



Environmental Assessment Services Limited

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Mr & Mrs P Voller
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Barnham
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Voller/Tars/BO

31 July 2013

Dear Mr & Mrs Voller

TARS FARM, CHURCH LANE, BARNHAM, BOGNOR REGIS PO22 0DB
Barn Owl Survey

The following survey information and recommendations are made in relation to the proposed redevelopment of former agricultural buildings for residential use with stables and stores located at Tars Farm, Church Lane, Barnham. This letter report should be read in conjunction with the Phase 1 Habitat Survey report (July 2013) which has been prepared for the current planning application.

The site comprises:

- Two modern concrete block barns, one located to the northwest and one to the east of the central 'yard'.
- The remnants of what is thought to have been a piggery located to the north of the yard.
- A brick and flint barn or lodge (probably built ca 1900) to the east of the yard.
- A lean-to type shelter between one of the modern barns and the outer wall of a former brick and flint barn (probably built ca 1800) along the western side of the yard.
- The remnants of a newer concrete block barn/out-building within the southwest corner of the central yard.

Following a site assessment undertaken in March of this year (as part of a Phase 1 Habitat Survey prepared for an earlier application), it was recommended, that should the barns be proposed for redevelopment, the site should be revisited to check for evidence of barn owls, especially within the second modern barn, located to the northwest of the courtyard, which was locked at the time of our first visit.



Registered in England No 2016354



Records

Records of barn owls (*Tyto alba*) were obtained as part of the Phase 1 Habitat Survey prepared for the site in March 2013. The Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre holds six records of barn owl within 1 km of the site. The most recent recorded sighting of a barn owl was by the Sussex Ornithological Society at a site to the north of Barnham (grid reference SU 958 050).

Further enquiry of Dr Barrie Watson (a member of the Sussex Ornithological Society) has confirmed that he is aware of two barn owl nesting sites within 2 km of Tars Farm which are in use most years.

Survey results

The site was first visited on the 6 March 2013, by two Ecological Surveyors from Environmental Assessment Services Ltd, undertaking a Phase 1 Habitat Survey at the site in relation to a proposed change of land use and development of a ménage within the field surrounding the agricultural buildings.

The site was found to have foraging potential for barn owls in and around the yard, where a large number of small mammal holes were observed, and within tussocky grassland in parts of the surrounding field.

Evidence of roosting barn owl was observed within the brick and flint barn/lodge located to the east of the yard. Access into the barn is likely to be via the open doorway on the western façade and possibly via a large hole in the northwest corner of the roof. Pellets (comprising bones and fur brought up after feeding) were identified in two locations within the barn and faecal waste was observed on the wall above. See Photographs attached. The floor of the barn was covered in a thick layer of mature. Pellets in these conditions are likely to decompose quickly, however, fresh pellets (and possibly pellets up to eight months old) were found indicating that barn owl are using this barn as a winter roost.

No evidence of the presence of barn owl was identified within the other buildings within the site (with the exception of the modern barn to the northwest of the yard which could not be searched at the time) and no evidence of nesting was identified within the brick and flint barn/lodge or the other buildings within the site. No flat ledges, old tanks or other platforms thought to be suitable for nesting were identified within the site.

The site was revisited on 15 July 2013 by bat surveyors from Batbox Ltd who also have experience of looking for signs of barn owl use. They were able to confirm that the brick and flint barn/lodge is being used by barn owl. No evidence of the presence of barn owl (feathers, pellets or faecal waste) was found within any other buildings surrounding the courtyard including the modern barn to the northwest of the courtyard, which could not previously be checked.

A little owl was heard both at the start and end of the bat survey undertaken in July 2013.

Conclusion and recommendations

Barn owls are a Schedule 1 Part 1 bird. In addition to the level of protection offered to all wild birds, it is an offence to disturb barn owls and their young at the nest.

Evidence of the presence of barn owl has been identified within the brick and flint barn/lodge to the east of the yard. It is thought that the lodge is being used as a winter roost only. No evidence of barn owl nesting was observed within the barns and no flat ledges thought to be large enough to support nesting barn owls, or any old water tanks or other suitable nesting cavities were identified within the barns.

The existing level of protection does not extend to roost sites, however, the development is likely to impact the local barn owl population should the roost be lost. This has been a particularly poor year for barn owls with very few chicks born. This is likely to be a result of the cold winter and wet spring affecting adult bird condition.

It is recommended that barn owl roosting opportunities are provided within the site to compensate for the loss of the roost as a result of the redevelopment of the site.

Whilst development works are being undertaken, a temporary roosting box may be provided on one of the mature trees located on the boundary of the field surrounding the site. The provision of a deep nest box erected high on one of the mature trees on the site boundary should be provided at least one month before development works begin at the site to give the local bird/s time to find the box. This will provide an alternative roosting site whilst development work is undertaken.

A long-term roosting and nesting provision should also be provided within the site as part of the site's redevelopment to compensate for the loss of a roosting site within the brick and flint barn/lodge and to enhance the site for barn owls to increase the biodiversity potential of the site beyond that of the pre-development level (inline with current National Planning Policy Framework).

An owl loft or nest chamber could be incorporated into the sites development, located high in one of the end gables of one of the barns with an external entrance for the barn owls to come and go freely and a hatch/door on the inside of the building to allow monitoring and cleaning. Details of suitable nest box/chamber designs and installation guides can be found on the Barn Owl Trust website.

Recommendations for habitat enhancement have been made in both the Phase 1 Habitat Survey prepared for the current planning application and the approved application for a change of use and development of a ménage within the field surrounding the agricultural buildings. New hedgerows planted within the site will enhance the site for a wide variety of species including small mammals (food for barn owls). The hedgerows will need to be protected from horses with stock fencing. To further enhance the ecological value of the site for barn owls, a strip of a permanent rough tussocky grass, a couple of metres wide, could be left between the stock fencing and the new hedgerows. This would provide protection for the maturing hedge from grazing horses as well as new foraging habitat within the site to compensate for the loss of foraging potential in and around the existing yard.

We trust the above information meets your requirements at this time.

Please do not hesitate to contact this office should you have any query.

Yours sincerely



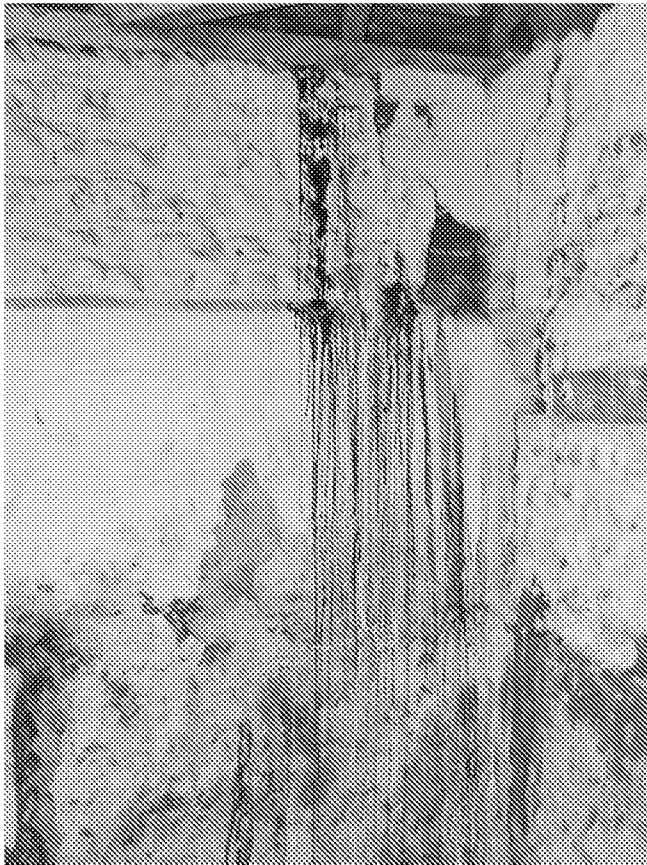
Lucy Monday
For Environmental Assessment Services Ltd

Enc. Photo captions

**Photograph 1:**

Brick and flint barn/lodge located to the east of the yard.

Barn owl access into the building may be gained via the open doorway and also via a large hole in the roofing material.

**Photograph 2:**

Faecal waste thought likely to be from a roosting barn owl perched on top of the flint wall within the brick and flint barn/lodge.

**Photograph 3:**

Barn owl pellets identified on the floor within the brick and flint barn/lodge.