

Walshaw Hall Care Home, Bury

Daytime Bat Survey

2023



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ECOLOGY

Client Capstone Care Limited
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Report Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Methods	6
3. Results	8
4. Assessment	18
5. Recommendations	19
Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation	20



Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing the conversion of Walshaw Hall Care Home, hereafter referred to as the 'site'.

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

Further survey work is required because the site offers low potential to support roosting bats. A survey should be undertaken between May and September to establish the status of roosting bats and inform mitigation requirements.



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 daytime bat survey of Walshaw Hall Care Home (O.S. grid reference: SD 77068 12087 – see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Map showing the site location

- 1.1.2 The proposed development site currently comprises a former care home which includes a number of interconnected buildings constructed from brick with gable and valley roofs. The site is in a rural location surrounded by open agricultural and pastoral land, which offers potential foraging and commuting habitat for bats.

Description of Development

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

Relevant Planning History

- 1.1.4 The site received planning permission in January 2013, for the erection of a 53-bed unit adjacent to the site.

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 site was surveyed from the ground using binoculars and a high-powered torch. 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, windows or on the ground below roost entrances or staining from fur oil around roost entry points.
- 2.1.3 The interior of the site, including the roof voids, was 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

Surveyor Details

- 2.3.1 The survey was undertaken by Simon Holden MCIEEM BSc (Hons), MCIEEM and Hollie Ainley BSc (Hons), PgCert. Simon has 18 years' professional experience of undertaking similar surveys and holds a level 2 class survey licence (Reference 2019-42937-CLS-CLS). Hollie has 1 years' professional experience of undertaking similar surveys.

Site Conditions

- 2.3.2 The weather at the time of the survey was mild and sunny. The site conditions were appropriate for a full assessment to be undertaken.

¹ Collins, J. (Ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists-good practice guidelines*. 3rd edn. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

² Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.



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 Constraints

- 3.1.1 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.

3.2 Habitat Appraisal

- 3.2.1 The site is in a rural location surrounded by open agricultural and pastoral land, with hedgerows and tree lines which offers potential foraging and commuting habitat for bats

3.3 External Survey

- 3.3.1 The site comprises an 18th Century mansion with various extensions comprising a number of interconnected buildings. The main building is constructed from stone with wall dormers and some parapet walls on the southern elevation. The roofs have a gable and valley structure and are covered with slate tiles. Soffits and eaves appear to be of uPVC. The roof appears to have been replaced in the last 20 years.
- 3.3.2 The external stonework is in good condition with only minor areas of missing mortar around the lintels (see Photographs 1, 2 and 3). The brick chimney stacks are complete and intact. The uPVC door and window frames are all intact and are flush with the surrounding masonry.





Photograph 1 showing the eastern elevation



Photograph 2 showing the southern elevation



Photograph 3 showing missing mortar

- 3.3.3 The roof of the building has a gable and valley structure covered with slate tiles (see Photograph 4). A small number of roof and ridge tiles are raised or missing (see Photograph 5). Lead flashing is present in-between pitches, this is flat and sits flush to the surrounding tiles.



Photograph 4 showing a section of the roof



Photograph 5 showing some of the missing roof and ridge tiles

- 3.3.4 The buildings have uPVC soffits and barge boards (see Photographs 6 and 7). These are in good condition; however they do not lie flush to the stonework creating gaps which could be used as potential entry points into the roof voids for bats (see Photograph 8)



Photograph 6 showing the uPVC barge boards



Photograph 7 showing the uPVC soffits



Photograph 8 showing the gaps beneath the barge boards

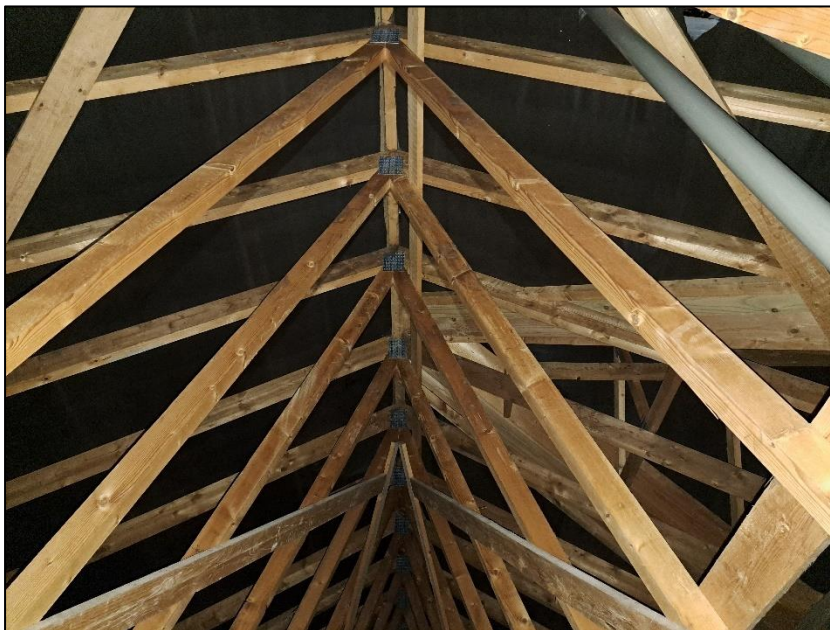
3.4 Internal Survey

- 3.4.1 The living spaces are not currently in use. The former living spaces are well-lit with natural light from the windows and do not provide suitable bat roosting habitat. The property has multiple roof voids present. The roof voids in the north-western wing of the building are newer in construction and separated by a fire break. The voids in this wing have a trussed roof structure and the timbers are all

intact, without gaps or cracks for bats to use (see Photographs 9 and 10). The roof is lined throughout with bitumen underfelt, and this is mostly complete with no significant tears or rips.



Photograph 9 showing the roof void



Photograph 10 showing the roof trusses and lining

- 3.4.2 The voids are insulated to the floor throughout. The internal masonry is complete, with no damaged bricks or missing mortar. A small window is present on the wall dormer allowing a small amount of light into the roof void. Daylight can be seen at the roof edges (see Photograph 11). No evidence of bat activity, such as bat droppings, could be found inside the roof void.



Photograph 11 showing daylight at the roof edges

- 3.4.3 Evidence of nesting birds was located within the roof void (see Photograph 12).



Photograph 12 showing the evidence of nesting birds

- 3.4.4 Several smaller roof voids are located in the older areas of the building. False ceilings with voids above are situated beneath the original roof voids (see Photographs 13 and 14). The roof timbers are in good condition, without gaps or cracks for bats to use. The voids are plastered throughout, and this is damaged in places. No evidence of bat activity, such as bat droppings, could be found inside the roof void.



Photograph 13 showing the space above the false ceiling



Photograph 14 showing one of the original roof voids

- 3.4.5 A roof void is present within the extension to the north of the site. The roof timbers are all intact, without gaps or cracks for bats to use (see Photographs 15 and 16). The roof is lined throughout with breathable membrane and this is complete with no significant tears or rips.



Photograph 15 showing roof void



Photograph 16 showing the timber and the lining

- 3.4.6 The void is insulated to the floor throughout. The internal masonry is complete, with no damaged bricks or missing mortar. Small louvre windows are present on the gable ends allowing a small amount of light into the roof void (see Photograph 17). No daylight could be seen at the roof edges. No evidence of bat activity, such as bat droppings, could be found inside the roof void.



Photograph 17 showing one of the louvre windows

- 3.4.7 One tree on site to the east of the site has a woodpecker hole, which is a Potential Roosting Feature (PRF) (see Photograph 18).



Photograph 18 showing the woodpecker hole

4. Assessment

4.1 Interpretation of Results

- 4.1.1 The site contains features which could be used by individual or small numbers of crevice dwelling bat species such as underneath the raised tiles. Potential access into the roof voids was also located underneath the soffits. Furthermore, the site is located in a rural area with good quality bat foraging and commuting habitat. It is assessed as offering low potential to support roosting bats.

4.2 Potential Impacts

- 4.2.1 The proposed conversion of the site into apartments is likely to include works to the roof and fabric of the building. Works such as this have the potential to result in impacts to bats and their roosts, should these be present. Impacts can include disturbance, killing or injuring of individual bats and damage, obstruction or destruction of roosts.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

- 5.1.1 Further detailed survey is required in order to determine the status of roosting bats at the site. A single bat activity survey is required at an optimal time of year (between May and September).
- 5.1.2 The survey results will inform mitigation requirements. If a bat roost is present, a bat mitigation licence will be required prior to the commencement of works. The licence can be sought following the granting of planning permission.
- 5.1.3 If the tree with the PRF requires removal or treatment in the future, an aerial inspection should be undertaken by a suitably licensed and trained ecologist, to survey the PRF for evidence of bat activity.
- 5.1.4 Evidence of nesting birds was identified within one of the roof voids, therefore, it is recommended that any works take place outside of the bird nesting season (the nesting season is generally March to August), or a bird nest check be undertaken prior to work commencing.

Enhancement Opportunities

- 5.1.5 The proposed development offers opportunities to enhance the site for wildlife, in accordance with the NPPF. This could include installation of bat boxes on the buildings and trees on site. Nest boxes suitable for species such as Swift *Apus apus* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* could also be installed. A suitably qualified ecologist should advise on the locations and specifications of boxes.

General Precautions

- 5.1.6 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 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.

