

Dear High Peak Borough Council Planning Team,

Brown Edge Residents Group (BERG) would like to raise urgent concerns regarding the impact of the proposed development (HPK/2024/0496) on *legally protected species*, specifically bats and barn owls, both of which are confirmed to be using the site.

We have gathered robust evidence demonstrating the presence and active use of the site by bats, including:

- Multiple direct visual sightings,
- Video recordings, and
- Bat detector recordings.

In addition, we have recently recorded barn owls foraging on the site at night, and we hold clear video evidence of this activity. Barn owls are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the presence of an active foraging territory carries significant ecological weight.

All evidence referenced above has been included with this correspondence.

Inadequacy of the Submitted Wildlife Survey

We note that the applicant has submitted only a brief walkover survey. This does not meet the recognised standards for assessing impacts on bats or barn owls under:

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended),
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and
- Relevant planning guidance on biodiversity and protected species.

Bats are a European Protected Species, and it is an offence to disturb them or damage their habitats. Barn owls are likewise protected, with disturbance or harm to nesting or foraging habitat carrying legal consequences.

The survey submitted by the applicant omits key site features known to offer potential roosting or commuting habitat, including:

- Goat Willow Clump at the eastern end of the site, adjacent to the railway line;
- Dry Stone Wall also adjacent to the railway line, which may provide roosting opportunities.

These omissions represent serious gaps in scope and mean the applicant's ecological assessment cannot be considered reliable or compliant.

Relevant Government Guidance

Government guidance identifies a wide range of activities associated with development that can harm bats, including tree works, removal of foraging/commuting corridors, installation of lighting, and habitat alteration. Many of these risks apply directly to this site.

To lawfully assess the potential impact, expert-led dusk and dawn bat surveys and targeted barn owl surveys are required at the appropriate seasonal times.

Context of the Planning & Infrastructure Bill

We also wish to highlight that the ongoing Planning and Infrastructure Bill introduces significant uncertainty and potential risks to the assessment of protected species. Current proposals — including the use of Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs) and the potential reduction of baseline ecological survey requirements — have been widely criticised by ecological organisations for potentially weakening onsite species protection.

Given this evolving policy landscape, it is essential that accurate, site-specific ecological information is secured *now*, under the existing legal framework, rather than relying on future mechanisms that may permit reduced on-site assessment or allow impacts to be offset elsewhere.

This further reinforces the need for HPBC to require a full, seasonally appropriate bat survey and barn owl assessment prior to determination.

Request

In light of:

- Confirmed bat and barn owl activity on site,
- The presence of suitable roosting and foraging features,
- The inadequacy of the applicant's submitted survey, and
- The heightened need to secure robust ecological evidence before any policy changes under the Planning and Infrastructure Bill come into effect,

we strongly urge the Council to require the applicant to commission a comprehensive ecological survey before the application proceeds to determination.

Approving any development without such assessment would risk causing unlawful harm to protected species and would fail to meet the Council's duties under national wildlife legislation and planning policy.

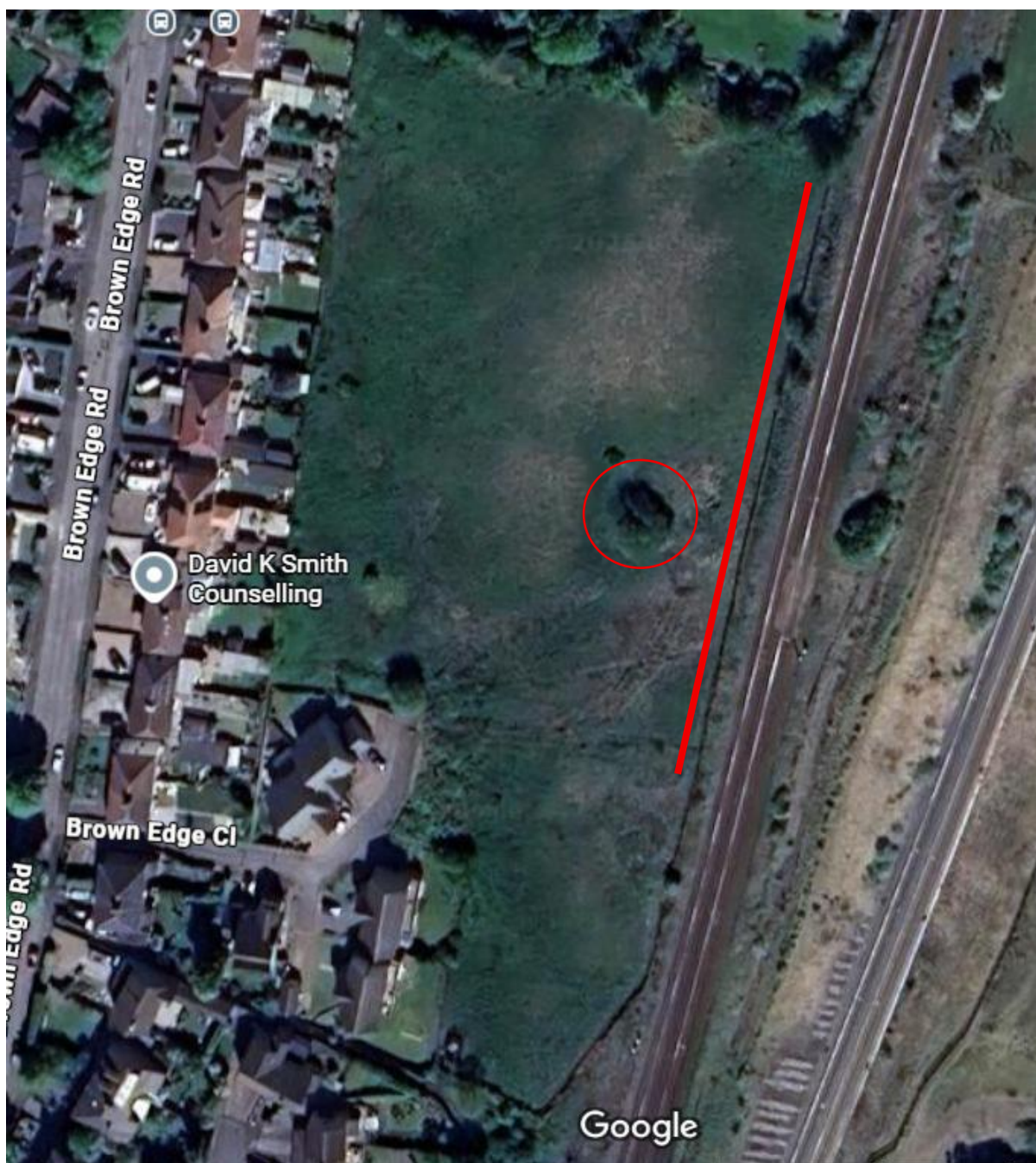
All bat and barn owl evidence collected by BERG — including video recordings, detector data, and observational logs — has been included with this correspondence.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours faithfully,

Mario Petronzi

On behalf of Brown Edge Residents Group



Summary of Key Ecological Features and Omissions – HPK/2024/0496

Purpose: Highlight areas of the site potentially used by bats that were omitted from the submitted wildlife survey.

Feature	Location	Potential Bat Use	Survey Status
Goat Willow Clump	Eastern end of the site, adjacent to the railway line	Potential roosting site	Omitted from submitted survey
Dry Stone Wall	Adjacent to the railway line	Potential roosting site	Omitted from submitted survey

Evidence Collected by BERG:

- Multiple visual sightings of bats on the site
- Video recordings showing bat activity
- Bat detector recordings confirming bat presence
- Observed bat activity includes foraging and commuting along the site
- Video of Barn Owl foraging on the site

Potential Threats if Development Proceeds Without Proper Survey:

- Disturbance or destruction of roosting sites
- Loss of commuting pathways along hedgerows and adjacent railway line
- Reduction or elimination of foraging areas

UK Government Guidance on Activities That Can Harm Bats:

- Renovating, converting, or demolishing a building
- Cutting down or removing branches from a mature tree
- Repairing or replacing a roof
- Repointing brickwork
- Insulating or converting a loft
- Installing lighting in or near roosts
- Removing commuting habitats such as hedgerows, watercourses, or woodland
- Changing or removing bats' foraging areas
- Using insecticides or treating timber

Recommendation:

A comprehensive seasonal bat survey must be conducted prior to planning permission. This should include dusk and dawn surveys covering all omitted features (Goat Willow Clump and dry stone wall) to ensure compliance with legal protections and to prevent harm to bats and other protected species.

Prepared by: BERG.