Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

1 CHURCH HILL, ROYSTON.

OS REF: SE 36499 11176.

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT.

Ref No: **240402.**

Date: **16th April 2024.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. There are plans to submit an application to demolish a single residential dwelling and erect a new residential dwelling with the same footprint in Royston, Barnsley.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd was therefore commissioned to carry out a preliminary roost assessment (PRA) of the buildings to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. The site survey was carried out on 9th April 2024 and this report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I and II of this report provides additional information on bats 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 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 Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition),* with an assessment of the buildings suitability for roosting bats made in accordance with these guidelines.

2.6. This survey was carried out by Jess Mason MSc ACIEEM FRGS. Since 2018 Jess has had experience in a professional capacity as an Ecologist carrying out ecology surveys and phase I habitat surveys. Jess holds Natural England survey licences in respect of bats (2023-11208-CL18-BAT), barn owls (2024-11866-CL29-OWL), and great crested newts (2023-11456-CL08-GCN), and a Scottish Natural Heritage survey licence in respect of barn owls. She has also successfully completed a number of courses run by CIEEM and the FSC in the relative protected species and carrying out habitat surveys and has a MSc in Biological Recording. Jess is an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

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3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data search request was submitted to the South Yorkshire Bat Group and Barnsley Biological Records Centre for records of bats and bat roosts within 2km of the survey area.

3.1.2. South Yorkshire bat group returned sixty-nine records of seven bat species. The closest record is approximately 300m to the northwest of the survey area and describes an injured bat taken into care. The closest confirmed roost record is an unidentified bat roost in a residential property approximately 790m from the survey area.

3.1.3. The data search carried out by Barnsley Biological Records Centre returned mostly the same records as South Yorkshire Bat Group. The closest record is a vague record of “bats” at a property approximately 160m from the survey area. Other than a number of vague 1km records, all other records are the same as returned from South Yorkshire Bat Group.

3.1.4. A copy of the data search results can be provided to the client upon request but should not be placed into the public domain.

3.2. Site Description.

3.2.1. The site is located in a built-up area on the outskirts of Royston, Barnsley. It is surrounded by residential housing, with some areas of public open space, urban tree lines and agricultural fields throughout the landscape.

3.2.2. The aerial map below shows the location of the survey area circled in red, and the surrounding landscape.

3.2.3. The survey area comprises a two-storey residential dwelling with a single-storey extension which has been used as a commercial premises. The building surveyed is outlined in red in the aerial map below.

3.3. Preliminary Roost Assessment.

3.3.1. The building comprises a brick-built two-storey residential dwelling with a brick-built single-storey extension. Most areas of the walls are in good condition with no cracks, gaps or crevices suitable for roosting bats. However, on the northern-facing gable end wall, there is a fracture in the brickwork with an open gap which provides potential access into the loft space.

3.3.2. On the east-facing wall there are cracks and areas of missing mortar, but these are shallow. A pipe entering the wall just above these defects is leaking, causing water to drip down the wall, causing the staining seen in the photograph below. The water has likely caused the mortar in this area to perish faster than other areas, and is

also likely to result in the defects being consistently wet. These defects are therefore unlikely to be used as a potential roost feature by bats as they are too wet and too shallow. The windows and doors were also well sealed with no potential for roosting bats.

3.3.3. There are no soffits or fascias anywhere around building, but there is guttering on the western and eastern facing walls which could hide any potential access points in the eaves.

3.3.4. The roof of the two-storey building is a pitched roof, with gable end walls at the northern and southern ends. The roof is covered in slate tiles, which are mostly intact and in good condition. There is a section in the middle of the roof where there are slipped tiles, providing potential access into the roof space for bats, shown in the

photographs below. There is also a section of missing mortar underneath the tiles on the southern gable end, also shown in the photographs below.

3.3.5. The ridge tiles on the two-storey part of the building are in good condition with no areas of missing mortar or gaps between the tiles.

3.3.6. The roof of the single-storey extension is also a pitched roof covered by slate tiles which are in good condition, with no damaged or slipped tiles. However, the ridge tiles have areas of missing mortar which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats.

3.3.7. The chimneys are in good condition with no defects in the brickwork. The lead flashing is also in good condition with no areas of lifting.

3.3.8. The loft space was accessed within the two-storey section of the building, but this could not be thoroughly inspected due to brick walls separating parts of the loft space, and lack of safe access into the separated areas. The inside of the single-storey extension could not be accessed during this survey, so it is unknown whether there is

any loft space in this part of the building. The photographs below show the typical nature of the loft in the two-storey part of the building.

3.3.9. The roof is supported by modern roof timbers and is unlined. No daylight was visible in the parts of the roof viewed. However, as previously identified, there could be access into the roof from defects on the gable ends or from other areas of slipped tiles not visible at this location within the roof space.

3.3.10. No bats or bat field signs were found within the accessible areas of the roof space.

3.3.11. The results of this survey found a small number of features that provided potential access points into the loft space and other potential roost features behind guttering or under tiles. The roof is unlined and therefore is unlikely provide enough thermal regulation for the space to be used by large numbers of bats or maternity roosts and also limits roosting potential in the roof and loft space. Furthermore, the building is in a brightly lit built-up area with limited foraging opportunities in the immediate surroundings, further reducing the likelihood of high-value maternity roosts thriving. However, the features identified in the walls may provide roosting opportunities for low numbers of bats in the summer months. The building and extension are therefore assessed to provide **moderate potential for summer roosting bats.**

3.3.12. The roof is unlined and is therefore unlikely to provide the stable temperatures preferred for hibernation. There is no cellar or underground spaces within the building, and no access to other parts of the building. Therefore, the building and extension are assessed as providing **negligible potential for hibernating bats**.

3.3.13. No evidence of nesting birds was identified within the building. However, the access points into the roof space could provide potential nesting habitat for birds. Furthermore, there are a small number of garden shrubs and mature conifers in the gardens which could provide potential nesting habitat for birds.

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4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. The building was assessed as having moderate potential for summer roosting bats. Therefore, the proposed demolition of this building will have a high impact on roosting bats if they are present. However, the building was assessed as having negligible potential for hibernating bats and will therefore have no impact on hibernating bats.

4.2. The site is located in an urban location, with some potential for foraging and commuting non-light sensitive bat species. The proposed works will not cause any loss or fragmentation of bat foraging or commuting habitats.

4.3. The roof of the building and the trees and shrubs in the gardens provides potential nesting opportunities for birds. The nesting bird season extends from March to August each year. Therefore, demolition of the house or works impacting the gardens could have a negative impact on nesting birds if they are present.

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5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. The building is assessed as having moderate potential for roosting bats according to the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Good Practice Guidelines'. Therefore, it is recommended that two dusk emergence surveys are carried out during the active bat season, which extends from May to August inclusive, to determine whether bats are using the building to roost. The surveys need to be carried out at least three weeks apart.

5.2. If during the survey, bats are found to be using the building to roost, then further surveys will be required to inform a mitigation strategy, which will be submitted with the planning application. A Natural England European Protected Species licence will also be required to cover the demolition works, which can only be applied for once planning consent has been issued. If no bats are found during the survey, then no further surveys or licencing will be required.

5.3. It is recommended that where possible the demolition and any external works are carried out outside of the nesting bird season. Where this is not possible, it is recommended that they are immediately preceded by a nesting bird survey to identify if there are any nesting birds present. If any active nests are found, a buffer zone around them should be left and no works should be carried out that will disturb the nest or prevent the birds from accessing to and from the nest, until the young have fledged.

5.4. To satisfy the NPPF requirements to provide enhancements on the site, it is recommended that an integrated bat box is provided in the new building. This should ideally be south facing and located at least 4m above ground level. In addition, it is recommended that one pair of integrated swift boxes is also provided in the new building. This should ideally be east-facing, away from the prevailing winds and the roads, and at least 3m above ground level.

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Prepared by:	
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Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou. BSc, MCIEEM.	Date: 16th April 2024.

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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”.