REPORT OF BAT SURVEY

Chesshyre Avenue and Sidwell Walk Manchester



Greater Manchester Ecology Unit

Provided for:

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Summary

A bat survey was commissioned by Manchester City Council of properties at Chesshyre Avenue and Sidwell Walk, Manchester, to inform proposals to demolish the buildings. This is a report of the survey.

Bats and their roosting sites receive a high level of legal protection under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010

Bat surveys were undertaken on the 21st August, 2013. The surveys consisted of an inspection of the exterior of the buildings to identify bats or signs of bats, an assessment of surrounding habitat for its suitability to support bats, a desk-top study to identify any previous records of bats associated with the buildings and a local area bat activity survey.

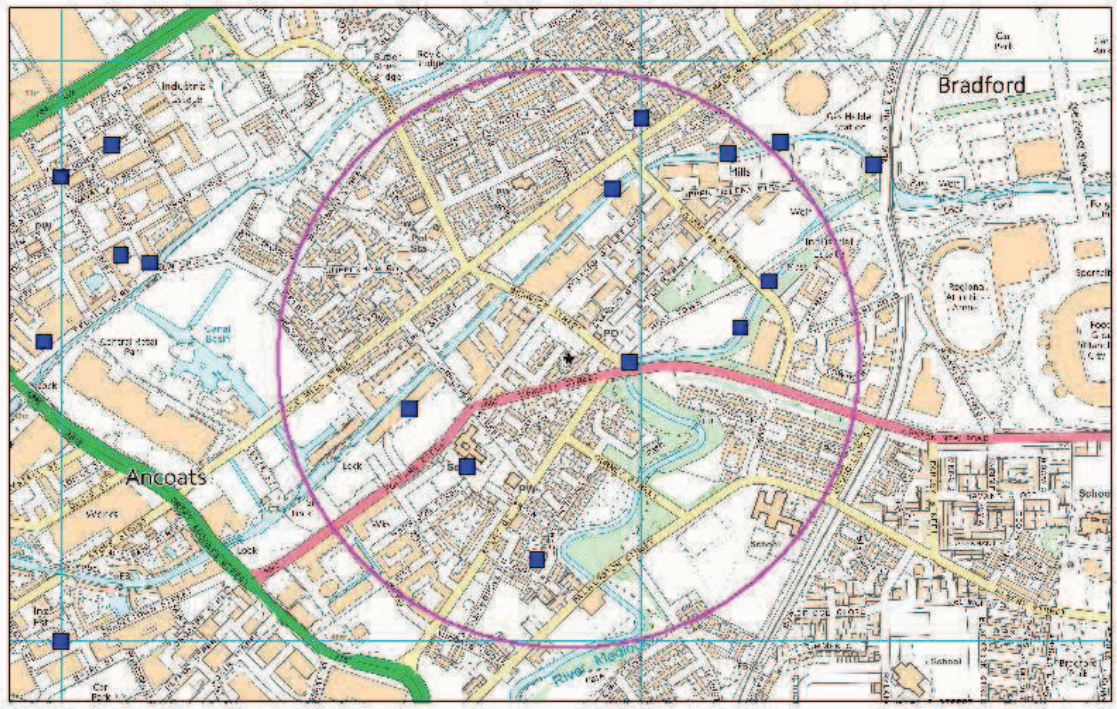
No evidence of bats using the buildings was found and the activity survey recorded very low levels of bat activity. The buildings were assessed as having low potential to support bats. However the nearby River Valley does offer good bat feeding habitat.

Although it is concluded that demolition works can take place without disturbing a bat roost, bats can turn up in unlikely places and therefore precautions are recommended to ensure that bats are not harmed by the proposed works. A method statement is also included.

1 Introduction

1.1 Reason for survey

Properties at Chessyre Avenue and Sidwell Walk Manchester are due to be demolished. Bat roost and bat feeding activity have previously been recorded in the area, although not associated with these buildings.



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Site Location showing bat records (blue squares) within 500m of the site

1.2 Legal protection offered to bats

All species of bats found in the UK receive a high level of legal protection under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. In summary, it is an offence –

- To kill, injure or take any wild bat
- To damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a wild bat uses for shelter or protection (known as a roost). Since bats are mobile in their habits and can use different places for shelter depending on the time of year this is taken to mean all identified bat roosts, whether bats are present in the roost or not.
- To disturb any wild bat while it is occupying a structure or place used for protection

It is possible to obtain licences for activities affecting bats that would otherwise be in breach of the law. In the case of development works (including building demolition) a licence can be issued under Section 39 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Strict tests must be satisfied before Natural England will agree to issue such a licence. These tests are –

- That the development is to preserve public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment
- That there is no satisfactory alternative

- That the issue of a licence will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range

1.3 Surveying for bats in buildings

Bats often use buildings as roosting sites because they provide a choice of safe, dry places. Buildings can provide a range of potential roost sites, e.g.

- Behind tiles or weatherboarding
- In cavity wall spaces
- In crevices between wall spaces and roofs
- Under soffit boards
- In roof spaces

Bats are mobile in their habits and can occupy a range of different roosting sites depending on the time of year and the stage of their life cycle. The most obvious use of buildings by bats is between May and August when the pregnant females gather in maternity roosts to give birth and raise their young. Although females and young often remain at one roost site all summer, they are sometimes known to move and can change roosting sites if conditions become unsuitable. Although some bats (e.g. brown long-eared bats) occupy the same roosting sites throughout the year, most summer colonies will have dispersed by the autumn. Temporary roost sites can then be occupied in the autumn before bats then move again into hibernation roosts for the winter. Hibernation roosts are often used by single or small numbers of bats and can be very difficult to detect.

Many buildings in areas supporting good feeding habitat can be used as temporary night roosts or feeding perches.

Since bats move roosting sites and can be difficult to detect directly the key identification feature to identify the presence of bats is droppings. Sometimes droppings are found on the outside of buildings. Otherwise droppings found in loft spaces or around chimneys or gable ends can be typical of bats. Other features used to identify the presence of bats include:

- Characteristic odour
- 'Chittering' by bats, usually in warm summer weather or when bats are active at dusk and are about to leave the roost
- Staining around possible access points

Any survey should include a desk-top survey for any existing records of bats close to the building being inspected and an assessment of the quality of the habitat surrounding the building. Since very many types of building can support bats, one of the best indicators of the possible presence of bats in a building is the presence of good feeding habitat for bats nearby.

It should be noted that the species of bat most commonly associated with buildings in urban areas is the pipistrelle and that pipistrelles, in spite of their protected status, remain relatively common the UK (estimated population is 2.5 million).

2 Aims of the survey

2.1 To identify any potential bat roosting features

2.2 To ascertain if bats currently use, or have used, the building for roosting purposes.

2.3 To ascertain the likely importance of the building for bats.

2.4 To recommend any further actions required resulting from the survey findings.

3 Methodology

A desk-top survey was undertaken for any existing records of bats within 1km of the site.

An assessment was made of the potential of the buildings to support bats based on external inspections.

Local area bat activity surveys were undertaken on the 21st August 2013. Surveys consisted of two surveyors using binoculars and ultrasound bat detectors (Peterrsson D230 and Magenta bat Box duet detectors with recorders, supported by Bat Sound software analysis). Surveyors walked transects around the buildings to be demolished and also used fixed-point observations to record bat activity.

The surveys were led by Principal Ecologist Derek Richardson MCIEEM supported by Tally Anderson.

3.1 Survey limitations

Access into all parts of the buildings was not possible and therefore comprehensive internal inspections could not be undertaken.

Given the mobile habits of bats it is possible that a one-off survey such as that conducted at Chessyre Avenue and Sidwell Walk, Manchester may miss signs of bats if they are not occupying the roost at the time of survey. Even if bats are present they can be very difficult to detect if they are occupying inaccessible cracks or crevices. A bat survey cannot therefore hope to provide a definitive 'negative' result. Rather, results are expressed in terms of the *probability* of a particular planned development affecting bats.

Although late August is not generally regarded as an optimum time for carrying out bat activity and emergence surveys this year (2013) has been a generally late year for bats because the Spring was very cold and some maternity roosts did not begin to form until later in the year than usual.

3.2 Judgement of potential for bat roosts

The following table was used to both assess potential and to aid decisions about recommendations for example for further surveys.

Level of Potential	Justification
High Potential	• Abundant features suitable for use as bat roosts e.g. gaps into soffits, lifted and/or missing roof slates/tiles and ridge tiles, wall cavities, accessible enclosed roofspace, accessible below-ground structures. • Bat roosts known from similar structures in the vicinity. • Evidence of bats found on site e.g. droppings, feeding signs. *Surrounding landscape supports abundant features for foraging, commuting and possibly roosting bats e.g. mature trees, waterbodies, pastureland, high connectivity. *Bat activity recorded in vicinity of survey site
Medium Potential	• Occasional features suitable for use as bat roosts.

	• Bat roosts known from similar structures in same borough. *Surrounding landscape supports occasional features for foraging, commuting and possibly roosting bats *Bat activity recorded from the borough around survey site
Low Potential	• Few Features suitable for use as bat roosts. • Bat roosts known from similar structures within Greater Manchester. *Surrounding landscape supports few features for foraging, commuting and possibly roosting bats. *Bat activity recorded from the Greater Manchester area

* Additional factor used in combination with those listed above.

Adapted from BCT Bat Survey Guidelines 2011

4 Results

4.1 The desktop search shows a number of bat records within 500m of the site surveyed, mostly feeding records associated with the nearby River Medlock Valley and the Ashton Canal.

4.2 Although the immediately surrounding habitat is poor for bats (the buildings are located in a busy area of central Manchester close to well-lit main road) but the Medlock River Valley and the Ashton Canal are located within 100m of the site and these water courses offer reasonably good bat feeding habitat.

4.3 The buildings themselves were two and three storey residential blocks of relatively modern construction (1960s?). They were brick built with slate roofs and enclosed roof voids. They were mostly vacant at the time of the survey but had been occupied until relatively recently. There were signs of significant deliberate disturbance (vandalism) in some of the properties. There were some potential bat access points in loose roof tiles and gaps under soffits and at gable end boards. No signs of bats were recorded on the exterior of the buildings.



Photo 1 Three-storey block



Photo 2 Two-storey blocks

4.4 During the activity survey the first bat (common pipistrelle) was recorded passing from north to south across the site at about 7.30 pm , some 35 minutes after sunset. The next bat was not recorded until 12 minutes later – again a pipistrelle that flew along Chessyre Avenue and then disappeared towards the south. Single bats were then recorded at relatively long intervals (10 or twelve minutes apart) until the end of the survey at 10 pm. There was no apparent bat activity associated with any of the buildings scheduled for demolition and most bats appeared to be passing through the survey area – they did not stay to feed. Although the numbers of bats recorded was too low to be certain about patterns of behaviour it did appear to the surveyors that the bats were moving between the River Medlock Valley and more built up areas to the north.

5 Limitations of the Survey

5.1 The survey was limited to a single visit in August 2013

5.2 A common issue on many sites is that the external field signs of bat presence, such as droppings and urine staining may be lost over time due to the weathering and damp conditions; this is a common issue when surveying buildings. It is therefore possible that signs of bats on the exterior of the building may not have been apparent at time of survey.

5.3 Another frequent limitation when surveying buildings is that droppings and other field signs of the presence of crevice dwelling species such as the pipistrelle are often not visible. Droppings often accumulate in hidden areas which may not be found during routine non-invasive surveys, for example inside soffit boards or under tiles.

5.4 This type of survey helps to determine the presence of bats but does not conclusively prove absence.

6 Conclusions

6.1 There was no evidence to suggest that bats were roosting in any of the buildings at the time of the survey.

6.2 There was no evidence to suggest that bats have used the buildings for roosting prior to the survey.

6.3 Bat activity in the area is low. However, bats are present in the area and the nearby River Medlock offers good feeding opportunities for bats.

6.4 The buildings are considered to have a low potential to support bats.

7 Implications and Recommendations

7.1 Demolition of the properties at Chessyre Avenue and Sidwell Walk can proceed without the need for further bat surveys.

7.3 If demolition hasn't commenced prior to May 2014, further surveys may need to be undertaken.

7.4 Notwithstanding the above, bats can turn up in unlikely places and the properties are close to good bat feeding habitat. Precautions should be taken throughout demolition works at any time of year, with the possible presence of bats borne in mind. If bats are found at any time then work must cease immediately and advice sought from a suitably qualified bat worker.