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Bat Scoping Survey to

Birkland Farm
Fullshaw Lane
Langsett
S36 9FD

6th February 2024

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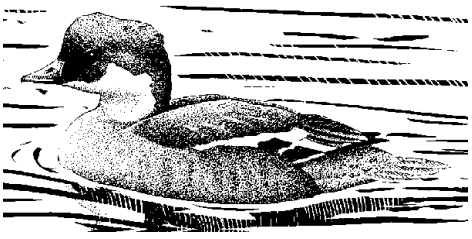

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1. Summary

1.1 A bat scoping survey has been carried out to outbuildings at Birklands Farm, Langsett to determine if there are features that have any potential to be used by roosting bats and whether bats are present or likely to be present. The survey is required as part of the planning application process and was undertaken outside the optimal time for bat occupancy, and therefore aimed to establish the *likelihood* of bats in the building. The application seeks to demolish the existing buildings and replace with a dwelling.

1.2 The site consists of a large barn and several smaller outbuildings. The large barn is constructed from blockwork to around 2m with single wooden slatted walls and a sheeted roof with translucent panels over a steel frame. Adjoining this is a large, ramshackle barn with tin sheeting to roof and some sides, with the remaining sides made of wooden slats. All the outbuildings are single thickness wooden or blockwork walls and there is a single steel container unit. Despite the number of buildings present, they offer a very limited number and diversity of potential roosting features (PRFs) and it is highly unlikely that the site could support a maternity roost. There is evidence of swallows using some of the outbuildings but a barn owl box inside one of the barns is completely unused, though barn owl is known from a nearby site.

1.3 The site is located in a rural area but occupies an exposed and open position and will be regularly subjected to windy conditions. There is limited foraging habitat other than a small pine shelter belt and foraging habitat in general is very limited in the area. Although the site is in an exposed location, there are other dwellings close by which are likely to provide much better roosting opportunities and, while it is highly unlikely that bats are roosting at the site, small numbers are likely to occur locally.

1.4 Given the limited number of PRFs, the site is considered unlikely to support bats and the presence of a maternity roost seems very unlikely. It is possible that the site could support the occasional transitional or day roosting bat, though, given the location and amount of foraging, this is speculation and therefore, the buildings have been assessed as being of **negligible** value to roosting bats. Inclusion of a permanent roosting feature in any new dwelling would very much increase the site's potential to support bats.

1.5 Loss of nesting sites for swallows is a greater issue at this site than potential loss of bat roosting features. Demolition of the outbuildings must not take place during the breeding season, particularly if the swallows have returned to nest, in which case the outbuildings will not be dismantled until the nesting season has finished or the young have fledged.

1.6 There are no requirements for further bat survey work and compensation has been prescribed.

2. Introduction

2.1 A bat scoping survey was carried out to Birklands Farm, Fulshaw Lane, Langsett S36 9FD (NGR SE208009) to determine whether bats have or are using the building as a roost site. The site was also checked for the presence of nesting birds.

2.2 The current proposal seeks planning permission to demolish the existing buildings and replace with a new residential dwelling.

2.3 The survey took place at a time considered to be outside the optimal period for bat occupancy aimed to establish the following:

- The likelihood of bats using the buildings by undertaking a scoping survey.
- Identify any potential roosting features (PRFs).
- Determine if activity surveys are required.
- Provide an impact assessment of the development on bats.
- Define mitigation proposals where required.
- Assess the requirement for a protected species licence.
- Assess the building for use by nesting birds.

3. Methodology

3.1 The site was surveyed in accordance with BCT best practice guidelines and surveyor experience by John Gardner, a surveyor with 43yrs field experience in searching for bats and is registered to use the Class Survey Licence WML CL20 (Level 4). The licence number is 2015-15656-CLS-CLS.

3.2 The interior and exterior of the building was inspected during daylight using torches, binoculars and an endoscope. All normal signs of bats were looked for including bats, dead baby bats, bat droppings, prey remains, scratching and staining of entry and exit holes.

3.3 The building was assessed for its degree of potential to support roosting bats including assessing the building design, construction, materials, and condition. This combined with an assessment of the location of the site and the surrounding habitat in terms of bat suitability allows an assessment to be made as to the potential of the building to support bats. Factors such as the proximity of good foraging areas (woodland, water bodies) and features that link the site to the wider surrounds such as linear features (hedgerows etc) were also considered.

3.4 This report sets out the findings of a daytime scoping survey carried out to the above site on Tuesday 6th February 2024. The report highlights the ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed works and appraises the potential impacts. Appropriate actions to ensure the protection of bats are identified and mitigation measures detailed where appropriate.

4. Survey constraints

4.1 There were no constraints to the survey.

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5. Site Description

5.1 The site consists of a large, prefabricated barn and associated outbuildings in a rural location although the site is exposed and has limited foraging close by. There are other residential dwellings in the area which may offer greater roosting potential although bat numbers are likely to be limited given the location.

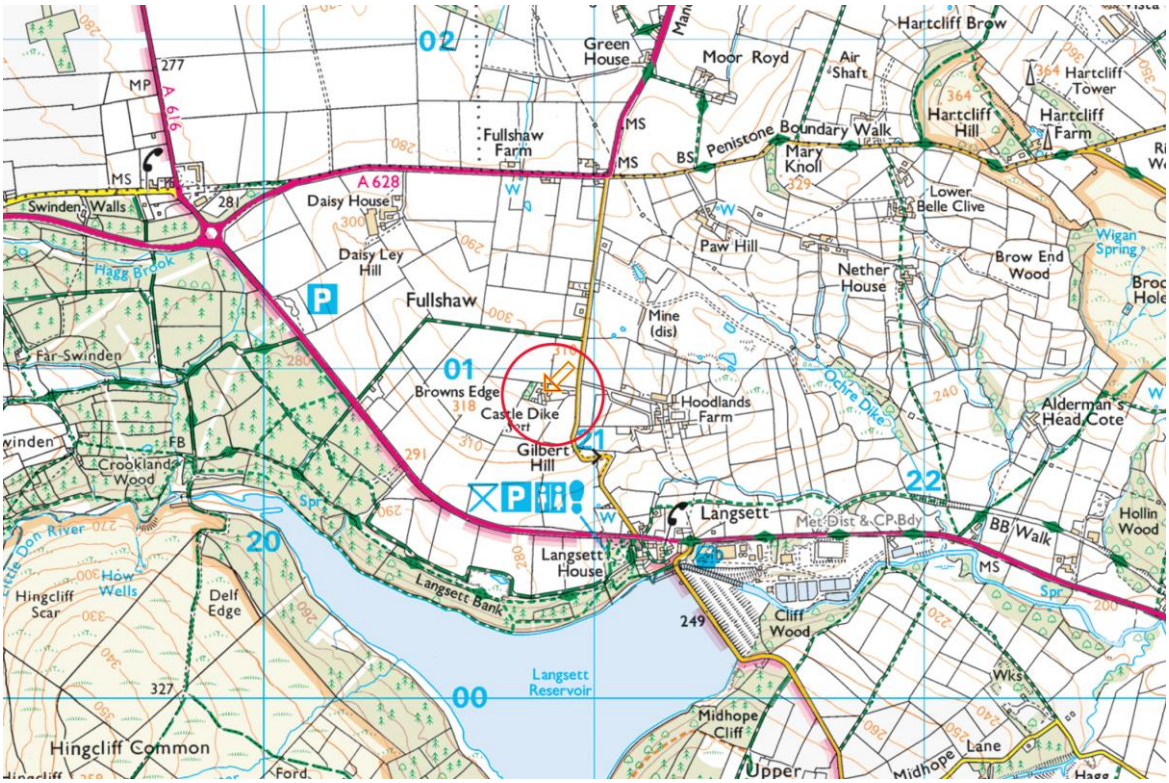

Figure 1. Site location plan

Figure 2 Aerial view of the site, surrounds and specific buildings surveyed.

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6. Desk Study

South Yorkshire Bat Group hold no records for the site and there are very few records from the locale with most being historical. The local bat population is likely to be unremarkable given the location which is exposed and has limited connectivity to the wider landscape.

7. Activity surveys

7.1 No activity surveys were carried out during the present survey as it was undertaken outside the optimal period for bats and activity surveys are not considered necessary at this site for reasons set out below.

8. Survey results

Scoping survey

The site comprises a large, prefabricated barn with adjoining barn and associated outbuildings. The main barn is constructed from single thickness blockwork walls with inset wooden slatted sections, The roof is single thickness cement fibre sheeting over a steel portal frame and there are several large translucent light panels allowing daylight to the interior. The sheeted roof has no ridge beam and is wholly unsuited to ridge dwelling species and the single thickness sheeting offer no roosting potential. There are no other features internally that would allow bats to roost. The walls are single thickness blockwork without any form of wall cavity and in some sections, the walls are full height while in other sections they reach around 2m and have wooden infill. The wooden sections are single thickness and have no potential roosting features. The west elevation has been coated with a bitumen sealant which also extends over the sheeting on the roof of a small, single-storey lean-to. The east elevation is blockwork and has been covered in a climbing plant at some stage which obscures the facia section. The facia, however, sits flush to the wall and has no roost potential. The west elevation has a wooden lean-to stable against and also has no value to bats. This building is considered to have negligible value to bats.

Photo 1 showing the main barn

Running off the south elevation of the main barn is a small wooden lean-to stable and a large barn which has been cobbled together from various materials and is in a poor state of repair. The walls are general made of tin sheeting as is the roof. Internally, the barn is partition off into livestock sections using all kinds of odd timbers, all of which are single thickness and do not offer roost potential. The roof is flat and made from tin sheets and is of no value to bats and has been assessed as being of negligible value to bats.

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Photo 2. Showing large ramshackle barn extending south off main barn

Running along the north boundary is a set of outbuildings that have been knocked together using a variety of materials from old doors to railway sleepers and bits of tin sheeting. One building is constructed from breezeblock but has no potential roosting features. None of the buildings are considered to be of any potential interest to bats and certainly would not be capable of supporting a maternity roost. One of the buildings is favoured by swallows and is indicated below,

Photo 3. Showing the outbuildings including one used by swallows.

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9. Interpretation and analysis

Despite the size of the buildings, all have a very limited number and diversity of potential roosting features. None of the walls or roofs of any of the structures offer any kind of cavity, ridge space or tiles that would allow bats to roost. Blockwork walls and sheeted roofing will prevent any great numbers of bats using the site and it is extremely unlikely that there would be a maternity roost present.

The site occupies and exposed position and has very little in the way of quality foraging habitat, though there is a thin line of scrub vegetation lining the sides of the track and a pine wind break at the rear of the site. It's not likely to provide foraging for any numbers of bats and the greater numbers of bats will be found closer to Langsett and the surrounding woodland. Although the site is of low quality to bats, there will be small numbers present as there are other residential dwellings to the east of the site that offer greater roosting opportunities.

There is a barn owl box in one of the large barns which has been in situ for a number of years but has not been used. There was no evidence of barn owls using the site, but they are known from Hoodlands Farm opposite. Swallows use the large ramshackle barn in small numbers and also use one of the outbuildings to nest. These will suffer a greater impact from the development than bats. Care should be taken not to disturb nesting birds if works are undertaken during the bird breeding season (end of February to early August).

The buildings and the location suggest a very low probability of bats using this site and no further surveys are required.

10. Impact assessment

The buildings are assessed as being of negligible interest to bats and surveyor experience in conjunction with the assessment of the site suggests there will be no impact to local bats. There will be a greater impact to nesting swallows.

11. Mitigation and Compensation

The buildings offer limited potential roosting sites and is unlikely to support bats. Consequently, there is no requirement for a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML). There might be some loss of minor potential roosting features, but these losses can easily be compensated for by the inclusion of permanent roosting features. Swallows should be preserved at the site by leaving the outbuilding that they currently use or by creating specific nesting spaces in new garage or outbuildings on site.

Timings

- There are no constraints with regard to bats, but swallows are likely to be present and nesting from May through to September. No works are to be carried out while nesting birds are present.

Mitigation

- The large tin-covered barn on the south of the site should have the roof stripped before mid-April as this will prevent swallows from nesting there. The smaller outbuilding could be left in situ for them to use until a new building with nesting facilities is created or artificial swallow nesting sites are provided.

- The barn owl box currently in the barn should be erected on site either on the side of a building or it can be pole mounted along a boundary.

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Compensation

- A permanent bat roosting feature will be included on the west and south elevation of the new dwelling and be in situ prior to occupation. The feature will be incorporated into the structure of the dwelling and will remain in perpetuity. Schwegler and Ibstock both provide a range of feature that can be discretely incorporated in most structures. The location of these features can be marked on plans.

- Provision should be made to allow swallows to continue to use the site by either leaving (or relocating) the existing outbuilding or by allowing nesting in new garages or outbuildings either by specific design of the building or by adding artificial nesting sites.

12. Conclusion

A bat scoping survey carried out to Birkland Farm, Langsett determined that the buildings offer limited or negligible bat roosting features and that it is unlikely that bats would use the site as a nursery roost. Barn owls were not recorded despite being present locally, though swallows are known to use the site.

Although the development is unlikely to impact bats, permanent roosting sites to be incorporated into the new dwelling have been specified along with suggestions that will allow swallows to continue to use the site.