

Environmental Statement: Chapter 7

Technical Appendix 7.10: Barn Owl Survey

Land East of Blackmore Farm, Melksham

Gleeson Land Ltd

March 2026

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1 Methodology

1.1.1 A three-stage barn owl survey was undertaken in 2024 in accordance with the IEEM publication 'Barn owl survey methodology and techniques for use in Ecological Assessment' (Shawyer, 2011). Surveys were carried out on the following dates:

- Stage 1 - 08 April 2021.
- Stage 2 - 14th May 2024.
- Stage 3 - 22nd July 2024.

1.1.2 The Stage 1 scoping process was undertaken within the Survey Area to establish and record features that may offer potential nest sites, roost sites or foraging habitat for barn owls. Mature standard trees were assessed and recorded within the Stage 1 scoping process based on the diameter of the trunk at chest height, as set out by Shawyer (2011):

- Ash, sycamore and crack willow: 0.5m diameter or more (>80 years old);
- Horse chestnut and beech: 0.75m diameter or more (>150 years); and
- Oak: 1.5m diameter or more (>250 years).

1.1.3 The Stage 2 survey involved a detailed ground-based inspection of trees using binoculars, to record potential nest sites (PNS) or active roost sites (ARS). Potential features include holes, cavities and chambers. Habitats within the Site boundary were also assessed, based on the appearance and structure of the vegetation, for their potential to offer potential foraging or commuting habitat (PFH).

1.1.4 The Stage 3 survey involved a detailed inspection of trees identified as supporting PNS, in order to identify the presence or absence of an occupied breeding site (OBS). A tree confirmed to have an OBS would include one where breeding was currently taking place or where it had done so in the recent past. The detailed inspection included identifying the presence of adult barn owls, their moulted feathers, pellets, eggs, egg shells, chicks or down, which was carried out by a Natural England licensed barn owl ecologist.

1.1.5 A review of previous survey data from the Site and any incidental records of barn owl from bat activity surveys (Appendix 7.14) was also undertaken; refer to Figure A7.10.1.

2 Limitations

2.1.1 There were no limitations to the survey.

3 Results

3.1.1 Eight mature oak trees were identified within Stage 2 surveys as having the potential to support nesting and/or roosting barn owls; refer to Figure A7.10.1. Two barn owl pellets were recorded beneath a mature oak tree during the Stage 3 survey; refer to Figure A7.10.1. The tree contained a cavity suitable for nesting and/or roosting barn owl. It was not possible to determine whether this was an OBS; however, the presence of a barn owl roost within this tree is assumed. No other evidence of an OBS was recorded during the Stage 3 survey.

3.1.2 One incidental record of barn owl was recorded on 2 September 2024 during a bat activity survey, in addition to the three incidental barn owl records recorded in 2021. This was an individual recorded flying between trees in the south of the Survey Area; refer to Figure A7.10.1. It is considered likely that barn owls use the Site regularly for foraging and occasional roosting.

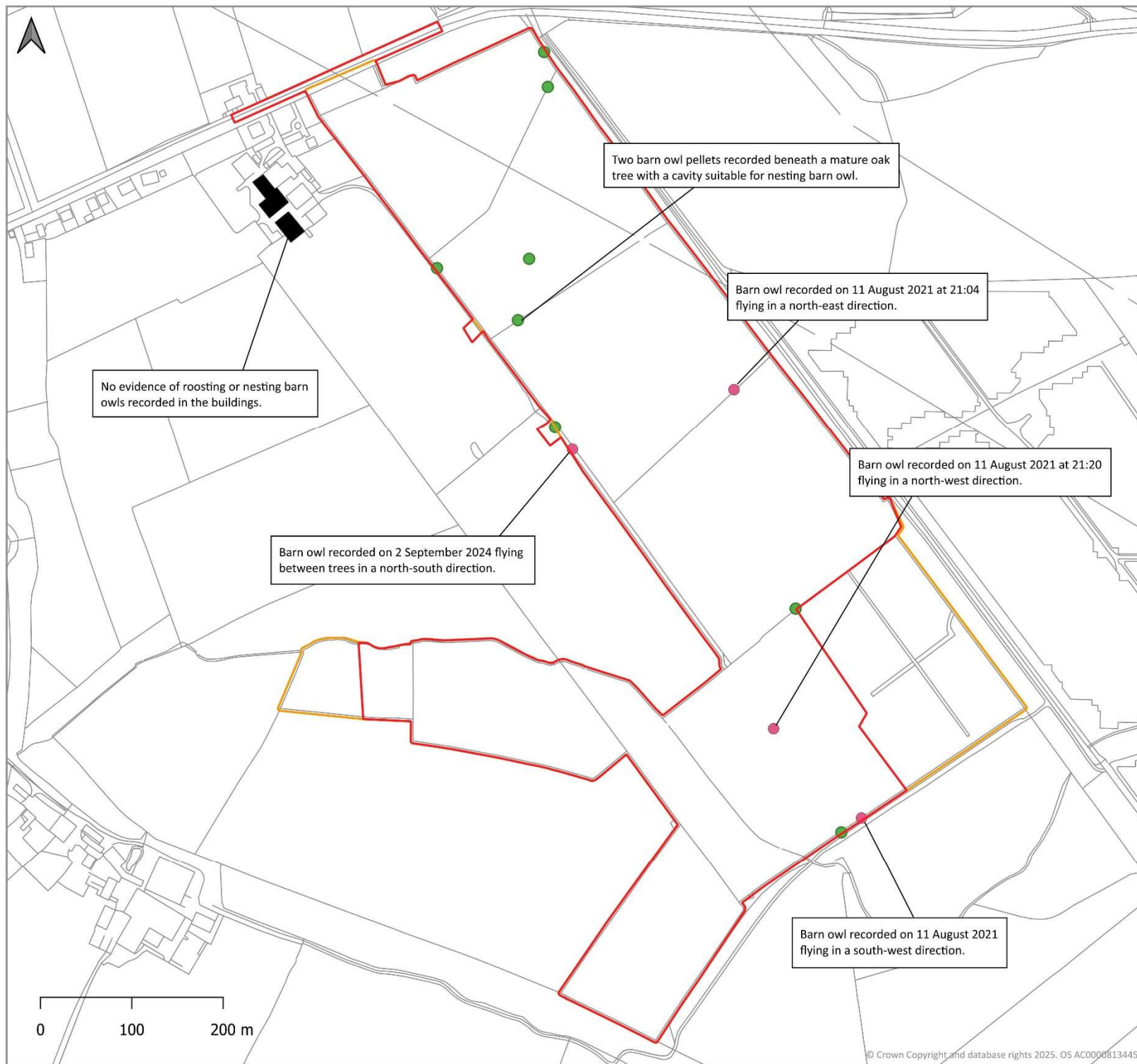
4 References

Shawyer, C.R. (2011). Barn Owl *Tyto alba* Survey Methodology and Techniques for use in Ecological Assessment: Developing Best Practice in Survey and Reporting, IEEM, Winchester.

The Barn Owl Trust (Undated) Survey Techniques. Leaflet No. 8. Barn Owl Trust, Ashburton.

The Barn Owl Trust (2012) Barn Owl Conservation Handbook. Pelagic Publishing, Exeter.

Figure A7.10.1: Barn Owl Survey Plan



Key

- Site boundary
- Survey boundary
- Buildings
- Barn owl locations
- Tree supporting 'Potential Nest Site' for barn owl



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