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SURVEY RELATING TO BARN AND OUTBUILDINGS AT COLDHARBOUR FARM, BIRCH VALE.

***DATE OF SURVEY**: 19th March 2012*

PURPOSE OF SURVEY

The owner(s) of this barn and other outbuildings are proposing conversion to residential use associated with their existing property. This survey and appraisal is to satisfy the requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to ensure bats, a European protected species, and their roost are not adversely affected. It was also possible to determine whether any barn owls were present, as signs of this creature are normally far more obvious.

DESCRIPTION:

There are three buildings the subject of survey, the main two storey barn, a single storey outbuilding, and a smaller store in the corner of the farm yard, as shown on the photographs attached as an Appendix. They are all of traditional construction, with natural stone walls (largely cement pointed not drystone) with stone slates, with the exception of the outbuilding which has a replacement corrugated metal roof. At the time of inspection the buildings were considered to be in a generally good condition in respect of main walls and roof, although the small store was in need of some rebuilding work on the rear elevation. All the buildings were in use for storage purposes more for domestic purposes, other than the first floor of the barn which was used as a hayloft. A fair degree of natural light was discernible from the existing doors, windows and in the case of the barn other first floor openings and, because the buildings were in use, electric lighting was available throughout. Most important from a bat perspective, there was no separate roof void to the main barn.
Photographs of the building are attached as an Appendix to this survey.

APPRAISAL:

The buildings were inspected internally and externally for their suitability for bats, using an endoscope where necessary. Because the external walls were pointed the main potential for bats to make use of the buildings would be cracks and crevices between the stone slates, but this normally only provides very limited potential for a few bats in the summer months and without removing the slates it is not possible to assess this properly. I would not see this as an issue as the stone slates are to be retained on the barn and the metal roof on the outbuilding would be replaced by stone slates as part of the development, thus ensuring that this potential is not lost.
Internally, the fact that the buildings were used on a fairly regular basis and there were a number of openings and a resultant good level of natural light (as well as being lit when in use) considerably reduced their potential. Bats would certainly be able to access the first floor of the barn through the vent holes on the front elevation (if the loft doors were closed), but of particular importance, there was no separate roof void and a lack of undisturbed areas. There were also few crevices in the walls of any depth suitable for bats, the internal walls being mainly cement filled, although those cracks observed were inspected but with no discernible evidence. No evidence of droppings or other indications of use by bats was found either in the barn or the other buildings, although it was observed there were old swallow nests in the outbuilding and in the roof space of the barn. The small store was particularly unsuitable, because it was more open to the elements, had a greater level of natural light, and no undisturbed areas.
Generally, these buildings did not provide much potential for use as a roost by bats, primarily because of the fact that the walls were mainly pointed and not drystone, they lacked a separate roof space with no dark, undisturbed recesses and because of the degree of use occurring with associated disturbance and use of electric light.

CONCLUSION

There was no evidence from the inspection of the buildings and in particular the barn to suggest either current or historic use by bats. I am therefore satisfied that the buildings can be satisfactorily converted without causing loss of a roost site. In this particular case I would not have considered an emergence survey necessary as the only likely roosting area for bats would be underneath the stone slates, and as these are being retained on the main barn, this potential would not be lost. In terms of the suitability of the general environment for bats, this location is a rather windswept hillside which is unlikely, in my view, to support a significant bat population. I would not therefore recommend significant biodiversity requirements as part of the proposed scheme, probably two bat boxes installed on the rear, west facing

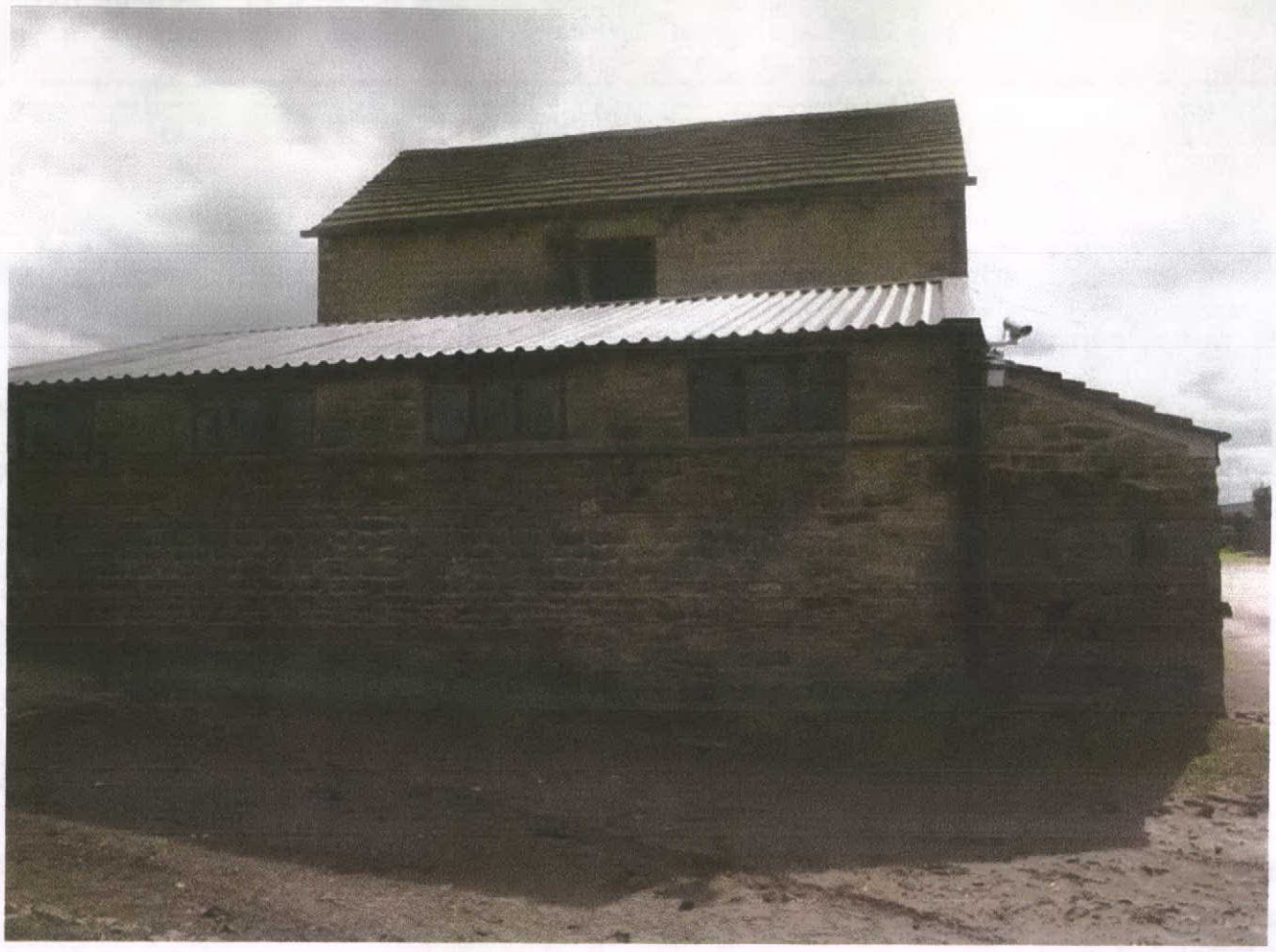
elevation of the barn would be sufficient, also taking into account the fact that the stone slates are to be retained on the main barn (and replacing the metal roof of the outbuilding) which can often provide limited potential for crevice seeking bats. .

It was also possible as part of this survey to establish that no barn owls were using the barn as evidence of their use in the form of pellets and feathers is very clear.

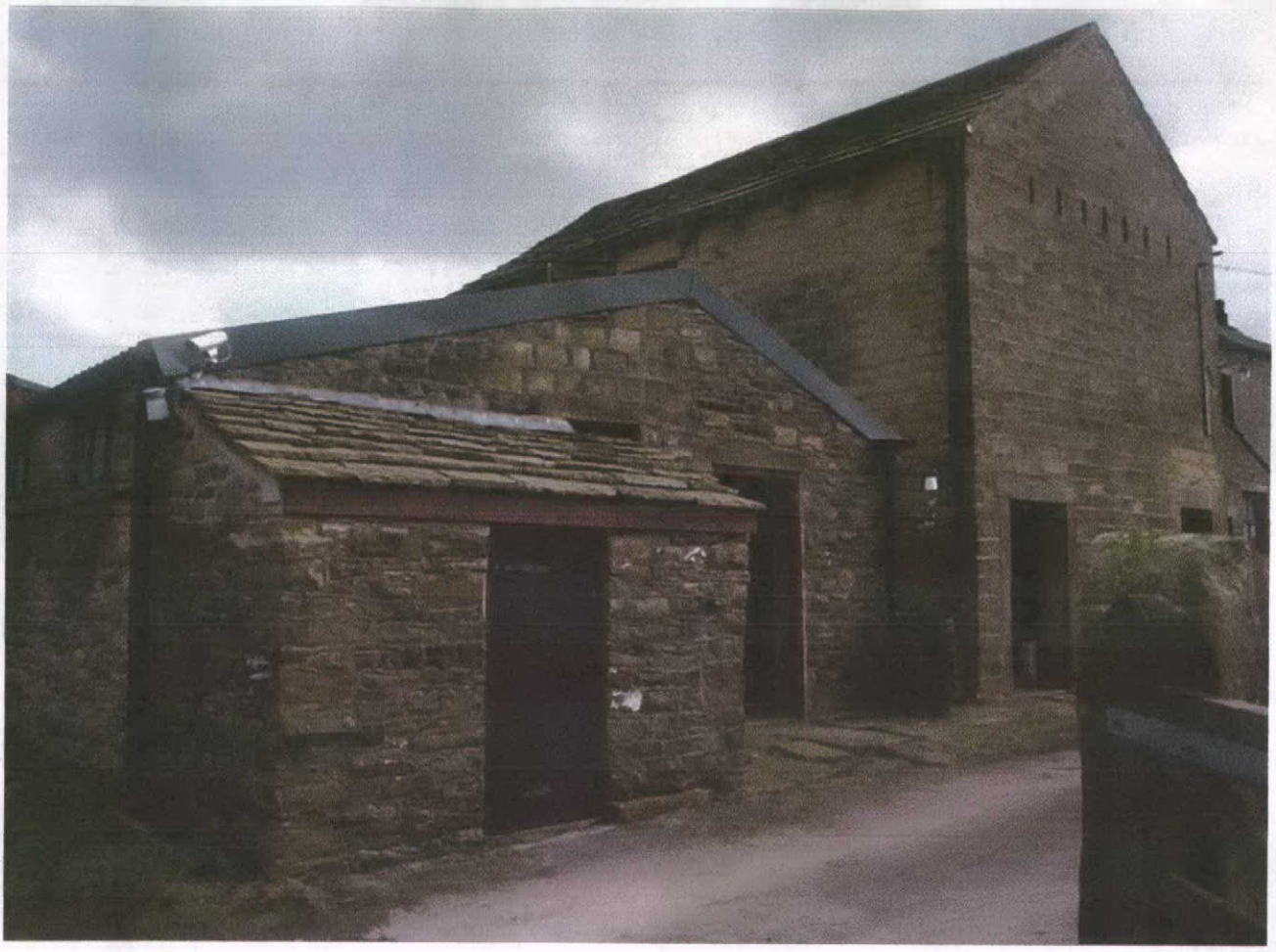
Barns At Coldharbour Farm, Birch Vale. 001.jpg



Barns At Coldharbour Farm, Birch Vale. 002.jpg



Barns At Coldharbour Farm, Birch Vale. 003.jpg



Barns At Coldharbour Farm, Birch Vale. 004.jpg



Barns At Coldharbour Farm, Birch Vale. 005.jpg



Barns At Coldharbour Farm, Birch Vale. 006.jpg



Barns At Coldharbour Farm, BirchVale. 007.jpg

