Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

FALL HEAD FARM COTTAGE, SILKSTONE.

OS REF: SE 29811 06036.

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT.

Ref No: **230163.**

Date: **27th January 2023.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. The owners of Fall Head Farm Cottage in Silkstone, Barnsley, have plans to renovate the existing building and add an extension to the rear.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd was therefore commissioned to carry out a bat survey of the site to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. The initial daytime survey was carried out on 19th January 2023, and this report outlines its findings and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I and II of this report provides additional information on bats, nesting birds and the protection afforded to them and is 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 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 fascia's and in the walls of the structure for suitable roost access points and field signs to indicate possible use by bats.

2.4. All windowsills, 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 Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition),* with an assessment of the buildings suitability for roosting bats made in accordance with these guidelines.

2.6. The survey was undertaken by Mitchel Greenhalgh, a wildlife consultant with an array of experience in conducting ecological surveys on a variety of flora and fauna in a professional capacity. Mitchel holds a level two Natural England survey licence in respect of bats (2022-10386-CL18-BAT) and has attended courses run by CIEEM and the FSC. Mitchel also holds a BSc in environmental science attained from the University of Leeds and he is an associate member of CIEEM.

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3. SURVEY RESULTS.

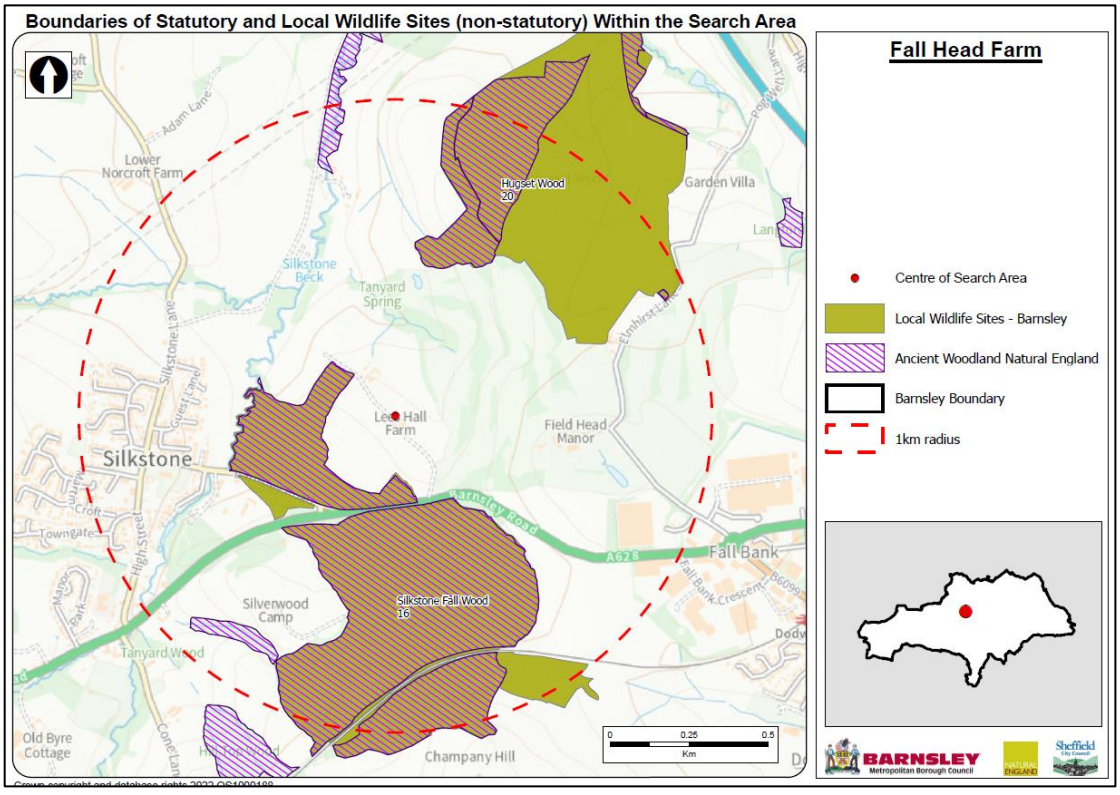
3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A desktop data search has been requested from the South Yorkshire Bat Group (SYBG) and Barnsley Biological Records Centre (BBRC) for all records of bats and their roosts within a 2km radius of the survey area.

3.1.2. The BBRC data search returned records of common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, noctule, Leisler's, brown long-eared, Natterer's and other unidentified Myotis species within a 2km radius of the site. The closest records to the site, are of a brown long-eared maternity roost and common pipistrelle roost within the buildings of Fall Head Farm, which lie only approximately 125m north-west of the surveyed building.

3.1.3. The SYBG data search has not yet been returned, but this report shall be updated and resent upon its receipt.

3.1.4. BBRC provided the following map, showing the proximity of any non-statutory sites and ancient woodland to the survey area. The closest of these is Silkstone Fall Wood which is detailed further below.



3.1.5. A search using the MAGIC map website shows that the survey area does not lie within 2km of any statutory sites.

3.2. Site Description.

3.2.1. The survey area comprises Fall Head Farm Cottage, which is located along Fall Head Lane in Silkstone, Barnsley. The building is shown on the aerial imagery below identified by the red box.



3.2.2. The immediate surrounding area comprises arable land, with the exception of a handful of mature sycamore trees, which are present to the west of the property along Fall Head Lane.

3.2.3. The further surroundings become increasingly suitable for foraging and commuting bats, with the ancient woodland and local wildlife site that is Silkstone Fall Wood, being located approximately 170m from the surveyed building along with the woodland surroundings of Silkstone Golf Club being located approximately 130m to the east.



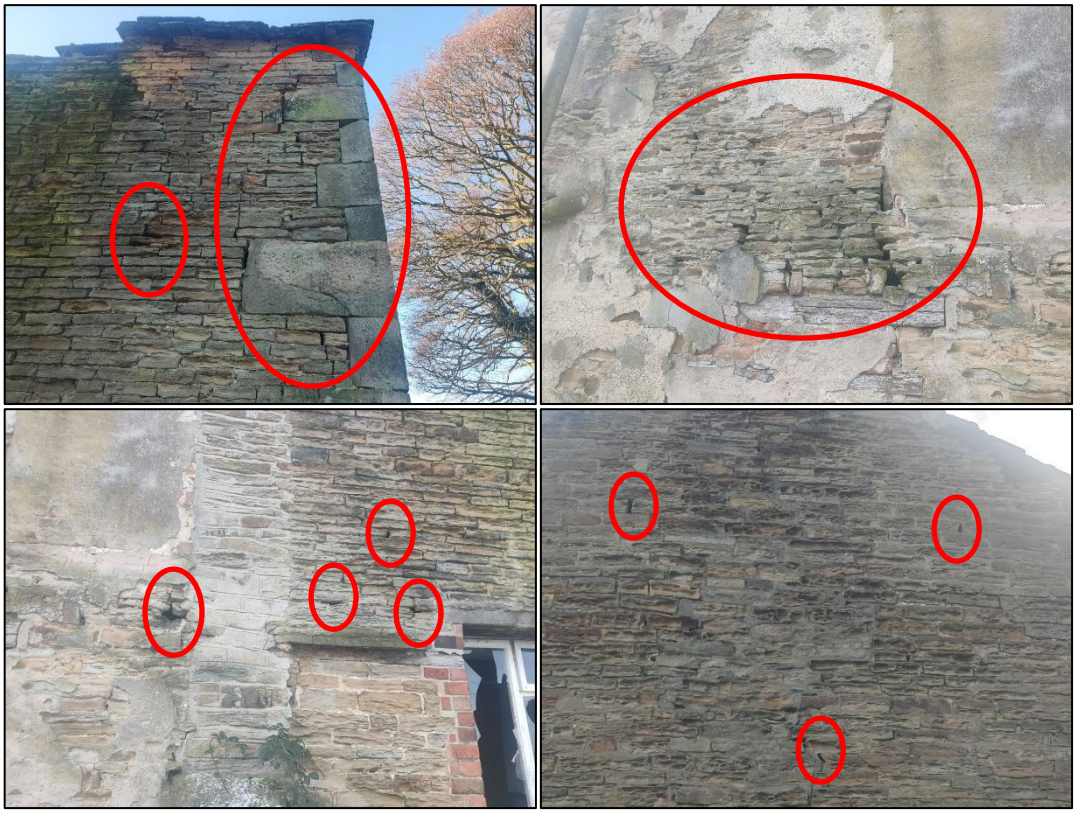
3.2.4. Connectivity between the building and these areas of suitable foraging habitat are very limited with no vegetative corridors between them.

3.3. Daytime Survey Results.

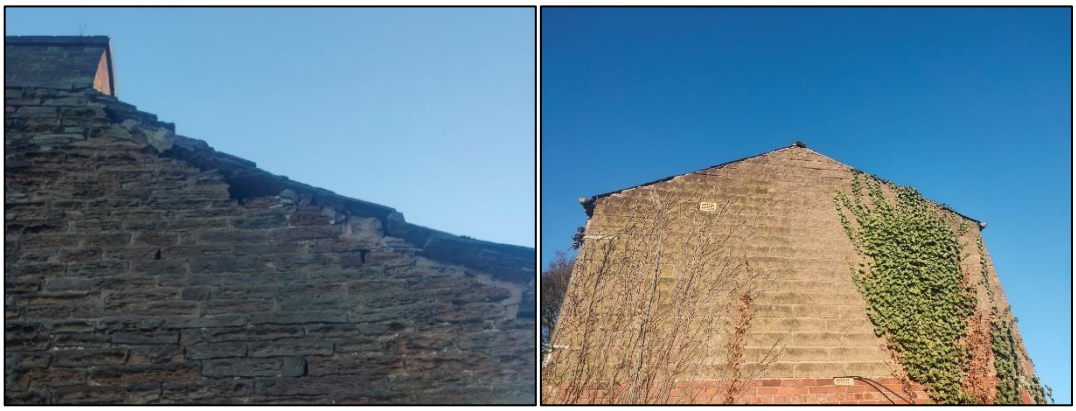
3.3.1. The surveyed building comprises a two-storey farmhouse constructed of stone with a stone slate pitched roof with gable ends. The eastern section of the building comprises an extension built on to the original house and comprises both stone and brick with a slate tile roof, which is slightly elevated from the rest of the building. The building is shown in the photograph below.



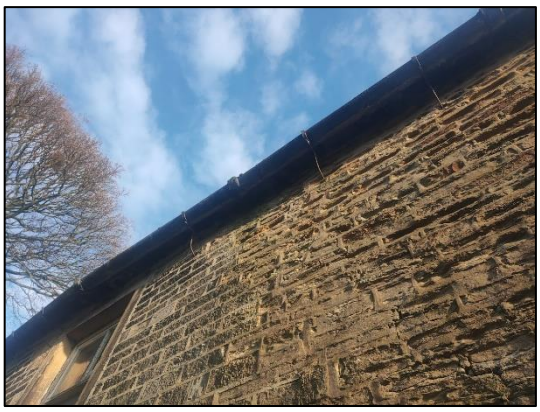
3.3.2. Externally, the building is in a poor condition. The walls of the property were thoroughly inspected and numerous defects were found which could provide opportunities for crevice dwelling bats such as gaps between stones or missing stones. These features are particularly numerous to the north of the property and examples are shown in the photographs below.



3.3.3. The gable ends of the property are also in poor condition, particularly at the western end where large sections of brickwork are missing allowing easy access into the loft space. The mortar on the western gable end is almost non-existent. The eastern gable end is in better condition and the stonework is sound, although it is still missing the majority of its mortar.

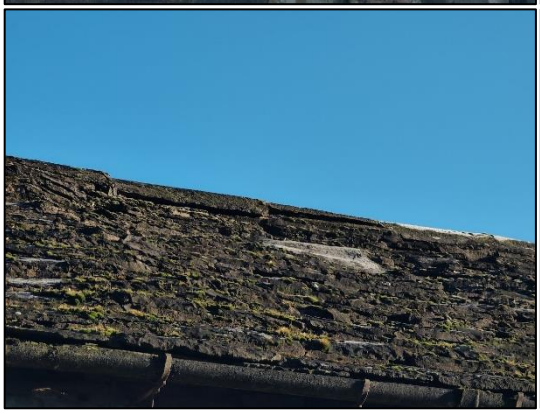


3.3.4. Although hard to see in photographs, gaps are present beneath the eaves of the building around most of the property, which could offer roosting opportunities for bats. Furthermore, there are gaps behind the timber fascia boards where they are present around the building.




3.3.5. The roof itself is in a poor condition, with a large section of it having collapsed inwards. The sections still intact are in a better condition but the natural stone tiles do not naturally sit flush regardless, which may offer roosting opportunities for bats beneath them. A number of the ridge tiles are also misplaced, which again gives access beneath. Examples of the roof defects are shown below.






3.3.6. The extended section of the building, which comprises a slate tiled roof, is generally in a better condition as shown in the photograph below. However, the southern side of this section has missing tiles, which will be shown later on from the internal inspection.



3.3.7. Most of the windows of the property have been smashed, and there is no door, which means access to the property is available on each level.

3.3.8. Internally, the property has been left derelict for some time and is generally in very poor condition. As most windows have been smashed and there is no door, light flows freely throughout the first and second floor, reducing the suitability of these sections of the building for roosting bats.





3.3.9. The loft is split into three separate spaces, with the original house being divided into two, and the extension loft space comprising the third.

3.3.9.1. The eastern most loft space of the extension comprises a standard timber frame and is lined, with the lining generally in good condition except for where the tiles are no longer present. The loft space is generally very light due to the sections of missing tiles and a large old wasp nest was present. No bat field signs were identified.




3.3.9.2. The central loft section, or the eastern section of the main house, is the largest of the three loft spaces. It has a traditional timber frame but is unlined and therefore bare to the underside of the tiles. The loft space is generally very light due to the missing section of roof. No bat field signs were identified.




3.3.9.3. The final loft space is the western most one, which again, comprises a standard timber frame and like the central section is unlined and bare to the underside of the tiles. No bat field signs were identified.



3.3.9.4. Ample access is available into all loft spaces for bats due to the defects within the roof. The stone internal gables also have crevices, which could be accessed by opportunistic roosting bats.

3.3.10. The building does have a cellar, which although unlikely, could be accessed by roosting bats should they enter the ground floor and fly down into it. This cellar provides a cool and dark area, which could be used by roosting bats, including during winter. However, the likelihood of this is considered very low and the cellar was fully inspected, including with an endoscope during the month of January and no bats or bat field signs were identified. The cellar is shown in the below image.



3.3.10.1. The cellar generally offers no crevices suitable for roosting bats, except for above where the wall is set back from the rest of the cellar, which is shown in the below photograph. This is highlighted in the photograph above by the red arrow.



3.3.11. The entirety of the building was thoroughly inspected for bats and bat field signs such as insect remains and droppings. Neither were found during the survey.

3.3.12. Due to the building having a good number of features which could host small numbers of roosting bats, the property is assessed as having **moderate potential** for roosting bats in line with the Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines.

3.3.13. The building is assessed as having moderate potential as opposed to high, due to the loft spaces generally being well lit and exposed due to the poor condition of the roof, which severely limits the suitability for loft-dwelling bats. Therefore any roosting bats are likely to be using smaller crevices, reducing the likelihood of the building hosting a significant roost.

3.3.14. The building is assessed as having **negligible potential** for hibernating bats in line with the Bat Conservation Trust's Good practice guidelines. If the survey had been carried out during warmer months, a precautionary hibernation check would have been recommended, but as this survey was done in January, the check was carried out at the time and found no evidence of bats.

3.3.15. The immediate habitat around the buildings is assessed as providing moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats. This is due to the immediate surroundings being predominantly arable or built-up with the exception of the mature sycamores on Fall Head Lane. However, the further surrounding habitat, including the nearby woodlands, are assessed as providing very good suitability for foraging and commuting bats.

3.3.16. Shown below are photographs of the general surroundings of the buildings, which show the quality of the surrounding foraging and commuting habitat.



3.3.17. The building provides various features which could be used by nesting birds, and one old nest was identified within a small porch on the extended section of the building.



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4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. The building is assessed as providing **moderate potential** for roosting bats due to the large number of features which could provide suitable opportunities for crevice dwelling bats but are unlikely to support significant roosts.

4.2. The building is assessed as providing **negligible potential** for hibernating bats due to the general exposure of the potential roost features to external elements. The cellar could provide some potential for hibernating bats but access into it by bats is unlikely and the survey in January found no bats or field signs within the cellar.

4.3. The building was thoroughly inspected for bats and their field signs, such as insect remains and droppings. Neither bats, nor any field signs were found.

4.4. The habitat around the site is assessed as providing moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats. Regardless, none of the surrounding habitat will be impacted by the works. Therefore, it is assessed that the proposed works will have no impact on foraging and commuting bats.

4.5. One bird nest was identified on the walls of the building. Therefore, any works during the nesting bird season, which extends from March to August inclusive, have the potential to impact upon nesting birds.

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5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. As the building is assessed as having **moderate potential** for roosting bats, it is recommended that, in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, two activity surveys be carried out within the active bat season, which extends between May and August. These should comprise one dusk emergence survey and one dawn swarming survey.

5.2. If during any of the surveys, bats are found to be using the buildings to roost, then further surveys will be required along with a Natural England EPS licence. If no bats are found during all surveys, then no further surveys or licencing will be required.

5.3. As birds may use the building to nest, it is recommended that the works take place outside of their nesting season, which extends from March to August inclusive. If works are to take place within nesting season, then they should be preceded by a nesting bird survey, undertaken by a suitably experienced person.

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Prepared by:	
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Checked by:	
Derek Whitcher, BSc, MCIEEM, MCMI	Date: 27th January 2023.

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Appendix I. BAT INFORMATION.

Ecology

There are currently 18 species of bat residing in Britain, 17 of which 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 habitat change and shortage of food, caused by pesticides, as insects are their sole diet.

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.

Surveys

During walkover surveys, bat roosts can be identified by looking for:

- Suitable holes, cracks and crevices within any building, tree or other structure.
- Bat droppings along walls, window cills, or on the ground.
- Prey remains, such as insect wings.

Further investigations can be made using endoscopes, by carrying out aerial inspections of trees or by conducting bat activity surveys during dusk and dawn over summer months.

Legislation

Bats are protected under Appendix II and III of the Bern Convention (1982), Schedule 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (some species under Annex II), Annex II of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and EUROBATS agreement. Numerous species are

also listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) making them species of principal importance.

All bats and their roosts are therefore protected in the UK. This makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any bat, to interfere with any place used for shelter or protection, or to intentionally disturb any animal occupying such a place.

The UK has designated maternity and hibernacula areas as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) under the Habitats Directive. Implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan also includes action for a number of bat species and the habitats which support them.

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

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”.