
DAYTIME BAT SURVEY

121-131 BELL LANE, BURY,
GREATER MANCHESTER

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CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION	2
2.0 METHODOLOGY	3
3.0 RESULTS.....	4
4.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	16
5.0 REFERENCES.....	18

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Site Information

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2021 by Neil Pike Architects to undertake a daytime bat survey at 121-131 Bell Lane, Bury (O.S. grid reference: SD 81434 11241). The site comprises a former commercial property and attached dwelling, surrounded by typical infrastructure and development found in a large town.

Description of Development

- 1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application to convert the building into 24 apartments with a retail unit to the ground floor

Biodiversity in Planning

- 1.3 Biodiversity is a material consideration, and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a requirement to consider biodiversity and protected species when determining planning applications. Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) gives specific reference to minimising the impacts of development on biodiversity. Local and Neighbourhood plans also provide guidance towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including priority habitats and notable species.

Legal Context

- 1.4 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.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Daytime Bat Survey

- 2.1 A daytime bat survey of the site was undertaken to search for, and to assess the potential for, a bat roost.
- 2.2 An external assessment of the affected building on the site was undertaken, which included, for example, looking for gaps between any soffit boards and walls, gaps between window frames and the walls, and looking for bat droppings on the walls and window ledges. An internal assessment was also carried out, with particular focus on gaps in walls, cracks in roof beams, and any evidence of bat activity, such as bat droppings, in the internal spaces.
- 2.3 A pair of close-focussing binoculars, a high-powered torch and, where necessary, an endoscopic camera, were used to search for evidence of bats.

Personnel and Seasonal Timing

- 2.4 Ben Crossthwaite (Senior Ecologist) carried out the daytime bat survey on the 1st September 2021. Ben is an experienced ecologist, fully trained in protected species assessments and holds a Natural England Level 2 Class Licence for bats (Ref: 2020-48541-CLS-CLS). The weather at the time of the survey was warm and dry with light cloud. Daytime bat surveys can be undertaken at any time of year.

Survey Constraints

- 2.5 The site was fully accessible and a thorough survey could be carried out.

3.0 RESULTS

- 3.1 The building on site was the subject of a daytime bat survey and the results are detailed below. The building was accessible and could be easily surveyed.

External Survey

- 3.2 The building is set over two floors and a small basement level, consisting of a former commercial property and an attached dwelling (see Photograph 1). The building is constructed from brick. The brickwork is showing signs of age and weathering, however, is in reasonable condition and sealed with mortar with no missing or damaged sections (see Photographs 2 and 3).



Photograph 1 showing the building



Photograph 2 showing the exterior of the building



Photograph 3 showing the exterior of the building

- 3.3 Parts of the buildings external walls have been rendered (see Photographs 4 and 5). The render is in excellent condition, free from cracks, gaps and flaking features bats may exploit.





Photograph 4 showing the rendered western gable end of the building



Photograph 5 showing a rendered section of the building

- 3.4 Part of the building's frontage has a timber clad box feature that houses the roller-shutter door motors and top boxes (see Photograph 5 above and 6 below). This is in reasonable condition with one timber board missing. However, this does not provide any entry point into the internal space.





Photograph 6 showing the timber clad box feature on the building's frontage

- 3.5 Many of the window spaces have been bricked up, particularly across the rear elevations of the building (see Photograph 7). The timber and uPVC window and door frames, as well as the metal roller-shutters are all in good condition and sealed to the surrounding frames and masonry with no potential entry points found (see Photographs 8 and 9).



Photograph 7 showing the rear elevation of the building



Photograph 8 showing some of the uPVC window frames



Photograph 9 showing the roller-shutters across the building's frontage

- 3.6 The pitched and hipped roofs are covered with slate roof tiles (see Photograph 10). The tiles are largely intact and fitted flush, as are the ridge tiles. However, a tile is missing along the roof's edge on the western part of the south-facing roof (see Photograph 11). The roof edges are sealed with mortar and topped with coping stones. The mortar is in good condition, sealing the roof edges effectively and the coping stones are in good condition and sealed to the surrounding roof tiles with mortar.



Photograph 10 showing a section of the roof



Photograph 11 showing the missing roof tile

Internal Survey

- 3.7 The internal spaces of the commercial property and the dwelling are empty. These spaces are finished and plastered and offer no roosting habitat for bats (see Photographs 12, 13, 14 and 15).



Photograph 12 showing the interior of the former commercial part of the building



Photograph 13 showing the interior of the former commercial part of the building



Photograph 14 showing the interior of the former commercial part of the building



Photograph 15 showing the interior of the dwelling

- 3.8 Access holes into the roof void spaces of both the former commercial part and the dwelling part of the building have been made in the ceilings of the first-floor rooms (see Photograph 16). These gave easy access into the roof void spaces above via a ladder.



Photograph 16 showing on of the access holes in the former commercial part of the building

- 3.9 The extended parts of the former commercial building are open to the underside of the roof with no roof void spaces present (see Photograph 17).



Photograph 17 showing on of the extended section of the former commercial part of the building

- 3.10 The roof void space of the former commercial part of the building is split into separate spaces with brick partition walls. Each space was accessed via the holes made in the ceilings or by holes in the partition walls. The gable and partition walls are in good condition and sealed with mortar and the spaces are very dusty and cobwebbed (see Photograph 18).



Photograph 18 showing one of the gable walls

- 3.11 The roof space has no insulation, and the underside of the roof is lined with roofing felt (see Photograph 19). The felt is in good condition, free from rips, tears, and folds. The roof timbers are in good condition with no roosting habitat located. The roof void appears sealed as no daylight could be seen at any point.



Photograph 19 showing the underside of the roof

- 3.12 The basement level, located in the former commercial part of the building only, is in poor condition with part of the ceiling collapsed in (see Photograph 20). The basement has no access points located across the external walls and it is considered to offer no entry points for bats. Therefore, this space is discounted as offering potential hibernation or summer roost habitat.



Photograph 20 showing part of the basement level

- 3.13 The roof void space above the dwelling part of the building consists of one space. The gable walls are in good condition and sealed with mortar (see Photograph 21). The western part of the roof void is partially lit due to the missing roof tile. Evidence of historic use of Pigeon is located across the roof void space.



Photograph 21 showing the gable wall of the dwelling part of the building

- 3.14 The underside of the roof is partially lined with roofing felt with the other part leaving the underside of the roof tiles exposed (see Photograph 22). The roof timbers are in good condition and free for cracks, crevices and gaps.



Photograph 22 showing the underside of the roof tiles

- 3.15 No evidence of bat activity or occupancy was found during the internal or external surveys of the building.

4.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

Bats

- 4.1 The building's urban location, next to a well-lit main road and car sales garage provides no-little suitable terrestrial habitat for bats and is arguably located in a hostile habitat for bats. The exterior of the building appears well-sealed, except for the missing roof tile on the western part of the south-facing roof. The buildings internal spaces also appear sealed with no daylight seen during the internal survey, apart from in the roof void space above the dwelling part of the building due to the missing roof tile. No evidence of bat activity or occupancy was found during the external or internal surveys.
- 4.2 Despite the potential entry point provided by the missing roof tile, it is considered the building offers negligible bat roost suitability. This is due to the building location and lack of evidence of bat activity or occupancy.

Birds

- 4.3 Evidence of Pigeon use was found in the roof void space above the dwelling part of the building.
- 4.4 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended).

Recommendations

Bats

- 4.5 It is the opinion of the author of this report that the proposed works can proceed without the need for further survey work (e.g. bat activity surveys) or bat mitigation due to the negligible potential of the building to support bats. However, if the work is delayed by longer than one year from the date of this survey, a further bat survey will be required to update the findings.
- 4.6 It should be noted that bat absence is very difficult to prove definitively due to their mobility and size, and single or small numbers of bats are able to roost in extremely small spaces, such as in gaps between panels. The renovation work should be undertaken with care.
- 4.7 **If during development works a bat (or an accumulation of bat droppings) is discovered at any time, work is to temporarily cease whilst an experienced bat ecologist is contacted for guidance and assistance.** This can be Rachel Hacking Ecology (0161 465 8971) who undertook the initial survey, any licensed bat worker, or the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) helpline (0845 1300 228).

Birds

- 4.8 It is recommended any works to the roof are carried out outside the nesting bird season (generally March – August). If the works need to be carried out within the bird nesting season, then a nesting bird survey will be required immediately prior to work commencing.

5.0 REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed.). (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd Edition*. Bat Conservation Trust. London.

Google Maps

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