

167-169 Heywood Road, Prestwich

Daytime Bat Survey

2023



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Client Paul Butler Associates
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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing an extension and refurbishment to 167-169 Heywood Road, Prestwich, 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

No evidence of bat activity was found within the roof voids, which are dusty and cobwebbed throughout. The site is considered to offer negligible potential to support a bat roost and no further survey is required.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2023 by Paul Butler Associates to carry out a Daytime Bat Survey at 167-169 Heywood Road, Prestwich. The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SD 81897 04233 (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site courtesy of Google Maps

- 1.1.2 The site comprises a two-storey office building with a hipped roof. The site is within a sub-urban area with residential development to the east, and a school and sports ground to the west. Heaton Park is located in the wider environment to the east.

Description of Development

- 1.1.3 The site will be the subject of a planning application for an extension and refurbishment.

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to carry out 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 void, 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 Hollie Ainley BSc (Hons), PgCert and Jasmin West (Assistant Ecologist) on the 16th May 2023. Hollie has over 2 years' professional experience of undertaking similar surveys.

Site Conditions

- 2.3.2 The weather at the time of the survey was mild and dry. 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.
- 3.1.2 An internal assessment of the extensions on the dwelling could not be made due to a concealed roof void.

3.2 Habitat Appraisal

- 3.2.1 The site is within a sub-urban area with residential development to the east, and a school and sports ground to the west. Heaton Park is located in the wider environment to the east. Hedgerows and tree belts occur in the locality, which offer potential foraging and commuting habitat for bats.

3.3 External Survey

- 3.3.1 The property comprises a two-storey building constructed from brick. The brickwork is in good condition with only minor damage and recessed mortar which do not offer a suitable bat roosting cavities (see Photographs 1 and 2). The uPVC window and door frames are well-sealed with no gaps.





Photograph 1 showing the rear elevation



Photograph 2 showing the front elevation

- 3.3.2 The property has a hipped roof covered with concrete tiles. The roof and ridge tiles are all complete, in position and flush to one another with no gaps which could be used by bats for roosting (see Photograph 3).



Photograph 3 showing the hipped roof

- 3.3.3 The property has wooden soffit boxes (see Photograph 4). These are intact and in good condition, however they do not lie flush to the masonry in places allowing potential access into the roof void for bats. These were inspected with binoculars and a torch, and no signs of usage by bats was found.



Photograph 4 showing the soffit boxes

3.4 Internal Survey

- 3.4.1 The property is currently in use and the office spaces do not offer suitable bat roosting habitat. The property has two roof voids covering the expanse of the building. The roof timbers within the first roof

void are all intact and without gaps or cracks for bats to use. The ridge beam is cobwebbed. The roof is lined throughout with breathable membrane, and this is complete, with no significant tears or rips (see Photographs 5 and 6).



Photograph 5 showing the first roof void

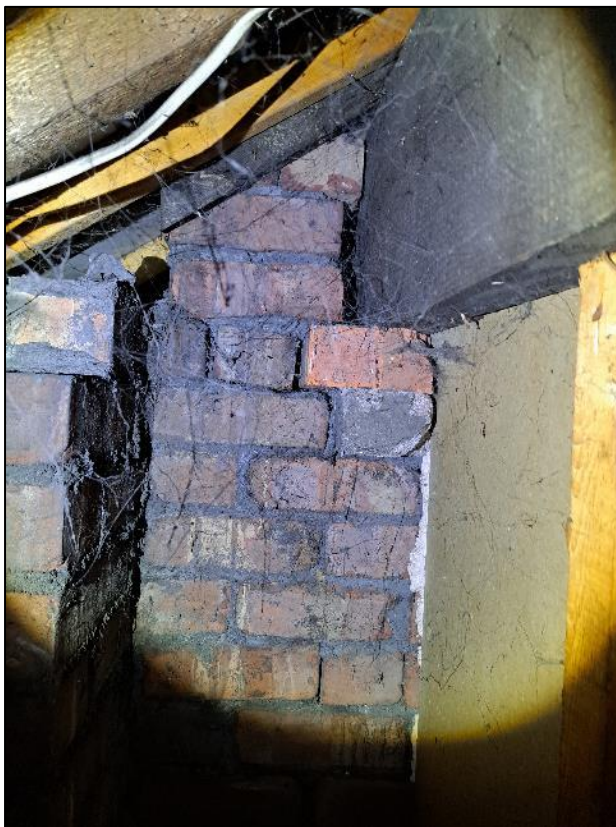


Photograph 6 showing the roof timbers and lining

- 3.4.2 The internal brickwork at the gable ends is complete and well-sealed. The internal dividing wall is not well-sealed, however these areas were found to be heavily cobwebbed suggesting they have not been used by bats for roosting (see Photographs 7 and 8). No evidence of bat activity, such as bat droppings, could be found inside the first roof void.



Photograph 7 showing the internal brickwork



Photograph 8 showing the edges of the brickwork

- 3.4.3 A room has been constructed within the second roof void using wooden plyboards and a timber frame. This is all intact and in position with no features suitable for roosting bats (see Photograph 9).



Photograph 9 showing the room within the second roof void

- 3.4.4 The remaining area within the second roof void surrounding this room are of a similar construction to the first roof void and it is heavily cobwebbed and dusty. No evidence of bats was found within the second roof void.

4. Assessment

4.1 Interpretation of Results

- 4.1.1 The external façade is in good condition with no features suitable for roosting bats. Internally, no evidence of bat activity was located within roof voids. The roofs voids are dusty and cobwebbed throughout, with the ridge beams and brick work heavily cobwebbed. The site is considered to offer negligible potential to support roosting bats.



5. Recommendations

- 5.1.1 It is the opinion of the author of this report that the development can proceed without the need for further survey work (e.g., bat activity surveys) or bat mitigation due to the negligible potential of the buildings to support bats.
- 5.1.2 It is not always possible to prove absence of roosting bats. Bats can roost in suitable features opportunistically and are not always identified during surveys. It is recommended that roof coverings are removed with due caution. Should a bat/bats be identified at any time, work should stop in that area and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted to attend site and advise how to proceed.
- 5.1.3 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 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 is 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.

