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Internal /External Bat Survey

Snitterfield Playing Fields

Wolverton Road



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1.0. Introduction

A proposed development site, which comprises the corner of playing field, with an area of amenity grass, hardstanding parking and access, two single storey buildings, with a native hedge along the road frontage and mature, in hedge, landscape trees, was subject to a pre-determinative bat survey at Snitterfield Playing Fields, Wolverton Road, Warwickshire, CV37 OHB. This constitutes a survey in relation to the potential for presence of bat and bird species and roost sites, in relation to a planning proposal, for conversion to residential apartments, refer to planning application for full details. The brief of the survey was as follows;

- An External/Internal evaluation of the buildings for utilization signs by bat and bird species.
- To determine whether any buildings and trees within the site had potential for use by bats for roosting or as a place of shelter, with consequent implication for development work with respect to Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations (and subsequent amendments)*.
- To determine the presence of any roosts within the site.
- To determine any use of the buildings concerned by bird species
- To make an overall assessment of the value of the site as foraging, feeding and commuting areas.
- To make recommendations for the development work to take place including any mitigation/compensation required.

1.1. Background

Bats and the Law

Prior to August 2007, all bat species in the UK were fully protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) through an inclusion in Schedule 5. The amendment of the *Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994*, in August 2007 now is the regulatory protection mechanism. In addition there are obligations within the Conservation of Species and Habitat Regulations (2010),

revised 2017 and National Planning Policy Framework (2019) which replaced the former Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS 9).

In England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland all bat species are fully protected by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations, which defines 'European protected species of animals' (EPS). This gives protection to bats and their roosts.

The Regulations have slightly different amendments in the different countries.

Under the regulations it is an offence to-

- a) Deliberately or recklessly to capture, injure, or kill a EPS.
- b) Deliberately or recklessly –
 - i. To harass a wild animal or group of wild animals of a EPS.
 - ii. To disturb while it is occupying a place of shelter (roosts).
 - iii. To disturb while it is rearing its young or caring for its young.
 - iv. To obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place, or otherwise deny the animal use of that site or resting place.
 - v. To disturb a EPS in a manner that is, or circumstances which are likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.
 - vi. To disturb a EPS in a manner that is, or circumstances which are likely to impair its ability to survive, breed or reproduce, or rear or otherwise care for young.

In this interpretation, a bat roost is “any structure or place which any bat uses for shelter or protection”. As bats tend to reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that the roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time.

Planning and Development

All British bat species and their roosts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, through inclusion on Schedule 5. They are also protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (which were issued under the European Communities Act 1972), through inclusion on Schedule 2.

The Act and Regulations include provisions making it illegal to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture bats.

- Deliberately disturb bats.
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to a roost.

Local Planning Authorities consult the Government's guidance notes, National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and the Conservation of Species Habitat Regulations (2010), updated 2017 in England, and equivalents in Scotland and Wales, before making a planning decision where there may be protected species on a site. The presence of a protected species should be a material consideration when considering a development proposal which, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. If bats use the site, appropriate Statutory Nature Conservation Organization (English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage or the Countryside Council for Wales) must be consulted before any work is carried out. Where necessary, a bat expert should visit and assess the site.

If planning permission is being sought from the local authority, any observations of bats should be reported to them and they can be reminded of their obligations within the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). The presence of bats will rarely prevent the general approval of a development, although it may be possible to incorporate mitigation to maintain habitats for bats.

Developers need to be aware that:

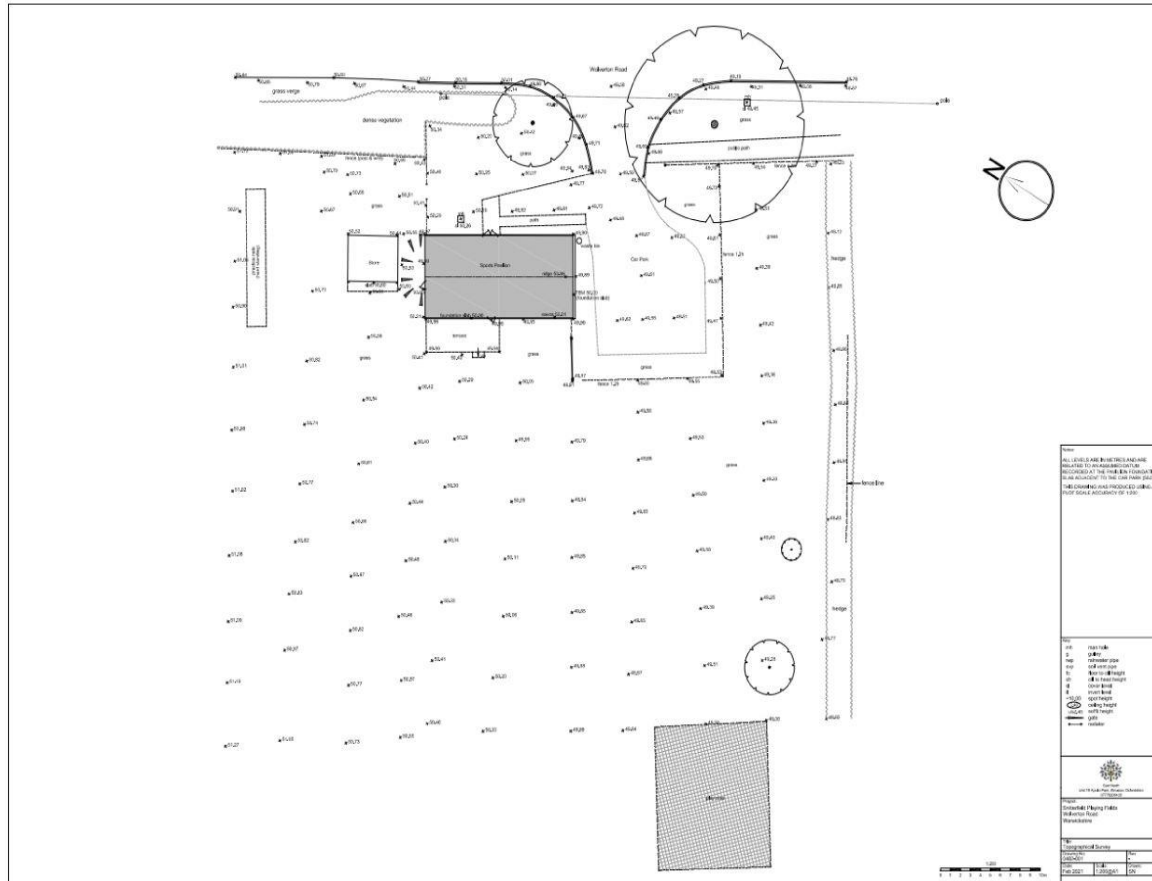
- Assessment of current use, likely effects and mitigation or habitat enhancement should be incorporated into development proposals at an early stage.
- Where changes in land use could affect bats, the implications to bats should be considered and advice sought.
- When considering planning applications, authorities are required to take account of protected species, including all bats, and their habitats.

Bat feeding habitats can be some distance from their roost sites, therefore, bats seen in flight may roost nearby or some miles away. Bats use a range of sites for roosting, including buildings and trees. Signs of roosts, which are visible from the outside, include bats emerging from the roost (timing varies from before sunset to up to about an hour after) and bat droppings on surfaces near emergence points.

1.2. Site Location

Snitterfield Playing Fields, Wolverton Road, Warwickshire, CV37 OHB.

All parts of the site and buildings were available for access. The site is shown below.





(c) Google maps 2022.

1.3. General Site Description and Status

The proposed development site comprises the corner of a playing field belonging to Snitterfield Cricket Club, the development area includes an area of amenity grass, hardstanding parking and access, two single storey buildings, and a native hedge along the road frontage with mature, in hedge, landscape trees.

1.3.1. Immediate Surrounding Area and wider Landscape Context in Relation to Bats

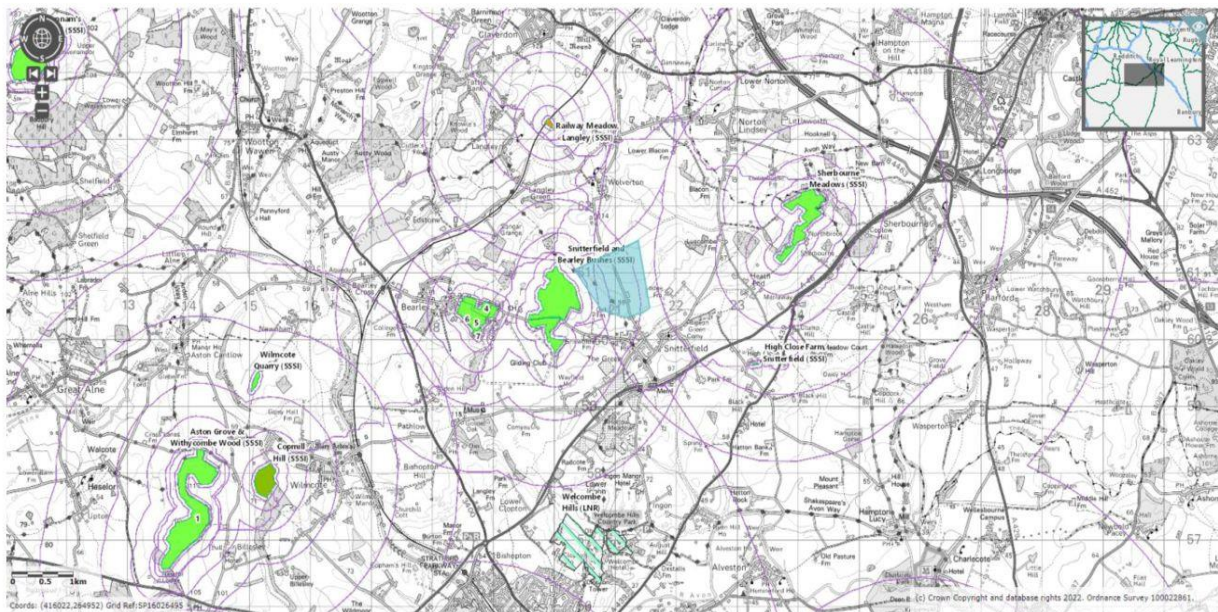
The site is located on the Northern edge of Snitterfield, in Warwickshire. The character is of large agricultural fields with hedgerows and occasional in field or in hedge trees. There are open green spaces within Snitterfield itself and conjoined gardens. See satellite image below.



(c) Google maps 2022.

Statutory Protected Nature Conservation Sites in Vicinity

These include Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National and Local Nature Reserves, Special Areas of Concern. The nearest statutory protected site is Snitterfield Bushes SSSI which lies within 1km west of the site. A Natural England 'Magic' data search (shown below) reveals that the site lies within a Nitrate Sensitive Zone, and the SSSI Impact Zones for Snitterfield Bushes SSSI and Sherbourne Meadows SSSI, these factors should be considered within any development on the site.



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1.4. Bat Ecology (a Summary)

Where do bats build roosts?

Different species of bat prefer different places; some creep into tiny spaces, cracks and crevices. Only occasionally do they hang free or are easily visible.

Outside they may roost:

- Under weather boarding or hanging tiles
- Above soffits and behind fascia and barrage boarding
- Between window frame and wall brickwork
- In gaps behind cladding tiles or wood
- Between underfelt and boards or tiles
- Inside cavity walls

Inside roof spaces they may roost

- Along the ridge beam
- Around the gable end
- Around the chimney breast

Looking for the evidence

Bats do not make nests or cause structural damage. The most obvious sign of their presence is droppings.

- Bat droppings consist largely of insect remains and crumble easily between your fingers to a powder of semi-shiny fragments.
- Rodent droppings are smooth and plastic, quickly becoming hard. They cannot be crumbled.
- Bat droppings do not present any known health hazards.
- Droppings may not always be readily visible in a loft.
- Large accumulations may reflect use over a number of years rather than large numbers of bats at any one time.

When do bats use buildings?

Bats use buildings at any time, but are most often found in houses between May and August.

- Mother bats have only one baby a year, suckling it for several weeks. The mothers gather in maternity roosts to have their young in summer, and this is the time they are most likely to be seen using buildings.
- The bats move away when the young can fly and feed themselves, and have usually left by September.
- Immature individuals, adult males and non-breeding females will occupy a variety of roosts, individually or in small groups, at any time of year.
- Disturbance or the use of chemicals at maternity roosts in houses can have a major impact on bat populations gathered from a wide area.
- Bats do roost in houses in winter, usually individually, but are difficult to see.

Which bats use buildings?

All UK species have been recorded in houses, but some very rarely. Pipistrelles and Long-eared bats are the species most usually found.

Pipistrelle bats

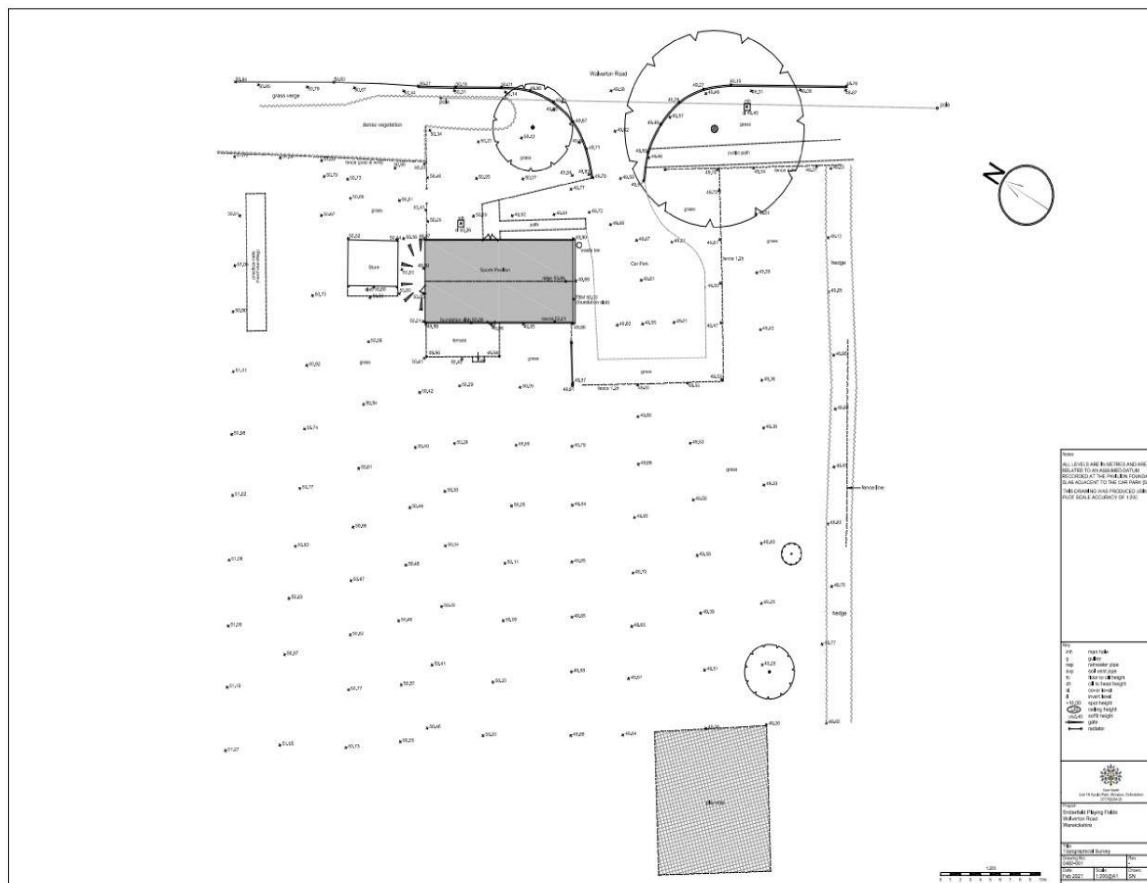
There are three different species of Pipistrelle; the common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and the rarer Nathusius' Pipistrelle. They sometimes use houses as maternity roosts, choosing confined spaces. These are usually on the outside of buildings, such as under the soffits or behind barge boards or hanging tiles, where the bats can rarely be seen.

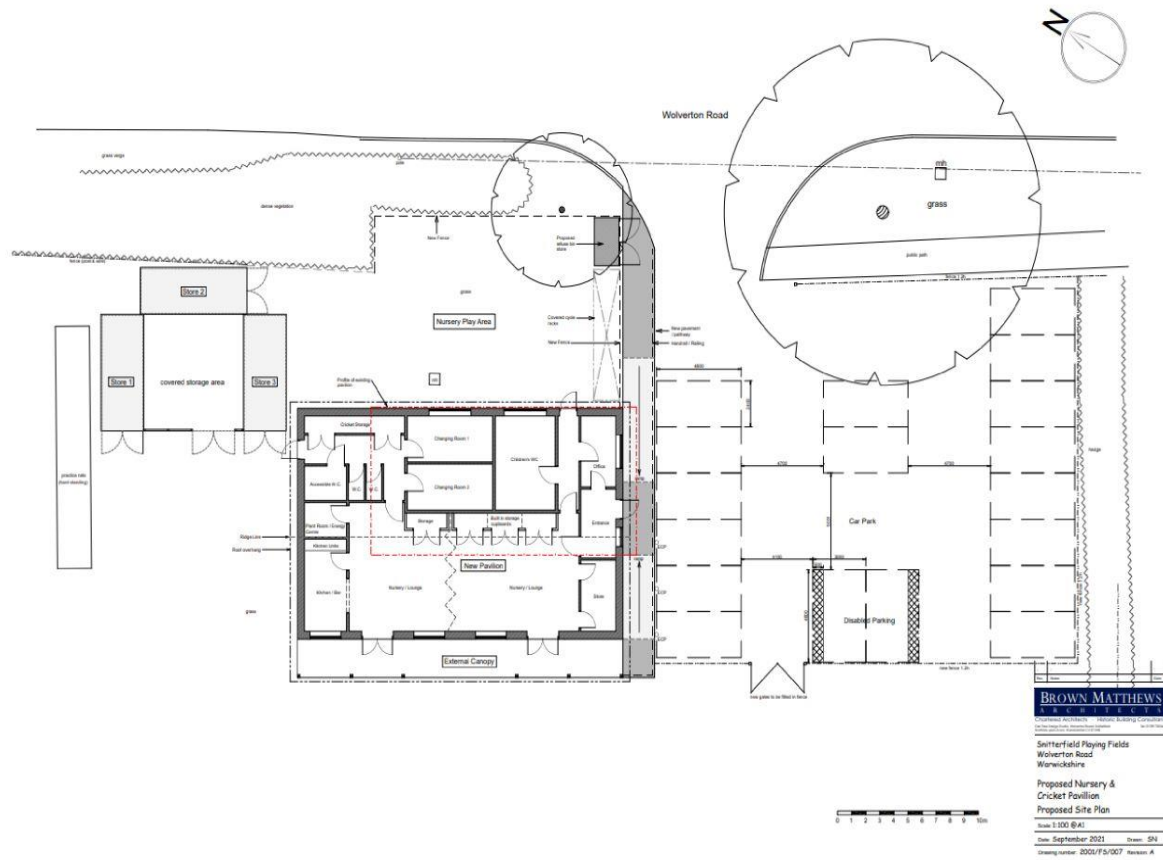
Brown long-eared bats

This species mostly prefers older houses with large roof spaces. Small clusters may be seen at junctions of roof timbers or under the ridge. It is the bat most frequently seen inside lofts, small numbers may stay longer than the other species.

See plans below and refer to Planning Application for full details:

Current:



Proposed:

1.6 Bat Species Records

In relation to bat species the following were recorded from freely available web-based data (and in places, the authors own records) presented here with the approximate distances of the nearest record. In addition, a number of Ecological survey reports within the area have been interrogated for protected species records. All records are post-2010 unless otherwise stated.

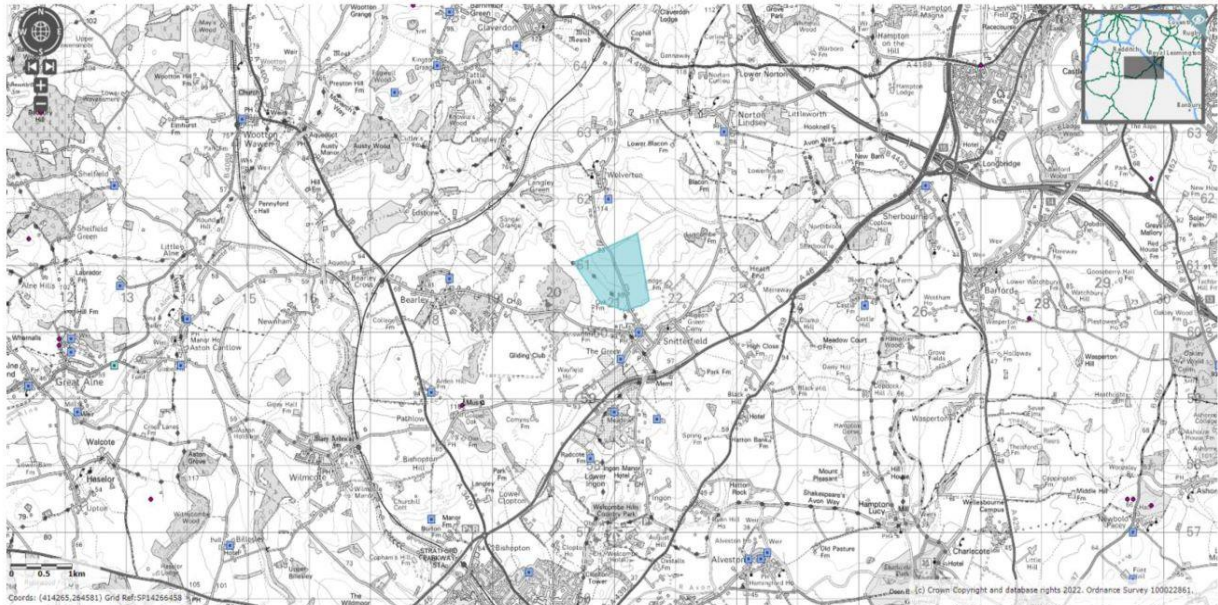
Species (Latin Name)	Common Name	Approximate distance of nearest record from the survey site (km)
<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Common pipistrelle	Within 1 km
<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Brown long-eared bat	Within 1 km
<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Soprano pipistrelle	Within 2 km

Great Crested Newts

Species (Latin Name)	Common Name	Approximate distance of nearest record from the survey site (km)
<i>Triturus cristatus</i>	Great Crest Newt	Within 2 km

European Protected Species Licence Applications

Data on European Protected Species Licenses granted in the local area, reveals that licenses have been issued within 1 km of the site for two species of bat. There are two species of bat recorded within 1 km of the site. Great Crested Newts are recorded within 2 km.



Interpretation of available biological data.

There are no designated sites on or directly adjacent to the site. The development is unlikely to impact on those at further distances.

In terms of protected species, two European protected bat species are found within 1 km of the site with Great Crested Newts found within 2 km of the site.

2.0. Methodology

The survey consisted of two elements:

- A day-time visual external assessment of the buildings and their potential in relation to use by bats as roosts.
- A day-time visual internal assessment of the buildings and their potential in relation to use by bats as roosts

2.1. Personnel

The survey was conducted by Dr Louise Sutherland MIALE and Dr. Stefan Bodnar MCIEEM, an experienced ecologist with over 15 years experience of bat surveys.

2.2. Visual External Assessment

The external building inspection (from the ground using binoculars) focused particularly on roof areas, soffits, areas of wall with cracks and apertures, window surrounds and the overall structure of the buildings including any features such as crevices or cavities that may be suitable for bats to roost in. Evidence of roosting such as droppings or staining around entrances was also recorded. Where appropriate gaps and cavities were checked using an endoscope. The date of site visit was 23rd February 2022.

Methods of survey used have been based on those outlined in Joint Nature Conservation Committee's Bat Workers Manual (Mitchell-Jones & McLeish, 2004), The Good Survey Guidelines, BCT (2016), and English Nature's Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Mitchell-Jones, 2004).

2.3. Visual Internal Assessment

The internal roof space of the building concerned was inspected using ladders to gain access to the loft space. The interior spaces present within the building, that bats might access were fully surveyed, and suitable features checked with an endoscope. The date of site visit was 23rd February 2022.

3.0. Results

3.1. External and Internal Visual Assessment

The assessment was carried out using the guidance provided within the publication: **Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists (3rd Edition), BCT (2016)**, which states:

Table 4.1 Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.		
Suitability	Description Roosting habitats	Commuting and foraging habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions^a and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation^b). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.^c	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^a and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^a and surrounding habitat.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

^a For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance.

^b Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten *et al.*, 2015). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK but ecologists should be aware of the potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in large buildings in highly urbanised environments.

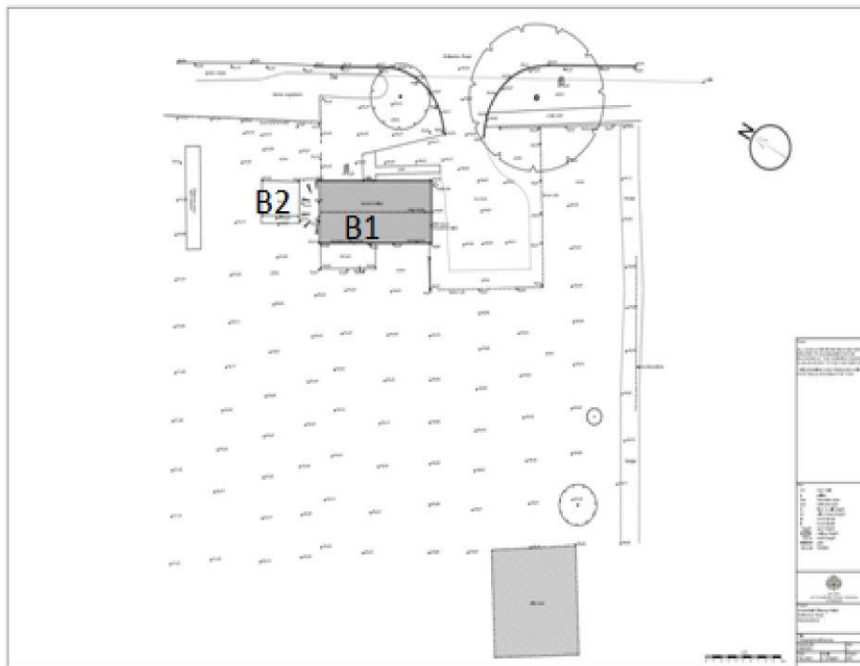
^c This system of categorisation aligns with BS 8596:2015 Surveying for bats in trees and woodland (BSI, 2015).

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Bat Roost Potential of Trees on Site

There is a mature English oak on site with stem cavities and high bat roost potential.

Bat Roost Potential of Buildings on Site



B1 is a single storey building, constructed of concrete panels, with wooden boarding over the top,. There is no gap between the wood and the concrete panels therefore no cavity wall. It has a pitched corrugated asbestos roof and intact wooden soffits. It has wooden windows. It has an internal loft space above a suspended ceiling, which is shallow, with asbestos boarding, cobwebbed and free of signs of bats or vermin. Due to a fire some years previously, part of the boarding has been replaced in sections. There is ivy growing at ground level on the building, reaching 2-3 feet up the building

walls. The building is intact, with no obvious cracks or gaps which bats could use for access. After inspection it was classified Negligible Bat Access Potential and Negligible Bat Roost Potential.

Building 2 is a small, single storey, metal storage structure. It has a metal roof and is constructed of SIP panels. It has no cavity wall and no internal roof space. The building is intact, with no obvious cracks or gaps which bats could use for access. After inspection it was classified Negligible Bat Access Potential and Negligible Bat Roost Potential.

Overall Assessment:

After inspection no signs of bats, birds or other mammals were found. After inspection the buildings were categorised as negligible access potential and negligible bat roost potential. No further bat surveys are recommended.

However, any on-site external lighting should be carefully chosen to ensure it is low lux, cowled (directed downwards to prevent light splay), and used on timers or motion sensors to minimize the impact on local bat populations which may forage on the site and roost within the adjacent mature oak tree.

See images Appendix 1

3.2 Birds

There is evidence of a previous (last year's) blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* or house sparrow *Passer domesticus* nest on the external wall of the building.

4.0. Conclusions

- The survey determined that the buildings have negligible bat access potential, and negligible roost opportunities for bats.
- No further bat surveys are recommended.
- There is a previous (last year's) bird nest on the building.

5.0. Mitigation/Compensation

There is no requirement for mitigation for loss of bat roosting opportunity, however, as a basic biodiversity enhancement, an integral bat box is recommended within or at least one box on the new building.

Removal of the building would only take place between April and August if a pre-commencement check immediately before has confirmed the absence of any active nests. If any active nests were found, the demolition of the building would be delayed until nesting has finished.

There are several trees and hedgerows adjacent the site, although they will not be impacted by works

There is a requirement for mitigation for loss of bird roosting opportunity, in the form of one house sparrow terrace and one hole nesting bird box on the building once works are complete.

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Procedures for emergencies: Protected species

Note 1: If bats are discovered at any time during processes involved with the development, work should cease immediately and the advice of a licensed ecologist sought.

6.0. References

Bats in Roofs. A guide for surveyors. English Nature, Peterborough, Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004).

Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough, Mitchell-Jones, A.J.& Mcleish, A.P. (Eds)(2004).

Bat workers Manual, 3rd Edn. Joint Nature Conservation committee, Peterborough.

Bat Survey guidelines (2016), Bat Conservation Trust

APPENDIX 1: SITE IMAGES

















































