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Bank House Farm, Silkstone

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20220036-PRA

Preliminary Roost Assessment

SE 29067 05412

12th September 2022

Prepared by: Steven Whitcher, MCIEEM	Date: 12 th September 2022	Revision 1
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Disclaimer

This report has been prepared by Steven Whitcher for the sole use of the commissioning party. The report may not be relied upon by any other party without written agreement from Steven Whitcher.

In line with Chartered Institute of Environmental and Ecological Management (CIEEM) recommendations the findings of this survey are deemed valid for 18 months from the date of the survey.

1. Summary

Purpose	Planning permission has been passed for the demolition of walling at Bank House Farm in Silkstone and the construction of a new extension on the property (reference 2021/1127). Works on the building commenced on receipt of the planning permission. The requirement for variations to the works have been identified and therefore a further planning application has been submitted (reference 2022/0636). Barnsley Council have requested a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) as part of the application process.
Results	The building, in its current state, was identified to provide suitable opportunities for bats due to extensive voids within the walls of the building, assessed to be equivalent to a moderate potential for roosting bats. However, the majority of the voids appear to have been created during the existing works on the building or would previously have been internal within the building and are now open and exposed due to the demolition works. No existing records of bats were identified for the building covered by this survey, although this may be due to a lack of survey work on the building. Surveys carried out on the adjacent building during 2009/2010 identified a generally low level of bat activity around the site with no high levels of activity noted around this building during the surveys. It is assessed that the moderate potential for bats that the building currently displays has been created by the works carried out on the building, following the issuing of the planning permission. Any potential provided by the building prior to the works commencing has been impacted by the ongoing works and therefore it is likely that any roosts present would have already been destroyed, although there are no records to imply that roosts were present. The proposed works are unlikely to impact on the foraging and commuting opportunities provided by the land surrounding the building, particularly if a sensitive lighting scheme is implemented during the development.
Recommendations	It is recommended that the development works are completed during the transitional/hibernation period for bats, September to April, when bats are unlikely to be present in the building due to the areas of potential being open to the weather conditions. It is recommended that roosting opportunities are included in the building during the development, ensuring that roosting opportunities are present prior to the peak activity season of 2023. It is recommended that the roosting opportunities are created through the inclusion of bat bricks located in the walls of the building. The bat bricks should include both cavity and crevice type boxes, providing opportunities for the species identified to be present around the site. It is recommended that any external lighting is designed in a sensitive manner, in line with BCT and Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance (2018).
Conclusions	The works carried out on the building since the issuing of the initial planning permission in 2021 may have impacted on bat roosts, if they were present in the building. However, there are no existing records for the building and it is not possible to assess the potential provided by the building before the development commenced. If the works on the building are completed during the bats transitional/hibernation period and the main development works are completed prior to the peak season of 2023, including roosting opportunities for bats within the building, the potential impact on bats from the remaining development works is likely to be negligible.

2. Introduction

2.1. Purpose

2.1.1. Planning permission has been passed for the demolition of walling at Bank House Farm in Silkstone and the construction of a new extension on the property (reference 2021/1127). Works on the building commenced on receipt of the planning permission.

2.1.2. The requirement for variations to the works have been identified and therefore a further planning application has been submitted (reference 2022/0636). Barnsley Council have requested a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) as part of the application process.

2.3.1. Steven Whitcher was commissioned to carry out the PRA of the building to support the application for planning permission.

2.2. Site Description and Location

2.2.1. The site comprises Bank House Farm, a Grade II listed building located off Barnsley Road in Silkstone.



Figure 1: Showing the building covered by this survey (old image from before works began).

2.2.2. Works on the building commenced on receipt of planning permission, late 2021, and therefore the building currently only comprises two original walls supporting roof timbers but no roof covering. A small cellar space remains underneath the southern half of the building.

2.2.3. New build sections of wall are present to the southeast of the building, created as part of the ongoing works. The new sections tie into the old walls to a height of approximately 2m on the southwest elevation.



Figure 2: The remaining northwest elevation of the building.



Figure 3: The building viewed from the east.



Figure 4: The new build walls to the southeast of the building.

2.2.4. The land immediately surrounding the building comprises the land associated with Bank House Farm to the north, east and west. These areas comprise bare earth and piles of stone and scaffolding associated with the development works that have previously been carried out on the building.

2.2.5. The wider surrounding area comprises Barnsley Road, a busy public highway, to the north and west with the village of Silkstone beyond. To east and south the land comprises a

series of stone buildings associated with Bank House Farm and the adjacent property with open grazing pasture and woodland beyond.



Figure 5: Showing Bank House Farm in context with the surrounding area.

2.3. Proposals

2.3.1. The proposals are to reconstruct the building, in line with the plans included in Appendix I of this report.

3. Methodology

3.1. Desk Study

3.1.1. A desk study to identify existing records of bats within 2km of the survey area was carried out with South Yorkshire Bat Group (SYBG). A full copy of the results can be provided on request.

3.1.2. Personal databases held by Steven Whitcher were also searched for records of bats within 1km of the site.

3.1.3. The MAGIC website was searched for records of existing European Protected Species (EPS) licences within the surrounding area.

3.2. Field Study

3.2.1. A field survey of the site was undertaken by Steven Whitcher (MCIEEM) on the 7th September 2022. The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was carried out in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition (2016) and was also advised by BTHK Bat Roosts in Trees - A Guide to Identification and Assessment for Tree-Care and Ecology Professionals (2018) and BRHK Bat Roosts in Rock – A Guide to Identification and Assessment for Climbers, Cavers & Ecology Professionals (2021).

3.2.2. The weather at the time of the survey was fine, clear and still (BWS-1) with a temperature of 20°C recorded at the time of the survey.

3.2.3. During the survey all buildings, structures and trees were searched for bat roosting potential or evidence of existing roosts, including:

- Checking buildings, structure and trees for cracks, voids or other Potential Roost Features (PRF).
- Looking for signs of staining or worn areas indicating a roost entrance.
- Searching for droppings, foraging remains such as wings or other field signs.

3.2.4. The inspection included a visual inspection using a bright torch (1 million candle power), ladders and also an inspection with binoculars, a pole camera and an endoscope, where applicable.

3.2.5. The habitat around the site was also assessed for its suitability to support foraging and commuting bats by looking at the value of the surrounding habitat and the connectivity of the site to the wider area.

3.3. Limitations/Constraints

3.3.1. This PRA was carried out as a daytime survey and therefore does not provide accurate information on bat emergence or entry or on foraging and commuting activity in the surrounding area.

3.3.2. At the time of this survey the building was partially demolished and had undergone significant works associated with planning permission 2021/1127, including the removal of

roof slates and the demolition of significant areas of the building. This survey can therefore only assess the building in its current state and not comment on the bat potential provided by the building prior to the works commencing.

4. Results and Interpretation

4.1. Desk Study

4.1.1. The Barnsley Planning Portal includes details of bat surveys carried out by Whitcher Wildlife Ltd during 2009 and 2010, in association with development works on barns associated with Bank House Farm. The mitigation strategy included with the planning application outlines the presence of a day/transitional natterers bat (*Myotis nattereri*) roost within the barns. The mitigation strategy goes on to outline mitigation to be included in a garage associated with the buildings. There is no record of a granted Natural England licence for the site on the MAGIC website although mitigation was visible on the exterior of the garage building, which lies immediately adjacent to this site, during the site visit.

4.1.2. The survey results outlined within the Whitcher Wildlife Ltd mitigation strategy did not cover the house at Bank House Farm in detail, only the associated buildings. The surveys identified a generally low level of bat activity on the site during the activity surveys with natterers bat emergence and foraging activity, occasional common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) passing over the site from north to south and small numbers of noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) passing high over the site.

4.1.3. SYBG returned abundant records of bats within the 2km search area, although no records specific to the building covered by this survey.

4.1.4. The closest records are historic records (1995) of a common pipistrelle roost in a house within Silkstone village, located approximately 125m to the west of the site.

4.1.5. The remaining records are field records of several species of bat within the woodlands around the site and additional roost records within residential properties and the church in Silkstone village.

4.1.6. There is one record of a granted Natural England licence on the MAGIC website. The record refers to a 2016 licence covering brown long eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), common pipistrelle and natterers bat located approximately 150m to the southwest of the site.

4.1.7. Steven Whitcher does not hold any additional records of bats within the 2km search area.

4.2. Field Study

4.2.1. The walls of the building were found to be in a partially demolished state at the time of this survey. The walls therefore displayed extensive voids leading to the rubble fill where other walls had been demolished and where the internal plaster had been removed.

4.2.2. The windows within the remaining areas of the building comprised decorative mullion windows with some glazing and secondary glazing present but some windows completely missing, including the frame.

4.2.3. The building contained occasional wooden lintels that displayed voids leading between the timbers into the rubble fill of the walls, notably on previously internal walls.

Additional voids were identified in the walls where roof joist had been removed around the 1st floor ceilings.



Figure 6: The partially demolished walls of the building.



Figure 7: The joist holes in the walls.

4.2.4. The roof timbers that remain within the building were found to be in a reasonable condition with tight fitting joints, although the timbers are open to the weather with no external covering due to the demolition works.

4.2.5. The cellar below the building was inspected and the stonework was found to be in a reasonable condition with no significant cracks or voids. The space was wet, potentially due to the opening created by the missing window and door that remains open to the elements.



Figure 8: The exposed roof timbers.



Figure 9: The stonework and missing window within the cellar.

4.2.6. The new build sections of wall to the rear of the building comprise breeze block internal with a stone external face. The cavity of these areas of the walls was found to be packed with insulation leaving no opportunities for bats.

4.2.7. No bat field signs or significant areas of wear that would imply the presence of a previous bat roost were identified around the remaining areas of the building at the time of this survey.

4.2.8. The land surrounding the building was identified to provide a moderate value foraging and commuting habitat for bats due to the presence of tree lines and areas of open pasture.

4.2.9. A thorough assessment of the foraging and commuting activity within the vicinity of the site was not carried out as part of this survey.

4.3. Interpretation

4.3.1. The building, in its current state, was identified to provide suitable opportunities for bats due to extensive voids within the walls of the building, assessed to be equivalent to a moderate potential for roosting bats. However, the majority of the voids appear to have been created during the existing works on the building or would previously have been internal within the building and are now open and exposed due to the demolition works.

4.3.2. It was not possible to assess the potential provided by the building prior to the demolition works during this survey due to the extensive works carried out on the building.

4.3.3. Existing records for the area show that a natterers bat roost was identified within the adjacent barns associated with Bank House Farm during surveys carried out in association with the development of the buildings approximately 12 years ago.

4.3.4. No existing records of bats were identified for the building covered by this survey, although this may be due to a lack of survey work on the building. The surveys carried out on the adjacent building identified a generally low level of bat activity around the site with no high levels of activity noted around this building during the surveys.

4.3.5. Overall, it is assessed that the moderate potential for bats that the building currently displays has been created by the works carried out on the building following the issuing of the initial planning permission. Any potential provided by the building prior to the works commencing has been impacted by the ongoing works and therefore it is likely that any roosts present would have already been destroyed, although there are no records to imply that roosts were present.

4.3.6. The proposed works are unlikely to impact on the foraging and commuting opportunities provided by the land surrounding the building, particularly if a sensitive lighting scheme is implemented during the development.

5. Recommendations

5.1. For a building displaying a moderate potential for roosting bats it would usually be recommended that additional surveys are carried out, in line with the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Good Practice Guidelines. This would require at least two surveys of the building carried out during the peak survey season, which is May to August.

5.2. However, the potential provided by this building, in its current condition, appears to have been created by the works carried out on the building since the initial planning permission was issued during 2021. Therefore, the potential has been recently created and the building has been subjected to ongoing disturbance from the development works with no way to accurately assess the potential provided by the building prior to the development commencing.

5.3. It is therefore considered that delaying the development work until the peak season of 2023 is not necessary and would potentially only allow additional time for bats to find and begin using the voids created during the development. It is assessed that it would be potentially less impacting on roosting bats to continue the development works on the building, with care, and to include roosting opportunities within the building during the development.

5.4. It is recommended that the remaining works on the building, notably the areas of old stonework, are carried out with care. In the event that any bats or bat field signs are encountered during the works it is recommended that all works on the site cease and further advice is sought immediately.

5.5. It is recommended that the development works are completed during the transitional/hibernation period for bats, September to April, when bats are unlikely to be present in the building due to the areas of potential being open to the weather conditions. It is then recommended that roosting opportunities are included in the building during the development, ensuring that roosting opportunities are present prior to the peak activity season of 2023.

5.6. It is recommended that the roosting opportunities are created through the inclusion of bat bricks located in the walls of the building. The bat bricks should include both cavity and crevice type boxes, providing opportunities for the species identified to be present around the site.

5.7. In the event that additional works on the building have not commenced prior to May 2023 it is recommended that further bat activity surveys are carried out at that stage, as a precaution.

5.8. It is recommended that any external lighting, both during and post development, comprises a sensitive design in line with BCT and Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance (2018).

6. Conclusions

6.1. The works carried out on the building since the issuing of the initial planning permission in 2021 may have impacted on bat roosts, if they were present in the building. However, there are no existing records for the building and it is not possible to assess the potential provided by the building before the development commenced.

6.2. If the works on the building are completed during the bats transitional/hibernation period and the main development works are completed prior to the peak season of 2023, including roosting opportunities for bats within the building, the potential impact on bats from the remaining development works is likely to be negligible.

7. References

BTHK (2018). Bat Roosts in Trees – A Guide to Identification and Assessment for Tree-Care and Ecology Professionals. Exeter: Pelagic Publishing.

BRHK (2021). Bat Roosts in Rock – A Guide to Identification and Assessment for Climbers, Cavers & Ecology Professionals. Pelagic Publishing, Exeter.

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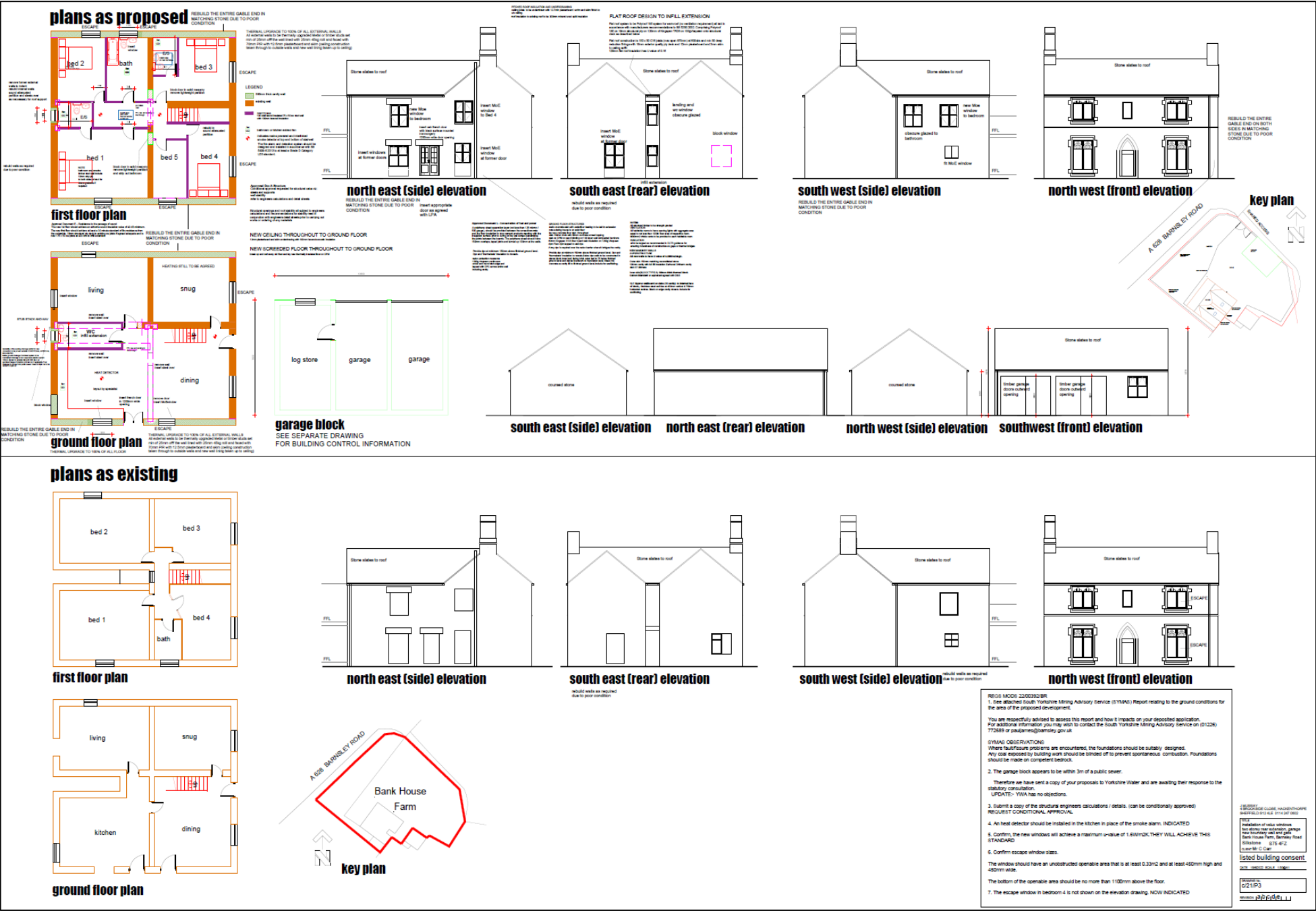
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Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents> (Accessed 5th April 2022).

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69> (Accessed 5th April 2022).

Appendix I: Development Plans



Appendix II: Planning Policy and Species Legislation Summary

1. Planning Policy

1.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the governments planning policies and how they should be applied. Section 15 of the policies refers to 'Conserving and enhancement the natural environment'. This outlines how local authorities should deal with biodiversity when considering planning applications.

1.2. NPPF paragraph 175 States:

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles;

- a) If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
- b) Development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*
- c) Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*
- d) Development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvement in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.*

2. Legislation Summary

Species	Legislation	Offences include
Bats	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)	○ Deliberately kill, injure or capture a bat; ○ Deliberately disturb bats; ○ Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat.
	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	○ Obstruct access to any structure or place which any bat uses for shelter or protection; or ○ Disturb any bat while occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.
Birds	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	○ Intentionally kill, injure, or take any wild bird; ○ Intentionally take, damage or destroy a nest of any such bird whilst it is in use or being built; or ○ Intentionally take or destroy an egg of any such bird.

Local authorities therefore have a duty to consider protected species as a material consideration when assessing planning applications. The ODPM Government Circular 06/2005 states: *'It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision.'*