



PIPERWELL FARM, SHEPLEY.

OS REF: SE 19336 09766.

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT.

Ref No: 251009.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. An application is being prepared to convert a farmhouse and barn building into a residential dwelling.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd was therefore commissioned to carry out a preliminary roost assessment (PRA) of the buildings to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. The site survey was carried out on 2nd October 2025 and this report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I and II of this report provides additional information on bats and the protection afforded to them and is designed to assist the reader in understanding the contents of this report.

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.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th 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 Jess Mason MSc ACIEEM FRGS. Since 2018 Jess has had experience in a professional capacity as an Ecologist carrying out ecology surveys and phase I habitat surveys. Jess holds Natural England survey licences in respect of bats (2023-11208-CL18-BAT), barn owls (2024-11866-CL29-OWL), and great crested newts (2023-11456-CL08-GCN), and a Scottish Natural Heritage survey licence in respect of barn owls. She has also successfully completed a number of courses run by CIEEM and the FSC in the relative protected species and carrying out habitat surveys and has a MSc in Biological Recording. Jess is an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data search request was submitted to the West Yorkshire Bat Group (WYBG) for records of bats and bat roosts within 2km of the survey area.

3.1.2. WYBG returned nine records of at least one bat species within 2km of the survey area. However, all are more than ten years old. The closest record is a possible roost record belonging to one of the *Vespertilionidae* bat species, approximately 430m from the survey area.

3.1.3. The data search is available to the client on request although this must not be placed within the public domain.

3.2. Site Description.

3.2.1. The site is located in a rural area near Shepley, West Yorkshire. It is surrounded by agricultural fields and scattered agricultural buildings in all directions, with an active sandstone quarry located further to the northeast.

3.2.2. The aerial map below shows the location of the survey area in red, and the surrounding landscape.



3.2.3. The survey area comprises a two-storey stone-built farmhouse, with an attached two-storey stone-built barn, and an attached single-storey stone-built stable. The layout of the property is shown in the aerial image below. Each part of the property has been labelled for the purposes of this report.



3.3. Preliminary Roost Assessment.

3.3.1. Farmhouse

3.3.1.1. The building has a stone construction, and the walls are in poor condition with multiple cracks, gaps or crevices throughout all aspects of the building which were suitable for roosting bats. Additionally, at least one of the windows was cracked, providing a potential access point into the building. Examples of the overall condition of the walls are provided in the photographs below.





3.3.1.2. In addition, a timber frame has been erected on the southern gable end of the building to support the wall due to structural instability. There are gaps between the frame and the wall, providing potential roost features for bats. Furthermore, there are gaps between the timber boards used to construct the frame, providing further potential roost features within the frame itself.



3.3.1.3. The roof is a pitched roof with stone tiles, which is in poor condition with many lifted, slipped, broken or missing tiles providing multiple potential roost features or entry points into the building for bats. There are also gaps underneath many of the ridge tiles providing potential roost features for bats. In addition, a stone chimney stack is present which has gaps in the mortar, providing further potential roost features for bats.



3.3.1.4. One gable end is present on the southern aspect of the building. The gable end has multiple gaps in the stonework and multiple areas of missing mortar beneath the roof tiles, providing potential roost features and/or potential access points into the building for roosting bats.



3.3.1.5. Internally, the loft space could not be inspected due to safety concerns around the stability of the floors. However, the loft space could be viewed from holes where the ceiling had partially collapsed. These viewing points showed an unlined roof with several gaps through which daylight could be seen. No field evidence of bats was found on the upper floor of the building underneath the gaps to the loft space, but it appeared that the floor had been recently swept.



3.3.1.6. Overall, due to the large number of potential access points into the loft space, and also many potential roost features under tiles or within gaps in the stonework of the walls, the farmhouse is assessed as having **high potential** for roosting bats

3.3.1.7. Due to the unlined roof, the loft space is unlikely to maintain the stable temperatures required for hibernation. Furthermore, due to the surrounding agricultural land, there is very little ecological connectivity between the buildings and any other suitable foraging/commuting habitats. However, it is possible that any bats found roosting through the summer months may also be present during the winter months. Therefore, the farmhouse is assessed as being a **non-classic hibernation site**.

3.3.1.8. No evidence of nesting birds was identified within the building. However, the gaps in the roof could provide potential nesting habitat for birds.

3.3.2. *Barn*

3.3.2.1. The building has a stone construction, and the walls are in poor condition with multiple cracks, gaps or crevices throughout all aspects of the building which were suitable for roosting bats. The walls are cavity walls, and several gaps lead to potentially large gaps within the cavity, providing potential roost features for multiple bats. The windows and doors were generally well-sealed by plywood boards. However, a purpose-built owl entry point is present on the eastern gable end, providing a potential entry point into the building for bats.



3.3.2.2. A stone-built column is present on the northern aspect of the building, which is partially covered with mortar. Most of the mortar has weathered away, leaving exposed gaps within the stonework and gaps underneath the mortar itself, providing potential roost features for bats.



3.3.2.3. The roof is a pitched roof with corrugated asbestos roofing sheets and clear plastic skylights. The roofing sheets extend on to the eastern gable end, where they are lifted away from the wall. The gaps between the sheets and the walls provide potential roost features for bats.



3.3.2.4. One gable end is present on the eastern aspect of the building. The gable end has multiple gaps in the stonework, as well as a large owl access point, providing potential roost features and/or potential access point for bats.



3.3.2.5. Internally, the majority of the barn is open and double height with a vaulted ceiling. There is a large gap in the roof where it has partially collapsed, providing potential access for bats. Furthermore, there are several gaps in the walls through which daylight can be seen. Parts of the walls have been lined with breezeblocks. However, where the stone walls remain, there are gaps within the stonework which could be accessed by roosting bats.

3.3.2.6. No field evidence of bats was found inside the barn, but the floor was partly covered by straw and other materials, and therefore it is possible that any droppings on the floor may have been obscured.



3.3.2.7. Two rooms are present on the ground floor in the eastern part of the barn. A small number of gaps to the outside were present in the walls. However, no field evidence of bats was found in these rooms. A further room was present above these rooms, but this was not accessible during this survey.



3.3.2.8. Overall, due to the large number of potential access points into the barn, and also many potential roost features under tiles or within gaps in the stonework of the walls, the barn is assessed as having **high potential** for roosting bats

3.3.2.9. Due to the materials used in the roof and the large gaps which will leave the building exposed to the elements, the barn unlikely to maintain the stable temperatures required for hibernation. Furthermore, due to the surrounding agricultural land, there is very little ecological connectivity between the buildings and any other suitable foraging/commuting habitats. However, it is possible that any bats found roosting through the summer months may also be present during the winter months. Therefore, the barn is assessed as being a **non-classic hibernation site**.

3.3.2.10. Barn owl pellets and feathers were identified throughout the open section of the barn. The number of pellets found was more than ten, which suggests that the barn

is a regular roost. The pellets varied in age from this current breeding season (less than eight months old) to more than a year old. In addition, multiple adult feathers were identified, as well as many droppings beneath timber ledges. The barn owl access point identified in section 3.3.2.4. leads directly into this barn via the upstairs room which could not be accessed during this survey. Therefore, it is possible that further field evidence, or the barn owls themselves, may have been present in that room. From the field evidence found in the accessible parts of the building, it is considered likely that barn owls are using the barn for breeding.



3.3.2.11. In addition, two further disused nests were identified, including one swallow nest and one other species.



3.3.3. *Stables*

3.3.3.1. The building has a stone construction, and the walls are in poor condition with multiple cracks, gaps or crevices throughout all aspects of the building which were suitable for roosting bats. Part of the wall on the northern aspect has collapsed, exposing cavities in the wall and also large entry points for bats. In addition, there is a smaller barn owl entry point on the southern aspect of the building, providing further access into the building.



3.3.3.2. The roof is a mono-pitched roof with corrugated metal sheeting, which is generally unsuitable for roosting bats. However, the roof was poorly sealed to the building, providing access to any potential roost features internally or into the cavity walls.



3.3.3.3. Internally, access was limited due to the presence of a large amount of materials blocking entry. For this reason, a thorough search for field evidence of bats could not be carried out. However, daylight was visible from many points where the roof meets the walls. Multiple gaps leading into the cavity walls could be seen internally.



3.3.3.4. Overall, due to the large number of potential access points into the walls or within gaps in the stonework of the walls, the stables are assessed as having **high potential** for roosting bats

3.3.3.5. Due to the unsuitable roof material and the many open gaps around the building, the space is unlikely to maintain the stable temperatures required for hibernation. Furthermore, due to the surrounding agricultural land, there is very little ecological connectivity between the buildings and any other suitable foraging/commuting habitats. However, it is possible that any bats found roosting through the summer months may also be present during the winter months. Therefore, the stables are assessed as being a **non-classic hibernation site**.

3.3.3.6. No evidence of nesting birds was identified within the building. However, the owl entry point provides potential access for owls and other breeding bird species.

3.3.4. Storage

3.3.4.1. The building has a stone construction with metal brackets around the eastern, southern and western aspects. The walls are in poor condition with multiple cracks, gaps or crevices throughout all aspects of the building which were suitable for roosting bats. A small open window was present on the eastern aspect, providing potential entry into the building for bats.



3.3.4.2. The roof is a pitched roof with stone tiles, which is in poor condition with many lifted, slipped, broken or missing tiles providing multiple potential roost features or entry points into the building for bats.



3.3.4.3. One gable end is present on the southern aspect of the building. The gable end has multiple gaps in the stonework and multiple areas of missing mortar beneath the roof tiles, providing potential roost features and/or potential access points into the building for roosting bats. However, barbed wire is also spread across this gable end where the roof meets the walls, potentially limiting the suitability of these features for bats.



3.3.4.4. No internal access was possible in this part of the building, and therefore a search for bats and/or field evidence was not carried out.

3.3.4.5. Overall, due to the large number of potential access points into the roof or within gaps in the stonework of the walls, the storage is assessed as having **high potential** for roosting bats

3.3.4.6. This part of the building could not be fully inspected for hibernation potential. However, it is possible that any bats found roosting through the summer months may also be present during the winter months.

3.3.4.7. The open window provides a potential entry point into the building for nesting birds.

4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. All parts of the building were assessed as having high potential for summer roosting bats. Therefore, any works impacting these buildings will have a high impact on roosting bats if they are present.

4.2. All parts of the building, other than the storage which could not be accessed, were assessed as being a non-classic hibernation site. However, it has to be assumed that if bats are found to be roosting in the buildings during the active season, they could potentially use the buildings for hibernation too. Should the works be carried out during the hibernation season, the works could potentially disturb / harm / kill this bat when in hibernation.

4.3. The site is located in a rural location with no connecting features to the wider landscape and therefore has limited potential for foraging and commuting light tolerant bat species. The proposed works will not cause any loss or fragmentation of bat foraging or commuting habitats.

4.4. Evidence of a regular barn owl roost was found within the barn. Barn owls are a Schedule 1 species and therefore are also protected from disturbance when breeding, which usually extends from March to August, but timings can be very variable. Therefore, any works to this part of the building may have a high impact on barn owls when breeding.

4.5. The barn, stables and storage parts of the building also provide potential nesting opportunities for other bird species. The nesting bird season extends from March to August each year. Therefore, any works to the roof within the nesting season could have a negative impact on nesting birds if they are present.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. The buildings are assessed as having high potential for roosting bats according to the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Good Practice Guidelines'. Therefore, it is recommended that three dusk emergence surveys are carried out during the active bat season, which extends from May to August inclusive, to determine whether bats are using the building to roost and to gather the information required to inform a suitable mitigation strategy. The surveys should be carried out at least three weeks apart.

5.2. If a bat roost is found present, a mitigation strategy will be required which will need to be submitted with the planning application. A Natural England European Protected Species licence will also be required to cover the works, which can only be applied for once planning consent has been issued. If no bats are found during the surveys, then no further surveys or licencing will be required.

5.3. As the barn has been identified as a barn owl roost and it is likely that barn owls are using the barn for nesting, it is recommended that a mitigation strategy is prepared outlining measures to protect barn owls during and after the works. This will include restrictions on the timings of the works, i.e. no works to the barn to be carried out during the nesting season (March to August inclusive). In addition, the mitigation strategy will require a pre-works survey, provision of a temporary roost site during the works, and the provision of a permanent roost site within the barn. For the permanent roost site, is recommended that a small loft space is built around the existing barn owl entrance hole, is at least 500mm deep from the entrance hole, and is easily accessible by the occupants for occasional cleaning.

5.4. It is recommended that, where possible, any external works are carried out outside of the nesting bird season. Where this is not possible, it is recommended that they are immediately preceded by a nesting bird survey to identify if there are any nesting birds present. If any active nests are found, a buffer zone around them should be left and no works should be carried out that will disturb the nest or prevent the birds from accessing to and from the nest, until the young have fledged.

5.5. To satisfy the NPPF requirements to provide enhancements on the site, it is recommended that a wall-mounted bat box is fixed to the building. This should ideally be fixed to the rear of the properties and located at least 4m above ground level. In addition, it is recommended that one pair of wall-mounted swift boxes is also attached

to the building. This should ideally be fixed to the rear of the building, and at least 3m above ground level.

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Checked by:	
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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 of 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”.

Appendix III. BARN OWL INFORMATION.

Ecology

The diet of the Barn Owls consists almost entirely of small mammals such as mice, shrews and voles. Consequently, areas of moist, moderately long grassland are especially important for foraging with 90% of prey taken within a 1km radius of the nest site.

Their feathers are specially structured for silent flight and, by using their extremely sensitive hearing, Barn Owls can find and swoop noiselessly onto their prey. Although Barn Owls can see perfectly well in daylight, they tend to hunt mainly at night.

Suitable nest sites are predominantly in derelict buildings such as farm buildings, church towers and old chimneys. Nest sites must be dry and warm to prevent fatal chilling of the owlets in wet weather.

Barn Owls generally produce 4 – 7 eggs, laid at intervals of 2 – 3 days during the breeding season (March to August inclusive). This gives a staggered hatch, with the first hatchling being as much as a week older than the last. In poor prey years the youngest chicks are unlikely to fledge.

Habitat loss due to agricultural change and urbanisation has had the most significant impact on Barn Owl numbers. The drainage of grasslands, increases in cereal crops, autumn sowing, the decline in haymaking, the loss of wild grassland, edge habitats and hedgerows, the vermin proofing of grain storage and the fragmentation of habitats as a result of land take for new roads, factories and housing schemes have all had an influence on the availability of suitable foraging habitat.

This has been compounded by the loss of traditional nest sites as a result of building improvements and conversions for other uses including residential.

As birds are pushed to exploit prey rich roadside verges and railway embankments they increasingly become prone to deaths from collisions with trains and road vehicles. Death can also be caused by consuming prey items which contain residues of rat and mouse poison.

The effects of disturbance are more pronounced at different times of the year. The early stages of the breeding season are the most vulnerable and birds may abandon nest building or even eggs if disturbed. When the eggs have hatched, they tend to tolerate a higher level of disturbance before abandoning young birds in the nest. Generally, disturbance should be avoided between April and September.

Surveys

Walkover surveys will look identify areas of suitable foraging habitat for Barn Owls. They will also look for suitable nesting locations and any signs of pellets within these areas.

Legislation

Barn Owls are protected under Schedule 1 and Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

It is therefore an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, take damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built, or to take or destroy an egg of any wild bird. Special penalties are available for offences related to birds listed on Schedule 1 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), for which there are additional offences for disturbing these birds at their nests, or their dependent young.