

Wormhough Farm, Rushton Spencer

Proposed Shed Demolitions

An Ecological Appraisal (with particular reference to bats and breeding birds)

A. Introduction

Ecology-first was instructed to conduct this survey by Ian Ankers Architects, on behalf of their client, to provide additional information in support of his application to Staffordshire Moorlands Council to build a new implement store. The application involving the demolition of two barns situated to the north of the farmstead.

Buildings, even modern ones, often provide roosting spaces for bats and nesting sites for several bird species (Swallow, House Sparrow and Barn Owl). All species of bats and their roosting areas are protected by law, as are wild birds and their nests during the nesting period, making it advisable to carry out a precautionary survey in advance of any disturbing works, even if none is required as part of the planning process.

B. Survey Work

Survey was limited to a single daytime visit on 9th August, when a visual inspection was made of the exterior and interior of both buildings, using a ladder and powerful torch to see into poorly lit corners. Photographs were taken to record the present condition and features of the buildings.

C. Survey Efficacy/Constraints

A visual inspection was considered to be adequate because it was possible to make a thorough inspection of the walls and roof spaces in both buildings. The only void is above section c in Shed 1, and it was possible to see into all parts of that space. In the circumstances, expending additional survey effort, such as watching for bats emerging from potential roost spaces or the use of electronic bat-detection equipment, does not appear to be justified.

D. Findings

No evidence of roosting bats could be found in either shed.

Both sheds have been constructed fairly recently (compared to the many stone barns in the locality). Shed 1 is constructed on split levels with sections a, c & d slightly above section b. The bottom half of the building is of breeze-block construction, with upper wall sections of asbestos sheeting, topped by a metal sheet roof (see photos 1-4). The ridge and lower corners are supported on reinforced steel girders.

Shed 2 is beginning to slump into the adjacent void. It is constructed entirely of galvanised tin sheeting fixed to a wooden frame (see photos 5-7).

Photos 3, 4 and 7 show the interiors of the buildings. Photo 3 shows the main workshop area in Shed 1, with the void above the spray shop (section c) visible near the ladder. There is very little overlap between the courses of block-work and the asbestos sheeting and most gaps have been plugged with sealant to exclude the wind and rain. Above the overlap, the asbestos sheeting forms a single-skinned wall with no cavities. It is also considered that any small cavities in the roof and walls would be very exposed and poorly insulated against heat or cold. Overall, this suggests that neither barn offers spaces or conditions likely to attract roosting bats.

Neither building has cross-beams to attract roosting owls nor, surprisingly, was there any evidence of birds ever having nested inside.

E. Impact Assessment

Demolition of the two sheds would not impact adversely on local bat populations.

No significant opportunities for roosting owls or nesting birds would be lost.

F. Mitigation

Apart from ensuring that no birds are actually nesting in the building immediately prior to demolition (note that nesting activity can continue into September in some years), no specific mitigation is required.

G. Summary Conclusions

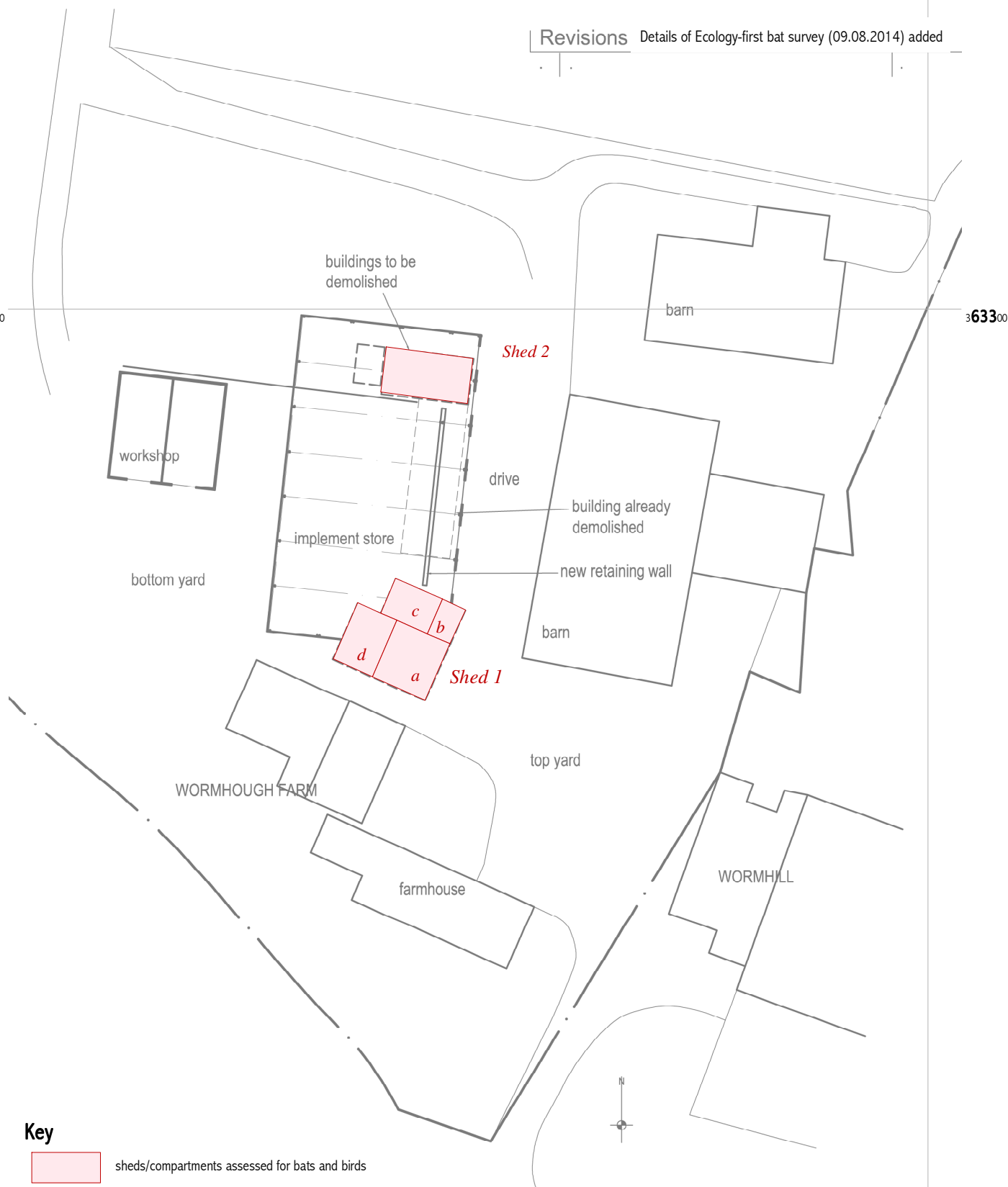
- Shed demolition would not impact adversely on local bat populations.
- The loss of potential bird nesting sites will be insignificant.
- Voluntary provision of commercially available bird and bat boxes around the new building could benefit local bats and birds.



Colin Hayes, Ecology-first

18th August 2014

Revisions Details of Ecology-first bat survey (09.08.2014) added



Key

sheds/compartments assessed for bats and birds

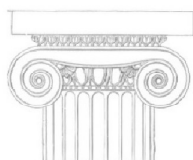
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Proposed Implement Store

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Proposed Shed Demolition (Shed 1) - Bat and Breeding Bird Assessment (August 2014)



Photo 1: Asbestos 'cladding' on the upper half of the W-facing walls is single-skinned with no voids behind. No bat droppings were found on the ground underneath.



Photo 2: From the SW corner, the detail of the upper wall can be seen. The small gap below the fixing timber could be inspected thoroughly.



Photo 3: Inside, the workshop (section a) is actively used with no suitable Barn Owl roost space. No evidence of bats was found in the void above section c.



Photo 4: Section d interior showing single skin walls and roof. The void above the white wall of section c was inspected from section a.

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Proposed Shed Demolition (Shed 2) - Bat and Breeding Bird Assessment (August 2014)



Photo 5: From the exterior, Shed 2 also looks to have poor prospects for roosting bats. Most access points along the roof edge have been stopped up to exclude wind and rain.



Photo 6: Construction of the retaining wall has allowed slumping of soil from under the shed leaving its floor unsafe.



Photo 7: The interior has no beams to attract roosting owls: walls are single skinned metal sheeting. No bat droppings were found beneath the partially clad end wall.