Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

HILLSIDE LANE, THURLSTONE.

OS REF: SE 22608 – 02667.

DAYTIME BAT SURVEY.

Ref No: **190714.**

Date: **11th July 2019.**

Cliff Edge, Cliff Road, Darfield, Barnsley, S73 9HR.
Tel. 01226 753271. Fax. 01226 270993.
info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk www.whitcher-wildlife.co.uk
Company No. 4401613.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. The owners of a small stone barn off Hillside Lane Thurlstone are in the process of applying for planning permission to convert the barn into a residential dwelling.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd was therefore commissioned to carry out a daytime bat survey of the site to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. This survey was carried out on 11th July 2019 and this report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendix I and II of this report provides additional information on bats and nesting birds 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.) (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. This survey was carried out by Stevan Roebuck. Since 2011 Stevan has had experience carrying out great crested newt and bat surveys. Since 2013 Stevan has had experience in a professional capacity as a Wildlife Consultant carrying out ecology surveys, badger, great crested newt and bat surveys. Stevan holds a Natural England Survey License for Great Crested Newts and Bats and is currently working towards gaining further Natural England, NRW and SNH survey licences. Stevan is also a Qualifying Member of CIEEM.

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3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data search request was submitted to South Yorkshire Bat Group for any records of bats or bat roosts within a 2km radius around the surveyed barn.

3.1.2. The data search provided various records of bats within 2km of the site, although the closest recorded roost was a Common Pipistrelle roost located 761m northwest of the surveyed barn. There are no records specific to this barn.

3.2. Site Description.

3.2.1. The surveyed area was a small barn that lies just off Hillside Lane, Thurstone. The aerial photograph below shows the surveyed barn and the immediate surrounding area.



3.2.2. The aerial photograph below shows the wider surrounding area.



3.2.3. The barn lies within a small grazing field. The field is surrounded by areas of grazing land and scattered residential dwellings.

3.3. Daytime Survey Results.

3.3.1. The surveyed barn is constructed with rubble filled stone walls that have numerous large voids and gaps. The barn is split into two sections inside, with the northeast section currently being used to house sheep and is open to the roof with no loft space or liner. The windows and doors are open leaving access into the barn.

3.3.2. The southwestern section is currently used to store hay and is open to the roof with no loft space or liner. The window is well fitted with no gaps to the inside, although there are gaps above the timber door. The photographs below show the barn.





3.3.3. The roof is sloping and covered with corrugated metal sheets supported with timber beams and is in a good state of repair.

3.3.4. No bats or bat field signs were identified during this survey. The stone filled rubble walls may provide low potential for roosting bats and were surveyed with an endoscope camera where possible, although some of the voids could not be thoroughly surveyed.

3.3.5. The rubble filled stone walls may provide a suitable habitat for nesting birds during the nesting bird season, which extends from March to September each year. Within the northeast section of the building, three old swallow nests were identified on the timber roof beams. No swallows were identified during this survey and no active nests were identified within the stone walls. The photograph below shows two of the swallow nests.



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4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. The barn was in a fair condition for the type and age of the building. However, the rubble filled stone walls do contain various voids that may provide low potential for roosting bats.

4.2. The rubble filled walls were surveyed with an endoscope camera where possible. No bats or bat field signs were identified, although some of the voids were deep and the endoscope could not access some of the voids due to curves in the voids.

4.3. No bat field signs such as droppings, feeding remains or staining where identified internally or externally on or around the building. Therefore, as not all the gaps and voids in the stone walls could not be thoroughly surveyed with the endoscope camera, there may be an impact on roosting bats if they are present during the proposed development.

4.4. The stone walls of the barn may provide suitable habitat for nesting birds during the nesting bird season, and old swallow nests were found within the barn. Therefore, if the proposed development is carried out during the nesting season, there may be an impact on nesting birds.

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5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. It is recommended that a further bat dusk emergence survey is carried out on the barn before the proposed development is carried out as not all the voids within the stone walls could be thoroughly surveyed with the endoscope camera.

5.2. Bat dusk emergence surveys must be carried out during the main bat activity period, which extends from May to August each year. If bats are identified to be roosting within the barn, further surveys may be required, and a Natural England EPS licence will have to be applied for and a suitable mitigation strategy put into place before the works can commence.

5.3. It is recommended that any works to the barn are carried out outside of the nesting bird season, which extends from March to September each year. If the works will be carried out during the nesting season, the works must be preceded by a thorough nesting bird survey carried out by a suitably experienced person. Any nests that are identified must be left undisturbed until the young have fledged from the nest.

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Prepared by:	
Stevan Roebuck	Date: 11th July 2019.

Checked by:	
Jenny Whitcher Roebuck MCIEEM.	Date: 12th July 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.

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

Ecological Consultants

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

Toolbox Talk: Nesting Birds

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The bird nesting season varies according to the weather each year but generally commences in March, peaks during May and June and continues until September.

A bird's nest is the place in which a bird lays and icubates its eggs. Some species build a nest structure while other species lay their eggs directly onto the ground or on a rocky ledge. Nests can be constructed from a variety of materials and are usually lined with feathers or fur.

Identification.

Some birds construct nests in an area where it can be seen while others construct nests that are hidden from view and are more difficult to identify.

The photograph to the right shows a Moorhen nest which can easily be seen.





Nests can also be identified from field signs without the necessity to see the nest itself. The presence of a nest can be identified by seeing the adult birds leaving and returning to the nest regularly with food to feed the chicks.

The photograph to the left shows a Wren's nest in overhanging tree roots, which is almost impossible to see.

Care should be taken at any time during the nesting season particularly when regular bird activity is seen, or birds can be heard calling.





Habitat.

Birds regularly nest in a variety of places with some species nesting in buildings or vegetation and others nesting on the ground or on water. However, birds may nest in any habitat or situation if they identify a suitable nest site.







Legislation.

Part 1. -(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 states that:

If any person intentionally or recklessly:

- 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 or recklessly:

- 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.

If a nest or potential nesting activity is identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk