

Waddington Parish Council

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25th January 2021

Laura Eastwood
Planning Department
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
Clitheroe
BB7 2RA

Application reference: 3/2021/0033
School House, West Bradford Road, Waddington

Dear Ms Eastwood,

As a Parish Council, we would be prepared to support the above-named planning application, if Ribble Valley Borough Council takes measures to incorporate swift nest bricks into this new build project as a biodiversity enhancement to the Parish. We have no other objections to the development.

If Ribble Valley Borough Council intends to grant permission for the above planning application, we urge you to make installation of three swift nest bricks a planning condition, thereby providing a communal habitat of three nest bricks to the new gable end of the building.

Section 40 of the **Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006**, states: *“Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.”*¹

This is supported in Section 109 of the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**, which states: *“The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: ...minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures...”*²

The habitat at this site, adjacent to open farmland used for a variety of livestock, is conducive to flying insect eating birds which feed on the wing such as Swifts, Swallows and House Martins. All of which have been observed and recorded in the area. However, their habitat is rapidly decreasing due to building upgrades such as this and the implementation of current roofing/building techniques.

Installing integral swift bricks would contribute to these objectives and demonstrate the commitment of both Waddington Parish Council and Ribble Valley Borough Council to protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Designing for and installing swift bricks into the fabric of the new part of the building during the construction phase is easy, inexpensive, and will last its lifetime.

¹ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/pdfs/ukpga_20060016_en.pdf

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/11-conserving-and-enhancing-the-natural-environment>

Why are swifts important?

Swifts are a quintessential sign of British summertime and an intrinsic part of the Ribble Valley and the Parish of Waddington. They can be seen, now in much lower numbers, soaring over rooftops on late summer evenings, with their dark sickle-shaped wings and distinctive 'screaming' calls. These charismatic birds spend nearly their whole lives in flight and are migrant birds, with one of the longest migration journeys in the world, travelling 14,000 miles from central/southern Africa in early May just to breed in the same village or town here in the UK, before leaving again in August.

However, swifts are in trouble, having declined significantly by 53% between 1995-2016 (5% per year and continuing). Swifts are now an 'Amber-listed' species on the list of Birds of Conservation Concern³ and a Priority species for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

Without our help, swifts will be lost as a breeding species in the UK.

Swifts are entirely reliant on buildings to nest. Nest sites are being lost when buildings are demolished or refurbished - and because swifts are faithful to their nest site, breeding success of swifts is being severely affected. The RSPB and the British Trust of Ornithology believes this loss of nest sites is a key driver behind the dramatic decline of swifts.

All is not lost, however. There are lots of simple and inexpensive solutions, easily deployed in all manner of developments which addresses the issue - swift bricks being one such example. The only pre-requisite is that the bricks should be sited above 5m from the ground, which is possible at this site with the gable ridge being at 7.8m.

Nesting swifts are clean birds and not to be mistaken with House Martins which build their mud nests under eaves and typically deposit faecal sacs directly below to the ground. Swifts do not, they do not take nesting material into their nests, adults do not roost on the nest other than for initial incubation of eggs and the young are quiet within the nest.

We enclose an annex which lists a range of possible solutions, products and resources, including boxes to suit an external random stone finish as proposed.

We therefore urge the RVBC to include the above condition for the developer to provide swift nest sites integral to the new extension as a biodiversity enhancement to this development.

If we do not take action now to save swifts, no more will future generations hear the exhilarating sound of screaming parties of swifts soaring over rooftops on a summer evening. With their loss, a part of our British heritage will be lost with them too.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Carol Baird
Clerk to the Parish
Waddington Parish Council

³ www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-guide/status_explained.aspx