

Press Release

**From Councillor Barry Stamp
Stafford Borough Councillor
Church Eaton Ward**

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Use: Immediate

Council Accused of Washing Their Hands Over Threatened Bats

A leading Stafford Councillor fighting to save a prominent Haughton building from being demolished has today criticised the Borough Council for not wanting to get involved.

Councillor Barry Stamp said he was appalled that the Borough Council's Planning Department had suggested he should contact the developers himself to ask them what they were going to do to ensure bats were not present in the building before it was demolished.

"Over the past few days a number of local residents have pointed out that Haughton Farm House is used as bat roost. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 bats are a protected species and any developer who intends to do work which could disturb them must get a licence from DEFRA before the work is begun. Under normal circumstances the Borough Council's Planning Department might well ask a developer to carry out a bat survey and hence get the necessary licences as part of their planning application. However because the demolition of Haughton Farm House does not need planning permission from the Council they have washed their hands of trying to get a survey carried out. Even though the Council has to formally agree to the way the developer intends to knock the building down they are unwilling to contact them to point out bats might be present. Instead they suggested I should contact them myself. To this end I have written to agent for the developers pointing out the fact many local residents do think the building is used as a bat roost and I have asked him if the developers have the necessary licence to disturb it. I have also contacted the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and English Nature pointing out that bats probably live in the building. What is clear is there is a massive hole in the planning law which allows a developer to demolish a building which could house a protected species," said Barry Stamp.

"Hopefully now the developers of Haughton House Farm have been told about the possibility of a bat roost they will carry out a full survey and then not only apply for the required licences from DEFRA but also seek advice from English Nature as to how the bats can be protected. They could of course rethink their plans to knock down the house!" added Cllr Stamp.

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Notes to editors

- 1) All 16 species of British bats are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- 2) It is illegal to kill, injure, or disturb bats; obstruct access to bat roosts; damage or disturb bat roosts
- 3) Before work is carried out which might affect a bat roost a licence for the work must be obtained from DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs)