



THE WATERMILL, LITTLE HOUGHTON.

OS REF: SE 41931 05677.

BAT SURVEY REPORT.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. There are plans to convert the existing garage and workshop to ancillary residential use at The Watermill, Little Houghton. The Local Authority has requested a bat survey in support of the planning application.

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 conversion. A day time survey was therefore carried out on 11th November 2020.

1.3. This report outlines the findings of those surveys and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I and II of this report provide additional information on protected species and the protection afforded to them and are designed to assist the reader in understanding the contents of this report.

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.) (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 subsequent dusk emergence survey was also conducted in accordance with Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition)*. It was conducted by a sufficient number of surveyors to cover all areas of roosting potential, in suitable weather conditions from fifteen minutes before sunset to at least an hour and half after.

2.7. All surveyors were equipped with Batbox Duet bat detectors, or similar. The use of static recording devices such as Anabat SD2's and video cameras with infrared lights were also utilised where appropriate.

2.8. 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.

3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. South Yorkshire Bat Group.

3.1.1.1. A desktop data search for existing records of protected species or designated sites within 2km of the surveyed area was submitted to South Yorkshire Bat Group.

3.1.1.2. South Yorkshire Bat Group hold records of number of large Pipistrelle roosts in the surrounding area including at Crabtree Close, Little Houghton (2005), Attlee Crescent (1991) and at Middlecliffe Hall (1997).

3.1.1.3. There are no records for the site and immediate surrounds.

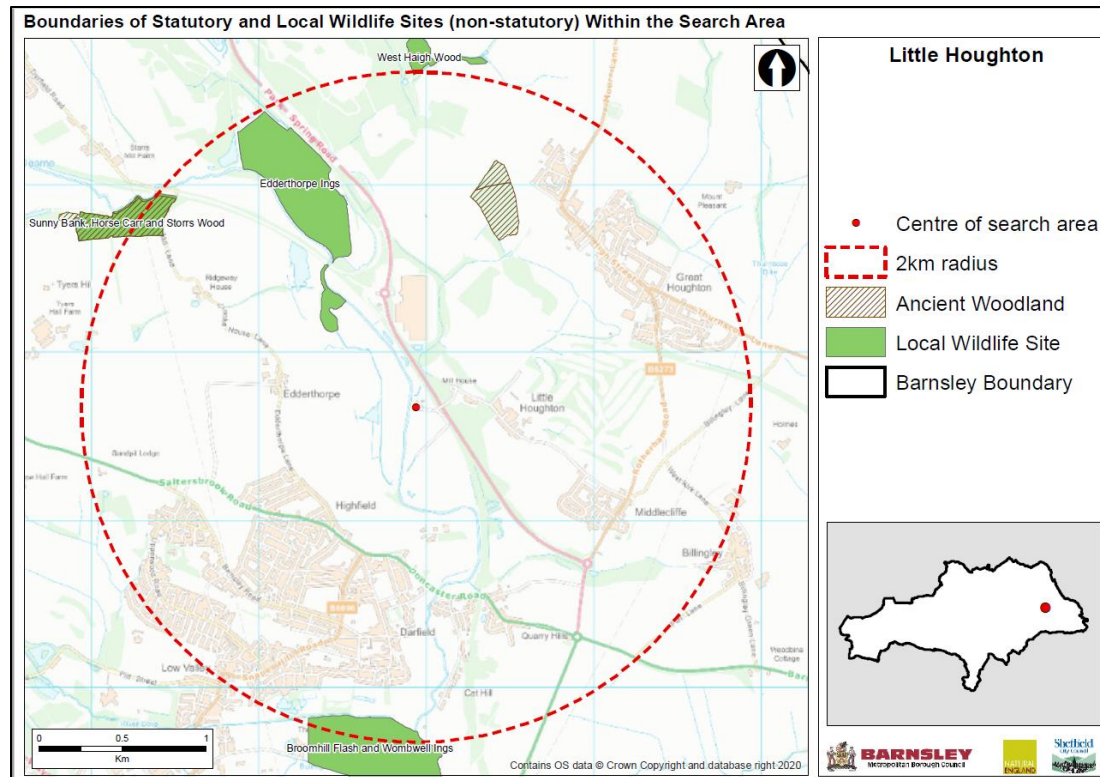
3.1.1.4. The data search results cannot be placed in the public domain but are available to the client on request.

3.1.2. Barnsley Biological Records Centre.

3.1.2.1. A desktop data search for existing records of protected species or designated sites within 2km of the surveyed area was submitted to Barnsley Biological Records Centre (BBRC).

3.1.2.2. BBRC have records of Local Wildlife sites within 2km of the survey area. The closest of these is Edderthorpe Ings approximately 1km to the north, shown on the map below.

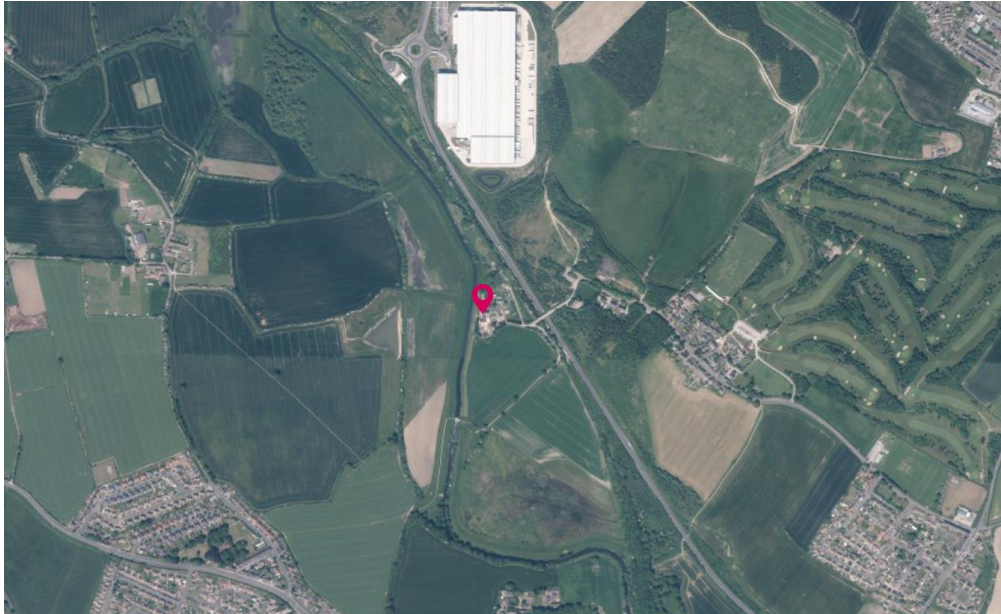
3.1.2.3. BBRC hold records of numerous species in the surrounding area but few bat records and most of those are pre 2001. None of the records are relevant to the survey area.



3.1.2.4. The full data search results cannot be placed in the public domain but are available to the client on request.

3.2. Site Description.

The survey area is a garage is in the grounds of a converted water mill adjacent to the River Dearne and west of Little Houghton, shown by the red symbol in the aerial photograph below. The site is surrounded by open farmland with Park Springs new road to the east and a large warehouse to the north.



3.3. Day Time Preliminary Bat Roost Appraisal.

3.3.1. The photographs below show the building surveyed. It is a tall, open fronted garage and workshop. The walls are sturdily built with stone on the outside and blockwork on the inside. Those walls are very well pointed and sound with no open joints, cracks or crevices suitable for use by bats.





3.3.2. The tops of the gable end walls are panelled with timber with gaps between to provide a good air flow.

3.3.3. The roof is supported on a metal frame and is covered with single skin, metal sheets with open eaves to the rear.



3.3.4. The design of the building and the materials used make it totally unsuitable for roosting bats and no bats or bat field signs were identified during the survey.

3.3.5. The open nature of the building renders it unlikely habitat for nesting birds and no old nests were found inside or outside the barn.

3.3.6. The surrounding habitat is open farmland with sparse hedgerows although the River Dearne flows past the site. This is assessed to be low to moderate value bat foraging habitat.

3.3.7. The building is assessed to have negligible bat roosting potential in line with the BCT Good Practice Guidelines.

4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. During the Preliminary Bat Roost Appraisal, the building was assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats. The surrounding habitat was assessed to be have low to moderate value habitat for foraging bats, with open farmland and the River Dearne close to the site. Conversion of the garage and workshop building to ancillary residential use will have no negative impact on bats.

4.2. No nesting bird activity was identified in the building and therefore the proposed work to the building will have no negative impact on nesting birds.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. The barn was assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats and therefore no further surveys are recommended and there is no requirement for a mitigation strategy or a Natural England licence.

5.2. No evidence of old nests was found during the survey. Nevertheless, any works to the building between March and September, during the nesting season should be preceded by a final check for nests. If any are found, these must be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

5.3. Biodiversity enhancements are recommended in the form of an integrated bat brick in the new gable end wall when the timber panelling is replaced with a stone wall.

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Appendix I. BAT INFORMATION.

Ecology

There are currently 18 species of bat residing in Britain, 17 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 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”.