

WHARTON

Natural
Infrastructure
Consultants

Preliminary Roost Assessment

SITE LOCATION

County Lane Farm, Codsall

PREPARED FOR

Ms. Katie Schofield

ISSUE DATE

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OUR REFERENCE

210326 1231 PRA V1

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Mr Matthew Wall



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Executive Summary

Table 1 below provides a summary of the findings of the preliminary roost assessment for the Building at the Site.

Table 1. Summary of Findings for the Building

The Building	
Was evidence of roosting bats found during the internal or external assessment of the Building? If so, what evidence?	No evidence of bats was found.
What level of suitability for roosting bats has been assigned to the Building?	Low
What (if any) further surveys have been recommended to inform the planning application for the Building?	One further survey comprising dusk emergence or dawn return to roost.
When must these surveys be undertaken?	Between May and August

Table 2 below provides a summary of the findings of the assessment of the Building for nesting birds.

Table 2. Assessment for Nesting Birds

The Building	
Was evidence of nesting birds found during the internal or external assessment of the Building? If so, what evidence?	One old swallow (<i>Hirundo rustica</i>) nest within the northwest small internal room. Anecdotal evidence from the landowner indicated that although swallows have used the Building historically, they had not nested within the Building for the last few years.
Is the Building suitable for use by nesting birds?	Yes – open doors at the southwest elevation provide suitable access, and suitable nesting areas are present inside the Building.
What are the recommendations?	Avoid demolition of the Building between March and August (inclusive), or have an ecologist undertake a check of the Building for nesting birds prior to demolition if undertaken during nesting season.



1. Introduction/Background

1.1 Principal Author

1.1.1 The Principal Author of this report is Matt Wall *BSc (Hons), MSc, ACIEEM* (Senior Ecologist). The Principal Author has over eight years of professional experience in ecological consultancy and has worked on projects ranging in scale, including mineral, waste, commercial and residential sites, throughout the UK. The Principal Author currently holds a Class 2 licence from Natural England for bats (*Chiroptera* spp.) and has worked on a number of bat mitigation projects ranging from maternity roosts of Annex II species to transitional and occasional roosts of common species. The Principal Author is an associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management ('CIEEM') and is therefore subject to CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct.

1.1.2 The detail provided within this report is a true and accurate reflection of both the Site conditions at the time the survey was completed, as well as the professional opinion of the Principal Author.

1.2 Purpose and Brief

1.2.1 The brief was to complete a Preliminary Roost Assessment 'PRA' of a single storey barn building ('the Building') at County Lane Farm, County Lane, Codsall (known henceforth as 'the Site') to identify the suitability of the Building for and any evidence of roosting bats and to provide advice in relation to a planning application for the Proposed Development as detailed above. The Building is centred at National Grid Reference SJ 83336 03198.

1.2.2 Due to the nature of the Proposed Development, bats and nesting birds are likely to form the only potential significant constraints in respect of ecological features. Due to the impacts of the Proposed Development being likely confined to roosting bats and nesting birds, the scope of this assessment is limited to those ecological features only.

1.3 Description of Site and Local Area

Site Context

1.3.1 The Site is located within a primarily agricultural area, immediately north of the A41. The Site is bordered to the north and west by agricultural land, to the east by County Lane and to the south by the A41. Land use in the local and wider area is dominated by agriculture with small areas of woodland interspersed throughout.

1.3.2 There is reasonable ecological connectivity to/from the Site in all directions for bats in the form of field boundary hedgerows and a large area of woodland to the east of County Lane.

1.4 The Proposed Development

1.4.1 The Proposed Development involves the conversion of the Building to residential use.

1.4.2 The proposals detailed above will be referred to throughout this report as the 'Proposed Development'.



2. Relevant Legislation and Planning Policy

2.1 Relevant Legislation

Bats

- 2.1.1 Bats are European Protected Species (EPS) and are protected under both European and UK legislation comprising The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (HMSO, 1981) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017 (as amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (HMSO, 2017) (HMSO, 2019). Offences under the legislation which are potentially relevant to this development include:
- The deliberate capture, injury or killing of a bat;
 - The deliberate disturbance of a bat, particularly disturbance which is likely to; impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, to hibernate or migrate, or to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species; and
 - The damage/destruction of, or obstruction of access to a breeding site or resting place (even if unoccupied) – referred to within this report as a 'roost'.
- 2.1.2 Several species of bats are also listed as Species of Principal Importance under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006). This legislation requires planning authorities to consider biodiversity when undertaking their duties.
- 2.1.3 Full legislative text should be referred to as above text is a summary only. Please refer to the online legislation for the most recent legislative updates.
- 2.1.4 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 provides safeguards for European Protected Sites and Species (as listed in the Habitats Directive). This has recently been amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 which continue the same provision for European protected species, licensing requirements, and protected areas now that the UK has left the European Union.

Nesting Birds

- 2.1.5 Nesting birds are afforded protection under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (HMSO, 1981).
- 2.1.6 It is illegal to damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird whilst it is being built or in use, it is also illegal to damage or destroy the eggs of a wild bird.
- 2.1.7 Further to the protection detailed above, wild birds listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (HMSO, 1981) are afforded protection against intentional or reckless disturbance whilst at a nest with dependant young; the young are also protected from disturbance.



2.2 Relevant Planning Policy

2.2.1 Planning policies which are relevant to the Proposed Development are summarised below in Table 3.

Table 3. Planning Policy Relevant to the Proposed Development

Planning Policy	Relevance to the Proposed Development
<p>National Planning Policy Framework (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2019)</p>	<p>National Planning Policy Framework section 170 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressure.</p> <p>Section 174 of the NPPF states that in order to protect biodiversity, plans should promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Section 175 of the NPPF states: <i>“if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts) adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused”.</i></p> <p><i>“Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists.”</i></p>

*Full policy text should be referred to as table text is a summary only.

2.2.2 The South Staffordshire Council Core Strategy (South Staffordshire Council, 2012) has been reviewed and an excerpt is provided in Appendix 3.

3. Methods & Methodology

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 As part of this PRA, a desk study was carried out to gather background ecological data. The Shropshire Ecological Data Network database (SEDN, 2021) was reviewed for records of bats and birds, within a 500m radius of the approximate centre of the Site.

3.1.2 DEFRA’s Magic map (DEFRA, 2021) was used to determine whether any bat mitigation licence applications to Natural England had been granted in the local area.

3.1.3 The bat and bird information provided in the records was reviewed and assessed in relation to the species diversity recorded within the local area, as well as local roost records within the last 25 years.

3.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA)

3.2.1 The external PRA was carried out on 5th March 2021 by the Principal Author, and the survey followed Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016).

3.2.2 The Building was assessed externally to check for evidence of roosting bats (i.e., staining at entry points, droppings etc.) and for areas of the Building that may be used as entry points to a roosting



feature (i.e., gaps in soffit boarding), or indeed as roosting features in their own right (i.e., missing mortar in brickwork).

- 3.2.3 The internal assessment involved a rigorous search of the inside of the Building for evidence of roosting bats as well as an assessment of suitable roosting features and the internal abiotic factors (i.e., light levels, temperature etc.) to determine its suitability to support roosting bats.
- 3.2.4 The assessment of the suitability of the Building to support roosting bats is based on Table 4.1 of the Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016)

3.3 Limitations

- 3.3.1 There were no significant limitations to the preliminary roost assessment.
- 3.3.2 It must be noted that the survey is only a 'snapshot' of the Site at the time that the survey was undertaken, and conditions may change. The detail provided within this report relates to the Site at the time of the survey only.
- 3.3.3 Biological records provided only detailed four-figure grid references. Sufficient location information was however provided to be certain that records did not originate from or immediately adjacent to the Site.

4. Survey Results and Recommendations

4.1 Baseline and Assessment of Impacts & Effects - Desk Study

- 4.1.1 There are no statutory or non-statutory wildlife sites within 500m of the Site designated for bats.
- 4.1.2 Only one bat record was provided by SEDN and this was a common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) record from 2011 southwest of the Site in Boningale.. The record is sufficiently distant from the Site (over 500m) that it is clear it did not originate from or is importantly linked to the Site.
- 4.1.3 MAGIC map (DEFRA, 2021) did not indicate any granted mitigation licences within 500m of the Site.
- 4.1.4 The local area (within 500m of the Site) supports good commuting and foraging habitat for bats in the form of arable field hedgerows and woodland (respectively). The Site is well-connected to the woodland to the east via a tree line. The woodland is c.30m southeast of the Site and therefore provides highly suitable foraging habitat for bats that may utilise the Building as a roost.
- 4.1.5 No bird records were provided within 500m of the Site.

4.2 Baseline and Assessment of Impacts & Effects – Field Survey

Bats

- 4.2.1 The Building is a single-storey barn currently used for storage of agricultural materials and livestock. The Building supports a pitched roof with gable ends at the southeast and northwest elevations, a small lean-to is present at the northwest elevation and scrub is present along the northeast elevation.
- 4.2.2 The Building is a single-skin brick-built structure, and the pitched roof is supported by a steel frame which is covered with corrugated cement sheeting. The Building has multiple doorways (some open) at the southwest elevation resulting in significant light and wind ingress to the interior of the Building. A single window is present at the southeast elevation.
- 4.2.3 The Building is compartmentalised into three separate internal areas, two small storage rooms at the southeast and northwest extents, and a larger internal stable area between the two smaller rooms at the centre of the Building.

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4.2.4 Table 1 below, describes the Building at the Site in relation to its suitability to support roosting bats. The table should be read in conjunction with the photos that are included in Appendix 2.

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Table 1 Detail of Bat Roost Potential for the Building

External Assessment		
Feature	Present During Inspection?	Notes
Lifted/warped/missing tiles	Yes	Small gaps between overlapping corrugated cement sheeting at the roof
Missing mortar (at roof level)	Not present	N/A
Missing mortar (in brickwork)	Yes	Missing mortar at northeast elevation, mostly superficial and obscured significantly by scrub. Unlikely to be exploited by roosting bats.
Lifted lead flashing	Not present	N/A
Gaps around lintels (windows and doors)	Yes	Gaps above wooden door lintels at southwest elevation. Other brick lintels in good condition.
Gaps in hanging tiles/cladding	Not present.	N/A
Gaps at soffits/eaves/argeboard	Yes	Gaps beneath corrugated cement sheeting at the eaves.
Other	Yes	Open and missing doors at southwest elevation provide flight access into the Building. Cracked brickwork at southeast elevation providing opportunistic roosting space.
Internal Assessment		
Feature	Present During Inspection?	Notes
Light ingress to roof void?	Yes	Significant light ingress to stable area and southeast internal room due to the open doorways at the southwest elevation and gaps at roof level. Northwest internal room much darker, with minimal light ingress.
Roof lining	Not present.	N/A
Roof timbers	Steel rafters & supports	N/A
Small/medium/large void	No void present. Three segregated rooms open to rafters.	Two small internal rooms and one large central stable area.
Cobwebbing	Some present.	Not significant.
Temperature (°C)	Ambient	Cold at time of survey. Likely similar to ambient temperature during summer months.
Flight space	Yes	Sufficient flight space inside the large central stable area.
Other	N/A	N/A
Evidence of bats found?		None found



Suitability of building

Low suitability

- 4.2.5 The Building has **low suitability to support roosting bats**, this suitability is limited to small gaps between overlapping roofing sheets and a large crack in brickwork at the southeast elevation.

Nesting Birds

- 4.2.6 One old swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) nest was observed on the steel rafters inside the northwest internal small room. This nest was crumbling and clearly had not been used for some time.
- 4.2.7 Bird droppings were present within the Building, but no other evidence of historic nesting was observed.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Bats

- 5.1.1 The Building has low suitability to support roosting bats and will therefore require a minimum of one presence/likely absence bat survey, to comprise either a dusk emergence survey or a dawn re-entry survey. This survey must be undertaken between May and August.
- 5.1.2 Further surveys may be required if a bat roost is identified on Site or if bat activity levels are high enough that further survey effort is deemed necessary.
- 5.1.3 Further surveys are required as the Proposed Development has the potential to result in a breach of legislation in respect of roosting bats if roosting bats are present within the Building. The elements of the Proposed Development that have the potential to adversely affect roosting bats, if present, are:
- Repair works to the external walls.
 - Re-roofing
- 5.1.4 It must be noted that this survey is required to be carried out **prior to the determination of the planning application**, as the results of the survey may have implications for the design of the proposal and the timing of works, should the Proposed Development be subsequently permitted.
- 5.1.5 Information on mitigation will be provided, if required, on completion of further surveys within a separate report.
- 5.1.6 The Proposed Development also provides an opportunity to enhance the Site for roosting bats by providing suitable roosting features for bats. Detail on enhancements will be provided following the completion of further survey.

5.2 Nesting Birds

- 5.2.1 Demolition of the Building should be avoided between March and August (inclusive). If this is not possible an ecologist must undertake a check of the Building for nesting birds prior to its demolition.

References

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Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan (Google Earth Pro, 2021)



Kingswood Rd

A41

County Ln

Newport Rd

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Google Earth

1945

Imagery Date: 6/29/2018 52°37'34.47" N 2°14'50.42" W elev 128 m eye alt 769 m

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Appendix 2 – Site Photographs

Figure 1. Southwest elevation



Figure 2. Northeast elevation



Figure 3. Southeast elevation showing crack in wall.



Figure 4. Lean to at northwest elevation showing scrub encroachment.



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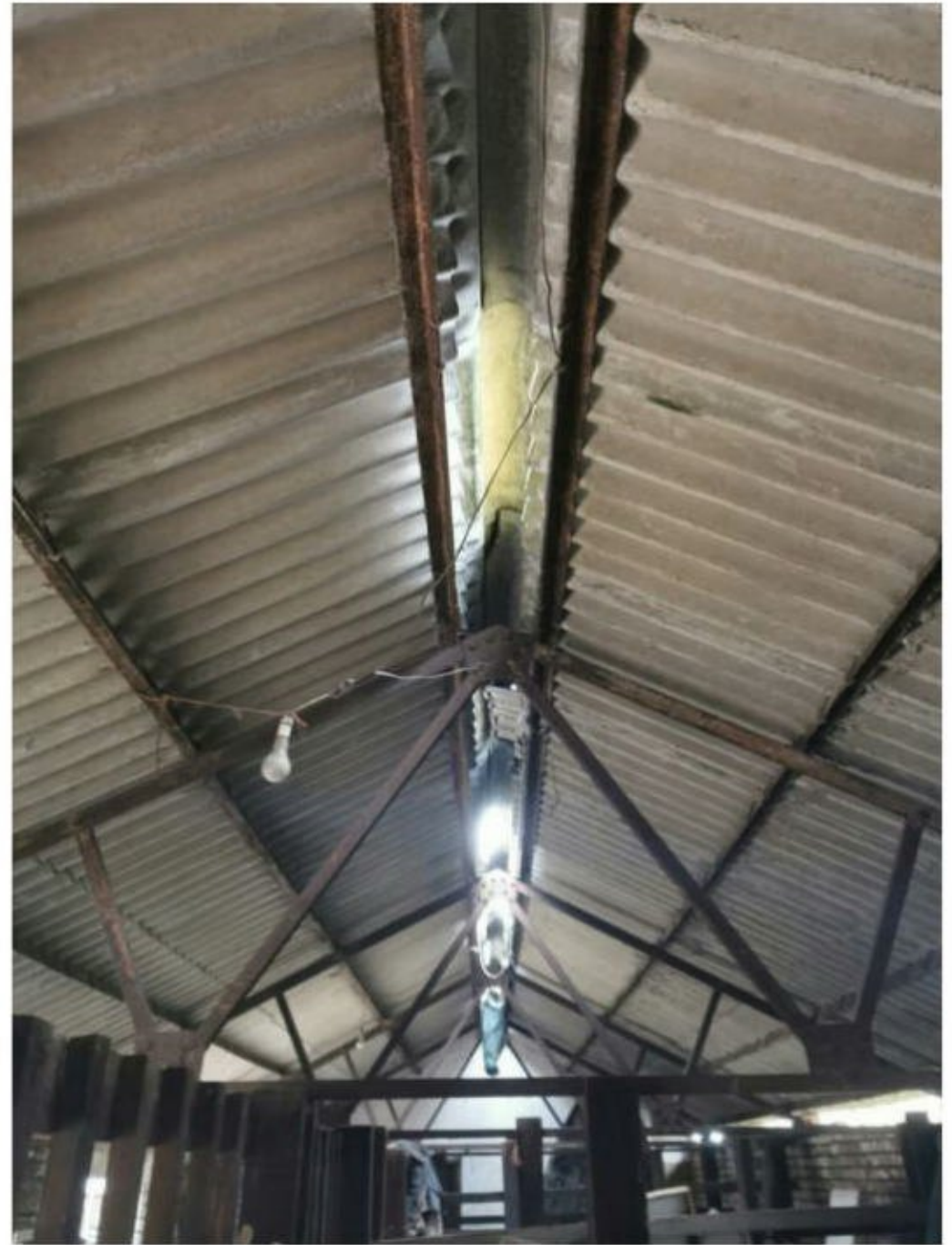
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Figure 5. *Damaged render obscured by scrub at northeast elevation.*



Figure 6. *Inside the central stable area*



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Figure 7. *The northwest smaller internal room with minimal light ingress*

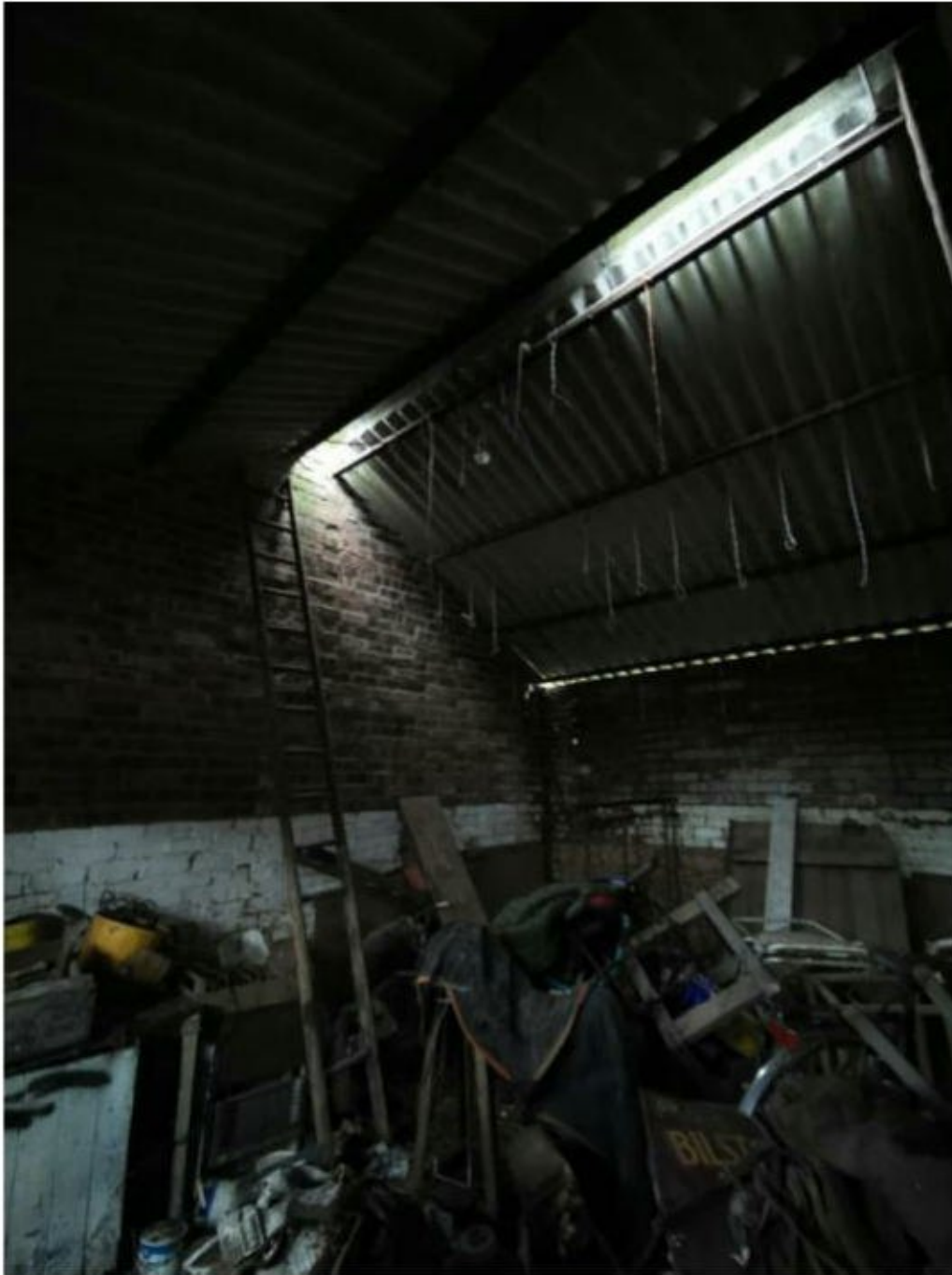


Figure 8. *Crack in brickwork at southeast elevation*





Appendix 3 - Local Planning Policy Excerpts (South Staffordshire Council, 2012)

Core Policy 2: Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment

The Council will support development or other initiatives where they protect, conserve and enhance the District's natural and heritage assets including ecological networks internationally, nationally and locally important designations. Particular support will be given to initiatives to improve the natural environment where it is poor and increase the overall biodiversity of the District including the development of green infrastructure links and to improve the historic environment where it is identified as at risk.

Development or initiatives will generally be supported which:

- a) will not have a detrimental impact upon the interests and significance of a natural or heritage asset;
- b) are not contrary to the control of development within internationally, nationally or locally designated areas including the Green Belt and Open Countryside, Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Motte Meadows Special Area of Conservation, and contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the character of the landscape and local distinctiveness;
- c) are consistent with the sustainable management of the asset including the repair and reuse of historic buildings;
- d) protect and improve water and air quality;
- e) provide mitigation or compensatory measures to address any potential harmful implications and supporting enhancement measures.

Development proposals should be consistent with the NPPF, the Supplementary Planning Documents on the Historic Environment and Biodiversity and other local planning policies.

Development proposals should have regard to and support the actions and objectives of the Severn and Humber River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and also have regard to the River Severn and River Trent Catchment Flood Management Plans (CFMPs).



Policy EQ1: Protecting, Enhancing and Expanding Natural Assets

Permission will be granted for development (alone or in combination) which would not cause significant harm to sites and/or habitats of nature conservation, geological or geomorphological value, including ancient woodlands and hedgerows, together with species that are protected or under threat. Support will be given to proposals which enhance and increase the number of sites and habitats of nature conservation value, and to meeting the objectives of the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (SBAP).

In line with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), development proposals must not adversely affect the ecological status of a water body and wherever possible take measures to improve ecological value in order to help meet the required status.

International Sites

Any proposed development that could have an adverse affect on the integrity of an international wildlife, geodiversity or landscape site (e.g. Natura 2000 or Ramsar site, Special Area of Conservation) or on ground water flows to those sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the legislative provisions to protect such sites can be fully met.

National Sites

Protected wildlife, geodiversity and landscape sites designated under national legislation are shown on the Policies Map [e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs)] and will be protected under the terms of that legislation.

Local Sites

Locally important sites are also identified [e.g. Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs), Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)] and will be protected and enhanced. Outside the areas designated, the interests of nature conservation must be taken into account in accordance with national guidance.

The restoration or creation of new habitats and the expansion of habitats in South Staffordshire will be supported where these contribute to priorities in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan including priority habitats such as native woodland, hedgerows, and lowland heathland. Areas or sites for the restoration or creation of biodiversity priority habitats will be identified through Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping working in partnership with Natural England, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and Staffordshire County Council.

Wherever possible, development proposals should build in biodiversity by incorporating ecologically sensitive design and features for biodiversity within the development scheme.

Development proposals should be consistent with the Supplementary Planning Documents on Biodiversity and Landscape Character and other local planning policies.

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