Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

HILL TOP FARM, GREEN MOOR.

OS REF: SK 276-992.

BAT AND BIRD SURVEY.

Ref No: - **190843.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Planning permission is being sought for the change of use of one of the buildings at Hill Top Farm into a residential property.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd was commissioned to carry out a bat and bird survey of the building to support the planning application for the site.

1.3. This survey was carried out on 9th August 2019. This report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendix I of this report provides background information with respect to bats 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.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition),* with an assessment of the structures suitability for roosting bats made in accordance with these guidelines.

2.5. The survey area was searched for potential nest sites in vegetation, buildings etc on the site. All potential sites were observed over a suitable period of time for bird movements or calling male birds that would indicate the presence of a nest.

2.6. This survey was carried out by Steven Whitcher MCIEEM. Since 2002 Steven has gained extensive experience in a professional capacity as an ecological consultant carrying out ecology, protected species and Extended Phase 1 Habitat surveys. Steven's knowledge has been supplemented through the attendance of a variety of courses run by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) and the Field Studies Council (FSC) in the relative protected species, plant species and in carrying out Extended Phase 1 Habitat Surveys. Steven holds Natural England Survey Licences in respect of bats, great crested newts, hazel dormice, crayfish and barn owls, NRW Survey Licences in respect of bats and great crested newts and an SNH Survey Licence in respect of bats. Steven is also a Registered Consultant with Natural England and is confined spaces trained and qualified in tree climbing and aerial rescue.

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3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A desktop data search for existing records of bats within 2km of the surveyed area was submitted to South Yorkshire Bat Group (SYBG).

3.1.2. SYBG hold several records of bats within 2km of the surveyed area, the most notable records comprise:

- Records of Pipistrelle bats in flight approximately 350m to the south on Hunshelf Bank.
- Records of foraging and commuting Pipistrelle and Noctule bats at Don Hill Height, Hunshelf bank, approximately 450m west of the surveyed area.
- Records of small numbers of bats in flight at Trunce Farm, Green Moor, located 600m north of the surveyed area.
- The closest roost record comprises a record of a Pipistrelle roost at Delph Mews, approximately 600m east of the surveyed area.

3.1.3. SYBG hold further records located over 600m from the surveyed area. A full copy of the records received from SYBG can be provided on request.

3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The surveyed area was a small outbuilding within Hill Top Farm in Green Moor, as shown below.



3.2.2. The building comprises a small single storey outbuilding adjoined to two larger barns within Hill Top Farm at Green Moor. The building is currently disused and empty.





3.2.3. The walls of the building comprise cavity walls with the breezeblock interior and stone exterior. The windows and doors around the building are intact and sealed.



3.2.4. The roof of the building comprises a cement tiled pitched roof with a modern breathable lining felt present underneath the tiles.



3.2.5. Internally the building comprises several small rooms that are open into the roof void.



3.2.6. The building is located with the Hill Top Farm complex with a further stone barn adjoined to its eastern elevation and a large corrugated barn sheltering the north elevation.



3.2.7. Hill Top Farm is located in an exposed located on the top of a north facing hillside a short distance outside Green Moor village. The land immediately surrounding the farm comprises open arable and grazing land.



3.3. Survey Results.

3.3.1. The walls of the building were found to be in a very good condition with no cracks or voids in the stonework. Voids were present around the eaves of the building where the fascia boards were missing, allowing potential access to the cavity.



3.3.2. The voids were inspected during this survey and were found to be very clean with no bats or bat field signs identified.

3.3.3. Further voids were also identified around the verge of the building leading in between the roof tiles and lining felt. No bats or bat field signs were identified within the voids during this survey of the building.

3.3.4. The roof of the building was found to be in a good condition with no missing or slipped tiles and the ridge tiles in place and sealed. However, the shape of the tiles created occasional voids between them. No bat field signs were identified around the roof of the building during this survey.



3.3.5. No voids were identified that would allow bats access to the interior of the building and no bat field signs were identified within the building during this survey.

3.3.6. Overall the building was assessed as providing a **low** potential for roosting bats to be present due to the voids around the eaves, verges and roof, although no bat field signs were identified during this survey of the site. The voids also display signs or recent disturbance implying that these features have only recently been created.

3.3.7. No birds or bird nests were identified around the building during this survey. Swallows were identified in abundance within the Hill Top Farm complex although none within or around this building.

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4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. South Yorkshire Bat Group do not hold any existing records of bats within the surveyed building or immediately surrounding area. Therefore, there will be no impact on known bat roosts during the proposed works.

4.2. The surveyed building was found to generally be in a good condition with the only voids identified being large voids around the eaves and verge and occasional gaps between the roof tiles, all of what appear to have been created during recent works to the exterior of the building. No bats or bat field signs were identified around the building during this survey of the site.

4.3. The works involved in the change of use are predominantly internal works to convert the interior for residential use with the only works to the exterior being the works to cap the large voids that have been created around the eaves and verge with a fascia.

4.4. The internal works will not have an impact on roosting bats because no bat field signs were identified within the building and there are no access points for bats to enter the interior of the building.

4.5. If the remaining external works are carried out in a manner that will retain access to the voids in the eaves and verge for bats these works are also assessed as highly unlikely to impact on roosting bats.

4.6. However, if these voids are completely sealed the works may impact on any bats present in the voids and would remove the potential roost site.

4.7. Internal works to the building will not have an impact on roosting bats because there are currently no voids that would allow bats access to the interior of the building to roost.

4.8. No birds or bird nests were identified within the building although the voids around the eaves and verge provide suitable opportunities for nesting birds if they remain open. Therefore, if the voids around the building are covered prior to the next nesting season, which will commence in March 2020, there will be no impact on nesting birds.

4.9. If the voids remain open and works plan to commence during the nesting season then the works may have a major impact on any birds present in the building at that time.

4.10. Swallows were identified in abundance throughout the Hill Top Farm complex although none were identified around the building and no nesting opportunities were identified. Therefore, the proposed change of use to the building will not impact on swallows.

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5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. It is recommended that the voids around the eaves and verge of the building are capped in a way that will retain occasional voids, a minimum of 15mm x 75mm, along the bottom of the fascia's and allow bats continued access to the voids for roosting. If this can be achieved the works will not impact and bats and will therefore not require a Natural England licence.

5.2. If it is not possible to leave access for bats to the eaves and verge of the building it is recommended that a further dusk emergence bat survey of the building is carried out in advance of the fascia's being fitted to establish whether bats roost in the voids.

5.3. The survey should be carried out during the peak survey season for bats, which is May to August, and should be carried out by sufficient surveyors to cover all areas of the building. Further recommendations relating to the requirement for additional surveys and a Natural England licence should be made following the survey.

5.4. It is recommended that the fitting of the fascia's is carried out prior to March 2020, to avoid nesting birds utilising the voids during the nesting season.

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Prepared by:	
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Checked by:	
Jenny Whitcher Roebuck MCIEEM.	Date: 13th August 2019.

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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 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.