features highlighted within the Preliminary bat assessment (PBA) and if so, in what capacity.

No active bird's nests were recorded within the internal of the property.

5.2 Emergence Surveys

Activity was low with Common pipistrelle (*P. pipistrellus*), Soprano pipistrelle (*P. pygmaeus*) and Noctules (*N. noctule*) foraging around the property during the time of survey. No bats were recorded emerging from the property during the activity survey therefore current proposals will not lead to a negative impact on roosting bats. The proposals will not have any impact on the surrounding foraging habitat.

5.3 Protected Species

Bats

All bat species in the UK are protected from killing, injury and roost disturbance by both national and international law, in the form of the Wildlife and Countryside act (1981) as amended. In England, they receive protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). The legislation that is in place makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally capture, injure, or kill a bat;
- Intentionally disturb a bat which will likely:
    - Impair its ability to survive, breed, reproduce or rear its young;
    - Impair its ability to hibernate or migrate, or;
    - Affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat roost;
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost;
- Damage or destroy a resting place or breeding site;
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange any live or dead bat or part of.

Bats tend to re-use the same roosts year after year and therefore a roost is protected whether bats are present or not.

In addition to the above legislation, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023) gives further protection with regards to development. It states that "*to minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should: promote the conservation…and the protection and recovery of priority species…"*

Breeding Birds

No bird's nests were recorded within the property during the survey. All birds, their nests and their eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Care should be taken to ensure that no birds are present during the works and that no harm comes to any nest, eggs, or nesting birds.

6. Potential Ecological Issues, Impact Assessment & Recommendations

6.1 Bats

The property has been assigned a low level of suitability to support roosting bats.

6.2 Breeding birds

No active bird's nests were recorded within the property.

6.3 Impact Assessment & Recommendations

Bats

Considering the lack of any bat roosting evidence observed during the preliminary building inspection and dusk emergence survey the current proposals are not likely to have a direct negative impact on bat roosting populations. As such a European Protected Species Licence **will not** be required to allow works to proceed, however it should be noted that bats are dynamic creatures and do roost opportunistically throughout the year, care should therefore be taken when carrying out proposed works. If bats are discovered at any stage during conversion works, all works must stop immediately, and a qualified bat ecologist should be contacted.

The proposed works will not have any impact on the surrounding environment and therefore it is not considered that these proposals will have any effect on commuting or foraging bats.

6.4 Further Survey

Bat surveys are only valid for a limited amount of time, if works are delayed for more than 18 months from the date of survey they should be repeated.

7. Conclusion

The results of the bat activity surveys have confirmed that there is likely to be no negative impact to bats associated with the conversion of the Steel House barn. At the time of survey no birds nests were recorded within or on the property. This could change, therefore it is recommended that if works are conducted during the breeding bird season, a breeding bird check should be undertaken (no more than two days prior to works). If breeding birds are found an ecologist should be consulted to advise the appropriate next step.

Subject to the recommendations within this report being followed, the proposed works should be compliant with relevant legislation and planning policy regarding protected species.

8. References

Collins, J (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Cumbria Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2009). [Online]. Available from: https://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-05/cumbria-biodiversity-action-plan-species-updated-list-2009.pdf [Accessed: 25th May 205]

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines.* English Nature, Peterborough.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004) Bat Workers Manual (3rd Edition). Joint Nature Conservancy Committee, Peterborough.

National Planning Policy Framework, updated December 2023. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

S.A.P Ecology & Environmental (2023). Bat roost database, S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd, Eaglesfield.