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DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
18 AUG 2008
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Biodiversity Report for

COOL HILL FARM.

Site off Sheepy Road, Sibson, ~~Leicestershire~~ ATHERSTONE.

Including Protected Species Survey

Date of Report – 1st July 2008

Proprietors

Bern Gibney (Ecologist) – 07875 484342 (mob)
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COOL HILL FARM.

Biodiversity Report of Land off Sheepy Road, Sibson, ~~Leicestershire~~ ATHERSTONE.

Name of Client: Zyox Ltd., contact Neil E. Smith

Address of Client: Unit C, Shilton Industrial Estate, Shilton, Coventry,Warwickshire, CV7 9JY

Name of Agent: Mr J. Dyas - ARCHITECT.

Address Of Agent: 18 Andrew Close, Stoke Golding, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, CV13 6EL 01455 212142.

Date of Survey: 1st July 2008

Weather Conditions: Sunny, dry, hot 24°C, breezy.

Address of survey site: Site of agricultural buildings, off Sheepy Road, Sibson, ~~Leicestershire~~ ATHERSTONE.

Planning Application Number:

Grid Reference of survey site: SK 34440075

Name of Surveyor: A.B.Gibney BSc (Hons), MIEEM

Licence Numbers: Great Crested Newt 20082074 & Bat 20073155 issued by Natural England

1) Background

1.1 Reason for survey

It is proposed to demolish the existing agricultural buildings and build a grain store as a replacement at some time in the future. A biodiversity report and protected species survey was requested as part of the Planning Permission conditions to carry on the development.

1.2 Description of site

The site was made up of 3 agricultural buildings, which were on hard standing. Their immediate surroundings was nutrient rich vegetation, particularly nettles (*Urtica dioica*).
The fields surrounding the site were in agricultural use being a mixture of arable and agriculturally improved permanent grass.
There was a hedge adjoining the site which was hawthorn (*Cretaegus monogyna*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*). The hedge was trimmed to about 2m.
There were no ponds within 500m of the site, however there was a stream at about 200m distance, which would be unaffected by the development.

1.3 The Buildings (see Appendix 1: Photographs)

There were three buildings:

- An open barn, which was filled with straw, it had a corrugated metal roof, on a steel framework, and no sides.
- An open shelter, which had concrete block walls to two sides and a corrugated metal roof, which was held up by telegraph pole purlins and timber rafters. These had nailed joints and so there were no cavities.
- A workshop, without a roof, which consisted of a double skinned brick wall.

2) Survey Methods

2.1 Methods and Limitations

The buildings were searched in a systematic pattern, all available spaces were searched, looking for signs of bats, in particular droppings, insect remains (where bats have fed), lack of spiders' webs (where bats have roosted), the bats themselves and body oils stains (where bats have squeezed through gaps). Particular attention was paid to undisturbed surfaces, walls (where bat droppings sometimes stick) and window sills (both inside and outside the buildings). The search was carried out with a high power torch inside the building and binoculars on the outside. Bats would be active at this time of year so would be likely to be present at any potential roosts.

The grounds were searched for signs of other protected species, and particular attention was paid to habitat type in case of other potential protected species.

Signs of birds were also noted, particularly old nests and barn owl pellets. Birds (in the main) are building nests, brooding eggs or feeding young, and so if any nests were found, it would be possible to establish if they were active ones.

A note was made of any signs of other protected species, or whether there was any appropriate habitat for other protected species.

3) Results

3.1 Bats – There was no evidence of bats on the site, and there did not appear to be any suitable bat roost sites. There was a small chance that cavities in the brick and block walls could provide hibernation sites for bats, but if so they would be impossible to detect and would only be present through the winter months.

3.2 Birds – There were no signs of nests or owl pellets in any of the buildings or on the site.

3.3 Great Crested Newt – There was no suitable terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newts on the site and there were no ponds within 500m of the site. All refuges that were checked were found to be far to dry for newts.

3.4 There was no evidence of any other protected species on the site.

3.5 The habitats that were present on the proposed site were of low ecological value being a mixture of hard standing, derelict buildings and nutrient rich vegetation

4) Conclusions

4.1 The buildings were not being used as a roost by bats, however bats can sometimes use such buildings as temporary roosts or for hibernating, if suitable cavities can be found (these are very difficult to find by a survey).

4.2 There was no evidence of birds nesting on the site, however birds are very mobile and the site would generally be suitable for various species to nest.

4.3 There were no indications of any other protected species on the site.

4.4 The site is of low ecological value.

5) Legislation

Bats: Bats and their roosts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000), and by the European Habitats Regulations 1994. To summarise; it is an offence to damage or destroy any place of shelter and protection used by bats (their roosts); deliberately, intentionally or recklessly obstruct a bat roost; deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat; or intentionally kill, injure or take any bat.
Nesting Birds: Nesting Birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. In addition to this, for some rarer species (listed on Schedule 1 of the Act), it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb them while they are nest building or, at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

6) Recommendations and Mitigations

1. The proposed development is unlikely to have a negative affect on the biodiversity of the area, as it will only affect an area, which would be classed as of low ecological value. All of the features that would be considered of having any ecological value in terms of the local biodiversity are unaffected by the proposed development.

2. No protected species are likely to be affected by this proposed development, as far as could be ascertained.

3. It would be preferred to carry out any demolition works outside the bird nesting season, the bird nesting season is normally considered to be April to August. Although it should be noted that if there is any doubt as to whether birds are nesting in the near vicinity of the proposed works, it is advised to get the area checked by a suitably qualified ecologist. Should an active nest be found, the nest must remain undisturbed until the young birds have fledged, which may cause a delay in the proposed works.

4. There is a small chance that bats, which are highly mobile animals that change roosts regularly, could use the various cavities in the walls as hibernation sites and it is advised that the demolition works be undertaken in either September/October or March/April. Also the contractors should be advised of the possibility of the presence of bats, and to carry out the demolition carefully checking for bats as the work progresses, and they should be informed of what to do if one is found during the course of the work. If a bat is discovered during demolition, the work needs to cease immediately and Natural England should be contacted for further advice. Work on the area where the bat was found (should one be found) should not recommence until such advice is received from Natural England.

- **Contact Numbers**

Natural England **01476 584800**
The Maltings
Wharf Road
Grantham
Lincs. NG31 6BH

References

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. [ed.] (1999) *The Bat Workers' Manual* JNCC

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines)* English Nature

K.Parsons (ed.) (2007) *Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines* Bat Conservation Trust

Gent,T. & Gibson,S. [Eds] (2003) *Herpetofauna's Workers' Manual* JNCC

Anon. (2001) *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines* English Nature

Heaton, A. (1998) *Rare Wildlife in Leicestershire and Rutland* Kairos Press

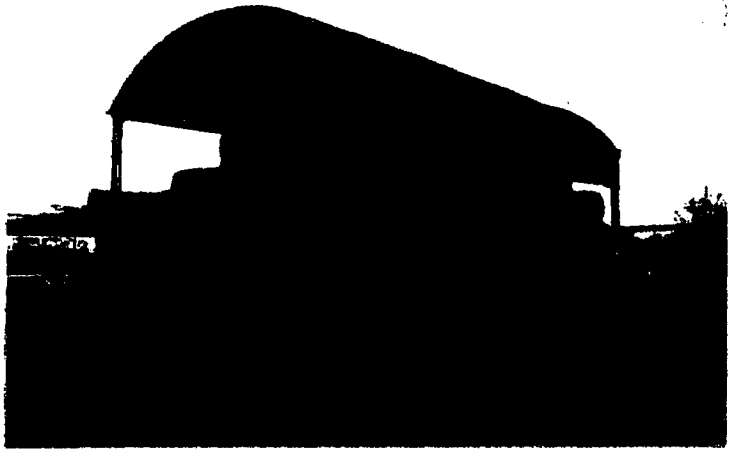
Betts, C.J. (2001) *Checklist of Protected British Species* Christopher Betts Environmental Biology

Anon. (2002) *Barn Owls on Site, a guide for developers and planners* Barn Owl Trust

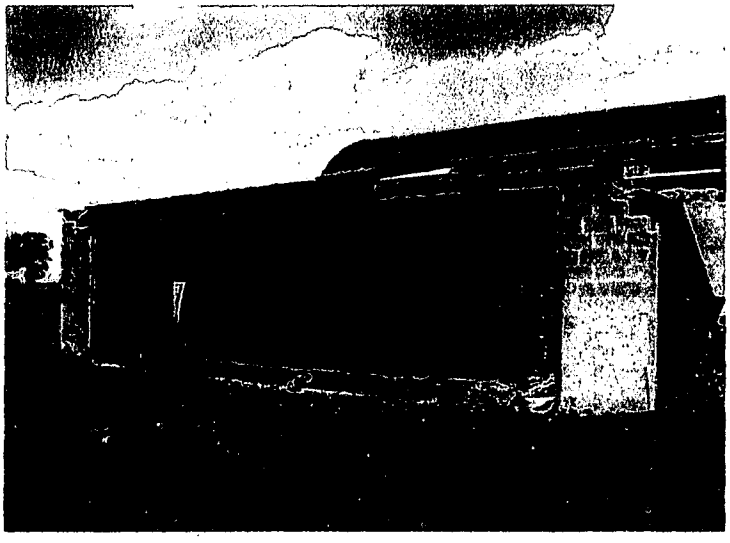


Report Produced by
Alan Bernard Gibney BSc (Hons), MIEEM - Ecologist (Curious Ecologists)

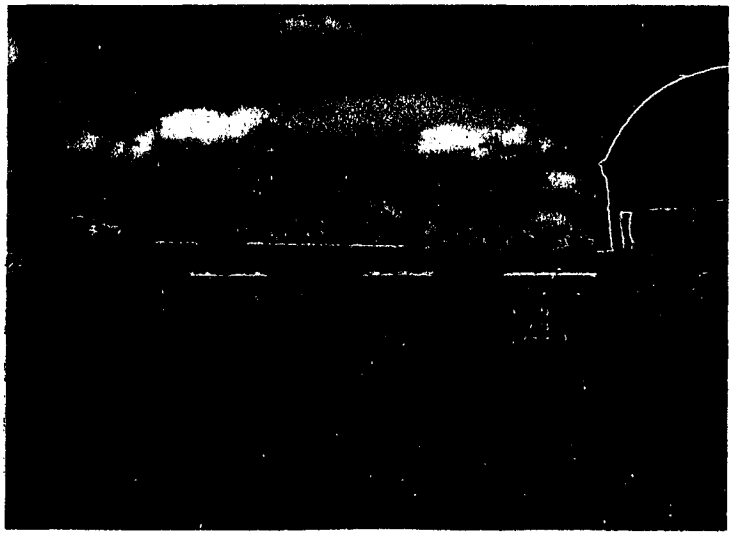
Appendix 1: Photographs of various buildings on site



Open Barn



Open shelter



Derelict workshop

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