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Bat Scoping Survey to
Town Farm
Churchfield Lane
Kexborough

S75 5DU

1st October 2019

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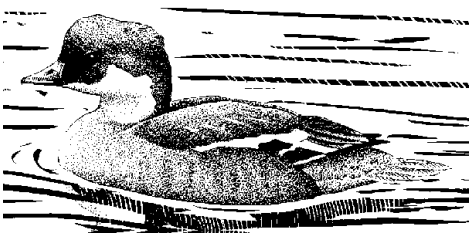

1. Summary

1.1 A winter bat scoping survey to Town Farm, Kexborough was commissioned to establish the likelihood of the building being used by roosting bats ahead of proposed development works.

1.2 The survey was undertaken at a time of year which is considered outside the optimal season for bat occupancy and, therefore, aimed to establish the likelihood of bats using the buildings by looking for evidence in the form of droppings, scattered prey remains, noting potentially suitable roosting cavities as well as assessing the likely impact of the work on bats.

1.3 The site comprises a stone farmhouse, a small brick livestock shed and four large agricultural units, mostly built of block and steel with cement fibre board covering but one is of a wooden construction. The survey resulted in the agricultural units being classified as being of negligible interest to bats while the farmhouse was classified as being of low potential. The table below summarises the main features and classifies the roost potential

Building 1	Barn	
Feature	**Description**	**Classification**
Building		
Agricultural unit (building 2)	Lower section single thickness block with cement fibre sheeting to upper section and roof	**Negligible**
Livestock shed (unit 3)	Small, open fronted brick building with slate roof in good condition having been reroofed.	**Negligible**
Agricultural unit (building 4)	Large, open-fronted barn with block work lower walls and sheeted upper walls and roof	**Negligible**
Agricultural unit (building 5)	Wooden barn with open front. All walls are single thickness planks with limited interest to bats. Timber roof is unlined and is single plank thick	**Negligible**
Agricultural unit (building 6)	Block work walls and sheeted roof with large extension constructed of single thickness planks	**Negligible**
Farmhouse	Modern, artificial stone dwelling in sound condition and having a concrete tile to roof. Soffits to south elevation have some gaps	**Low**

1.4 The agricultural units have very limited bat roost potential being built of block on the lower wall sections while the upper sections are cement or tin corrugated sheeting. Bats require a cavity in which to roost and these buildings do not provide any such opportunities and therefore are classed as being of negligible interest to bats. The wooden barn is much the same in terms of roost potential as the walls and roof are single thickness cedar planks and do not have any cavities. The livestock shed has a stone wall to sides and rear but has brick infill to the front. The slate roof has been replaced and the unit is open fronted and in daily use and is therefore considered to be of negligible interest to bats. The farmhouse is built of artificial stone and is sound and without structural cracks. The roof has a slate covering and is sound and without attic void as this is a bedroom but there are some suitable gaps between the wooden soffits and the stone walls on the south side of the building. Because there are suitable gaps but no evidence of bats, the farmhouse is considered to be of low roost potential.

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1.5 Although the survey was undertaken outside the optimal period for bat occupancy in buildings, the style of the barns coupled with surveyor experience suggests that none of the barns have any particular roost potential and could easily be demolished at any time assuming no birds are breeding there. The farmhouse has limited potential and has gaps in the soffits on the south side, the preferred aspect for bats, and therefore at least one summer activity survey should be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist. Evidence suggests starlings are using the SE corner of the soffits to nest and caution must be taken to ensure these are not disturbed during the breeding season.

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2. Introduction

An ecological assessment and bat scoping survey was undertaken to Town Farm, Churchfield Lane, Kexborough S75 5DU (NGR SE298095) in accordance with the Planning Authority's request, to determine whether bats are using or have used the property as a roost site.

2.1 The current proposal is to demolish all buildings within the site footprint and replace with a residential development.

2.2 The survey took place at a time considered outside the optimal time for bat occupancy, therefore, the survey aimed to establish the following

- the likelihood of bats using the building by undertaking a daytime scoping
- identify any potential roosting areas
- Identify the need for activity surveys where necessary
- provide an impact assessment of the development on bats
- define mitigation proposals where required
- assess the requirement for a protected species licence.
- Assess the building for use by nesting birds

3. Methodology

3.1 The building was surveyed in accordance with best practice guidelines by John Gardner, a surveyor with over 35yrs fields experience in searching for bats (licence number 2015-15656-CLS-CLS).

3.2 The interior and exterior of the buildings were inspected during daylight using torches and binoculars. All normal signs of bats were looked for including bats, dead baby bats, bat droppings, prey remains, scratching and staining of entry and exit holes.

3.3 The buildings were assessed for their degree of potential to support roosting bats including assessing the building design, construction, materials and condition. This combined with an assessment of the location of the site and the surrounding habitat in terms of bat suitability allows an assessment to be made as to the potential of the building to support bats. Factors such as the proximity of good foraging areas (woodland, water bodies) and features that link the site to the wider surrounds such as linear features (hedgerows etc) were also considered.

3.4 This report sets out the findings of a daytime scoping survey carried out to the above site on Tuesday 1st October 2019 and highlights the ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed works and appraises the potential impacts. Appropriate actions to ensure the protection of bats are identified and mitigation measures detailed where appropriate.

4. Survey constraints

4.1 None.

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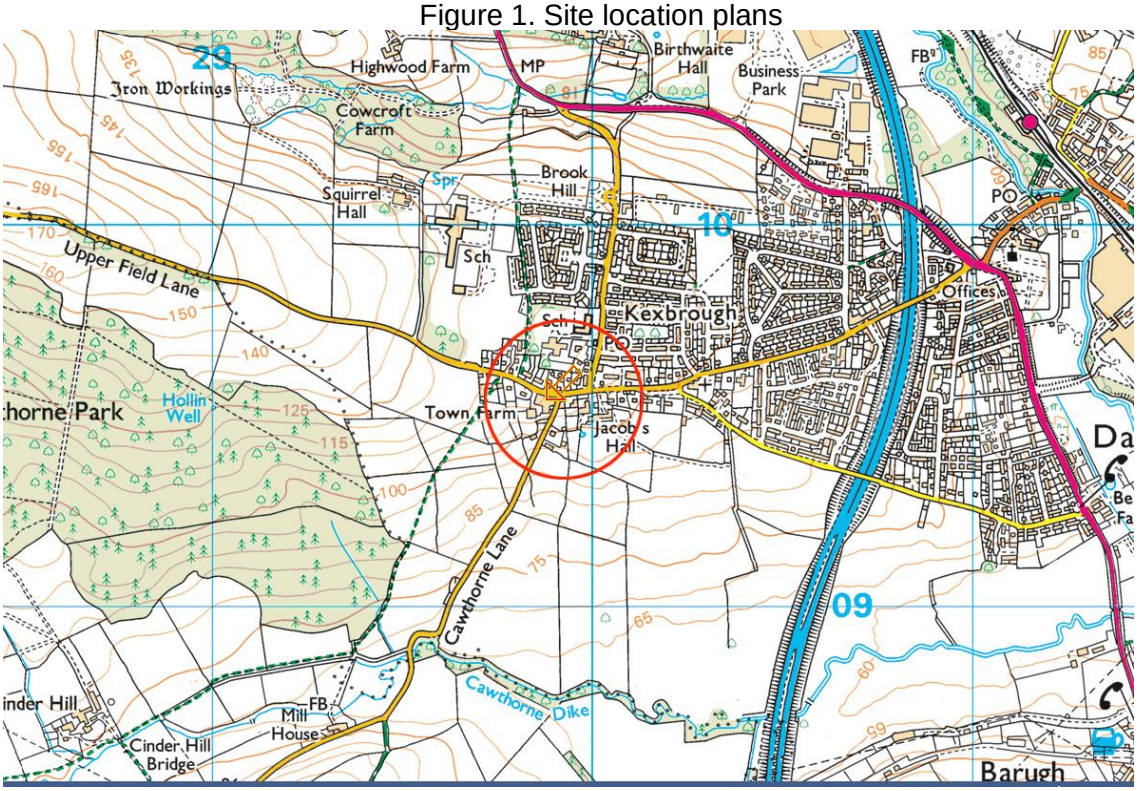
5. Site Description

5.1 This site comprises several large agricultural units of modern construction along with a single storey livestock shed and modern, detached farmhouse. There are residential dwellings in the immediate vicinity that will also offer roosting potential. Linear features connect the site to the wider landscape and the site is close to excellent foraging habitat.

Figure 1. Site location plans



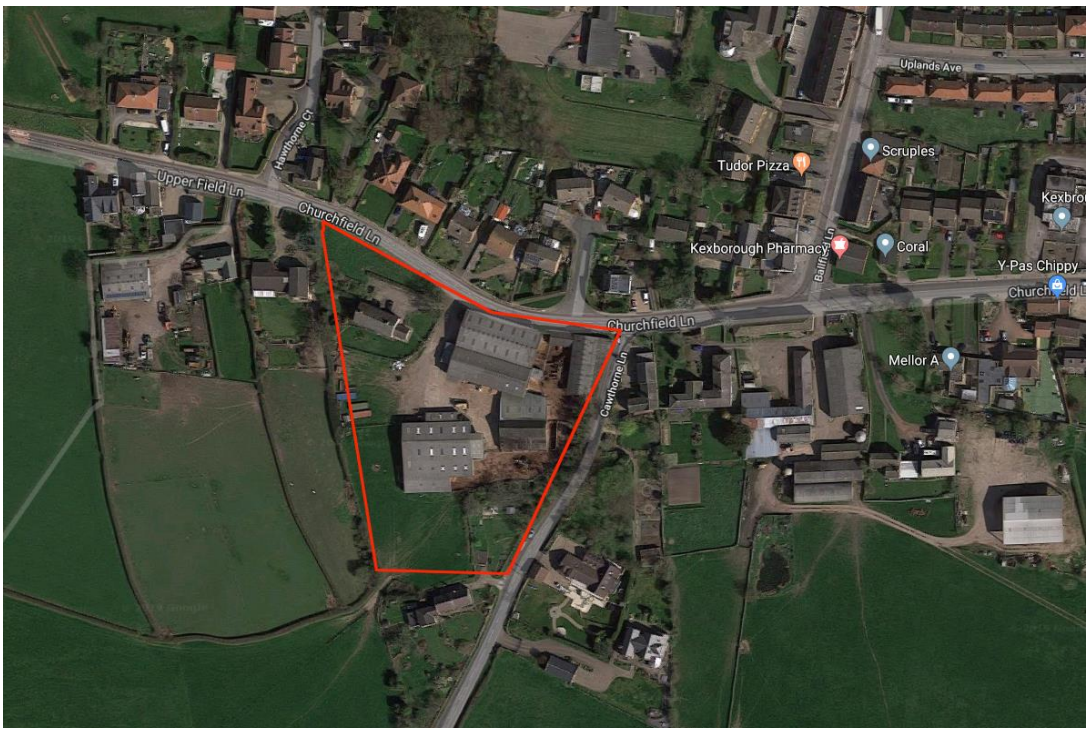


Figure 2 Aerial view of the site, surrounds and buildings surveyed

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6. Desk Study

6.1 No desk study was undertaken as a data searches are now considered to be less important where a single species is involved as the results tend to plot observer activity rather than species distribution. The buildings have not been surveyed previously and are considered to be of low value to bats.

7. Activity surveys

7.1 No activity surveys were undertaken due to the time of year being unsuitable for this. However, the results of this survey suggested that at least one activity survey is required on the farmhouse.

8. Survey results

8.1 The daylight survey

The site consists of several large agricultural units, a livestock shed and a farmhouse. Figure 3 plots the location of each and identifies each of the buildings.

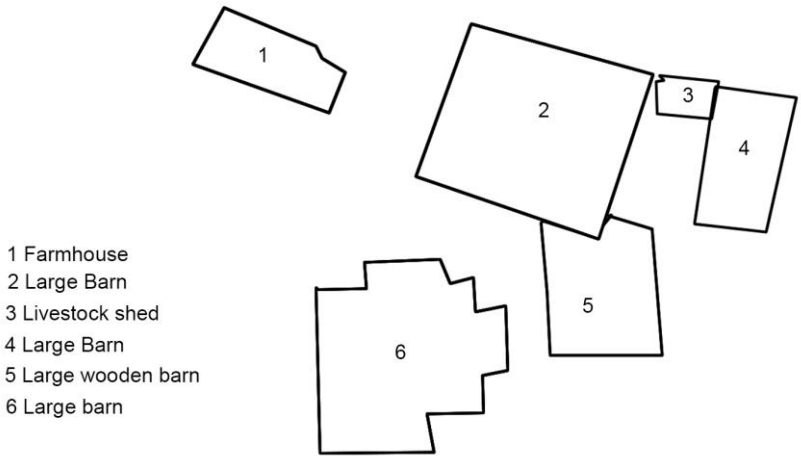

Figure 3. Layout of the buildings

The large units (fig.3 buildings 2, 4 & 6) are all of the same style of construction with the lower section of walls made from breeze block in between a steel framework, while the upper walls and roofing is covered with corrugated sheeting, mostly cement fibre. The walls have no cavities that would allow bats to roost and the single thickness sheeting on the upper walls and roof are also of no potential interest to bats. The ridge sections tend to be wide, open and without a central ridge beam and are highly unlikely to be used by ridge dwelling species.

Building 3 is a small, open-fronted livestock shed that has been partially bricked up to the front. The original building has stone walls to rear and sides and a slate roof. The roof has been replaced in recent years and is in good condition with a full set of ridge tiles that are well bedded and in situ. The gable walls have heavy stone caps and are sound on the verges. There is no evidence to suggest use by bats and the building appears to have limited potential. It may be worth checking during the summer period when the farmhouse is being surveyed.

Building 5 is a large open-fronted wooden barn with a tin sheeting over the roof. The lower walls are single thickness blockwork while the upper walls are single thickness cedar planks on a

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timber frame. The lack of wall cavity and open ridges make this an unlikely unit for bats to roost in.

The farmhouse is built from artificial stone and is sound and has no structural cracks. The walls have a traditional cavity that bats often use when they can gain access to them. The dry verges are very well sealed and the roof has a sound, slate covering which has no obvious entry points. The soffits along the north elevation are fairly well sealed to the walls and, where there are any minor gaps, they have a heavy build-up of dust and cobwebs. The soffits running along the south elevation do have some suitable gaps between the woodwork and the stone walls. In places these are large enough for birds to gain entry and may be less suited to bats. However, give the south facing aspect and the partial suitability of the gaps, it would be difficult to establish that bats are not present without at least one activity survey during the summer months.

9 Activity survey results

9.1 Due to the time of year, no activity surveys were undertaken.

10. Interpretation and analysis

10.1 The large, modern agricultural units are not particularly suited to use by bats in terms of roosting. Bats may use the barns in a foraging and hunting capacity, especially just after emergence or when the weather is windy. The lack of cavity to both the blockwork walls and the roofing materials very much limits the potential for bats to roost. There would be no obvious reason why these buildings could not be taken down over the winter period when bats (and nesting birds) are not likely to be present. The smaller, livestock shed doesn't appear to have much potential for bats and is more likely to be used by nesting birds such as swallow (Hirundo rustica).

10.2 The farmhouse has the most potential to provide bat roosting sites behind the soffits on the south elevation. Here, there are some potentially suitable gaps and they occur on the aspect that bats tend to favour most. There is no evidence of bats using this building but it would not be possible to discharge it without at least one activity survey being undertaken during the summer period (May to August inclusive). It is likely that starling is nesting in the SE corner of the building and consideration must be given to this species which will be noted in the LPA biodiversity action plan. Swallows do not appear to use these barns or the farmhouse and they are more likely to use the older stone barns at the adjacent Kexborough Farm which is also being surveyed for bats under a separate report.

11. Impact assessment

11.1 It is unlikely that bats are using the agricultural buildings on the site but they cannot be ruled out from the farmhouse without an activity survey. Demolition of the barns is unlikely to impact bats and will not destroy any maternity roosts or cause fragmentation of habitat. The impact of the proposed development on the farmhouse can be ascertained more fully on completion of the recommended summer activity survey.

12. Mitigation and compensation measures

12.1 The following mitigation and compensation measures should be adopted as part of the proposed planning application:

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- The buildings should not be demolished during the bird nesting season March to August unless a thorough check for nesting birds has been carried out. Demolition of the barns between November and the end of February is unlikely to impact bats or birds

- Work to demolish the farmhouse shall not commence until at least one summer activity survey has been carried out. Either a dawn return or evening emergence survey should be carried out by suitably qualified ecologists using enough staff to sufficiently cover the building.

- Any scheme put forward for the site must include compensation and mitigation for both bats and birds, including starling, house sparrow and swallow. A full mitigation plan will be determined by the ecologists carrying out the bat activity survey during the summer months.

The proposed conversion is subject to planning regulations and therefore, any of the above could be conditioned as part of any planning permissions that may be granted.

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Appendix 1: Photographs of the survey site

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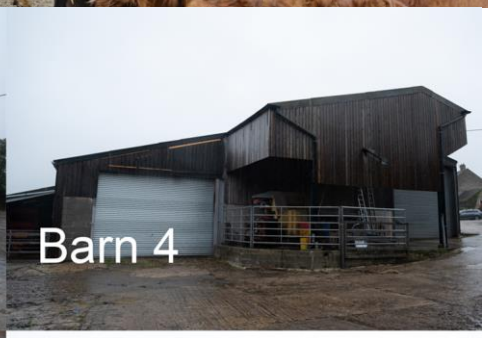
Barn 2


Barn 3


Barn 4


Barn 4


Barn 4


Barn 4

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Farmhouse