Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

DARTON BUSINESS PARK, BARNSLEY.

OS REF: SE 31365 09961.

BAT SURVEY REPORT.

Ref No: **240815.**

Date: **18th August 2024.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. A planning application has been submitted to carry out development works to a section of the Darton Business Park. These would involve partial demolition and then construction.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd were therefore commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Roost Assessment to establish whether there is potential for a bat roost in the building.

1.3. The initial Preliminary Roost Assessment was arranged for 12th August 2024. This report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I and II of this report provide background information with respect to protected species and the legal protection afforded to them.

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2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. The structure was checked for potential bat roosting sites in line by looking for the following signs: -

* Holes, cracks or crevices.
* Bat droppings.
* Prey remains.

2.2. A thorough external inspection was carried out from ground level for any gaps or openings of the structure which may provide suitable roost access points and field signs to indicate possible use by bats.

2.3. All 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.

2.4. 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 structures suitability for roosting bats made in accordance with these guidelines.

2.5. The subsequent dusk emergence and dawn return surveys were also conducted in accordance with Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition).

2.6. The survey was carried out by Derek Whitcher who has over twenty years' 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, CCW and NRW survey licences for, bat, great crested newt and white clawed crayfish.

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3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

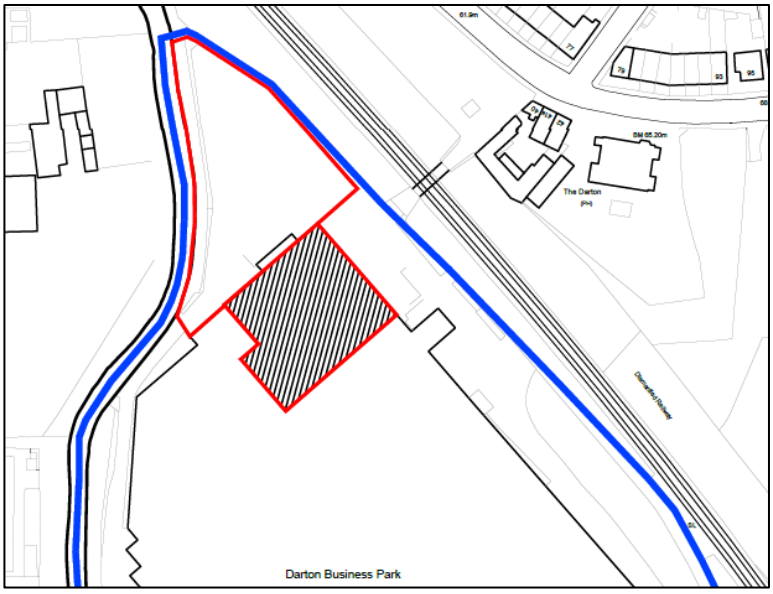
3.1.1. A data search request has been submitted to South Yorkshire Bat Group for existing records of bat roosts within 2km of the site.

3.1.2. The results of the data search results include records of bats foraging close to the site but the closest roost record is 1.18km from the site and that was a roost containing twenty-three Common Pipistrelles recorded in 2012.

3.2. Site Description.

3.2.1. The survey area is at the northern end of the Darton Business Park, at the location shown by the red arrow below.

3.2.2. The survey area is the section of the building shown cross hatched in black on the plan below, at the very northern tip of the buildings.



3.2.3. The site is located in a rural area surrounded by woodland and scrub and with the Wakefield railway line running up the eastern site boundary. This represents high value bat foraging habitat.

3.3. Preliminary Roost Assessment.

3.3.1. The existing building comprises three bays of the existing building, as shown in the photographs below.


3.3.2. The end bay of the building is a more recent add on and is constructed with steel panel clad walls and a pitched, corrugated steel covered roof.

3.3.3. The adjacent two bays have brick end walls with metal cladding above and pitched roofs that resemble Northern light roofs with extensive skylights on one side and metal cladding on the other.

3.3.4.There were occasional small gaps between cladding panels However, these were metal cladding panels that are subject to wide and sudden temperature fluctuations and are unattractive to roosting bats.

3.3.5. Internally the bays are used for manufacturing and storage with dividing walls between bays built with concrete blocks.

3.3.6. The ceilings are underdrawn with boarding that is generally in a poor condition with damaged sections, holes and sags.


3.3.7. No bat field signs were found inside or outside of the buildings. The three bays were assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, 4th Edition.

3.3.8. No bird activity was identified around the buildings and there was no evidence of nesting birds.

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4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. The survey area is part of a large commercial unit to the southwest of Darton. The railway line runs past the site and this provides good quality bat foraging habitat.

4.2. The buildings are industrial units with concrete block and brick walls with extensive areas of steel sheet cladding. There are pitched roofs covered with corrugated metal and cement sheets and skylights.

4.3. No bats or bat field signs were found anywhere inside or outside of the buildings and the buildings were assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, Edition 4. There will be no impact on roosting bats as a result of the proposed works.

4.4. The building was assessed to have little potential for nesting birds and no nests or nesting activity was identified around the building during the survey.

4.5. The proposed building alterations will have no negative impact on roosting bats or nesting birds.

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5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. The buildings were assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats and therefore no further surveys are deemed necessary.

5.2. There is little potential for the presence of nesting birds in the existing building and no nests or nesting activity was identified during the survey. Nevertheless, if the proposed works are to be undertaken between March and August, during the nesting season, it is recommended that a check for nesting birds is undertaken by the owner immediately prior to works commencing. In the unlikely event an active nest is found, it must be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

5.3. The NPPF requires biodiversity enhancements are provided in the converted building. However, in this instance, considering the open nature of the site around these buildings and the type of buildings in question, no biodiversity enhancements are recommended.

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Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou. BSc, MCIEEM.	Date: 20th August 2024.

6. REFERENCES.

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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”.

Toolbox Talk: Bats

Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

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18 species of bat have been recorded in Britain, 17 of which are known to breed here.

Identification.

Some species can be extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

Species such as the Brown Long Eared bat pictured above can be more easily identified in the hand. Whereas, the Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle are more difficult to identify.

Bats are more easily identified by field signs such as droppings or feeding remains.

Habitat.

Bats are highly specialised creatures and require a relatively narrow range of suitable conditions in order to sustain a viable population. Bats require an abundant supply of flying insect food in places where they can easily be caught and they need safe and reliable roosting sites, particularly during breeding and hibernation.

Bats are heavily dependent on buildings and trees for their roost sites and therefore extremely susceptible to disturbance from human activities. Development schemes can also isolate bat populations and sever roost sites from favoured feeding areas by removing hedgerows or other features used as commuting routes.

Bats are susceptible to disturbance and have been known to abandon roost sites after instances of disturbance. The effects of disturbance are more pronounced at different times of year. Serious disturbance during breeding can result in the breeding females being killed or the abandonment and subsequent starvation of dependant young. Repeated disturbance during winter hibernation can result in the death of adult animals from starvation.

The level of protection afforded to bats in the UK and European legislation reflects the fact that it is now generally accepted that bats have declined substantially, maybe by as much as 60%, over recent years. Most species are declining and vulnerable with all species being protected.

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 occasionally the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly Pipistrelle, can quickly adapt to manmade structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

Legislation.

Bats and their roosts are fully protected at all times (whether the bats are currently present or not). This protection comes from the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (updated by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000) and the Habitats Regulations 1994. Under this legislation it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection.

Under the Habitats Regulations, where bats may be affected by development proposals, a licence is required from Natural England. Natural England's published guidelines on the licence procedure indicate that if, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, the proposed activity is reasonably likely to result in an offence then a licence is required. If, on the other hand the proposed activity is reasonably unlikely to result in an offence, then a licence is not required.

If bats or bat field signs are identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk