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BAT SCOPING SURVEY

At

St. John Vianney Presbytery
Poynter Street
Manchester
M40 0DH

NGR: SD 88385 02288

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toby Hart', is positioned below the 'Approved by:' line.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is written by Jacob Miller BSc IEMA, Graduate Ecologist at United Environmental Services Ltd (UES). It provides an assessment of the potential impacts on bats as a result of the proposed demolition of St. John Vianney Presbytery ahead of the redevelopment of the site at Poynter Street, Moston, Manchester.

A bat scoping survey was undertaken on 16th February 2022. The objective of the survey was to establish the suitability of the building on-site to support roosting bats, based on a site-specific survey and habitat assessment. The building was searched externally and internally (where accessible) for bat presence and features associated with bat activity, as detailed in Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance (2016).

St. John Vianney Presbytery is situated in an area that provides low-quality foraging habitat for bats due to the large areas of urban development within the local areas. However, small areas of scattered woodland habitat, mature trees and areas of green space will provide some foraging and commuting opportunities for bats in the local area, while the residential buildings will offer an abundance of alternate roosting opportunities. Furthermore, pockets of higher quality habitat are present within the local and wider area and the ancient woodland of Boggart Hole Clough LNR associated with the Boggart Brook, and wet woodlands of Moston Fairway reserve and Moston Brook to the east. Additionally, Rochdale Canal SAC and SSSI is also located eastwards. These habitats will support a variety of insects on which bats can forage, along with various commuting and roosting opportunities.

The building on site has been assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats due to an absence of any suitable potential roosting features (PRFs). A small number access points were identified. However, all PRFs were fully inspected and were found to be superficial or unsuitable for use by bats. Only a single loft void exists above to entrance to St. John Vianney Presbytery, although this void is open to the elements, exposed to high levels of natural light and rainfall, and no evidence of roosting activity was identified internally. Therefore, no further surveys, mitigation or compensation measures are required with regards to bats.

No bat droppings or other field signs were found during the external or internal inspections, suggesting no historic or present use by roosting bats. A single historical blackbird *Turdus merula* nest was identified within an ash tree at the south-western site boundary.

The building on site has been assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats, and no evidence was found to suggest present or historic use by bats. As such, no further survey or mitigation work is required for the development to proceed.

Due to the potential presence of breeding birds in the vegetation adjacent to the building, it is recommended that the works (including site clearance, vegetation removal and demolition) take place outside of the breeding bird season and should not be undertaken from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible, a breeding birds nest check should be undertaken prior to the commencement of works by a suitably experienced ecologist and an ecological clerk of works appointed if considered necessary.

The development proposals present an opportunity to create roosting opportunities and enhance the habitats on-site to benefit wildlife locally. The provisioning of bat and bird boxes on site is therefore recommended.



The report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 4, which give visual representations of the survey results.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Author, surveyors and qualifications

This report is compiled and written by Jacob Miller BSc IEMA, UES Graduate Ecologist. Other surveyors include:

- Mark Halliwell MBiol, UES Ecologist. Mark is licensed by Natural England to survey all species of bats by observation using an artificial light under licence number 2020-45183-CLS-CLS (level 1).

All surveyors have the knowledge, skills and experience identified within CIEEM's "Competencies for Species Survey: Bats" (2013), or were under the supervision of a surveyor with the required competencies.

1.2 Survey objectives

UES was commissioned in February 2022 to conduct site surveys which include the following activities:

- Conduct internal and external building inspections to look for field signs of bats
- Assess the suitability of the building for use by roosting bats
- Recommend further surveys, mitigation and compensation, where appropriate

1.3 Proposed development

The proposed development involves the demolition of the vacant building which is currently on-site.

1.4 Structure of the report

This report sets out the methodology, results, and recommendations in relation to a specific bat survey. Recommendations are in line with statutory legislation and planning policy objectives.

The report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 4, which give visual representations of the survey results.



2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

All surveys were carried out to recognised guidelines, timings and weather conditions, with particular reference to Natural England and BCT publications (see references for further information).

The habitats on-site and in the surrounding area were assessed during a walkover survey and by studying aerial photographs, in order to gauge their suitability to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats.

2.2 Building survey

The building on site were searched both externally and internally for bat presence and features associated with bat activity, as detailed in BCT guidance (Collins, 2016). This was conducted on 16th February 2022 by Mark Halliwell and Jacob Miller.

2.2.1 External inspection

The external inspection was carried out from ground level using binoculars, and also using ladders and an endoscope to investigate suitable gaps. The objective of the survey was to find and record any signs of bat use, for example:

- Bat droppings
- Feeding remains
- Grease staining / urine marks
- Corpses or skeletons

The bat signs listed above are visible from the outside of a building. The following areas were searched, where present:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| • Roof and ridge tiles | • Gaps under felt |
| • Lead flashing | • Cracks / holes in woodwork or behind cladding |
| • Eaves | • Gaps in brickwork and mortar |
| • Boxed soffits | • Air bricks |
| • Fascia and barge boards | • Grills |
| • Window sills and panes | • Vents |
| • Walls | |

2.2.2 Internal inspection

The internal inspection covered all of the accessible rooms and roof spaces within the building.

Bats regularly utilise specific areas within roof spaces, which were searched for any field signs of bats using high-powered torches and an endoscope, where considered necessary by the licenced ecologist. The following features were searched, where present:

- Roof beams and junctions
- Gaps under felt



- Dividing walls
- Chimney breasts
- Gaps in brickwork and mortar
- Cracks / holes in woodwork
- Floor or other surfaces on which droppings could accumulate

2.3 Survey limitations

The survey was carried out in mid-February at a time when bats are spending large amounts of time in torpor within hibernation sites. For this reason, exposed droppings from summer roosts may not be evident as they are likely to have decomposed or have been washed away.

Internal field signs should still be evident at this time of year, as should droppings in sheltered locations.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Habitat assessment

The proposed development site is located within Moston, a suburb of Manchester, to the north-west of Manchester city centre, surrounded by several local businesses and residential buildings. The habitats on-site and within the immediate vicinity of the site include St. John Vianney Presbytery, hardstanding parking and areas of amenity grassland. Several self-seeded young trees including ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and butterfly bush *Buddleja davidii* are encroaching to the east and south of the building, while a number of mature ash trees are scattered around the site. The mature trees on-site and within residential gardens will provide some low-quality foraging and commuting opportunities for bats.

The local surrounding area (within 500m) predominantly consists of residential dwellings comprising high-rise flats, flats and residential properties with associated gardens. Furthermore, areas of green space are provided by local playing fields, amenity grassland, and areas of parkland such as Broadhurst Park located 100m west of the development area. Areas of higher quality habitat are located 200m to the east and south-east within Moston Fairway Nature Reserve which offers woodland and lowland fen habitats that line a railway, along with a large area of woodland / scrub habitat associated with Moston Brook (0.3km south-east). These areas will provide moderate quality foraging and commuting opportunities for bats, although they are separated from the site by urban habitats.

The habitats within the wider surrounding area (within 2km) are similar in composition; the suburban areas of Moston, New Moston, Newton Heath, Failsworth, and White Moss are all present within the surrounding area. Large areas of urban development are present within these suburbs in the form of residential housing and industrial sites. Barriers to movement include large roads such as Broadway, Manchester Outer Ring Road, and Oldham Road. However, there are large areas of higher quality habitat for bats integrated into the urban landscape. Dense areas of deciduous woodland are present at Broadhurst Park and Lower Memorial Park, which are situated approximately 500m south-west and 500m south-east of the development boundary. Furthermore, Boggart Hole Clough Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies 1.3km to the west of the development site and supports ancient woodland habitat, grassland, lakes, and Boggart Hole Brook. Furthermore, the Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) runs from north to south, 1.3km east of the development site at its closest point. These areas, flanked by woodland and marginal vegetation, will support an abundance of insects on which bats can feed, and provide excellent quality commuting opportunities for bats.



3.2 Building survey

3.2.1 External inspection

St. John Vianney Presbytery is a disused, single-storey, detached building, with a pitched roof and hipped roof extension to the north-east (see Appendix 3 – Photographs, Photograph 1).

The building's large, pitched roof lacks roof tiles and is clad with a bitumen roofing membrane. The membrane is generally tightly sealed to the underlying timber structure although a small section of the membrane has lifted away at the south-western aspect (Photograph 2). This feature has been deemed unsuitable for use by bats due to the presence of the raised batten, which is intact and prohibits access for bats. Four skylights are integrated into the pitch of the roof. These skylights were found to be tightly sealed to the roof with bitumen roof felt after full inspection with binoculars and high-powered torch (Photograph 3). Timber barge boards are present at the gable ends of the building, tightly sealed to the wall. Boxed soffits at the eaves are all intact and tightly-sealed except for at the north-western aspect where access into the soffit is provided by mossing panels (Photograph 4). This area of the building is cluttered by ash and butterfly bush, which will obscure the entrance in the summer months. Furthermore, the internal feature is considered to be largely unsuitable for bats due to the large and open nature of the interior of the boxed soffit. No access is provided from the boxed soffit under the pitched roof, which is tightly sealed against the wall plate. The building is clad with timber panels on all aspects which is in good condition and presents no roosting opportunities for bats. Several windows in rotting timber frames are present on the north-western and south-eastern aspects, each of the windows is tightly sealed to the wooden box soffits and timber clad. Furthermore, two fire exits are present at the southern end of the north-western aspect, each of which is in good condition and lacks any roost any PRFs (Photograph 5). There are dense growths of young trees ash trees and butterfly bush at the south-eastern and south-western aspects. A historical blackbird nest was recorded within one of the ash trees at the south-western aspect (Photograph 14).

The hipped extension is present above the entrance to St. John Vianney and is also lined with bitumen roofing felt, in the same fashion as the primary pitched roof. However, large gaps are present above the guttering and fascias which provide access into the interior (Photographs 6 and 7). A ventilation feature present beneath the apex of the extension has degraded and provides additional access into this loft void (Photograph 7). A hole in the ceiling of above the porch provides an additional access point into the void, although the access point is broadly unsuitable for bats as it leads into the floor of the void and is set away from the walls such that bats would have to fly directly into the void from the porch (Photograph 8).

No bat droppings or other field signs of bats were found during the external building inspection.

3.2.2 Internal inspection

The main pitch of the roof has a vaulted ceiling and lacks a loft void entirely. The ceiling is constructed from single skin plywood attached to timber beams with mineral wool insulation between the beams (Photograph 9). The interior is divided into a large main hall, and several interconnected rooms. A large amount of water damage is present throughout the structure of the roof, particularly at the north-eastern end of the building (Photograph 9) and surrounding the skylights which are in derelict condition within the large southern room (Photograph 10). All of these rooms lack any loft voids or sheltered features suitable for roosting bats. Furthermore, no evidence of bat activity, such as droppings or field signs, was identified despite a thorough assessment with endoscope and torches..



There is a loft void present beneath the building's hipped roof extension, which is accessible through a large hole in the ceiling of the foyer, which has been created by water damage (Photograph 12). The void has been formed by building a hipper roof above the flat roof of the entrance to the building, presumably to prevent water damage. The hipped roof structure is supported by timber rafters, with a single skin plywood structure above which bitumen felt is lined (Photograph 13). The void is approximately 1m in height to the apex and lacks any form of insulation. Gaps at the eaves, which were noted from the exterior of the building (Photograph 6 and 7), provide access into this void. However, the area is considered to be unsuitable for roosting bats as PRFs are limited to the junctions of the timber frame. These features are highly exposed and subject to high levels of natural light and rain, as evidenced by the water damage beneath the void (Photograph 12 and 13). Furthermore, no internal field signs of bats were visible, such as droppings or feeding remains.

No bat field signs were found during the internal building inspection.



4 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Evaluation of results

4.1.1 Qualitative assessment of foraging habitats

In summary, the proposed development site is situated in an area that provides low-quality foraging habitat for bats due to the large areas of urban habitat that dominate the local area. However, small areas of scattered woodland, mature trees and areas of green space will provide some foraging and commuting opportunities for bats in the local area, while the residential buildings will offer an abundance of alternate roosting opportunities. Furthermore, pockets of higher quality habitat are present within the local and wider area such as Boggart Hole Clough LNR, Moston Fairway Nature Reserve and Moston Brook. Moreover, Rochdale Canal SAC and SSSI is also located to within the wider area. These habitats will support a variety of insects on which bats can forage, along with various commuting and roosting opportunities.

4.1.2 Qualitative assessment of roosting habitats

There is no historical or recent evidence of bat use within the building on-site, and no suitable roosting features were identified. As such the building has been assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats. Therefore, no further surveys, specific mitigation or compensation measures are required with regards to bats.

However, the proposed development presents an opportunity to enhance the habitats on-site and create roosting opportunities to benefit bats in the local area. The provision of bat boxes as part of the development proposals would increase the roosting opportunities for bats on-site and would increase the ecological value of the site. Bat boxes that could be used on-site include:

- Schwegler 1FF box (affixed to trees or the external walls of the newly constructed building)
- Schwegler 2F box (affixed to trees or the external walls of the newly constructed building)
- Schwegler 2FR bat tube (installed in connected pairs or threes into the external walls of newly constructed buildings)

Bat boxes affixed to or incorporated into the external walls of a building should be installed just below the eaves / roof height, taking into consideration potential disturbance from artificial lighting and noise. Bat boxes affixed to trees should be installed at a height of 4-6m. All bat boxes should be oriented on a southern aspect, thus receiving the most sunlight. Once bats have inhabited a bat box, they may only be disturbed by a licensed bat ecologist.



5 CONCLUSION

St. John Vianney Presbytery is situated in an area that provides low-quality foraging habitat for bats due to the large areas of urban development within the local areas. However, small areas of scattered woodland habitat, mature trees and areas of green space will provide some foraging and commuting opportunities for bats in the local area, while the residential buildings will offer an abundance of alternate roosting opportunities. Furthermore, pockets of higher quality habitat are present within the local and wider area such as Boggart Hole Clough LNR and Rochdale Canal SAC and SSSI. These habitats will support a variety of insects on which bats can forage, along with various commuting and roosting opportunities.

There is no historical or recent evidence of bat use within the building on-site, and all features are considered broadly unsuitable to support roosting bats. As such, the building has been assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats. Therefore, no further surveys, specific mitigation or compensation measures are required with regards to bats.

The proposed development presents an opportunity to enhance the habitats on-site and create roosting opportunities to benefit bats in the local area. It is recommended that bat boxes should be included within the proposed development scheme.



6 REFERENCES

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2013). *Competencies for Species Survey: Bats*.

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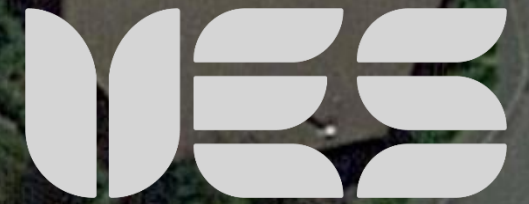
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site Plan



**St. John Vianney Presbytery,
Moston**

Site Plan

— Survey boundary

Loft boundary





Appendix 2 – Photographs



Photograph 1 – The north-eastern aspect of St. John Vianney Presbytery, with pitched roof and hipped extension clad with bitumen roof membrane and various timber features



Photograph 2 – The south-western aspect where a section of the bitumen roofing felt has raised from the pitched roof. Access under the felt is impeded by the raised timber batten.



Photograph 3 – Two skylights at the north-western aspect, tightly sealed to the roof with bitumen roof felt, and raised timber roof plank. Wood fascia and windows are also visible.



Photograph 4 – Damaged timber box soffits creates a generally unsuitable feature for roosting bats due to the absence of internal roosting features, and cluttered access point.



Photograph 5 – North-western aspect, showing the primary pitched roof, wooden cladding, large windows in timber frames and fire exits with timber fascia all tightly sealed.



Photograph 6 – The north-eastern aspect of the hipped extension where the bitumen roof felt and the timber fascia have degraded, creating a gap into the structure.



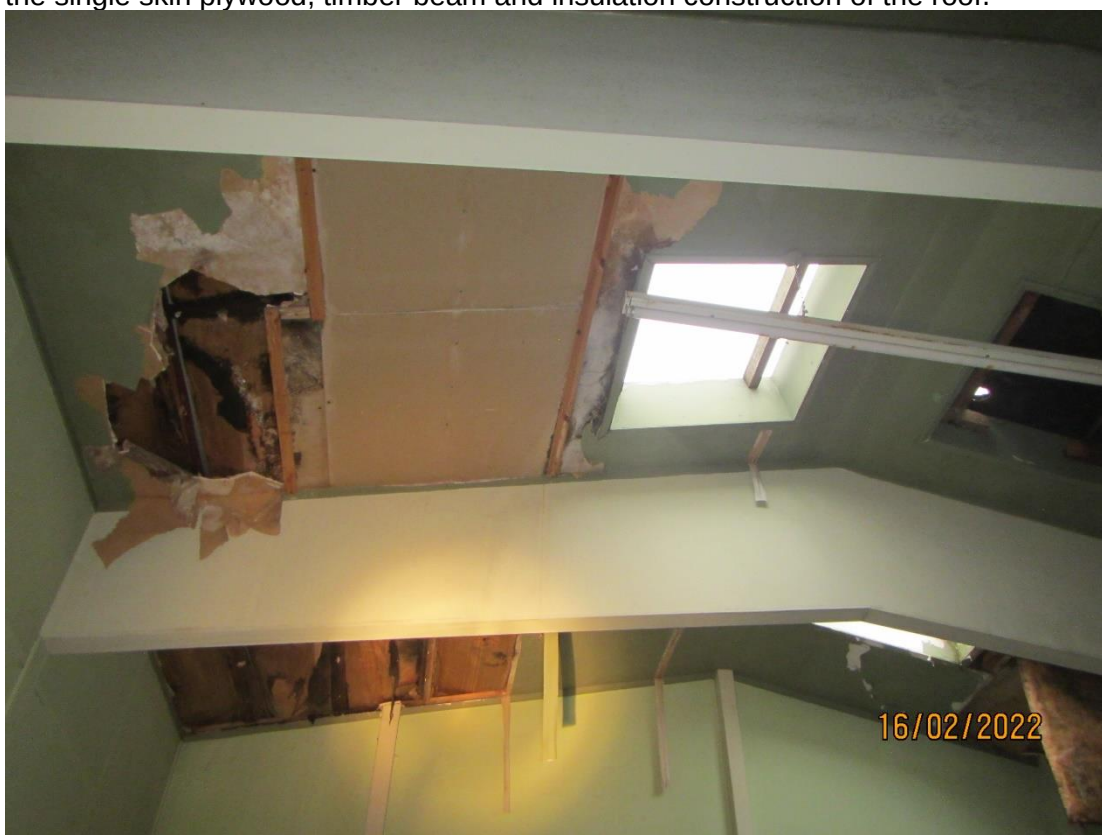
Photograph 7 – A close up of the damaged timber ventilation feature which faces north-west on the hipped roof extension and provides easy access into the structure.



Photograph 8 – A gap located at the eaves within the building's porch, assessed as being unsuitable for bats as its positioning restricts access for bats.



Photograph 9 – The water damaged roof at the north-eastern end of the main hall, revealing the single skin plywood, timber beam and insulation construction of the roof.



Photograph 10 – View of the ceiling within the large room of the primary building, which is in deteriorating condition due to water damage and window panes missing from the skylights.



Photograph 11 – Looking south-west within the main hall of the building, showing the high levels of natural light entering through large windows and the doorways to the backrooms.



Photograph 12 – A large hole in the single skim plywood ceiling of the foyer leading to the hipped extensions loft void, which has been created through water damage.



Photograph 13 – Looking north-east within the hipped extensions loft void, largely unsuitable for bats, with single skin plywood timber, rafters, and all external features visible from within and exposed to high levels of natural light.



Photograph 14 – A historical blackbird *Turdus merula* nest located within a self-seeded ash tree at the south-western aspect of the building.



Appendix 3 – Aerial Photographs



**St. John Vianney Presbytery,
Moston**

Close aerial photograph

 Development boundary





**St. John Vianney Presbytery,
Moston**

Wide aerial photograph

 Site location





Appendix 4 – Statutory and planning context

Ecological assessments

Ecological assessments play an important part within the planning context; they include an initial assessment which highlights any specific interests of a site. From the initial site assessment, the surveyor assesses the suitability of habitats within the site to support protected species and makes recommendations for further survey works if required. The following paragraphs provide a brief interpretation of the legislative protection that is relevant to the findings of this report.

Bats

In the United Kingdom, all species of bat and their roosts are afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU exit) Regulations 2019 (known as the “Habitats Regulations”). The Wildlife and Countryside Act is the domestic implementation of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention) and was amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a bat
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (even if the bat is not present at the time)
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead bat, any part of a bat or anything derived from a bat

Under UK law, a bat roost is *any structure or place which any wild [bat] ... uses for shelter or protection*. As bats often reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time of the activity taking place.

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

If an activity is likely to result in any of the above offences, a licence can be applied for to derogate from the protection afforded. These licences must provide appropriate mitigation and are issued by Natural England.

A Natural England mitigation licence application requires a Mitigation Method Statement and, in many cases, a Reasoned Statement of Application. The Mitigation Method Statement contains details of the proposed mitigation works. The Reasoned Statement needs to provide a rational and reasoned justification as to why the proposed development meets the requirements of the Conservation (National Habitats & c.) regulations 1994, namely Regulations 44(2)(e), (f) or (g), and 44(3)(a).

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) provides guidance on the interpretation of the law in relation to the natural environment and development.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 lists the following bat species as species of principle importance under Section 41:

- Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*
- Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
- Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*
- Greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
- Lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

Section 40 requires every public body in the exercising of its functions ‘have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’ (all biodiversity and not just section 41 species and habitats); therefore making these bats a material consideration in the planning process and requiring a detailed ecological bat survey before planning permission can be granted.

Birds

All wild birds, their nests and young are protected throughout England and Wales by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is illegal to kill, injure or take any wild bird, or damage or destroy the nest or eggs of breeding birds. The legislation applies to all bird species, common and rare.

In addition to the protection afforded to all wild birds, more vulnerable species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act receive enhanced protection when breeding. Schedule 1 species, including their dependent young, are protected from intentional or reckless disturbance whilst at or near the nest, in addition to the protection afforded the more common species.

The NERC Act offers further protection to the nests of some species that regularly re-use their nests, even when the nests are not in use.

The leading governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations in the UK have reviewed the population status of 244 UK bird species. "Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the Red List for Birds" is the most recent publication summarising their findings. Three lists, Red, Amber and Green, have been produced based on the most up-to-date evidence available and criteria include conservation status at global and European levels and, within the UK: historical decline, trends in population and range, rarity, localised distribution and international importance. These lists are a valuable resource when considering conservation priorities.

Planning policy

National Planning Guidance is issued in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF). The most relevant section is 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Key relevant principles stated in 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment are;

- 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;
 - e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
 - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 179.** To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity⁶¹; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation⁶²; and
 - b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity
- 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 reasons⁶³ 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.