Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Wildlife Consultants.

WESTFIELD HOUSE FARM STABLES.

BAT SURVEY.

Ref No: **230824**

Date: **10th August 2023.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. There are plans to convert a stable block at Westfield House Farm, Penistone and there is a need to provide a bat survey report in support of the planning application.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has therefore been commissioned to carry out that bat survey.

1.3. A visual inspection and dusk emergence survey was carried out on 19th May 2014. As this is now time expired, a new preliminary roost assessment and dusk emergence survey have been carried out on 8th August 2023. This report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I and II of this report provide additional information on protected species and the protection afforded to them and are designed to assist the reader in understanding the contents of this report.

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2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. The buildings were thoroughly checked internally and externally for potential bat roosting sites in line with L Hundt (2012). *Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines* by looking for the following signs: -

* Holes, cracks or crevices.
* Bat droppings.
* Prey remains.
* Staining on external walls.

2.2. Unless otherwise stated, all lofts were accessed and inspected using a high-powered torch and where necessary an endoscope.

2.3. A thorough external inspection was carried out from ground level for any gaps or openings in the roof and ridge tiles, behind soffits and fascias and in the walls of the structure for suitable roost access points and field signs to indicate possible use by bats.

2.4. All window cills, walls and the ground around the structure were checked for signs of bat droppings or staining to indicate possible use by bats. Where necessary, ladders were utilised to gain access within the limits of health and safety.
Any access constraints encountered are outlined within the following report.

2.5. All survey work was carried out in line with L Hundt (2012). *Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines.*

2.6. This was followed by a dusk emergence survey of the building.

2.7. The survey was undertaken by Derek Whitcher who has over twenty year's experience of surveying for wildlife and has run his own wildlife consultancy since 1998. He has extensive experience of a wide variety of survey techniques for a variety of species of protected wildlife supplemented by attendance on a wide range of training courses through CIEEM, FSC and BCT. As a member of CIEEM he is committed to continuous professional development, a continual process of learning and career development, a condition of CIEEM membership. He holds current Natural England survey licences for barn owl, bat, great crested newt and white clawed crayfish.

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3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data request was submitted to Barnsley Ecological Records Centre for records of bat roosts within 1km of the site. Only two records of bats were provided, both records of the same Pipistrelle maternity roost at 57 Gledhill Avenue, approximately 350m northeast of the site. Those records are provided in Appendix II of this report.

3.1.2. A data search request was submitted to South Yorkshire Bat Group. The records include a bat roost of 76 Pipistrelles from 1987 and 1989 in Keats Grove and the same Pipistrelle roost on Gledhill Avenue recorded above. The remainder of the records is a mixture of records of dead bats, bats in houses and foraging bats.

3.2. Site Description.

3.2.1. Westfield House Farm is located to the southwest of Penistone in an area of open arable and grazing farmland. Coal Pit Dyke flows down past the eastern side of the farm, through a wooded valley.



3.2.2. Westfield House Farm is a complex of buildings, some converted for residential use and others remaining as farm buildings. The building surveyed is a stable block within the complex.

3.3. Daytime Survey Results.

3.3.1. The stable block is a single storey, stone building with a pitched roof covered with concrete tiles.

3.3.2. The walls are solid walls with coursed stone on the external skin and random stone on the inside. The stonework is generally well pointed and sealed. There were some open joints at the time of the first survey, but these have been repaired and repointed.






3.3.2. The southern end of the building ends at a tall blockwork wall higher than the roof of the stables.

3.3.3. The roof of the building is supported on a timber, king post frame as shown in the photographs below. The northern end of the roof is hipped and the southern end adjoins the tall blockwork wall. The timbers are all sound and the joints close fitting.

3.3.4. The concrete tiles have a felt lining underneath, which is in good condition with no rips or tears. All tiles are in place and the ridge tiles are all well pointed. There are open gaps at the eaves.




3.3.5. Internally there is one room and the internal walls are all painted white and are well sealed.

3.3.6. No bat field signs were identified anywhere inside or outside the building and the building was assessed to have a negligible potential for roosting bats in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines.

3.3.7. Swallows were identified nesting inside the stables but there were no field signs to suggest the presence of barn owl.

3.4. Dusk Emergence Survey Results.

3.4.1. Two surveyors carried out a dusk emergence survey. One surveyor holds a Natural England bat survey licence and the other is an experienced surveyor.

3.4.2. The evening was fine, the sky was clear with some high cloud, there was a light breeze, 0 BWS and a temperature of 13ºC at 20:30. Sunset was at 20:48 and the survey started at 20:30.

3.4.3. Each surveyor was equipped with a Batbox Duet detector and a two-way radio. Static Anabat recorders were deployed on the site to record bat activity for subsequent computer analysis with Analook software.

3.4.4. The two surveyors were positioned so they could see all sides of the building simultaneously, as can be seen in the aerial photograph below, where S is a surveyor.



3.4.5. The following are the observations of the surveyors.

3.4.5.1. Surveyor 1.

21:24. Common Pipistrelle passed to the southeast, north of the site.
21:27. Noctule passed high over the site.
21:33. Distant Common Pipistrelle heard not seen.
21:39. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen, west of the site.
21:40. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen, west of the site.
21:42. Common Pipistrelle from the west, foraged over the yard, went north.
21:43. Common Pipistrelle from the west, foraged over the yard, went north.
21:50. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen, dark.
21:51. Common Pipistrelle heard not seen, dark.

Anabat 18 with Surveyor 1 recorded thirteen Common Pipistrelles between 21:23 and 21:51 and one Noctule at 21:27.

3.4.5.2. Surveyor 2.

21:17. Common Pipistrelle passed to the southeast, north of the site.
21:21 onwards. Distant Common Pipistrelles heard foraging throughout.
21:23. Common Pipistrelle passed north to south.

21:24. Common Pipistrelle passed north to south.
21:27. Noctule passed high over the site.
21:42. Common Pipistrelle from the west, foraged over the yard, went north.
21:43. Common Pipistrelle from the west, foraged over the yard, went north.

Anabat 12 with Surveyor 2 recorded eleven Common Pipistrelles between 21:16 and 21:50 and one Noctule at 21:27.

3.4.6. Only a low level of bat activity was identified during the survey with a small number of Common Pipistrelles foraging over the site and one Noctule that passed high over the site. No bats emerged from the stable block.

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4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. Westfield House Farm is located in an exposed area of open farmland, low value bat foraging habitat, although the wooded valley along Coal Pit Dyke to the east of the site provides ideal bat foraging habitat.

4.2. The single storey stable block has a negligible potential for roosting bats, in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines.

4.3. The dusk emergence survey identified a small number of Common Pipistrelle bats passing over the site and foraging, mainly around the yard in front of the houses to the west and to the east towards the trees. One Noctule also passed high over the site during the survey.

4.4. No other species of bat was recorded and no bats emerged from the stable block.

4.5. Swallows were identified nesting inside the stables.

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5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

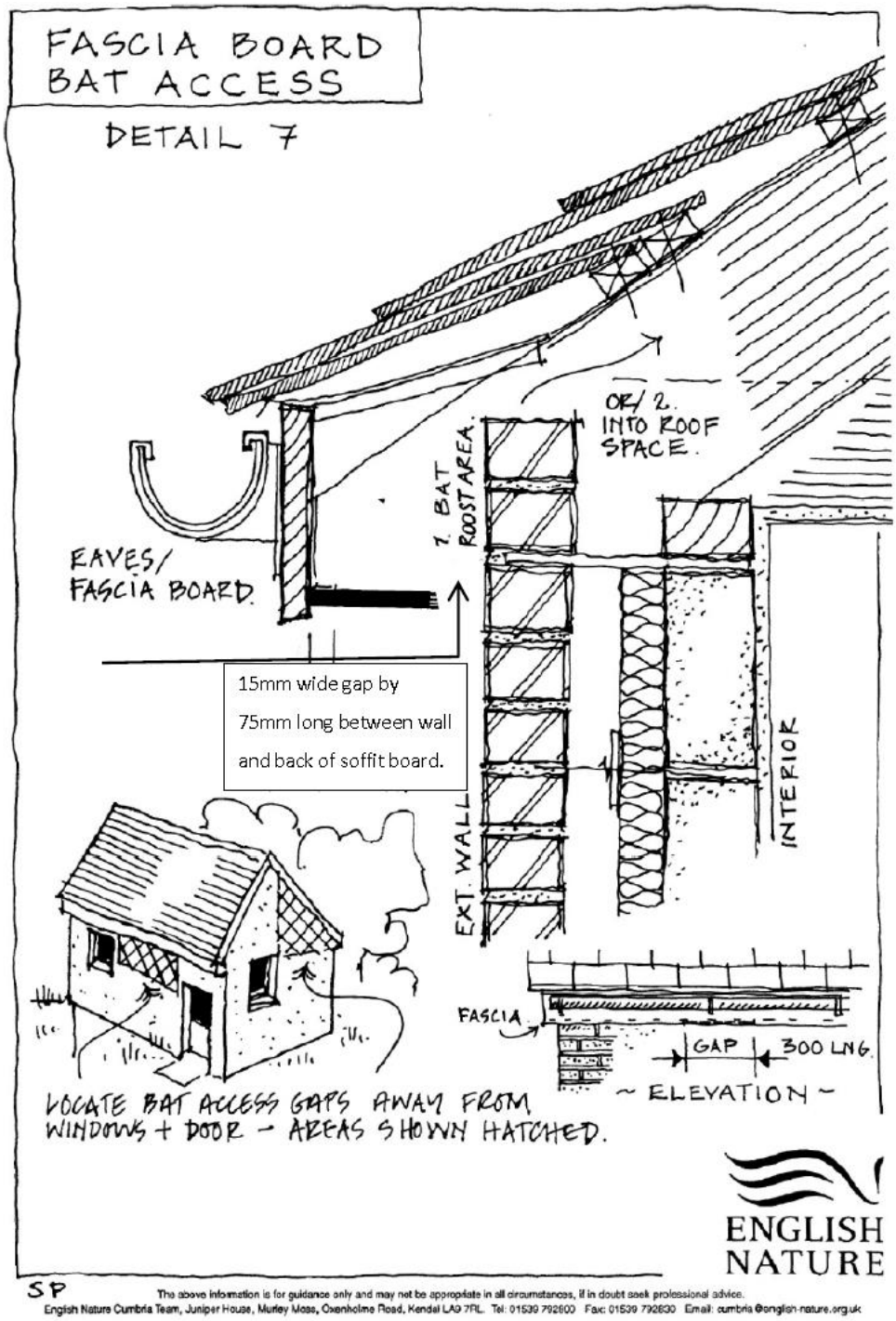
5.1. The results of the visual survey and the dusk emergence survey show that there are no bats roosting in the stable block. Therefore, no further bat surveys are recommended, no mitigation strategy is necessary and there is no requirement for a Natural England licence to convert the stables.

5.2. Nevertheless, individual bats can seek temporary shelter almost anywhere and therefore it is recommended that the conversion works are carried out with care. In the unlikely event a bat is found, the bat should be covered and protected and work should cease until further advice has been sought from the undersigned.

5.3. It is recommended that four small gaps are left between the soffit boards and the walls of the converted building, two on the east side and two on the northern end. These should be 75mm long and 15mm wide to allow bats the opportunity to land on the wall and roost behind the soffit boards. A sketch showing these bat access points is shown below.

5.4. It is recommended that works to the barn are carried out outside the nesting season, which extends from March to September. Any work during that time should be preceded by a nesting bird survey and any active nests should be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

5.5. After the stables have been converted, it will be impractical to provide opportunities for swallows to roost in the converted building. However, abundant opportunities will remain for nesting swallows in the other buildings on the farm complex.



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Checked by:	
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Appendix I. BAT INFORMATION.

It is necessary to understand a little about bats, their basic nature, ecology and legal protection in order to evaluate the findings of this report.

18 species of bat currently reside in Britain, 17 of which are known to breed here. They are extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

All appear to be diminishing in numbers, probably due to shortage of food, caused by pesticides, as insects are their sole diet, and habitat change.

As their diet consists solely of insects, bats hibernate during the winter when their food source is at its most scarce. They will spend the winter in hollow trees, caves, mines and the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly the pipistrelle (the commonest and most widespread British bat) can quickly adapt to man-made structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Regulation 41 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, and the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.

It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture or disturb bats or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection.

A breeding or resting site of any bat is known as a bat roost. A bat roost is therefore any structure a bat uses for shelter or protection. Because bats tend to use the same roosts each year, legal opinion is that the roost site is protected whether or not the bats are present at that time.

Bat roosts can be identified by looking for:-

- Suitable holes, cracks and crevices.
- Bat droppings.
- Prey remains.
- By carrying out night observations using a bat detector.

Where development proposals are likely to affect a bat roost site, a licence is required from Natural England.

The person applying for that licence has to be suitably qualified and experienced in bat matters. That person is then responsible for ensuring that the measures contained in the licence are carried out.

Appendix II. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.

Ecology

The nesting season will vary according to the weather each year but generally commences in March, peaks during May and June and continues until September. It is also worth remembering that some birds nest in trees and scrub but others are ground nesting or prefer man- made structures or buildings.

Surveys

Nesting bird surveys search for potential nest sites in vegetation, buildings etc. Potential nesting sites are observed over a suitable period of time for bird movements or calling male birds that would indicate the presence of a nest. The presence of a nest can be identified from the field signs without the necessity to see the nest itself, thereby avoiding any disturbance of the nests. The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

Legislation

Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Part 1. -(1) Of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - kills, injures or takes any wild bird; takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird, he shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1. -(5) of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young; or disturbs young of such a bird, he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amends the above by inserting after “intentionally” the words “or recklessly