

Walshaw Hall Care Home, Bury

Bat Emergence Survey

2023



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Client Capstone Care Limited
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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing to submit a planning application for the conversion of Walshaw Hall Care Home (hereafter be referred to as the 'site') to residential units. Works such as this have the potential to impact bats and their roosts, should these be present.

This report describes the ecological features of the site and its surroundings and assesses the potential impacts of the development on the ecological interest. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Outcomes

No evidence of roosting bats was recorded during the survey. The proposed development is unlikely to result in any impacts to bats or their roosts. No further survey work is required. It is recommended bat boxes are erected as part of the development.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2023 by Capstone Care Limited to carry out a Bat Emergence Survey at Walshaw Hall Care Home (O.S. grid reference: SD 77068 12087 – see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site

Description of Development

- 1.1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the conversion of the buildings into apartments.

Relevant Survey History

- 1.1.3 A Daytime Bat Survey was undertaken in 2023¹. The site was identified as offering potential features which may support individual or small numbers of crevice dwelling bat species and was assessed as offering low potential to support roosting bats.

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to carry out a single bat emergence survey.

¹ Rachel Hacking Ecology (2023) Walshaw Hall Care Home, Bury. Daytime Bat Survey.

1.3 Aims of the Survey

1.3.1 The aims of the survey were to:

- Establish the status of roosting bats at the site.
- Identify the requirement for any further surveys or mitigation.

2. Methods

2.1 Dusk Emergence Survey

- 2.1.1 A single dusk emergence survey was undertaken in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (2016). For the survey, five surveyors and an infra-red camera monitored the building, to ensure complete visual coverage. The emergence survey began 15 minutes before sunset and continued for 90 minutes after sunset. The surveyors used Anabat Walkabout and Echometer Touch 2 Pro bat detectors to record the echolocation calls of bats.

2.2 Assessment Criteria

- 2.2.1 Interpretation of survey findings was undertaken using professional judgement and criteria described in published guidance^{2,3}.

2.3 Site Visit Information

Surveyor Details

- 2.3.1 The survey was undertaken by Ben Crosssthaite (Senior Ecologist), Hollie Ainley, Matthew Bottomley (Ecologists), Steve Smith and Samuel Adshead (Assistant Ecologists) on 16th May 2023. All surveyors are experienced and trained in nocturnal bat surveys.

Site Conditions

- 2.3.2 The weather at the time of the survey was dry with light cloud cover and a moderate breeze. The average temperature was 10°C. The conditions were appropriate for the survey to be undertaken.

Surveyor Positions

- 2.3.3 Figure 2 shows the locations of the surveyors (yellow stars) and infra-red camera (red star) during the survey.

² Collins, J. (Ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists-good practice guidelines*. 3rd edn. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

³ Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

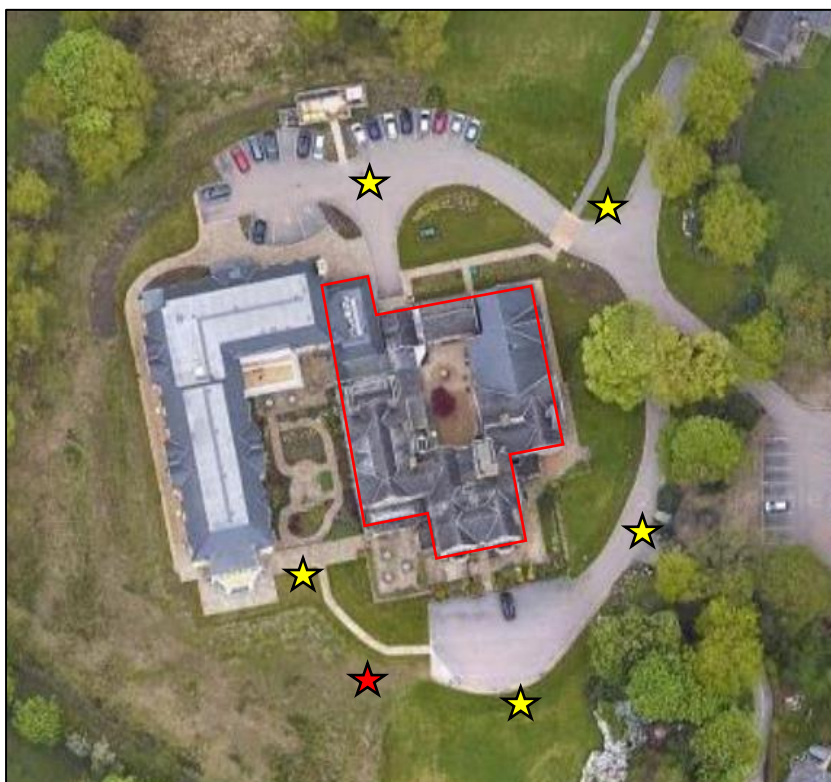


Figure 2 showing the surveyors positions

3. Results

3.1 Survey Results

- 3.1.1 No bats were recorded emerging from the building during the survey. Low levels of bat activity were recorded during the survey. Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* were recorded foraging and commuting around the building during the survey. A single Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and a single Noctule *Nyctalus noctula* were recorded foraging onsite.



4. Assessment

4.1 Interpretation of Results

- 4.1.1 No bats were recorded emerging or re-entering the building and low levels of bat activity were recorded during the survey. The survey was undertaken during optimum weather conditions and seasonal timing.
- 4.1.2 Given the lack of evidence found during the daytime bat survey and the lack of bat emergence during the dusk survey, it is concluded that there are no bat roosts currently present. The proposed development is unlikely to result in any impacts to bats or their roosts and no further surveys are considered necessary.

4.2 Constraints

- 4.2.1 Field survey results are valid for a limited duration and no investigation can provide a complete description and characterisation of a site. The composition of habitats and species can change depending on environmental variables and the mobility of species, so the results of a study become less reliable over time. In some cases, surveys that are 3 years old may be acceptable for a project assuming that habitats have not significantly changed in the intervening period, but for protected species it is likely that survey data will need to be no more than 18 months old. After this, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted to assess its validity. An assessment update may be required.



5. Recommendations

- 5.1.1 It is not always possible to prove absence of roosting bats. Bats can roost in suitable features opportunistically and are not always identified during surveys. It is recommended that roof coverings are removed with due caution. Should a bat/bats be identified at any time, work should stop in that area and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted to attend site and advise how to proceed.
- 5.1.2 It is recommended that bat boxes are erected as part of the development. These should be installed at eaves height facing southeast to southwest but not directly above windows or doorways. Bat boxes could also be installed on suitable mature trees on site. This would demonstrate compliance with the NPPF (20212) which requires development to provide enhancements for wildlife where possible.



Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) describes the Government's planning policy for England and how it should be applied. Within this framework, the requirements in relation to biodiversity are included within several policies. The two most relevant to individual planning decisions are Paragraphs 174 and 180, shown below:

- 174. 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; etc...

- 180. 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 and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d. development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty on every public authority to have regard to conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the same Act requires that the Secretary of State must publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitats that are of 'Principal Importance' for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Secretary of State must take steps, as appear reasonably practicable, to further the conservation of those living organisms and habitats in any list published under this section. The list of species and habitats of principal importance currently includes 943 species and 56 habitats.

Legislation

All bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit), which make it an offence to:

- Deliberately kill, injure or capture a bat;
- Deliberately disturb bats;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) contains further provisions making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- Obstruct access to any structure or place which any bat uses for shelter or protection; or
- Disturb any bat while occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

Proposed development works that are likely to disturb or destroy bats or their roosts will need to obtain a licence from the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (e.g., Natural England) prior to work commencing.



Appendix 2: Survey Data

Table A1. Results from the dusk emergence survey				
Survey Type	Date	Average Temp (°C)	Sunset/ Sunrise	Weather
Emergence	16/05/2023	10°C	21:05	Dry with a moderate breeze
Results				
Noctule bats were recorded but not seen at 20:56, 21:35.				
A Noctule bat was recorded foraging at 21:23.				
Common Pipistrelle bats were recorded foraging around the eastern elevation of the building at 21:24, 21:26, and between 21:31 to 21:36.				
A Soprano Pipistrelle was recorded but not seen at 21:29.				
Common Pipistrelle bats were recorded commuting over the building at 21:30, 21:44, 21:59 and 22:12.				
A Common Pipistrelle bat was recorded but not seen at 21:33, 21:42 and intermittently between 21:57 and 22:05.				
Common Pipistrelle bats were recorded foraging around the site at 21:34, 21:58.				
A single Soprano Pipistrelle was recorded foraging around the vegetation on site at 21:40.				