[*Name*

*House number/Name and Street*

 *Village/Town/City*

 *County*

 *Post Code*]

 [*Phone number/ Email address*]

[*Date*]

[*Name of* planning casework officer assigned to application]

 [*Local Authority office address*]

**Application reference: XXX/XXXXX/XXX**

Dear [*Name of* planning casework officer assigned to application],

As a local resident, I wish to comment on the above named planning application and request that [*Name of Local Authority*] takes measures to protect the known swift nest sites present within the renovation, which are potentially threatened as a result of this work.

**If [*Name of Local Authority*] intends to grant permission for the above planning application, I urge you to apply the following conditions:**

**1)** The renovation work described in this application must be conducted outside of the period 30th April-1st August (the breeding season of swifts); in order to avoid destroying active nests of this threatened species.

Swifts and their nests are fully protected under the **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**1 and the **Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985**2. This makes it illegal to intentionally or, in Scotland and Northern Ireland, recklessly, kill, injure or take a swift, or to take, damage or destroy an active nest or its contents. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, it is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly obstruct or prevent any wild bird from using its nest. This includes blocking access to nests with scaffold and/or netting, or wrapping areas around a development.

Other species such as house sparrow and/or starling may also be breeding here. Their nesting season commences earlier, from beginning of March. Bats may also be using the site to roost.

**2)** The location of all existing nests must be retained wherever possible, or access provided through any new materials (e.g. replacement fascias and soffits) in the same location as existing nests, or other appropriate integral provision must be made to suit the design and materials of the renovation.

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.*”3

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…*”4

1 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>

2 <http://www.hmso.gov.uk/legislation/northernireland/nisr/yeargroups/1980-1989/1985/1985oic/no171_000.htm>

3<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/pdfs/ukpga_20060016_en.pdf>

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

Based on [*insert your evidence e.g. anecdotal observations, swift survey data, etc*], I believe there are approximately [*X*] pair(s) of swifts nesting on this site. Further increasing the number of swift nest sites available through this renovation would be preferable.

[*Name of Local Authority*]would be demonstrating their commitment to protecting and enhancing biodiversity by ensuring measures are taken to retain the access holes to the swift nest sites in exactly the same place. Swifts imprint on the location of their nests and moving holes even a short distance can cause loss of a colony.

If existing holes are to be covered by new materials, like fascias or soffits, make new holes to precisely match the location of the old holes. If new building work is being undertaken, internal nest spaces incorporated into the integral fabric of the building are best. If this is not possible, external nest boxes can be fitted. Much advice is available from Swift Conservation6, who provide solutions to protecting swift nest sites in a plethora of development scenarios.

**Why are swifts important?**

Swifts are a quintessential sign of British summertime and an intrinsic part of[*Name of town/city*]. They are often seen 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, arriving all the way from central/southern Africa in early May just to breed in the UK, before leaving again in August.

However, swifts are in trouble, having declined by 47% between 1995-2014 (that’s 3% per year). Swifts are now an ‘Amber-listed’ species on the list of Birds of Conservation Concern5 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, their breeding success 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. I enclose an annex which lists a range of possible solutions, products and resources.

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,

[*Your Name*]

5 [www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-guide/status\_explained.aspx](http://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-guide/status_explained.aspx)

6<http://www.swift-conservation.org/OurLeaflets.htm>