Brindle &Green

Protected Species Survey Report – Barn Owl

Royd Moor Farm, Royd Moor Road
Thurlstone, Sheffield, South Yorkshire
Report Reference: BG22.227.4
July 2023

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Revision	Approved	Revision Details

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1 Summary

1.1.1 Brindle and Green were commissioned by Kingsman Homes to undertake a barn owl presence/likely absence survey on buildings identified as suitable to support breeding barn owl at Royd Moor Farm, Royd Moor Road, Thurlstone, Sheffield, South Yorkshire. The survey was undertaken on 28th June 2023.

1.1.2 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was undertaken by Brindle and Green Ltd. which concluded that buildings 3, 4, 12 and 13 (Figure 1) offered potential breeding habitat for barn owl. The PEA numbered these buildings as 1 and 5 and have been renumbered using the plan provided by the client (Figure 1) and will be referred to using this numbering going forward within this report.

1.1.3 Although these buildings are not proposed for redevelopment as part of the planning application which relates to Buildings 7, 8, 14, 19 and 20 only, the buildings fall within the zone of influence for the development and indirect impacts to barn owl were considered possible due to the suitable breeding habitat recorded.

1.1.4 The application site is the subject of a Class Q application for the change of use of agricultural buildings (Buildings 7, 8, 14, 19 and 20) to 5no. dwellings including building operations reasonably necessary for conversion (Prior Approval) (Figure 1). Design plans have been included within Appendix 3 of this report.

1.1.5 No evidence of barn owl activity was recorded within the buildings identified as supporting suitable breeding habitat during the initial Preliminary Ecological Appraisal or phase 2 inspection surveys.

1.1.6 The following recommendations are provided to ensure the client works within the law and that any impacts to protected species are minimised:

- Barn owl are a mobile species and can uptake habitat within a building throughout the year and from season to season. As such pre works check is recommended no more than three months prior to the onset of development of the buildings on site to ensure continued absence
- Should any evidence of barn owl be uncovered during works then works should cease and the advice of an ecologist sought.

2 Introduction

2.1.1 Brindle and Green Ltd were commissioned by Kingsman Homes to undertake a barn owl survey on suitable buildings at Royd Moor Farm, Royd Moor Road, Thurlstone, South Yorkshire. Grid Ref: SE 22135 04084.

2.1.2 The purpose of this survey was to establish whether barn owl were using the buildings identified as supporting suitable breeding habitat within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (previously labelled as Buildings 1 and 5) and provide details for mitigation solutions if required. The buildings have been renumbered according to the plan provided by the client (Figure 1) and are hereby referred to as buildings 3,4 12 and 13.

2.1.3 The extent of the suitable breeding habitat pertained to presence of haybales within buildings 12 and 13 and an empty roof void present within Buildings 3 and 4 which could provide opportunities for barn owl to use for breeding.

2.1.4 The PEA identified buildings 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 (Figure 1) as providing opportunities for roosting barn owl, but were not identified as suitable for breeding barn owl.

2.1.5 Buildings 1, 5, 6, 14 and 19 (Figure 1) were identified as being unsuitable to support barn owl due to alack of suitable access points or perching opportunities.

2.1.6 The buildings lie within approximately 1.1 ha comprising agricultural buildings and associated hard standing as well as areas of semi-improved grassland with dry walls forming the sites boundaries. The site is located approximately 1km west of the rural village of Thurlstone and is bordered by extensive agricultural land with Royd Moor Road running along the northern boundary. The application pertains to buildings 7,8, 14, 19 and 20.

2.1.7 The site is the subject of a Class Q application for the change of use of agricultural buildings (Buildings 7 ,8, 14, 19 and 20) to 5no. dwellings including building operations reasonably necessary for conversion (Prior Approval). Design plans have been included within Appendix 3 of this report.

2.1.8 The legislation relevant to barn owl within the United Kingdom is summarised within Appendix 2.

2.1.9 Results and recommendations contained within this report have been prepared by an experienced ecologist and are therefore the view of Brindle & Green Limited. The survey is based

on information provided by our client, the development proposals, and the results of our survey of the site. This report pertains to this information only.

3 Methodology

3.1.1 A daytime inspection targeted towards suitable breeding locations was undertaken to search for evidence of barn owl activity. Buildings 3, 4, 12 and 13 were the buildings identified suitable for breeding barn owl. This survey was undertaken following best practice guidelines (Barn Owl Trust, 2012). The surrounding habitat was also assessed for its potential as foraging habitat for barn owls in line with best practice guidelines (Shawyer, 2011).

3.1.2 A preliminary inspection was made from the ground with the aid of binoculars and a further inspection was carried out from a ladder. The following signs of barn owl presence were searched for during the inspection:

- Adult or juvenile birds
- Nesting material
- Eggs and egg shells
- Pellets
- Feathers
- Droppings

3.1.3 Following the survey a determination of whether the building comprises an Occupied Breeding Site (OBS), Active Roost Site (ARS) or Temporary Roost Site (TRS) was made.

3.1.4 The daytime survey was undertaken on 28/06/2023. The surveys were carried out by Ellen Marshall BSc (Hons) MRes, Natural England Barn Owl Licence (CL29/00362), CS38 NPTC Certified Tree Climber, Head of Ecology assisted by Victoria Halford BSc, Consultant Ecologist.

Survey Conditions

3.1.5 The temperature was recorded as 15°C and 4/8 cloud cover.

Limitations

3.1.6 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment.

Report Lifespan

3.1.7 Given the transient nature of the subject we would consider the survey results contained to be accurate for 1 year.

4 Site Context

4.1 Site Description

4.1.1 The application site can be found at SE 22135 04084, accessed off Royd Moor Road which borders the north of the site. The site is dominated by agricultural buildings, their associated hardstanding and boundary features with an area of semi-improved grassland to the south. The site is located 1km west of the rural village of Thurlstone, South Yorkshire, the areas surrounding the site are dominated by extensive arable and pastoral land supporting mainly dry-stone walls with occasional hedgerows and trees. Beyond Royd Moor Road, approximately 500m north of the site is Royd Moor Reservoir supporting associated woodland, no direct linear connectivity was noted between the site and this habitat.

4.2 Zone of influence

4.2.1 The zone of Influence is used to describe the geographic extent of potential impacts of a proposed development in relation to the target species, in this case barn owls. The zone of influence for this species is 150m.

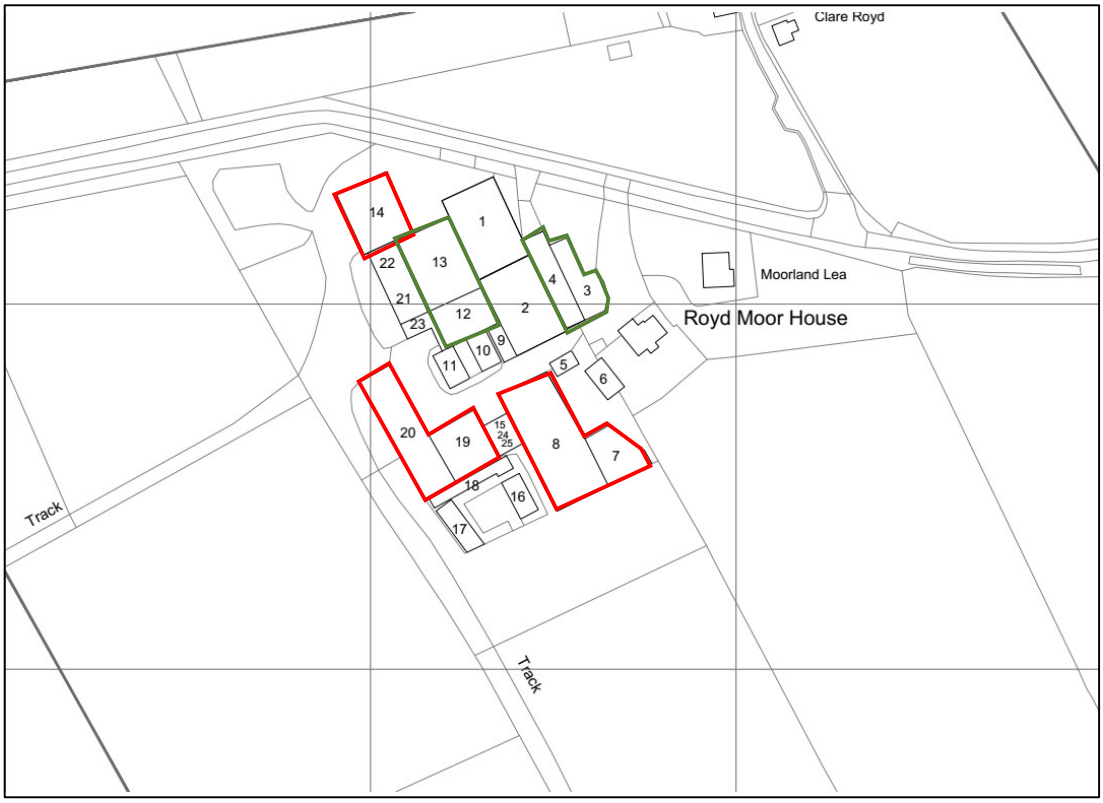

Figure 1: OS map of the project site and surrounding area. The application pertains to buildings 7,8, 14, 19 and 20 (depicted by the red line), The buildings suitable to support breeding barn owl and were surveyed have been depicted by the green line.

5 Results

5.1.1 The zone of influence for barn owls pertains to the suitable habitats located within the application site and within 150m of the site boundary. No evidence of barn owl activity was recorded within any of the buildings during the preliminary appraisal, however suitability to supporting perching, roosting and breeding behaviours was recorded.

Nest Sites

5.1.2 The daytime inspection of Buildings 3, 4, 12 and 13 found no evidence to suggest that barn owl previously occupying the building. The remaining buildings (Figure 1) lacked suitable features to support breeding barn owl, and were not subjected to further surveys.

Assessment of Potential Foraging Habitat

5.1.3 The application site itself comprised buildings set upon hardstanding. The habitat within the application boundary lacked structural variation to provide an abundance of foraging resources for barn owl.

5.1.4 The habitat within the zone of influence comprised homogenous pastoral habitat lacking field margins and mature trees with a network of stone walls limiting ability to support field voles. The wider landscape to the north supported more heterogenous habitat including woodland edge which provides suitable foraging resources for barn owl.

6 Evaluation

6.1.1 The barn owl survey did not reveal evidence of breeding barn owls within buildings 3, 4, 12 and 13 as such the site was assessed assessed to hold 'Site value' for this species. As such no further mitigation is required for this species.

6.1.2 The foraging habitat in the zone of influence will remain unchanged by this application as it pertains to buildings 7, 8, 14, 19, 20 only.

6.1.3 Although no evidence was found the proposals will see the loss of suitable roosting and breeding habitat identified within buildings 7, 8 and 20 as such the recommendations outline a pre-works check and enhancements post construction.

7 Recommendations

7.1.1 Barn owl are a mobile species and can uptake habitat within a building throughout the year and from season to season. A pre works check is required on all buildings no more than three months prior to development works to the buildings.

7.1.2 Should any evidence of barn owl be uncovered during works then works should cease and the advice of an ecologist sought.

7.1.3 A barn owl box is recommended to be installed within a retained building post development, the box should be positioned on an internal wall of an open-faced barn to provide access, at a height of at least 5m with an unobstructed flight path. If this is not possible a suitable tree mounted box should be provided.

Appendix 1. General References

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British Standards Institution (2013) BS 42020: Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development, British Standards Institution London

Byron, H (2000) Biodiversity and Environmental Impact Assessment: A Good Practice Guide for Road Schemes. The RSPB, WWF-UK, English Nature and the Wildlife Trusts, Sandy.

CIEEM (2017) Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

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CIEEM (2020) Guidelines for Accessing, Using and Sharing Biodiversity Data in the UK. 2nd Edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. Winchester, UK.

Shawyer, C. R. (2011). Barn Owl Tyto alba Survey Methodology and Techniques for use in Ecological Assessment: Developing Best Practice in Survey and Reporting. IEEM, Winchester.

Sutherland, W.J. (1996) Ecological Census Techniques. Cambridge University Press.

Treweek, J. (1999) Ecological Impact Assessment. Blackwell Science.

Appendix 2. Legislation, Guidance and Methodology

Barn Owls are included in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 which affords them protection against disturbance whilst nesting in addition to the basic level of protection of Barn Owls afforded to most wild birds.

Specifically, under Part 1, Section 1 (5) it is an offence punishable with imprisonment for a period of up to 6 months to intentionally or recklessly:

- Disturb a Barn Owl while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young.
- Disturb a Barn Owl's dependent young.

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs.

The bird breeding season is typically accepted to start in February/March and continue through until September/October, however breeding birds can be found all year round depending on the given species and climatic conditions.

A sites habitat composition, locality, association to designated sites as well as current usage and management are all considered in the decision as to whether further bird related surveys are required. In addition, surveys may be recommended based on incidental bird records collected during a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, species identified within an ecological data search or target species listed within a local biodiversity action plan.

Appendix 3. Design Proposals