

Sunny Bank Primary School, Bury

Daytime Bat Survey

2024



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Client Lancaster Maloney Martin

Project Title Sunny Bank Primary School

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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing demolition and redevelopment at Sunny Bank Primary School, Bury, hereafter referred to as the 'site'.

This report describes the potential of the site to support roosting bats and assess the potential impacts on bats. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Ecological Interest

The site has negligible suitability to support roosting bats.

Outcomes

No impacts to bats or their roosts are anticipated and no further survey work is required. Enhancement opportunities are identified.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Ltd was commissioned in 2023 by Lancaster Maloney Martin to carry out a daytime bat survey of Sunny Bank Primary School, Hathaway Road, Bury, hereafter referred to as the 'site'. The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SD 81169 07381 (see Figure 1).

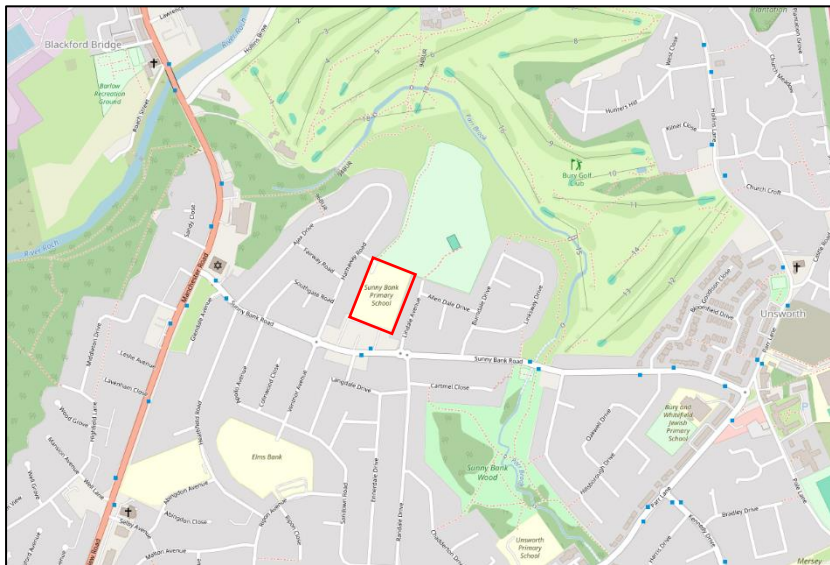


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site courtesy of © OpenStreetMap Contributors

Description of Development

- 1.1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the levelling of the secondary temporary building and the construction of single storey extension to the rear side of the main building.

Relevant Planning History

- 1.1.3 The site has been subject to two previous planning applications. One successful application in 2016 to build an extension to the front entrance (Bury Council REF: 60111/PP-05124401), and a further application in 2023, which was withdrawn (Bury Council REF: 69484/PP-11943863)

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to undertake an external and internal assessment of any buildings on the site affected by the development proposals.



1.3 Aims of the Survey

1.3.1 The aims of the survey were to:

- Assess the potential of the site to support roosting bats.
- Identify the requirement for any further detailed surveys.



2. Methods

2.1 Daytime Bat Survey

- 2.1.1 The exterior of the buildings was surveyed from the ground using binoculars, a high-powered torch and a drone. Features offering potential access to roosting bats were recorded. Such features may include suitable gaps in roof coverings, gaps behind external cladding/facia and gaps in masonry.
- 2.1.2 Evidence indicating the presence of roosting bats was also searched for. This may include bat droppings on walls or windows or, staining from fur oil around roost entry points.
- 2.1.3 The interior of the buildings, including the roof voids, were surveyed to identify any evidence indicating use by roosting bats. Such evidence may include bat droppings, feeding remains, urine splashes, live or dead bats and staining from fur oil on timbers.

2.2 Assessment Criteria

- 2.2.1 Interpretation of survey findings and assessment of roosting potential was undertaken using professional judgement and criteria described in published guidance^{1,2}.

2.3 Site Visit Information

Survey Details

- 2.3.1 The survey was undertaken by Ben Crosthwaite (Senior Ecologist) on 20th February 2024. Ben has seven years' professional experience of undertaking similar surveys and holds a Natural England level 2 class survey licence (Reference 2020-48541-CLS-CLS).

Site Conditions

- 2.3.2 The weather at the time of the survey was mild, overcast and dry with an average temperature of 8°C. The site conditions were appropriate for a full assessment to be undertaken.

¹ Collins, J. (Ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists-good practice guidelines*. 4th edn. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

² Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.

2.4 Mitigation Hierarchy

2.4.1 Mitigation measures should be embedded within the masterplan design and planning application process. Measures during the construction phases should be included in a Construction Environmental Management Plan: Biodiversity (CEMP). This process from proposal to implementation needs to consider the 'mitigation hierarchy' of avoid, reduce, compensate, and enhance:

- Aim to avoid negative effects through the design process.
- Mitigate if negative effects cannot be avoided.
- Use compensation measures to offset residual impacts.
- Identify and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity.



3. Results

3.1 Survey Constraints

3.1.1 Full access was available and no constraints affected the assessment.

3.2 Habitat Appraisal

3.2.1 The site is located in a suburban area and is surrounded mostly, by residential properties. Woodland, running water and golf courses are all present within 500m, offering good quality bat foraging habitat.

3.3 External Survey

The site consists of two buildings. The main building (Building 1) has brick walls and a flat roof covered with bitumen felt (see Photograph 1).



Photograph 1 showing the rear of Building 1

3.3.1 The edges of the roof are well-sealed and no PRFs were recorded (see Photograph 2).



Photograph 2 showing the edge of the roof of Building 1

- 3.3.2 Building 2 is a single-storey pre-fabricated structure of timber panel construction. The roof is pitched and covered with felt (see Photograph 3).



Photograph 3 showing Building 2

- 3.3.3 The edges of the roof are well-sealed and no PRFs were identified (see Photograph 4).



Photograph 4 showing the soffits of Building 2

3.4 Internal Survey

- 3.4.1 The main building has a suspended ceiling with a small void above which is illuminated by windows (see Photograph 5).



Photograph 5 showing the void above the suspended ceiling

- 3.4.2 Building 2 has a low void with fibre-glass insulation present (see Photograph 6).



Photograph 6 showing the roof void of Building 2

3.4.3 No evidence of use by bats was recorded within either of the buildings.

4. Assessment

4.1 Interpretation of Results

- 4.1.1 No evidence of use by bats was recorded in either building. No suitable access points or PRFs were recorded during the survey. The site is assessed as offering negligible potential to support roosting bats.

4.2 Potential Impacts

- 4.2.1 No impacts to bats or their roosts are anticipated.



5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

- 5.1.1 No further survey work is required.

5.2 Mitigation Measures

General Precautions

- 5.2.1 Bats can roost in suitable features opportunistically and are not always identified during surveys. In the unlikely event that a bat is encountered at any time, work should stop in that area and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted to attend site and advise how to proceed.

Enhancements

- 5.2.2 The site could be enhanced for bats by installing bat boxes on buildings or suitable trees on site. Bat boxes should be installed at least 3m high, facing southeast to southwest, but not directly above windows or doorways.
- 5.2.3 This report is considered to be valid for two years. After this, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted to assess its validity. An assessment update may be required.



Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023) 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 180 and 186, shown below:

- 180. 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.
- 186. 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.

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.

