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Planning Applications Manager
High Peak Borough Council
Planning Department
Municipal Buildings
Glossop
Derbyshire
SK13 8AF

For the attention of James Stannard

Your ref: HPK/2023/0469

Our ref: DWTHPK716

17th January 2024

Dear James

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of replacement dwelling

Location: HOLLY FARM, Briargrove Road, Birch Vale, Derbyshire, SK22 1AY

Application Ref No: HPK/2023/0469

With reference to the above application, I am responding as the Biodiversity Planning Officer responsible for work relating to the Service Level Agreement, which the High Peak Borough Council and the Trust have signed. The following comments are aimed at providing accurate and up to date information on the nature conservation issues associated with the proposed development.

Response

We have reviewed the Ecological Appraisal and Bat Surveys report (Rachel Hacking Ecology, October 2023).



Species

Previous ecological survey work was undertaken at this site in 2013/14, 2019 and 2020, with small roosts of common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle bats recorded in onsite buildings including the bungalow and two of the barns.

Survey works carried out in 2023 comprised a daytime walkover on 10th August and two bat emergence surveys carried out at the end of the survey season – 30th August and 13th September. A single common pipistrelle bat emerged from the bungalow (B1) and one common pipistrelle and one brown long-eared bat emerged from one of the barns (B3).

We note that not all aspects of the buildings were covered during surveys, with no justification for this provided. We also note that the surveys were at the end of the activity season and therefore potentially not representative of the usage of the site in the peak season. However, the findings are relatively consistent with the previous survey results on site i.e. roosts used by a small number of common bat species. Only one bat was recorded using the bungalow compared to a peak count of six in 2013. The report states that the building had deteriorated in the interim but we would also point out that the recent surveys were at the end of the survey season and it is possible that more bats could be present in mid-summer. Never-the-less, a bat licence will be required to enable the redevelopment of the site, particularly prior to any works to B1 or B3.

Proposed mitigation comprises two boxes to be installed on the new dwelling, including one suitable for brown long-eared bats. This appears to comprise the bare minimum that may be acceptable to obtain a licence. The site has been shown to be used by bats over a ten-year period, with various buildings used at different times including large, open barns. Brown long-eared bat was recorded in 2023, which require open flight spaces within buildings.

All bats are protected by law in the UK and both brown long-eared and soprano pipistrelle bats are listed as Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. The LPA has a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity when exercising their functions and to be mindful of government targets to halt the decline of species abundance by 2030 and to increase species abundance and decrease the risk of extinction by 2042. We would encourage the LPA to seek more ambitious protected species mitigation within development proposals, in line with such targets and take account of current standing advice <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bats-advice-for-making-planning-decisions>.

We advise that additional consideration should be given to improving the proposals for continued provision for roosting bats on site. The Site Plan as Proposed shows at least three sections of the

new building with roof space and we would recommend that one of these areas is designed to allow access for bats. This could comprise access tiles and ridge gaps to allow bats to roost between the tiles and roofing felt (Bitumen Type 1F) and ideally also allow access into the roof void to benefit species such as brown long-eared bats. Bat boxes on buildings and trees would also be beneficial and provide additional roosting opportunities, including for the other bat species recorded foraging on site (Section 3.4.14 of ecology report).

The buildings on site are suitable for species such as swallow and barn owl, although no evidence was detailed in the ecology report. Pre-works surveys will be required to ensure nesting birds are not present.

A Biodiversity Enhancement Plan should also be provided to indicate locations of building and tree-mounted bird boxes and other enhancements.

Habitats

Himalayan balsam is present across the site and therefore a control strategy will be required to prevent spread during development.

Habitats are consistent with a derelict, unmanaged farmstead, with encroaching scrub and outgrown grassland. The site boundary follows the footprint of existing buildings quite closely, whilst the Tree Assessment confirms that the most valuable trees and groups will be retained. We advise that a landscape plan is secured via a suitably worded condition to ensure beneficial replacement planting on site, with a focus on native and wildlife-attracting species.

Suitable condition wording can be provided once additional consideration has been given to the bat mitigation proposals. Conditions are likely to include Nesting Birds, Bat Mitigation, Lighting, CEMP and Biodiversity Enhancement Plan.

It is hoped that the information provided is helpful to the Council. If you require any further information or wish to discuss any of the comments made, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



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Endnote:

Please see our planning pages <https://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/planning> for ecological advice on submitting a planning application, finding an ecological consultant and information on mitigation and enhancement.