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Dear Sir,

Cloughbank B, Wilmslow Old Road – Preliminary Bat Roost and Barn Owl Appraisal Survey of Vicarage Cottages

1. Introduction

In May 2019, AECOM was commissioned by Manchester Airports Group to undertake bat and barn owl surveys at Vicarage Cottages, Cloughbank Farm. The surveys were required to support a planning application for a proposed car-park development located within the Cloughbank B site. The cottages are located off Wilmslow Old Road, to the south-west of Manchester Airport. The row of Cottages comprises of 4 buildings numbered 1-4.

This letter report presents the methods and results following the preliminary bat roost and barn owl appraisal survey.

This letter report has been prepared to support a planning application for the above proposals.

2. Methods

Detailed Internal and External Inspection

A detailed internal and external inspection of all cottage buildings was undertaken on 22nd May 2019 by an AECOM ecologist registered to use the Natural England bat survey class licence (Level 2).

The four buildings were assessed by the bat ecologist using binoculars and a high powered torch in order to determine features with suitability to support bats in accordance with the criteria within the standard guidance for bat surveys (Collins, 2016). All external features that may have suitability to be used by roosting bats, including the roof tiles, cracks and crevices within the stone work and missing mortar, were examined externally during the survey.

The internal inspection involved searching key areas of the building for evidence indicating the presence of bats, this included roof voids. Evidence searched for included droppings, urine spots, fur oil staining, dead bats, an absence of cobwebs and the animals themselves.

Following the inspection each building was re-assigned a bat roost category of negligible, low, moderate, high or as a confirmed roost.

The preliminary roost appraisal also considered the geographic location, surrounding habitat and connectivity to the wider landscape of the Site.

Field Survey

An internal and external inspection of the buildings within the Site was undertaken on 22nd May 2019. The survey followed the 'bottom-up' approach described in the Barn Owl Conservation Handbook (The Barn Owl Trust, 2012) and assessment techniques within Shawyer (2011). The survey began by searching the least suitable parts of the Site for nesting, roosting or resting barn owl and gradually moved through to the most suitable part of the Site at the end of the survey. This approach maximises the chance of finding conclusive evidence of barn owl presence and breeding status without causing direct disturbance to barn owls that are present at a nest. Signs of barn owl presence include:

- Pellets;
- Whitewash (droppings);
- Sounds/calls of adults or young;
- Feathers;
- Nests/roosts; and,
- Barn owls (live or dead).

The age of pellets, which consist of indigestible prey items, such as hair and bone, can often be used to provide an approximate indication of when they were produced by a barn owl. Additionally, from approximately eight months old, pellets often contain moth pupae and pupal cases. More recent pellets are typically dark in colour, wet (typically a few days old) and hold their shape when pulled apart. As pellets age, they dry and become slightly greyer in colour, when squeezed, they crumble and disintegrate, often making a 'crackling' noise. Pellets typically take two years to fall apart; however, factors such as humidity and physical disturbance are likely to result in pellets deteriorating at different rates.

An initial visual inspection of the external areas of the buildings was conducted to determine which of the buildings were suitable for barn owl.

3. Legislation

Bats

All species of bats are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Under this legislation it is illegal to:

- intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a bat;
- intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat when it is occupying a roost; and
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, or obstruct access to a bat roost.

A bat roost is defined as being 'any structure or place that is used for shelter or protection', and since bats regularly move roost site throughout the year, a roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time.

It is illegal to carry out work affecting bats or their roosts. Licences to permit otherwise illegal activities relating to bats and their roost sites can be issued for specific purposes and by specific licensing authorities in each country. These are called European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSMLs) and are issued under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is an offence not to comply with the terms and conditions of an EPSML.

Barn Owls

The legislative provisions for the protection of wild birds in the UK are contained primarily within Sections 1-7 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), a wild bird is defined as any bird of a species that is resident in or is a visitor to (in a wild state) the European Territory of any member state.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) makes it an offence to:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is being built or in use; and,
- Take or destroy the eggs of any wild bird.

Special penalties exist for offences related to species listed in Schedule 1, for which there are additional offences of disturbing these birds and / or their dependent young at their nests. Barn owls are listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are thus protected against disturbance whilst nesting. Under Part 1, Section 1 (5), it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- Disturb any wild bird included on Schedule 1 whilst it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; and/or,
- Disturb dependent young of such a bird.

It is noted that barn owls do not 'build' nests in the typical sense and, thus protection from disturbance is generally considered to commence as soon as the first egg is laid and ceases when the last young owl becomes independent.

4. Results

Each of the four buildings was assessed for bat roost and barn owl suitability.

Bats - Detailed Internal and External Inspection

Vicarage Cottage No.1

Cottage no.1 is a two storey building with rendered/plastered external walls and a pitched slate roof. There were minimal external features present on the roof only comprising of a few slipped tiles and gaps under ridge tiles. There were no obvious gaps or crevices on the external walls and it was well sealed. Loft space was present and accessed.

Vicarage Cottages No's.2-4

Cottages no's. 2 to 4 were all adjoined and were constructed of brick with pitched slate roofs. There were multiple external features present on the roof which included raised lead flashing around the chimney, possible gaps under the eaves, slipped tiles and gaps under tiles. Loft space was present and accessed, apart from cottage no. 2 (due to tenant refusing access).

Barn Owl

All four cottages were assessed for their potential to support barn owl. There were no access points for barn owl in any of the cottages no's.1-4.

The cottages do offer potential for breeding birds.

Photographs of the cottages surveyed are provided within Table 1 below.

Table 1: Photographs

Photograph Number	Notes	Photographs
1	Vicarage Cottage No.1 Low bat roost potential	

2	Vicarage Cottage No’s. 2-4 High bat roost potential	

3	Vicarage Cottage No’s. 2-4 High bat roost potential	

4	Vicarage Cottage No’s. 2-4 High bat roost potential	

5. Conclusions & Recommendations

Bats

Vicarage Cottage No.1

No bats or evidence of bats recorded, due to a limited number of features on the roof of the cottage this building is classed as having **Low bat roost potential** and a single additional survey is required.

Cottage No.1 should be subject to a single dusk emergence survey or dawn re-entry survey in this building one or more of these building.

Vicarage Cottages No's.2-4

No bats or evidence of bats recorded but due to number of external features these buildings are classed as having **High bat roost potential** and additional surveys are required.

Cottages No's.2-4 should be subject to three surveys, a combination of dusk emergence/dawn re-entry surveys. These surveys must be undertaken between May and September, with at least two of the surveys undertaken between May and August. The surveys must be spaced out as far as possible.

Barn Owl

No potential for barn owl due to lack of access points into the cottages. No further survey work required.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries regarding this letter report.

Yours faithfully,



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