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**BAT SCOPING SURVEY**

**At**

***Address Removed***

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Prepared for: *Client removed*  
Written by: Mark Halliwell, UES Graduate Ecologist  
Approved by: Toby Hart, UES Managing Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toby Hart', is positioned below the 'Approved by' line.

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019  
UES reference: UES02642/01

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is written by Mark Halliwell MBIol, UES Graduate Ecologist at United Environmental Services Ltd (UES). It provides an assessment of the potential impacts on bats as a result of the proposed residential development at *Address Removed*.

A bat scoping survey was undertaken on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019. The objective of the survey was to establish the suitability of the building on site to support roosting bats, based on a site-specific survey and habitat assessment. The building was searched externally and internally (where accessible) for bat presence and features associated with bat activity, as detailed in Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance (2016).

*Address removed* is situated in an area with moderate quality foraging habitat for bats. The immediate habitat consists of residential gardens with shrubs and tree borders and the occasional pond, whilst in the wider landscape, superior habitats are available including grassland, rivers and woodland surrounding bodies of water, such as at Rixton Clay Pits. Connectivity with the wider landscape is good due to the allocation of hedge- and tree-lined fields.

The building presents a low number of potential roosting features (PRFs), none of which had any associated field signs of roosting bats. Furthermore, no internal loft void is present, so it is highly unlikely for the building to be used by loft or void dwelling bats. Additionally, the current development proposals are relatively non-invasive and will not affect the roof where the low numbers of PRFs are found.

No bat field signs, such as droppings, urine staining or feeding remains, were found during the external or internal building inspections.

**The building has been assessed as containing negligible potential to support roosting bats and no field signs of bats were found during the survey. Therefore, no further survey or mitigation work is required for the development to proceed, with regards to bats.**

The report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 3, which give visual representations of the survey results.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Author, surveyors and qualifications

This report is compiled and written by Mark Halliwell MBIol UES Graduate Ecologist. Other surveyors include:

- Stewart Bradshaw, UES Sub-contractor. Stewart is licensed by Natural England to disturb, take and handle all species of bats under licence number 2015-15615-CLS-CLS (level 2).

All surveyors have the knowledge, skills and experience identified within CIEEM's "Competencies for Species Survey: Bats" (2013), or were under the supervision of a surveyor with the required competencies.

## 1.2 Survey objectives

UES was commissioned in March 2019 to conduct site surveys which include the following activities:

- Conduct internal and external building inspections to look for field signs of bats
- Assess the suitability of the building for use by roosting bats
- Recommend further surveys, mitigation and compensation, where appropriate

## 1.3 Proposed development

The proposed plans involve the refurbishment of the existing property including adding two single storey extensions to the north and east aspect.

## 1.4 Structure of the report

This report sets out the methodology, results, and recommendations in relation to a specific bat survey. Recommendations are in line with statutory legislation and planning policy objectives.

The report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 3, which give visual representations of the survey results.



## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 General

All surveys were carried out to recognised guidelines, timings and weather conditions, with particular reference to Natural England and BCT publications (see references for further information).

The habitats on site and in the surrounding area were assessed during a walkover survey and by studying aerial photographs, in order to gauge their suitability to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats.

### 2.2 Building survey

The building on site was searched both externally and internally for bat presence and features associated with bat activity, as detailed in BCT guidance (Collins, 2016). This was conducted on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019 by Stewart Bradshaw and Mark Halliwell.

#### 2.2.1 External inspection

The external inspection of the building on site was carried out from ground level using binoculars, and also using ladders and an endoscope to investigate suitable gaps. The objective of the survey was to find and record any signs of bat use, for example:

- Bat droppings
- Feeding remains
- Grease staining / urine marks
- Corpses or skeletons

The bat signs listed above are visible from the outside of a building. The following areas were searched, where present:

- Roof and ridge tiles
- Lead flashing
- Eaves
- Boxed soffits
- Fascia and barge boards
- Window sills and panes
- Walls
- Gaps under felt
- Cracks / holes in woodwork or behind cladding
- Gaps in brickwork and mortar
- Air bricks
- Grills
- Vents

#### 2.2.2 Internal inspection

The internal inspection covered all of the accessible rooms and roof spaces within the building.

Bats regularly utilise specific areas within roof spaces, which were searched for any field signs of bats using high-powered torches and an endoscope, where considered necessary by the licenced ecologist. The following features were searched, where present:

- Roof beams and junctions
- Gaps under felt



- Dividing walls
- Chimney breasts
- Gaps in brickwork and mortar
- Cracks / holes in woodwork
- Floor or other surfaces on which droppings could accumulate

### **2.3 Survey limitations**

No limitations were encountered during the survey.



## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Habitat assessment

*Address Removed* is located in *Address Removed*, a village several kilometres east of Warrington. The habitats within the curtilage of the site include an area of amenity grassland with scattered mature trees to the front of the building (west) and a hardstanding car park to the east (see Appendix 2 – Photographs, Photographs 1 and 2).

The immediate surrounding area comprises residential properties to the south west, whilst to the north lies agricultural fields. The busy A57 is situated behind the property, running from north to south, beyond which is the Manchester Ship Canal. The property is set on a relatively quiet and sparsely lit road within *Address Removed*.

Habitats in the wider surrounding area are generally dominated by agricultural fields separated by hedgerows and lines of mature trees, with occasional copses and small areas of woodland interspersed throughout. Agricultural fields are also found beyond the Manchester Ship Canal and A57 to the east. There are several ponds in the nearby area, as well as field drains and Marsh Brook, which will enhance foraging opportunities by supporting invertebrate prey. Furthermore, Rixton Clay Pits LNR<sup>1</sup>, SAC<sup>2</sup> and SSSI<sup>3</sup> is situated to south west of the development. This site comprises a mosaic of water-filled hollows and clay banks surrounded by woodland and scrub which will provide both excellent foraging and roosting habitat.

### 3.2 Building survey

#### 3.2.1 External inspection

*Address Removed* is a single storey brick building with several smaller extensions on the east, south, and west aspects (see Appendix 2 – Photographs, Photographs 2, 3 and 4). The main body of the building is a single storey height hall which is surrounded by flat roof extensions. The roofs of the buildings are all flat roofs, but there is a pitch fixed on top of the flat roof of the main body of the building to aid with drainage (see Appendix 2 – Photographs, Photograph 4). The flat roofs are either covered with bitumen roofing felt or corrugated iron whilst the pitch of the main body is composed of a weatherproof membrane (see Appendix 2 – Photographs, Photograph 5). The main body of the building has wooden fascias, whilst the flat roof extensions have PVC boxed soffits, or a wooden barge board, as is the case on the east aspect. There are some small gaps surrounding the wooden fascia boards and concrete stanchions on the east aspect (see Appendix 2 – Photographs, Photograph 6), however, no field signs of roosting bats was associated with this PRF and the gaps are rather small. Furthermore, the current proposals do not involve this area of the building. There are also some small gaps beneath the plastic boxed soffits on the north aspect, which were fully inspected with an endoscope and no field signs of bats was found (see Appendix 2 – Photographs, Photograph 7). PVC windows are located on all aspects of the building and all are in good condition, with no gaps found. The cavity brick walls are in good condition across all aspects of the building with no cracked mortar or missing bricks (see Appendix 2 – Photographs, Photograph 8).

**No bat droppings or other field signs of bats were found during the external building inspection.**

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<sup>1</sup> Local Nature Reserve

<sup>2</sup> Special Area of Conservation

<sup>3</sup> Site of Special Scientific Interest



### 3.2.2 Internal inspection

There are no loft spaces present within the building (see Appendix 2 – Photographs, Photographs 9 and 10). No PRFs were noted internally.

**No bat droppings or other field signs of bats were found during the internal building inspection.**





## **4 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 Evaluation of results**

#### **4.1.1 Qualitative assessment of foraging habitats**

In summary, *Address Removed* is situated in an area which provides moderate quality foraging habitat for bats. The immediate surrounding habitat consists of residential gardens with shrubs and tree borders, whilst in the wider landscape, superior habitats are available such as grassland, rivers, and woodland. Furthermore, the connectivity between habitats in the local area is good due to the network of tree- and hedge-lined fields.

#### **4.1.2 Qualitative assessment of roosting habitats**

The roosting habitats within the building on site were considered to be of negligible quality for bats. There are a low number of PRFs present on the exterior of the building, all of which are associated with gaps beneath wooden fascias or PVC boxed soffits. These PRFs are associated with areas of the building with no internal roof space. Furthermore, all PRFs were inspected thoroughly and no field signs of roosting bats are present.

There are no internal roof spaces in the building and as such internal roosting potential is negligible within the well-lit and well-used building.

In summary, due to the limited number of external PRFs and absence of internal roosting potential, the building is considered to have negligible bat roosting potential.

### **4.2 Mitigation and compensation measures**

As no bats were found to be using the buildings on site to roost, no further mitigation or compensation measures are required with regards to bats.



## 5 CONCLUSION

In summary, *Address Removed* is situated in an area with moderate quality foraging habitat for bats. The immediate surrounding habitat consists of residential gardens with shrubs and tree borders and the occasional pond, whilst in the wider landscape, superior habitats are available such as grassland, rivers, and woodland surrounding bodies of water, such as at Rixton Clay Pits. Connectivity with the wider landscape is good due to the allocation of hedge- and tree-lined fields.

The building presents a low number of PRFs, none of which had any associated field signs of roosting bats. Furthermore, no internal loft void is present, so it is highly unlikely for the building to be used by loft or void dwelling bats. Additionally, the current development proposals are relatively non-invasive and will not affect the roof where the low numbers of PRFs are found. These PRFs were also thoroughly inspected and no field signs of bats are present.

No evidence of bats was found during the internal or external inspection. Consequently, no further mitigation or compensation measures are required with regards to bats.



## 6 REFERENCES

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2013). *Competencies for Species Survey: Bats*.

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Department for Communities and Local Government (2012). *National Planning Policy Framework*.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004). *The Bat Workers Manual*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) JNCC



## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1 – Aerial photographs**

*Redacted.*



## Appendix 2 –Photographs

Photograph 1. *Removed*



Photograph 2. Car park and east aspect of the building.

Photograph 3. *Removed*



Photograph 4. South aspect of the building with pitched roof visible.



Photograph 5. Manmade material covering the pitched roof of the building. Corrugated metal covering the east flat roof section also seen below.



Photograph 6. Small gaps surrounding the concrete stanchions on the east side of the building.



Photograph 7. Small gaps around a drain pipe on the north aspect of the building.





Photograph 8. The PVC windows and brickwork on the building are in good condition.

Photograph 9. *Removed.*

Photograph 10. *Removed*



## **Appendix 3 – Statutory and planning context**

## Ecological assessments

Ecological assessments play an important part within the planning context; they include an initial assessment which highlights any specific interests of a site. From the initial site assessment, the surveyor assesses the suitability of habitats within the site to support protected species and makes recommendations for further survey works if required. The following paragraphs provide a brief interpretation of the legislative protection that is relevant to the findings of this report.

## Bats

In the United Kingdom, all species of bat and their roosts are afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the "Habitats Regulations"). The Wildlife and Countryside Act is the domestic implementation of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention) and was amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a bat
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (even if the bat is not present at the time)
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead bat, any part of a bat or anything derived from a bat

Under UK law, a bat roost is *any structure or place which any wild [bat] ... uses for shelter or protection*. As bats often reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time of the activity taking place.

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

If an activity is likely to result in any of the above offences, a licence can be applied for to derogate from the protection afforded. These licences must provide appropriate mitigation and are issued by Natural England.

A Natural England mitigation licence application requires a Mitigation Method Statement and, in many cases, a Reasoned Statement of Application. The Mitigation Method Statement contains details of the proposed mitigation works. The Reasoned Statement needs to provide a rational and reasoned justification as to why the proposed development meets the requirements of the Conservation (National Habitats & c.) regulations 1994, namely Regulations 44(2)(e), (f) or (g), and 44(3)(a).

The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) provides guidance on the interpretation of the law in relation to the natural environment and development.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 lists the following bat species as species of principle importance under Section 41:

- Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*
- Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
- Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*
- Greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
- Lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

Section 40 requires every public body in the exercising of its functions 'have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity' (all biodiversity and not just section 41 species and habitats); therefore making these bats a material consideration in the planning process and requiring a detailed ecological bat survey before planning permission can be granted.

## Planning Policy

National Planning Guidance is issued in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF). The most relevant section is 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Key relevant principles stated in 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment are;

- 170.** Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
  - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
  - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
  - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
  - e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
  - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 174.** To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity<sup>56</sup>; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
  - b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- 175.** When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
  - b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
  - c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons<sup>58</sup> and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
  - d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.