

Press Release

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

Date : 24th January 2006

Use: Immediate

Staffordshire Police Asked To Investigate Demolition of Bat Roost

Staffordshire Police have today been asked to investigate whether builders developing the old Houghton House Farm site in the centre of Houghton village have committed an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Stafford Borough Councillor Barry Stamp said he was appalled to see work had started to demolish the old farm house on the site despite the developers being warned that bats could be using the building as a roost.

“Over the past few weeks local residents have become more and more concerned that the owners of the old Houghton House Farm site in the centre of the Village were planning to demolish the old farm house, parts of which have stood on the site since the seventeenth century. One concern was the building is used as bat roost. A week ago both myself and English Nature wrote to the developers agent pointing out that bats might be using the building. I asked him to confirm what investigations had been done to find out whether bats were in the building and if this was the case if he had applied for the necessary licences to carry out the demolition. However both English Nature and myself have not had a reply to our letters and now demolition work has started, hence destroying any bat roost that might have existed. The only course of action now appears to see if an offence has been committed under the either the Wildlife and Countryside Act or various other English and European laws which gives protection to the bats. I have now contacted Staffordshire Police about the work and will be writing formally to them asking them to investigate the case. While it is now too late to save the roost in this building I do think it is important to remind builders they cannot ride roughshod over the law designed to protect threaten wildlife species,” said Cllr Stamp

Further details from: Councillor Barry Stamp
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Notes to editors:

i) Under the Habitats Regulations it is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any bat. This is an absolute offence – this means that, intent or recklessness does not have to be proved.

ii) The potential fine for each offence is £5,000 per bat. In England and Wales an offender can also be imprisoned for six months.

iii) A photograph can be arranged with Cllr Stamp and the roofless Houghton Farm House – please ring Barry on 01785 822723