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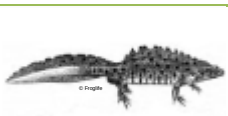
Inspection & Assessment in relation to Bats & Breeding Birds

April 2022

Former Sawmill

Spring Street,
Ramsbottom,
Bury,
BL0 9JQ

National Grid Ref: SD78921657



Former Sawmill, Spring Street, Ramsbottom, Bury, BL0 9JQ
Inspection & Assessment in Relation to Bats & Breeding Birds

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Executive Summary

As part of a proposed planning application at the Former Sawmill on Spring Street, Ramsbottom, Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd carried out a daytime preliminary roost assessment in relation to bats with an inclusive inspection for breeding birds in February 2022. The survey was commissioned by PPY Design; proposals are understood to involve the demolition of the existing sawmill and subsequent development of the site.

Detailed methods, findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented throughout the report; however, the reader should be aware of the following Key points:

Bats: Based upon the findings of the survey, covered through sections 6.0 – 7.0 of the report and supported by Appendix I, building B1 at the Former Spring Street Sawmill been determined to offer ‘**Moderate**’ bat roost potential in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust - Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd ed. (2016). Based upon this categorisation, this report will recommend two suitably spaced dusk/dawn emergence/re-entry surveys in order to determine if bats are using any of the buildings as a roost.

Bat Conservation Trust		
Table 7.3 Recommended minimum number of survey visits for presence/absence surveys to give confidence in a negative result for structures (also recommended for trees but unlikely to give confidence in a negative result).		
Low roost suitability	Moderate roost suitability	High roost suitability
One survey visit. One dusk emergence or dawn re-entry survey ^a (structures). No further surveys required (trees).	Two separate survey visits. One dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey. ^b	Three separate survey visits. At least one dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey. The third visit could be either dusk or dawn. ^b
^a Structures that have been categorised as low potential can be problematic and the number of surveys required should be judged on a case-by-case basis (see Section 5.2.9). If there is a possibility that quiet calling, late-emerging species are present then a dawn survey may be more appropriate, providing weather conditions are suitable. In some cases, more than one survey may be needed, particularly where there are several buildings in this category.		
^b Multiple survey visits should be spread out to sample as much of the recommended survey period (see Table 7.1) as possible; it is recommended that surveys are spaced at least two weeks apart, preferably more. A dawn survey immediately after a dusk one is considered only one visit.		

Breeding Birds: In relation to common birds, whilst no direct evidence of breeding birds was discovered, both the building B1 and vegetation on site offer small birds nesting habitat, particularly during the breeding season.

It is therefore recommended that any demolition and clearance works on site are carried out outside of the breeding bird season (March – August inclusive). For works undertaken within the breeding bird season, any areas that have the potential to support nesting birds should be checked by a professional Ecologist within 48 hours or less prior to works commencing. If birds are found nesting any works which may affect them would have to be delayed until the young have fledged and the nest has been abandoned naturally.

Biodiversity Enhancement: As a means of enhancement and aiding the design of the scheme in keeping with local and national planning policy considering biodiversity net-gain principles, the proposals may consider incorporating wildlife friendly provisions such as:

- *Native species only when landscaping / tree re-planting,*
- *Bird, bat, and invertebrate provisions,*

Further information is provided within Appendix II.

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1.0 Introduction & Reasons for Survey

- 1.1 As part of a proposed planning application at the Former Sawmill on Spring Street, Ramsbottom, Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd carried out a daytime preliminary roost assessment in relation to bats with an inclusive inspection for breeding birds in February 2022. The survey was commissioned by PPY Design; proposals are understood to involve the demolition of the existing sawmill and subsequent redevelopment of the site.

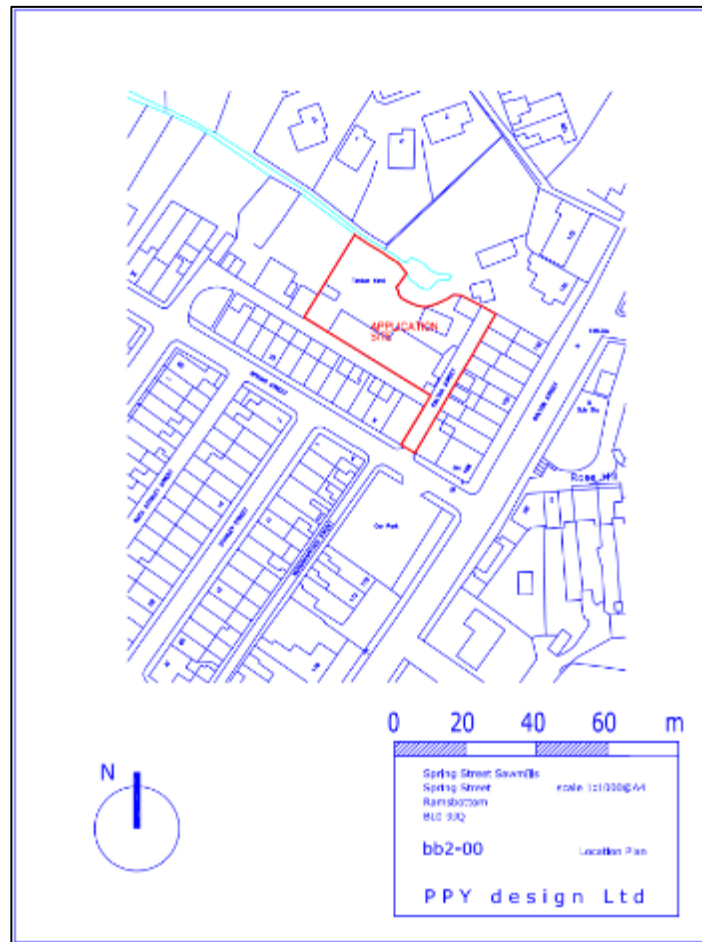


Figure 1.1 – Application site location plan (©PPY Design Ltd)

- 1.2 The aim of the survey was to ascertain if the building was of value to bats, whilst an assessment for birds was also carried out. If any potential roost features (PRF's) were found to be suitable for bats, or signs of use were observed, then more detailed surveys would be recommended i.e. dusk/dawn emergence/re-entry surveys during the main active season of bats which is May – August (extending into September).
- 1.3 If additional surveys are required following the initial site visit, this report will outline the details of those further requirements.
- 1.4 If it was determined that bat(s) or their roost/place of rest/shelter will be subsequently impacted by the works then a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) from Natural England would be legally required to proceed with the development.
- 1.5 If evidence indicated breeding birds may be impacted by proposals, tailored recommendations would be made accordingly, species pending.

- 1.6 As part of the local authority's planning policies and obligations to the Planning Framework, ecological surveys are generally required prior to planning permission being granted where protected/priority habitats and species are, or may be present, that could be affected by the proposals for which the application seeks consent. Where more detailed surveys are recommended by the ecologist, following an initial daytime investigation, then Local Planning Authorities (LPA) on the advice of their ecological advisors, will not grant permission until such time that all relevant information is gathered.
- 1.7 In accordance with *Biodiversity Net Gain: Good practice principles for development* (CIEEM *et al*, 2019) the site visit also aims to identify enhancement opportunities for biodiversity in line with national and local planning policy.

2.0 Protected Species & Their Requirements

Bats

- 2.1 All British bats and their **roosts are afforded full protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and are listed in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019) (EU Exit). When dealing with cases where a European Protected Species (all UK bats) may be affected, a planning authority is a competent authority within the meaning of the Regulation 7 of the Regulations, that has a statutory duty as the local authority to have due regard to the provisions of the Regulations in the exercise of its functions.
- 2.2 Uses of Buildings by Bats
- a) Summer breeding roost (May-August)
 - b) Hibernation roost (October-March)
 - c) Transitional or temporary roost (other months)
- 2.3 Roost selection is often closely correlated to suitable foraging habitat within a reasonable commuting distance from the roost and different sites are used depending upon insect densities and abundance; climatic conditions can also affect their ability to successfully forage. All British bats are insectivorous.

*** The term roost is generically referred to as a place that bat/s use for the any of the above reasons, however it should be noted that under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019) (EU Exit) (Regulation 43 (d) the term roost is not used but refers to "a breeding site or resting place of such an animal" and is afforded legal protection. The roost, breeding site or resting place of bats, which ever terminology is used is legally protected whether or not bats are in occupation.*

Birds

- 2.4 All wild birds, no matter how common, their eggs, young and nests, whilst being built or occupied, are protected under both the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA, 1981) and Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC Act, 2006). Birds listed on Schedule 1 of the WCA 1981, for example Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), are afforded a greater level of protection protected also from disturbance.
- 2.5 Any work that would damage an occupied nest, eggs or young of breeding birds must be avoided; any damage to nests that may occur as a result of the development should be outside of the main breeding bird season (March-August). On occasions nests can become unoccupied during the breeding season but the status of the nest(s) should be determined by a suitably experienced ecologist before any damage takes place.

Policy

- 2.6 Paragraph 180 of the National Policy Planning Framework (as revised in July 2021) states:

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.

- 2.7 This national focus on the conservation of the natural environment is echoed in Policy EN6 of the Adopted Bury Unitary Development Plan, which states:

The Council will retain, protect and enhance the natural environment of the Borough, particularly in relation to areas of ecological, wildlife and geological importance.

This policy recognises the importance of the natural environment and its value for aesthetic, scientific, recreational and educational activities. Once destroyed, the natural environment is difficult or impossible to replace. It is therefore the Council's intention to work towards ensuring that development and growth are sustainable in line with current Government guidance and in this context the Council recognises the importance of environmental and ecological considerations.

- 2.8 Where more detailed surveys are recommended by the Ecologist following a daytime assessment, then the Local Planning Authority, upon the advice of their ecological advisors, should not determine an application until such time that all relevant information is gathered, i.e. - until all required survey work has been completed. This is in accordance with the obligations placed upon Local Authorities in the exercise of its functions by way of its duties under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2019 (EU Exit).

- 2.9 Figure 2.1 is a process model that surmises how ecological issues should be dealt with in the context of the planning process.

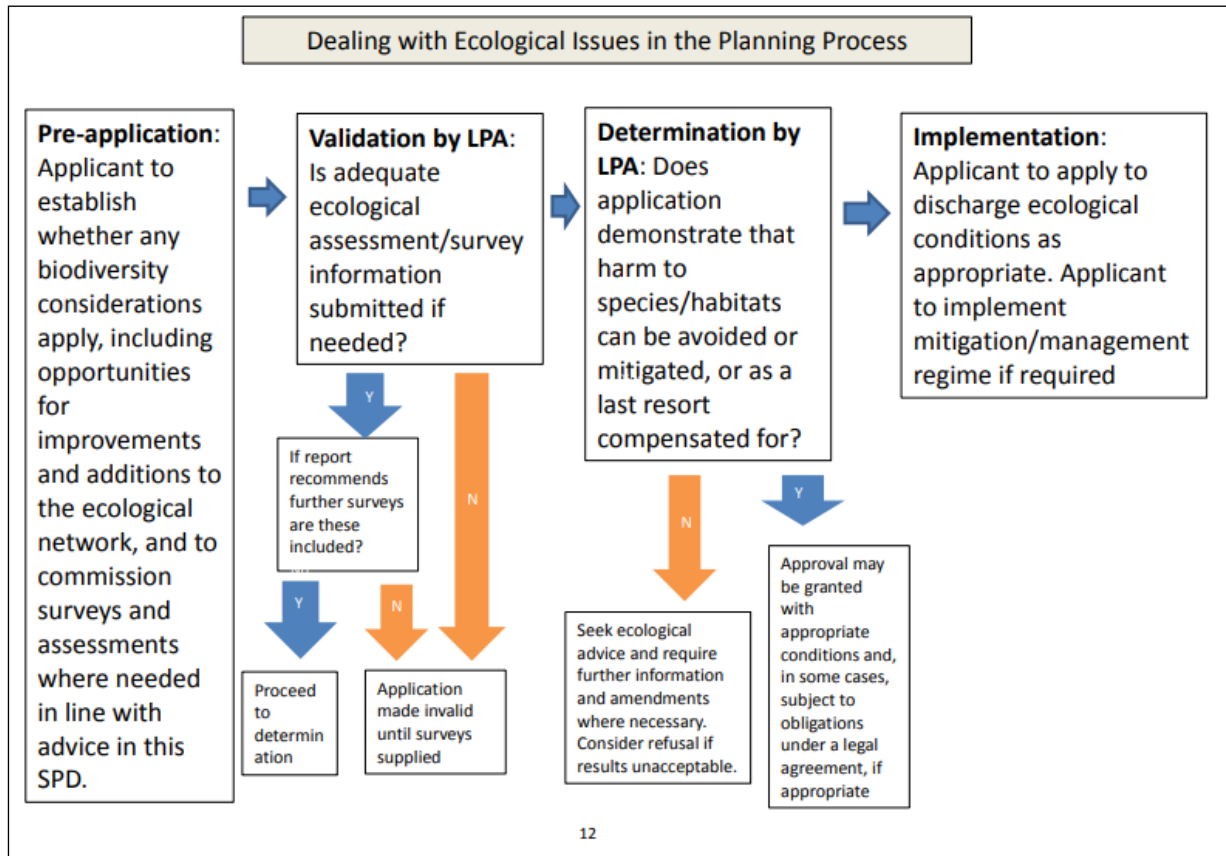


Figure 2.1 - Dealing with ecological issues in the planning process

3.0 Protected Species in Greater Manchester

- 3.1 Up to ten bat species have been recorded in Greater Manchester, most of which use built structures, notably occupied residential properties, for roosting. All bats feature on the local biodiversity action plan for the area; the most frequently encountered bat species is the Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) which will roost in building crevices, and its abundant status in Greater Manchester is reflected throughout the UK.
- 3.2 All wild birds (with only minor exceptions) and their nests, whilst being built or containing eggs or dependant young, are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Some species are, however, subject to a greater level of protection, for example the Barn Owl, which is listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), with nests of birds from these species being protected from disturbance as well as destruction.
- 3.3 Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) is listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended); additional to protection from nest destruction, Schedule 1 listed species are also protected from disturbance. The species is red-listed on Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC 4) with fewer than 100 breeding pairs recorded in the UK; decline in Manchester is part-attributed to regenerative works across the city resulting in the loss of nesting sites and feeding areas as this is a species typically linked with abandoned sites close to water, railways and industry, whilst habitat such as forest, meadow and areas of dense vegetation of any height are typically avoided. Black Redstarts have their own action plan within Greater Manchester (Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan: Black Redstart) which recommends enhancement for this species in suitable areas across the Greater Manchester conurbation.

4.0 Survey Methodology

- 4.1 As part of the Inspection & Assessment for Bats & Breeding Birds report, a desk-top and field-based study is conducted. Methods for both components of the appraisal are given below.

Desktop Study

- 4.2 Prior to a site visit a desktop study was conducted using online resources to obtain information pertaining to any sites afforded statutory (e.g. SSSI) and non-statutory (e.g. LWS) designations within 2.0km of the site boundary. To do so, the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGiC – provided by DEFRA) was accessed to gather such information; this particular interactive mapping service was also used to locate any locally granted European Protected Species Mitigation Licenses (EPSML) to further inform conclusions concerning such species in the context of the study site and its proposed development.
- 4.3 Satellite imagery was reviewed using sources such as Google Earth (© 2021/22) to determine the nature of adjoining and extending habitats; such information aids in the understanding of how the site might interact with its surroundings ecologically and its value in that context, and how the development may impact at a wider scale.
- 4.4 A commercial data request to the Local Environment Records Centre serving the area – Greater Manchester Local Record Centre - has not been sourced and is justified through application of the following recent guidance:

1) The Guidelines for Accessing, Using and Sharing Biodiversity Data in the UK (CIEEM, 2020) states:

“It is generally expected that a desk study, including a data search, will be a key part of the ecological surveys or reports produced to inform a planning application. Freely available web-based sources of data and contextual information should always be used; in some cases, it may be acceptable to not undertake a data search with the LERC or other relevant NSS or local interest groups, for example:

ii) Situations where the data search would be extremely unlikely to provide information needed to inform the assessment, due to the scale and location of the proposed development. The appropriateness of excluding a data search will need to be judged on a case-by-case basis as, in most situations, it will be essential to carry out such a search even if the development is very small or is likely to have a low impact. It can be very difficult to demonstrate that a data search would not have provided relevant information without obtaining and reviewing those data.

*iii) In some cases for Preliminary Roost Assessments of buildings in **low impact / small-scale scenarios**, such as an extension to a residential property, loft conversions (full or partial), installation of Velux/dormer windows, single modern agricultural or similar building conversion or demolition; however, it should not be assumed that data searches are never required for such scenarios and this must be judged on a case by case basis and justified accordingly.*

2) The Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM, 2017) also states:

*“Very occasionally it might be possible to carry out a robust PEA without obtaining LERC/NBDC/CEDaR data; this will usually only apply to low impact or **small-scale projects** (e.g. by virtue of size, extent, duration of works, magnitude and locality), and should be determined on a case-by-case basis.”*

- 4.5 As exemptions as made **bold** above can be applied at the application site, in good practice, it is considered unnecessary to conduct a commercial data request following the desk study effort and daytime assessment at this time which offers a proportionate level of survey effort, however, if a data search is considered to be necessary by the Local Authority to inform the ecological impact assessment following any further surveys recommended in this report, a proportionate data search should be commissioned with results interpreted into the conclusions and recommendations of a re-issued/updated report.

Field Survey

- 4.6 In context with the above, a diurnal inspection and assessment of the property, its outbuildings and its immediate environment in relation to bats and breeding birds was conducted on 28th February 2022 in dry conditions (10°C), wind 2/12 (Beaufort scale), 10% cloud, by Mr. B. Richards Qualifying CIEEM, an Ecologist in training who has received extensive training in conducting Preliminary Roost Assessments and who also holds an MBiolSci in Biological Sciences (Zoology).
- 4.7 Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) - Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd ed. (2016) states:
- “The guidelines should be interpreted and adapted on a case-by-case basis according to site-specific factors and the professional judgement of an experienced ecologist. Where examples are used in the guidelines, they are descriptive rather than prescriptive.”*
- 4.8 The bat and breeding bird survey was conducted in tandem; the buildings were inspected for potential places that may be of value to bats or breeding birds, and to determine if evidence of use by either group was present; the interior was assessed with the aid of a high powered torch for evidence of bat use which mainly includes bat droppings and/or prey items, or incidental presence of live or dead animals, for example, and also investigated for evidence of breeding birds which broadly involves a search for nesting materials, presence of pellets or accumulated faeces and/or dead juveniles/hatchlings, for example.
- 4.9 External elevations were investigated with the aid of high-powered torch and close focus binoculars (where necessary) for places that can be used as a roost by bats or as a means of ingress for bats and birds leading to areas of roosting/nesting potential. These features are typically referred to as potential roost features (PRFs) when concerning bats. All external features were able to be surveyed without constraint.
- 4.10 The surrounding habitat was also considered in terms of general suitability for bat and bird species associated with the local habitat types.
- 4.11 Trees on site were inspected for places that may be of value to bats and to determine if evidence of use was present; this typically involves a search for potential roost features along with an investigation of those features using a high-powered torch or close focus binoculars. Potential roost features can include woodpecker holes, rot holes, hazard beams, other vertical or horizontal cracks or splits in stems and branches, partially decayed lifted bark, knot holes, man-made holes, tear-outs, cankers in which cavities have developed, other hollows or cavities, including butt-rots, double-leaders forming compression forks with included bark, gaps between overlapping stems or branches, partially detached Ivy with stem diameters in excess of 50mm or bat/bird boxes. Trees (where present) were also checked for evidence of nesting birds and suitability for relevant species.
- 4.12 Criteria for roost assessment are based upon the determinants given in the Bat Conservation Trust - Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd ed. (2016): (see Figure 4.1).

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).

Figure 4.1 - BCT guidelines extract

4.13 An assessment of the building was conducted when birds are within their breeding season (this is typically March-August inclusive). Elevations were inspected for evidence of birds that show a high dependency upon built structures, many of which are in a state of decline. These might include the following species for example:

- Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*): Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) red status
- House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*): BoCC red status
- House Martin (*Delichon urbica*): BoCC amber status
- Swift (*Apus apus*): BoCC red status

4.14 Additional to the site's capacity to support common species of bird, the area was subject to an assessment for capacity to support specially protected species such as Barn Owl, a species protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended).

4.15 The results, conclusions and recommendations are based on a number of factors i.e.

- Practical experience of surveyor,
- Knowledge of bat/bird species relevant to the site location and geographical range,
- Nature of immediate/surrounding habitat in relation to foraging/commuting,
- Condition of the building,
- Presence/absence of a loft space or cellar and reasonable practicality of use,
- Presence/absence of roost potential,
- Value of roost potential – if present.

- 4.16 All aspects of the field survey were undertaken in line with government and CIEEM (2020) standing guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.17 The results, conclusions and recommendations of this report have been assessed by Mrs. K. Wilding, the Director of Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd, and her assessment is consistent with that of Mr. Richards.

5.0 Limitations

- 5.1 The survey was conducted in February 2022 which is outside of the active season of bats (May-September) at a time of year when bats are in their hibernation period. Whilst evidence of bats can be less apparent in this timeframe, the bat roost potential of buildings/trees and suitability of any potential roost features can be adjudged as conclusively as within the active season of bats, saving time and unnecessary delay to applicants; thus, frequently the assessment can be as conclusive as if carried out within the active season, though applicants should be aware of the risks. Survey timing is therefore not considered a constraint in this instance.
- 5.2 The survey took place outside the breeding bird season (typically March-September), therefore incidental breeding bird behaviour has a lower/negligible probability of being encountered. Suitability for breeding birds is readily identifiable all year round however, and often nesting material can attest to presence of breeding birds at buildings where they have nested. The timing of the survey is again not considered a constraint in this instance.
- 5.3 No access limitations were experienced on site and the surveyor was able to make a conclusive assessment of the bat and bird roost potential following the robust external and internal assessment.; therefore, having considered possible survey constraints, no significant limitations were experienced that might adversely influence the results, conclusions and recommendations of this report.

6.0 Desk Study Results

- 6.1 The existing former sawmill on the north side of Spring Street (referred to as “the application site”), is located within the market town of Ramsbottom in close proximity to the A676, approximately 6.0 kilometres from Bury town centre (see Figure 6.1).



Figure 6.1 - Location of the application site (red line boundary) within the landscape (Source: Google Earth Pro 2021/22)

- 6.2 The immediate habitat is distinctly sub-urban, with typical associated infrastructure such as pubs, primary schools, commercial retail premises and industrial units. There is also extensive residential property surrounding the application site, with associated landscaped gardens and hedgerows providing linear features connecting the site to semi-natural habitats in the immediate environment, such as broadleaved woodland to the east and west. The River Irwell flows to the east of the site, moving from north to south, and provides more semi-natural features, with trees and scrub lining its banks.
- 6.3 The extending environment is both sub-urban and semi-rural in nature, with heavily developed areas to the south including Greenmount and Summerseat, which are linked to Bury via the M66 motorway and other A roads. Vast expanses of moorland lie to both the east and west of the application site, and other semi-natural environs include upland and lowland heathland, lowland dry acid grassland and priority habitat deciduous woodland. These habitats are linked to the application site via corridors of linear habitats along roads and the River Irwell.
- 6.4 Collectively, the immediate and extending aforementioned ecological features, as described, should be considered favourable, well-connected ecological networks for bats and rural associated birds, most notably for the Common Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) bats, with the variety of semi-rural outbuildings and broadleaved woodland providing an ideal habitat for either of these two species.

NB: *Where quality habitat is present close to buildings then the percentage use of those buildings, by bats, increases given that roost opportunities are available and vice versa.*

6.5 Three statutory designated sites feature within 2.0 kilometres (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 – Designated sites in proximity to the survey area

Site name	Designation type	Interest features
Redisher Wood 1.48 kilometres south-west	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Habitats within this LNR include semi-natural broadleaved woodland, scrub, neutral grassland, acid grassland, acid heath, marshy grassland, stand/running water, swamp and bracken. Categorised as ancient woodland,, the presence of species such as: Stone Loach (<i>Barbatula barbatula</i>), Marsh Marigold (<i>Caltha palustris</i>) and Common Valerian (<i>Valeriana officinalis</i>) make this site a biodiversity hotspot in the borough.
Lower Red Lees Pasture 1.23 kilometres north	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Set at an altitude of 183m within the River Irwell valley, this site is one of the few remaining examples of herb-rich unimproved neutral to slightly acidic pasture, with agricultural intensification leading to severe decline of this habitat in Lancashire. A variety of species are present in this designated site, such as: Bird's-Foot Trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>), Devil's-Bit Scabious (<i>Succisa pratensis</i>), Lady's Mantle (<i>Alchemilla glabra</i>), Adder's-Tongue Fern (<i>Ophioglossum vulgatum</i>).
West Pennine Moors 0.77 kilometres west	SSSI	This SSSI comprises of three distinct areas of moorland with an extensivemosaic of upland and upland-fringe habitats, such as: blanket bogs, wet and dry heathlands, acid and lime-rich flushes, rush pastures and mire grassland, acid grassland, neutral hay meadows and scrub, wet and dry broadleaved woodlands and scrub. Rare and protected species which are a reason for the designation of this site are: breeding populations of Black-Headed Gulls (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>), Mediterranean Gulls (<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>), Grey Herons (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>), Starry Lady's-Mantle (<i>Alchemilla acutiloba</i>), Large-Toothed Lady's-Mantle (<i>Alchemilla subcrenata</i>) and Floating Water-Plantain (<i>Luronium natans</i>).

6.6 The application site falls within the impact zone for the aforementioned statutory designated sites; it is however considered highly unlikely that the proposed development at will have any impact upon said nearby designated sites or the qualifying species species/habitats for which they have been designated due to the low impact nature of the works.

6.7 An online search of MAGiC Maps revealed that four EPSMLs have been granted within a 2.0 kilometre buffer of the site. Three pertain to non-breeding roosts for *Pipistrelle sp.* bats, with one being granted for a breeding Common Pipistrelle roost approximately 1.5 kilometres north of the application site.

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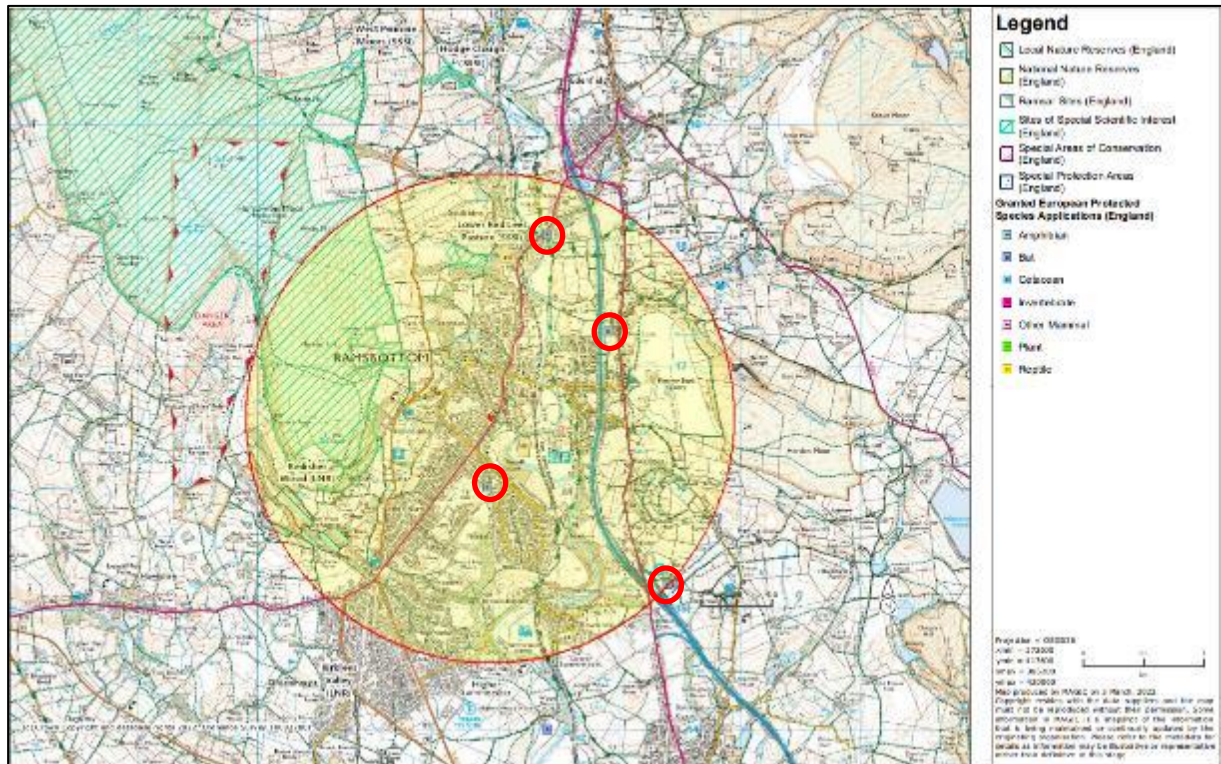


Figure 6.2 – Designated site and species data for the area within 2.0 kilometres of the application site (MAGiC Maps 2022)

6.8 Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd have undertaken and been involved in bat surveys within the 2.0km area surrounding the application site – as such, the following biological data is readily available to the Ecologist from the company database – all data has been previously submitted to the LERC serving the area, which in this case is Greater Manchester RECORD.

- 0.23 kilometres north-east / 2020 / Emergence and commuting by a single Common Pipistrelle bat.

7.0 Field Study Results

Bats

7.1 Figure 7.1 shows the locations of buildings B1 and B2 within the application site boundary; Table 7.1 below describes each building in respect to their potential to offer roost features for bats.



Figure 7.1 – Locations of the buildings at the former sawmill on Spring Street within the red line boundary (Source: Google Earth Pro 2021/22)

Table 7.1 – Building descriptions at the application site with included bat assessments

B1
A detached 2-storey building of varied construction, with the original section of the building comprising a stone-built structure with a pitched slate roof; this part of the building features components such as timber windows, lintels and fascia. The western section of the building is a single-storey industrial structure with a corrugated metal roof, and features components such as timber windows and a timber fascia. In respect of its condition, the surveyor is not qualified to assess structural state, however the aesthetic condition of the building was adjudged to be good, with only the slate roof and the aging fascia showcasing signs of disrepair. Internally, the building is separated into three distinct components, the first is a small, office space which has a modest internal loft void above, with approximate dimensions of 4m x 6m x 0.5m (Length x Width x Height). This space is dark, cold, slightly draughty with minimal light ingress, and is currently unused. The second component is a storage space above the woodworking space below and is used for storing planks and wooden elements, it is noted to be illuminated by skylights, cold, and slightly draughty with significant cobwebbing around

the roof timbers, which are left exposed. The final component is the industrial style building, above which there is no loft space present.

B1 is thus considered unsuitable for the breeding purposes of loft-dwelling species such as Brown Long-eared bats, due to the confined space above the office and the cold space above the woodworking area deemed to be incompatible with the roosting preference of these bats, which prefer dark, unrestrictive, warm and draught-free loft spaces. This does not necessarily discount the building for uses other than breeding by such species, however, no evidence of BLE bats was encountered during the assessment.

The pitched areas of the roof are lined with a bitumen 1F underfelt immediately beneath the roof tiles; where present, this or other such underlining typically improves a buildings value to bats, notably for crevice-dwelling bats of the *Pipistrellus* genus, whereby the bats roost between linings and the roof cover material provided external access opportunities exist, whilst an absence of roof linings can lower a structures value in the same respect. No evidence of such bats was found; however, this is often the case due to the crevice dwelling nature if these species.

Externally, the building can be separated into two individual elements by roof type. The section of the building with a pitched slate roof exhibits a number of PRFs. On the south-eastern elevation, gaps are found beneath the slate on the gable, whilst ingress opportunities on the south-western elevation are located behind the entirety of the fascia, with access onto the roof timbers noted, as well as at wall plate level where there are a number of entry points which provide access to the roof crevice. On the north-eastern elevation there are entry points behind the full length of the fascia, which has come away from the wall. There are also a number of slates missing/lifted on the roof which may again provide potential entry points. The industrial part of the building has a flat roof, which is very tight with no obvious entry points on any of the elevations.

B1 is duly categorised as offering '**Moderate**' bat roost suitability based on the climatic conditions, presence of underfelt and the abundance of potential roost features identified.

B2

A detached, single-storey property of wooden and corrugated metal construction, with a mono-pitched zinc roof and entry to the structure provided via a large sliding door. In respect of its condition, the surveyor is not qualified to assess structural integrity of the building, however the aesthetic condition was adjudged to be poor, with deterioration in the timber elements.

Internally, there is no loft space present, the interior is open to the underside of the ridge and is being utilised as a storage area for various wooden components. No roof lining is present, and on the day of the survey conditions found to be entirely illuminated, draughty and cold due to the gaps in the wooden exterior.

Externally, there are no PRFs on the structure; all gaps present are wide in nature and provide no crevice-roosting opportunities that might be utilised by bats.

B1 is considered entirely unsuitable for use by both crevice and loft dwelling species such as *Pipistrelle sp.*, and Brown Long-eared bats, with no potential for entry into the building, therefore, the building is duly categorised as offering '**Negligible**' bat roost suitability.

NB: The breeding roosts of Pipistrelle bats are proportionally higher in occupied residential dwellings where the warm, dry conditions favour the requirements of a maternity colony but other structures are also used, especially for hibernation or by male bats which do not need the same conditions as a maternity colony.

- 7.2 There are a number of mature trees in the site boundary, alongside vegetation / dense scrub to the north, west and north-east of the application site, which were all absent of potential roost features regarding bats with an absence of cracks, rot holes, peeled bark or other such features. Trees and dense scrub should be considered valuable to bats in a local context in that they provide valuable foraging/commuting habitat to bats, offering shelter cover and habitat connectivity when in foliage.

Breeding Birds

- 7.3 In relation to WCA Schedule 1 specially protected bird species such as Barn Owl, no evidence was found to suggest any form of site use or historic nesting. No access points exist to the exterior of a suitable site as to permit a bird the size of this species any ingress opportunity and risks to this species can be conclusively ruled out. No suitability for Black Redstart was observed, and impacts to these and other Schedule 1 bird species can also be safely discounted.
- 7.4 In relation to wider breeding birds, there was evidence that birds have been using some of the gaps at wall-plate level on the south-eastern elevation of B1, with droppings noted at this area. Whilst no direct evidence of nesting was discovered at the site, the potential roost features described previously for bats could feasibly support small birds adapted to nesting in buildings, including House Sparrows for example. The site does also support a range of trees, hedgerows and mature shrubbery within the vicinity of the proposed works that would provide suitable nesting platforms for common bird species.

8.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

- 8.1 Based upon the findings of the survey, covered through sections 6.0 – 7.0 of the report and supported by Appendix I, building B1 at the Former Spring Street Sawmill been determined to offer '**Moderate**' bat roost potential in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust - Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd ed. (2016), and further surveys by way of dusk/dawn surveys are recommended to be carried out to establish if the building supports a bat roost. No further surveys are required at B2.

Bat Conservation Trust		
Table 7.3 Recommended minimum number of survey visits for presence/absence surveys to give confidence in a negative result for structures (also recommended for trees but unlikely to give confidence in a negative result).		
Low roost suitability	Moderate roost suitability	High roost suitability
One survey visit. One dusk emergence or dawn re-entry survey ^a (structures).	Two separate survey visits. One dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey ^b	Three separate survey visits. At least one dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey. The third visit could be either dusk or dawn. ^b
No further surveys required (trees).		

^a Structures that have been categorised as low potential can be problematic and the number of surveys required should be judged on a case-by-case basis (see Section 5.2.9). If there is a possibility that quiet calling, late-emerging species are present then a dawn survey may be more appropriate, providing weather conditions are suitable. In some cases, more than one survey may be needed, particularly where there are several buildings in this category.

^b Multiple survey visits should be spread out to sample as much of the recommended survey period (see Table 7.1) as possible; it is recommended that surveys are spaced at least two weeks apart, preferably more. A dawn survey immediately after a dusk one is considered only one visit.

Figure 8.1 – Bat Conservation Trust extract on roost potential requirements

- 8.2 It is recommended that two dusk and/or dawn emergence/re-entry surveys are conducted at the site during the active season of bats (May - August, extending into September), in order to establish if/how the building is being used by bats, and if so, identify the species present, abundance, roost locations and flight lines around the site following emergence/re-entry. Three surveyors would be required to monitor the potential roost features described at the building.
- 8.3 Trees and scrub on the site itself are absent of bat roost potential, though should be considered valuable to bats in a local context in that they provide valuable foraging/commuting habitat, offering shelter cover and habitat connectivity especially when in foliage. Thus, it is recommended that any trees lost to development should be replaced on-site or immediately off-site.
- 8.4 The Applicant should be aware that, if during further surveys, evidence is gathered by the Ecologist that confirms bat(s) or their roost(s) are found and will be impacted upon, then an EPSML may be required to legally commence with the proposals.
- 8.5 Natural England provides information and guidance about EPSML's and the following extract is included in that guidance:-

"If you intend to apply for a licence for development you are advised to seek the guidance of a consultant ecologist".

Natural England's view is that:

"A licence is needed if the consultant ecologist, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, considers that on balance the proposed activity is reasonably likely to result in an offence under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019) (EU Exit)".

- 8.6 If the consultant ecologist, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, considers that on balance the proposed activity is reasonably unlikely to result in an offence being committed then no licence is required. However, in these circumstances Natural England would urge that reasonable precautions be taken to minimise the effect on EPS should they be found during the course of the activity. If EPS are found, cease the work until you have assessed whether you can proceed without committing an offence.
- 8.7 A licence should be applied for if offences are unavoidable and the work should not be re-started until a licence is obtained. The application should be completed by the developer and a consultant ecologist. The ecologist will need to be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of Natural England that they have the relevant skills and knowledge of the species concerned.
- 8.8 Where more detailed bat surveys are recommended by the Ecologist, following an initial daytime investigation, then Local Planning Authorities on the advice of their ecological advisors, may not determine the application until such time that all relevant information is gathered, i.e. by conducting dusk/dawn surveys.

The advice that is provided by the ecological advisors is in full accordance with the obligations placed upon Local Planning Authorities by way of its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019) (EU Exit) and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Therefore, it would be prudent to make enquiries to the relevant departmental Planning Officer before submitting a Planning Application that includes an ecological survey report that recommends more detailed surveys.

- 8.9 Installation of overly harsh artificial lighting as part of any development that exceeds current levels may have a negative impact upon foraging/commuting bats in the landscape, particularly if increased light spillage occurs in areas of that are currently free from illumination. A bat-sensitive lighting plan is therefore recommended in order to avoid potential impacts to bats that may use the surrounding treelines. Several options to consider have been listed below, though the reader is referred to the Bat Conservation Lighting Guidelines for further information.

Appropriate luminaire specifications: Luminaires come in a myriad of different styles, applications and specifications which a lighting professional can help to select. The following should be considered when choosing luminaires.

All luminaires should lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, fluorescent sources should not be used. LED luminaires should be used where possible due to their sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability. Lighting should be directed to where it is needed, and light spillage avoided. This can be achieved by the design of the luminaire and by using accessories such as hoods, cowls, louvres and shields to direct the light to the intended area only. Planting can also be used as a barrier or manmade features that are required within the build can be positioned so as to form a barrier.

Predicting where the light cone and light spill will occur: There are lighting design computer programs that are widely in use which produce an image of the site in question, showing how the area will be affected by light spill when all the factors of the lighting components listed above are taken into consideration. This should be a useful tool to inform the mitigation process.

Light levels: The light should be as low as guidelines permit. If lighting is not needed in any particular area, do not light. Numerous software programmes are currently available which can be used inform lighting plans, demonstrating how lighting decisions will illuminate a site.

Please refer to the 'Landscape and urban design for bats and biodiversity' (Gunnell et. al., 2012, Bat Conservation Trust) Guidance Note 8 'Bats and Artificial Lighting' 2018, Bat Conservation Trust for further information.

- 8.10 No impacts are applicable in relation to any Sch.1 (WCA) specially protected bird species such as Barn Owl or Black Redstart and no further surveys or recommendations are necessary in relation to specially protected birds at this time.
- 8.11 In relation to common birds, whilst no direct evidence of breeding birds was discovered, both the building B1 and vegetation on site offer small birds nesting habitat, particularly during the breeding season.
- 8.12 It is therefore recommended that any demolition and clearance works on site are carried out outside of the breeding bird season (March – August inclusive). For works undertaken within the breeding bird season, any areas that have the potential to support nesting birds should be checked by a professional Ecologist within 48 hours or less prior to works commencing. If birds are found nesting any works which may affect them would have to be delayed until the young have fledged and the nest has been abandoned naturally.
- 8.13 Point 3.24 of the British Standards Publication 42020:2013 defines a professional ecologist as *"a person who has, through relevant education, training or experience, gained recognised qualifications and expertise in the field of ecology and environmental management."*
- NB:** *All wild birds (with only minor exceptions) and their nests whilst being built or containing eggs or dependant young are protected from destruction, damage and disturbance under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is a punishable offence to interfere in any way with an active nest.*
- 8.14 As a means of enhancement and aiding the design of the scheme in keeping with local and national planning policy considering biodiversity net-gain principles, the proposals may consider incorporating wildlife friendly provisions such as:
- Native species only when landscaping / re-planting,
 - Bird and invertebrate provisions,

Further information is provided within Appendix II.

9.0 Bibliography

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Appendix I: Site Photographs



Plate 1 – *South-eastern elevation of building B1*



Plate 2 – *Potential ingress point behind fascia and below roof slate*



Plate 3 – *Character of the south-western elevation*



Plate 4 – *One example of the many entry points at wall-plate level on south-western elevation*



Plate 5 – Evidence of birds using the gap at wall plate level, with droppings visible



Plate 6 – North-eastern elevation of building B1



Plate 7 – *Poor state of slate roof providing ingress opportunities*



Plate 8 – *Internal character of the loft space above the office section of B1*



Plate 9 – *Evidence of bitumen 1F underfelt behind boarding in same loft space*



Plate 10 – *External character of the north-eastern elevation of the industrial section of B1*



Plate 11 – *Slight gap behind the fascia on same section of building, discounted from recent use due to the heavy cobwebbing*



Plate 12 – *Further character of industrial part of the building*



Plate 13 – *South-western elevation of B1*



Plate 14 – *Character of the flat rooved section of B1*



Plate 15 – *Internal 'loft' space used as a wood storage*



Plate 16 – *Further character of same loft space*



Plate 17 – Presence of bitumen 1F underfelt evidenced, with heavy cobwebbing in some parts



Plate 18 – Poor state of repair of bitumen 1F underfelt



Plate 19 – *Clear evidence of gaps at wall plate level*



Plate 20 – *Character of B2, the timber shed*



Plate 21 – *North-eastern elevation of B2*



Plate 22 – *Internal character of B2, showing use as storage*



Plate 23 – *Roof and building construction of B2*



Plate 24 – *Waterway at the north-east of the site*



Plate 25 –*Bramble scrub present at the western end of the application site*



Plate 26 – *General character of the site, which is currently utilised*

Appendix II: Biodiversity Enhancement: General Recommendations

Indicative Enhancement

Breeding Bids - House Sparrow

The Sparrow Terrace has been designed to help redress the balance of falling House Sparrow numbers. The current UK population is now half of what it previously was in 1980 and this is widely attributed to habitat destruction and lack of suitable nesting spaces. House Sparrows are social birds and like to nest in company, therefore, this terrace provides ideal nesting opportunities for three families. The terrace can be fixed on to the surface of a suitable wall or incorporated into the wall. It is suitable for all types of buildings.



Breeding Birds - Other

This traditional design has proved to be highly effective in attracting Robins, as well as other small species such as Black Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher and Wren. It is designed to be installed on the walls of houses, barns, garden sheds or other buildings and should be hung so that the entrance is to one side (at an angle of 90° to the wall). The front panel can be easily removed for cleaning.

This type of box should not be made conspicuous on a tree or bush because small predators can enter through the unprotected opening. By hanging on a wall, predators won't be able to reach the box. Alternatively hide the box in Ivy, Honeysuckle or other climbing plants.



Invertebrates - Bee bricks

The Bee Brick can be used in place of a standard brick or block in construction to create habitat for solitary bees. Alternatively, it can be used as a standalone bee house in your garden or wild patch. It will provide much needed nesting space for solitary bee species such as red mason bees and leafcutter bees, both of which are non-aggressive.

Each Bee Brick contains cavities in which solitary bees can lay their eggs before sealing the entrance with mud and chewed-up vegetation. The offspring will emerge the following spring and the cycle will begin again. Each cavity goes part way into the brick, which is solid at the back. Bee Bricks should be placed in a warm sunny spot on a south-facing wall at a minimum height of 1m, with no vegetation obstructing the holes. It is highly recommended that bee-friendly plants should be located nearby so that the bees using the bricks have food, otherwise it is unlikely that the brick will be used.

Available in a choice of four colours: white grey, dark grey, yellow and red.

Specification

- * Material: Concrete
- * Origin: Cornwall, UK
- * Dimensions: W 215mm x D 105mm x H 65mm
- * Weight: 2.9kg
- * Colours: White grey, yellow, dark grey and red



Native Planting and/or Landscaping

New feature landscaping should incorporate native woody plants as opposed to non-native species that are of significantly less benefit to biodiversity. Species such as Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) are native and will provide a valuable resource for a myriad of wildlife as opposed to non-native, exotic species which are generally much less effective, particularly to pollinator groups including bees, butterflies and moths.

Suitable Trees	Suitable Woody Shrubs
English Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>)
Rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)	Honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>)
Wild Service Tree (<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>)	Guelder Rose (<i>Viburnum opulus</i>)
Silver Birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>)	Elder (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>)
Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	Wild Privet (<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>)
Goat Willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>)	Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>)
Beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)	
Wild Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i>)	