

23rd Dec 2024

Rachael Simpkin, Planning Officer
High Peak Borough Council

Re: Planning Application No. HPK/2024/0446: Adult Education Centre, Spring Bank, New Mills, Derbyshire, SK22 4AZ

I am writing on behalf of Derbyshire Swift Conservation, a charity working to conserve Swifts in Derbyshire and part of a national network of Swift groups throughout the UK.

We appreciate that under normal circumstances a building conversion of this type would not require an ecological survey or assessment, and the conversion would be approved without any requirement for ecological enhancement.

However, we have been informed, by a Swift surveyor located in the New Mills area, of at **least one nest site for the red listed Swift, *Apus apus***, which was identified in the 2024 breeding season, **located on the Adult Education Centre** as follows:

Date identified: 22nd July 2024

Grid Reference: SK 00009 85843

Address: New Adult Education Centre (as was), Spring Bank, New Mills, SK22 4AZ

Details: "The nest is through a hole in the pointing to the roof line of the boarded up two-story building to the rear of the main building. The gable end, where the nest is in the roof line, is East South East facing. The site has been sold for development. I believe more nests are close by, but I had no access to survey. This nest is endangered and I'll be watching carefully when plans are submitted"

This record, in common with all records received by the Derbyshire Swift Survey, has been submitted to the Derbyshire Biological Records Centre. All 2024 data from the county as a whole will be live on the [Derbyshire Swift Conservation](https://www.derbyshireswiftconservation.org/) website in Jan 2025

Unlike the majority of nesting birds, Swifts are well documented to be loyal to their nest sites and have been known to use the same sites for decades, if not centuries.

Another feature of breeding Swifts is the difficulty in identifying their nest sites: they access and leave their nests very quickly and quietly, so the observer must be fortunate enough to be looking in the right place at the right time. Once identified, however, for the reason given previously, it becomes much easier to track the occupancy of nest sites from season to season.

Additionally, Swifts are colonial nesting birds, so it is likely that if one nest has been identified it suggests that there will be others. In short, we know the Adult Education Centre hosts at

least one Swift nest site but there may well be a *colony* of endangered Swifts, a bird which is primarily at risk *through the destruction of nest sites when buildings are renovated or repaired*.

Our advice is that the following actions are taken to a) protect the existing Swift nest site(s) and b) mitigate for the potential loss of undiscovered Swift nest sites.

Completing these should be a **condition of planning approval for this development**.

1. a professional survey be performed during the 2025 breeding season to document the number and location of all the Swift nests on the Adult Education Centre. Following this..
2. expert advice is required to determine whether the existing access holes & nest sites can be protected during the conversion so they can continue to be used by the Swifts in years to come.
3. any planned works that may disturb the Swifts during the breeding season would have to be curtailed until the Swifts have departed for the winter (i.e. late April – mid August).
4. irrespective of whether the existing nest sites can be retained or not, we strongly advise that best practice be followed, and a significant ecological enhancement be made in the form of Swift bricks integrated into the façade at a ratio of 1 Swift brick per dwelling, i.e. **26 bricks**. *Furthermore, the location, specification and number of nest bricks should be clearly marked on a plan of the development and photographic evidence of installation made available upon completion.*

We are happy to provide further advice and assistance.

Yours faithfully

Andy Broadhurst

Derbyshire Swift Conservation

Member of SLN Swifts & Planning Group

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