HAGG WOOD QUARRY, HUDDERSFIELD,

WEST YORKSHIRE

Results of Tree Assessment, including to establish their potential for roosting bats

Prepared for Abacus Stone Sales Limited

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Terms of Reference

SLR Consulting Limited (SLR) was commissioned by Abacus Stone Limited to undertake an assessment of trees at their premises at Hagg Wood Quarry, Woodhead Road, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire (central OS grid reference SE 14971065).

The survey was undertaken to establish the intrinsic ecological value of a small number of relatively young trees located on the top of an unstable bank, on the edge of Hagg Wood, including an assessment of their potential to support roosting bats.

Whilst Hagg Wood is designated ancient woodland (i.e. one in existence since before 1600) in the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) for West Yorkshire[1], the bank on which the trees are growing comprises 'made up' ground. Proposals involve the removal of the trees concerned, as due to the unstable nature of the ground in which they are growing they need to be removed for safety reasons, and in order to stabilise the bank itself.

1.2 Relevant Legislation[2]

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA), as amended, provides the main vehicle for the protection of native wild plants, within England. It is an offence to uproot any wild plant without permission from the landowner or the occupier. It is also an offence to pick or damage other plants which are included under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act.

The WCA is also the principal legislation dealing with non-native invasive plants which are listed in Schedule 9 of the Act. The Act makes it illegal to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild any of these 'Schedule 9' plants. Offences under section 14 carry a maximum penalty of a £5,000 fine and/or six months imprisonment on summary conviction (i.e. at Magistrates' Court) and an unlimited fine (i.e. whatever the court feels to be commensurate with the offence) and/or wo years imprisonment on indictment (i.e. at Crown Court).

Section 14(4A) of the WCA, as inserted by section 23 of the Infrastructure Act 2015, enables species control agreements and orders to be made by environmental authorities to ensure that landowners take action on invasive non-native species, or permit others to enter the land and carry out those operations, to prevent their establishment and spread.

[1]The Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) was developed by the Nature Conservancy Council and its successor body English Nature. It is an electronic dataset which identifies and records information about ancient woodland in England on a county basis. The AWI for West Yorkshire was first published in 1994. For the purposes of the Inventory 'ancient' woods are those which are believed to have been in existence since at least 1600 AD and which have only been cleared for underwood or timber production. Criteria for inclusion required a woodland site to have an area of at least two hectares as shown on the 1:25,000 scale 1930s base maps used from the start of the project. Other determinants were presence on old maps (OS 1st edition 1805-1873), old estate maps or documents; name, shape, relief and internal boundaries; its location relative to other features such as parish boundaries; ground survey information such as flora and historic features such as wood-banks, charcoal pits etc. and aerial photography interpretation. The sites include ancient semi-natural woodland, ancient replanted woodland and ancient woodland sites which have been cleared.

[2] Please note that the summary of relevant legislation provided here is intended for general guidance only. The original legislation should be consulted for definitive information.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Ecological Assessment

The survey was carried out by Mr Gary Oliver, Principal Ecologist with SLR Consulting, on the 13th of August 2020. Mr Oliver has over 25 years' relevant experience within ecological consultancy and is a competent botanist, and holder of a Level 2 Natural England bat survey licence.

Survey focussed on assessing the intrinsic value of the trees to be affected, including a search for any Potential Roosting Features (PRFs).

The trees concerned are illustrated in the JCA Tree Protection Plan and are reported to comprise seven young, semi-mature or early mature silver birch (*Betula pendula*); a young goat willow (*Salix caprea*) and a young peduncule oak (*Quercus robur*).

2.2 Limitations

The field survey was undertaken at an optimal time of year and by an experienced and suitably qualified ecologist; therefore no survey limitations applied.

2.3 Quality Assurance and Environmental Management

The surveyor is a Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM), and follows the code of professional conduct set out by the institute when undertaking ecological work.

3.0 RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the silver birch, goat willow and pedunculate oak trees referred to on the JCA Tree Protection Plan, the section of unstable bank also supported sapling/ young holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*).

The ground flora comprises predominantly of a mix of bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) along with scattered tall ruderal herbs such as broad-leaved willowherb (*Epilobium montanum*) and raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*) as well as broad buckler fern (*Dryopteris dilata*) and occasional sapling hawthorn (*Crataugus monogyna*). Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) and bents (*Agrostis* sp.) were also recorded in more open areas, a short distance back from the top of the bank.

None of the trees to be removed were of high intrinsic nature conservation value (refer to Plates 1 and 2), and no potential bat roosting features were noted to be present in any of the trees.

Plate 1: View of southern end of bank supporting trees to be removed, looking north

Plate 2: View northern end of bank supporting trees to be removed, looking south

Furthermore none of the trees supported active bird nests and no other potential ecological constraints, such as badger setts, were noted to be present at the top of the bank or within 30 metres of the working area.

It is therefore recommended that, subject to agreement from the local planning authority, that the unsafe trees should be removed as soon as possible, and that sections of their trunk should be used to create log piles within the woodland at the top of the bank. It is then recommended that the area should then be left to vegetate naturally, once bank stabilization works have been undertaken.

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