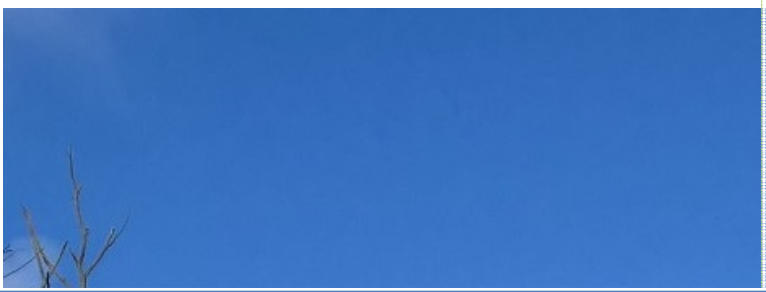

Greenyard Farm

Nesting Bird Survey

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Date: 24.10.16

KHEPRI

Wildlife Services and Consulting Ltd.

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Project:	Greenyard Farm, St. Andrew's Major.
Location of site:	Argae Lane, central grid reference ST 13744 70551, post code CF63 1BL.
Date of site visit/s:	07.09.16
Surveyor:	Jenny Jones
Scope of survey/s:	Nesting bird survey
Description of proposed works (if known):	Demolition of existing structures, construction of new residential accommodation.
Overview of results:	Evidence of feral pigeons, swallows and blackbirds nesting within structures, possibly also house sparrows and house martins. Robin's nest likely present in scrub directly adjacent to one structure.
Further actions required:	Re-survey for updated species list if development works not commenced by 07.09.17.
Recommendations:	Carry out demolition works when birds are not nesting (generally between September - February, inclusive). If this is not possible, exclude birds from buildings during winter months, or when they have finished nesting and there are no longer active nests inside, under ecological guidance/supervision, to prevent re-entry during next nesting season.

ECOLOGICAL TIMETABLE

Jan	Birds generally not breeding, exclusion/demolition works can occur
Feb	
Mar	Bird nesting season, not advisable to exclude birds during this time
Apr	
May	
Jun	
Jul	
Aug	
Sept	Birds generally not breeding, exclusion/demolition works can occur
Oct	
Nov	
Dec	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Proposed development and background to works

Khepri Wildlife and Consulting Ltd. was commissioned by Dawn and Dusk Ecology Ltd. to undertake a nesting bird survey of Greenyard Farm in St. Andrew's Major. The client, Andrew Edmunds, proposes to develop the existing barn structures and outbuildings into residential accommodation.

1.2 Objectives of study

The aim of this survey and report is to determine whether birds are nesting within the structures. If birds are found to be present, a record of species, location of where they are nesting and where they are entering the building (if known) will be made. Recommendations on how to proceed are also included in this report.

1.3 Site context

Greenyard Farm is located along Argae Lane, in the south of rural St. Andrew's Major, at central grid reference ST 13744 70551. To the north, east and south of the farm lies a golf course, comprising maintained green, pockets of trees/small areas of woodland and hedgerows. Immediately adjacent to the farmyard there is a small section of scrub and tall ruderal habitat (which will be cleared as part of the development). Across Argae Lane to the west of the farm is agricultural land. All of these habitats, in addition to the structures to be surveyed, can provide many bird species in the area with foraging and nesting opportunities.

2. METHODS

2.1 Site survey

A nesting bird survey was conducted at Greenyard Farm on 07.09.16. The survey consisted of a thorough walkover of the site, both internally and externally inspecting structures, gathering information on whether birds were nesting inside them, and if present, what species they were and where they were accessing the structures, if known. The structures, any birds in the area and nests were visually inspected using Field 10x42 binoculars from ground level.

Results are given using descriptions and photographs.

2.2 Constraints

Due to stored materials in the outbuildings, some areas were not as easily viewed from ground level therefore some old (currently disused) nests where birds were not in the vicinity/tending to may have gone unnoticed.

The second storey of the double storey timber barn was not accessible at the time of survey due to unsafe/no staircase.

The survey was conducted near the end of the nesting bird season, so exact locations of all nests may have not been recorded as no evidence of birds regularly flying in/out tending chicks was not observed. It should also be noted that new nests in different locations could be constructed during the next nesting season, if birds are not excluded during the winter period, so locations of nests may change.

However, it is considered that these constraints will not affect the recommendations of this report and it is likely that the majority of bird species using the buildings have been identified.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Site survey

Double storey timber barn

Photo 1: Double storey timber barn

Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) were noted using the upper storey of this structure (Photo 1) and also calling and resting on nearby overhead cables. Nests inside were not visible but it is highly likely multiple pairs of swallows nest in this structure, accessed via the upper level door and windows.

Old/currently disused nests and nesting material were present on wooden beams and fascias within the lower storey of this structure. These were likely also swallow nests, but could also be other species such as house martin (*Delichon urbicum*) or swift (*Apus apus*) (Photo 2), although these species were not recorded in the vicinity at the time of survey. A possible house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) nest (Photo 3) was noted on a beam in the lower storey. One other nest was visible at the edge of a false ceiling (Photo 4), possibly this was a feral pigeon (*Columba livia domestica*) nest as pigeon feathers were present on the floor, but access restrictions prevented closer inspection of the nest itself.

Birds could make use of the ivy cover on the wooden building and adjacent smaller shed type structure in which to nest, although no obvious nests were observed at the time of survey.

Incidentally a number of wasps were seen to also be flying in and around the upper storey of the timber clad barn, suggesting a wasp nest may be present somewhere within the structure.

Photo 2: Currently disused/old swallow or house martin nest in lower storey of structure.

Photo 3: Possible house sparrow nest.

Photo 4: Hole in false ceiling with nesting material present at edge, possibly a pigeon nest.

Stable block

Photo 5: Stable block.

The shorter length of this structure, located between the wooden barn and longer expanse of the stable block (Photo 5, section on the left hand side), was not observed to have any nests in it.

The longer section of the stable block (Photo 5, right hand section) had an old nest present on one of the internal beams near the gable end (Photo 6). Species that had built/used the nest was indeterminable at the time of survey.

Photo 6: Old/currently disused nest at intersection of two beams in stable block.

Ivy cover on the outside of the building surrounding the door could support nesting bird species including robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) and blackbird (*Turdus merula*). Personal communication with the client/landowner suggested there were a pair of robins that regularly held territory and nested within the bushes at the front of the stable block.

The narrow lean-to (Photo 7) that abutted the stable block and open Dutch barn did not have any signs of nests beneath it, although presence of ivy and other vegetation towards the rear of this could support nesting birds.

Photo 7: Narrow lean-to structure between stable block and open Dutch barn. Vegetation at rear has the potential to support nesting birds.

Dutch barn

No evidence of nesting birds was seen in this structure, however, there was evidence that a predator, likely a fox as there were fox prints in the farmyard, had predated a bird and plucked some of its feathers at this location. To the rear of this structure, it appeared that small mammals, possibly rabbits and/or rats, have been digging in substrate/hay on the floor and created a series of burrows.

Larger stone barn

Photo 8: Pigeon excrement present on beam and on floor below. No nests were visible in this structure at the time of survey.

Pigeon feathers and a large amount of excrement were present on the floor at various locations within this structure, both in the stone barn and metal lean-to structure at the rear (Photo 8). No nests were observed, suggesting this location may currently be a roost or favoured perching location rather than a nesting site.

Smaller stone barn

This smaller stone barn with a slate roof abutted the larger stone barn and the farmhouse. There was a possible blackbird nest plus one other nest (Photo 9) that were present within this structure.

Photo 9: Possibly blackbird nest (far right) plus another old nest (far left).

Scrub/tall ruderal vegetation

Photo 10: Scrub and tall ruderal vegetation that will be cleared as part of development.

Multiple bird species were present at the time of survey in this area of vegetation (Photo 10). It was suggested by the client/landowner that this area had been previously cleared of vegetation and current vegetation was relatively recently re-established growth. It should be noted that birds may construct nests in this area during the next breeding season should vegetation remain.

Additional observations/notes

Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*) was also seen on site during the survey, although it could not be confirmed whether it was or had been nesting in the survey area.

The client/landowner advised that barn owls (*Tyto alba*) have been seen in the area but are not known to nest at Greenyard Farm. No signs of barn owl (or other owl species) presence was observed in any of the outbuildings during the survey.

Although the farmhouse itself is not proposed to be affected as part of the development, it was observed that jackdaws (*Corvus monedula*) appear to be nesting in/on the chimney.

A juvenile slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) was found beneath a piece of wood adjacent to the scrub/tall ruderal area of habitat.

3.2 Legislation

Birds

All naturally occurring bird species in Britain are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The legislation protects all birds, their nests and eggs and it is an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure and take any wild bird;
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; and
- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

In addition, any bird listed on Schedule 1 of the above legislation, such as barn owl, is afforded further protection and it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb the bird while nest building or while at (or near) a nest with eggs or young; or
- Disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

Reptiles

The four most commonly encountered reptiles in the UK, namely common lizard (*Lacerta [Zootoca] vivipara*), slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), adder (*Vipera berus*) and grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) are listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are partially protected under Sections 9(1) and 9(5) of this legislation, which affords them protection against killing, injury and sale.

Reptiles are vulnerable to killing and injury during ground disturbance operations and are particularly so during the winter (October to March inclusive) when they are in hibernation. National Guidance (Reptiles: Guidelines for Developers, English Nature 2004) states that "where it is predictable that reptiles are likely to be killed or injured by activities such as site clearance, this could legally constitute intentional killing or injuring". Therefore, in areas where reptiles are present during the active season (April to September inclusive), site clearance should be carried out under ecological guidance. Where reptiles could be hibernating, site clearance during the winter months should be avoided altogether.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Demolish structures/exclude birds outside of main bird nesting season

Generally from September until February (inclusive) the chance of encountering an active bird nest is low. Therefore, it is advised that structures are taken down or made unsuitable/inaccessible for nesting birds during this timeframe. Suitable exclusion features such as plastic or mesh across open windows or doors could be installed once the interior is clear of nests and birds to prevent any from re-entering the structure ahead of the next nesting season.

4.2 Ecological supervision

Depending on nature, location and timing of proposed renovation work, it is recommended to liaise with an ecological consultant who will advise on level of supervision that may be required to exclude birds from structures requiring demolition/exclusion. Due to seasonality and nature of some bird species to rear multiple broods, it is advised that an ecological consultant is appointed to check for active nests and remove inactive ones before any exclusion work is undertaken.

If for any reason a bird manages to re-enter the structure once exclusion has taken place, an ecological consultant must be notified and efforts made to encourage the bird out again as soon as possible. If a bird is discovered inside during active nesting season (generally March - August, inclusive), it should be left alone and an ecologist contacted immediately for advice.

Should nature or duration of works change for any reason and it is believed that nesting birds (or any other protected species) may be affected by works, an ecological consultant should also be contacted immediately for advice.

4.1 Install nest boxes

A selection of nest boxes should be provided to compensate for loss of nesting habitat, for example robin nest boxes can be affixed to remaining trees or at other suitable locations in the vicinity and house sparrow nest boxes can be erected to new and/or existing structures. Nest boxes could also be incorporated into the newly built structures for example into roof tiles or into brickwork of walls.

5. REFERENCES

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).