

Katherine Wood [via email]

Planning

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

11 March 2025

**Comment on Planning Application: C/06/65 North & South Barns
Adjacent to B6160 and Barden Road, Barden
Full planning permission for conversion of two barns into three dwellings for local
occupancy/short term holiday let, with associated curtilage and parking**

Dear Ms Wood

Friends of the Dales wishes to raise concerns around the protection of Barn Owls, a Schedule 1 species using these barns for nesting and roosting.

1. Barn Owls

Barn Owls receive the highest level of protection under Schedule 1 and Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They are very susceptible to disturbance at all stages of their life cycle which can cause them to abandon courtship and nesting attempts or an active nest.

a) Active Roost Site

The survey commissioned by the applicant identified an **Active Roost Site** (ARC) during an inspection of both barns on 5 January 2023. It is our understanding that this survey will effectively **expire** in April 2025. Assuming that the application has not been determined by then, **another survey will be required to support the application.**

If approved, a survey is legally required 30 days before any approved development starts to ensure the status of the Barn Owls has not changed since the first survey.

As the existing survey report says “Barn owls are highly faithful to their roost and/or nest sites.” The report also notes that male Barn Owls may roost away from a nesting site but the partner female bird may continue to roost where the pair have previously nested. Thus the presence of a roosting Barn Owl can indicate an active pair with a nest site local to the roost.

Recent sightings (February and March 2025) of a Barn Owl [and once of two owls] leaving the barns to hunt have been submitted to North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre (NEYEDC). These sightings demonstrate that the barns are still an **Active Roost Site.**

There are clear procedures to be followed to protect roosting Barn Owls and we would expect these to be conditions to be added to any approval of this planning application. These are procedures will be familiar to the Authority and are summarised in the surveyors’ report.

Continued./...



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2. Nesting Site

The Barn Owl survey identified that “Numerous ledges and cavities suitable for nesting were observed within the barns and it is possible that the barns are used a nest site.”

Regular sightings during the summer of 2023 (the summer after the Barn Owl survey found evidence of an Active Roost Site) have now been submitted to NYEDEC. These sightings were on five dates in August 2023. On all occasions an adult Barn Owl left the barns to follow a habitual hunting route across the fields and on to the moors (identified as optimum habitat for Barn Owls in the survey report). On several occasions the adult was observed to **return with prey, an indicator of an active nest.**

It is highly likely that the Barn Owls, possibly the same pair, nested again in summer 2024. Certainly at least one owl was present as it was seen leaving the barns by the surveyor undertaking the Bat Surveys on 26 May 2024 and 6 August 2024.

The Barn Owl survey says that “Further surveys during late spring and summer will be required to determine if the barns are used by nesting barn owls.”

No official surveys were carried out in 2024, although the applicant and local birdwatchers may have records. Given that nesting did occur the year before, and the presence of roosting owls this year, it would be reasonable to pause determination of the application until formal surveys can be done in spring and summer 2025.

Alternatively it would be prudent and in the interests of the applicant and the Barn Owls that it is **assumed that Barn Owls are currently preparing to nest in 2025.** Barn Owls can in any month and two owls were observed in early March. If the application is approved all the additional procedures regarding nesting can be conditioned.

We note that the applicant [Chatsworth/Bolton Abbey Estates] have submitted plans which include provision of an interior Barn Owl nesting box in one of the barns. **This is a good indication that the estate is fully aware of the presence of nesting owls and are also aware of their legal responsibilities to protect these Schedule 1 birds to the highest degree.**

Yours sincerely

Chair, Policy and Planning Committee
On behalf of Friends of the Dales

Friends of the Dales is a working name of the Yorkshire Dales Society which was founded in 1981 and is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Friends of the Dales is free of political and financial affiliations. We work to ensure that the Government, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, and other relevant agencies deliver their obligations to care for the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales, an internationally important area. We do this by considering major planning applications and policy development affecting the Yorkshire Dales and adjacent areas. We offer a year round programme of walks and talks so that everyone can enjoy and learn more about this beautiful area and why it needs protection. We have a membership of around 1,300 individuals, families, businesses and organisations.