

Daytime Bat Survey

Hale Estates

Church Inn, Northenden
Manchester

URBAN GREEN
arboriculture
landscape
ecology

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A bat survey was requested at the former Church Inn, Church Road, Northenden, Greater Manchester, M22.

1.2 The Ordnance Survey grid reference is SJ 83147 90073.

1.3 Plans are proposed to demolish the existing buildings on site and erect a number of new dwellings.

Site Description

1.4 The site is the former Church Inn and associated outbuilding.

1.5 The public house is a large brick built Victorian building first built in 1897 but was completely gutted by a major fire in 2006 and has never been rebuilt.






1.6 The main building and associated outbuilding have had their roofs completely or partially removed by either the fire or in some instances by subsequent theft and vandalism.





1.7 The building originally had a slate covered pitched roof which in the main frontage had a parapet all around the front and two sides at least.



1.8 There would have been roof voids over all the buildings but these have been almost completely lost due to the 2006 fire.

1.9 There is one small area of the main building with the slates still covering the roof. The roof in this void is unlined but originally under-drawn with mortar (torching). This mortar has since fallen off.





1.10 There is no loft insulation in this void.

1.11 The windows and doors to the building are boarded over. In some instances the glass windows remain.



1.12 The building generally is in a very poor state of repair and there are many areas of collapse or near collapse.





1.13 There are cellars underneath the main building.





1.14 There is a pitched slate roofed brick built outbuilding previously used as an aquatic pet shop (called 'Tom's Aquatics').




1.15 The slates are missing on one side of the building and there is no roof lining making much of the building open to the elements.



Surrounding habitat

1.16 The site is in an urban setting in a built up residential and commercial area in the centre of Northenden.





1.17 There is a small 'village green' on the opposite side of the road adjacent to a church.



1.18 The area is considered sub-optimal for bats though it is possible that the occasional common pipistrelle may fly around the site, either foraging or commuting, during the warmer evenings.

Aims of the survey

1.19 To ascertain if bats use, or have previously used, the site for roosting purposes.

1.20 To recommend any further actions necessary as a result of the survey findings.

Surveyor details

1.21 The survey was conducted by Mike Freeman. He has been a licensed bat worker since 1984 and a licensed bat worker trainer since 1989 (Licence No. 20123594). He has been chairman of the Cheshire Bat Group since its formation in 1986 and is a voluntary Bat Warden for Natural England. He is an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (ACIEEM).

2.0 LEGAL PROTECTION FOR BATS

2.1 All UK bats and their roosts are protected by law which gives strong legal protection to all bat species and their roosts. For all countries in the UK the legal protection maybe summarised as follows:

You will be committing a criminal offence if you:

1. Deliberately* capture, injure or kill a bat
2. Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats
3. Damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time)
4. Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat
5. Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost even if bats are not present at the time

**In a court, 'deliberately' will probably be interpreted as someone who, although not intending to capture/injure or kill a bat, performed the relevant action, being sufficiently informed and aware of the consequence his/her action will most likely have).*

Defences include:

1. Tending/caring for a bat solely for the purpose of restoring it to health and subsequent release
2. Mercy killing where there is no reasonable hope of recovery (provided that person did not cause the injury in the first place – in which case the illegal

act has already taken place).

Penalties on conviction – the maximum fine is £5,000 per incident or per bat (some roosts contain several hundred bats), up to six months in prison, and forfeiture of items used to commit the offence, e.g. vehicles, plant, machinery.

NB Whilst the protection afforded to bats is virtually the same in all UK countries please refer to the specific legislation for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for the precise wording – the above is a brief summary only.

Licensing Procedures

Licences to permit illegal activities relating to bats and their roost sites can be issued for specific purposes by the relevant licensing authorities in each country. These are sometimes called 'derogation licences' or 'European Protected Species' licences. It is an offence not to comply with the terms and conditions of a derogation licence. If you carry out work affecting bats or roosts without a licence, you will be breaking the law.

In the case of development works 3 tests must all be satisfied before the relevant licensing authority can issue a licence:

1. A licence MAY be granted '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'.
2. A licence may NOT be granted UNLESS the licensing authority is satisfied 'that there is no satisfactory alternative'.
3. A licence CANNOT BE ISSUED unless the licensing authority is satisfied that the action proposed 'will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range'.

2.2 The following people need to take particular note of the legislation:

- Property owners/householders who have a bat roost in their property
- Woodland owners/managers, and owners of individual trees
- Arboriculturalists and foresters
- Pest controllers
- Planning officers
- Building surveyors
- Architects
- Property developers
- Demolition companies
- Builders
- Roofers
- Ecological consultants

3.0 BATS IN BUILDINGS

3.1 Buildings provide a choice of safe, dry places made from materials like timbers, bricks, stone, tiles and slates.

3.2 Buildings present a whole range of potential roost sites for bats e.g.: -

In walls:

- Behind external hanging tiles or weatherboarding
- In cavity spaces
- At top of solid walls

In eaves:

- Above soffit, or behind fascia and barge boarding

In roofs:

- In tunnels under ridge tiles
- Between underfelt and tiles or slates
- In roof space along ridge beam and at timber joints, at gable end or around chimneybreast.

3.3 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.

3.4 Females and young often remain in one site all summer or move about using several roosts.

3.5 Most summer colonies will have dispersed by the autumn, though brown long-eared bats often appear early in the year (early April) and leave later (October or later). These bats occasionally use the roost throughout the entire year.

3.6 Buildings may also be used as temporary or "transitional roosts" by small numbers of adult and immature bats of both sexes, particularly in spring and autumn.

3.7 Many outbuildings are attractive to bats for temporary night-time roosts or as sheltered feeding perches. The latter are indicated by the presence of a lot of insect remains, particularly of moths or large beetles and some droppings.

3.8 Cool, undisturbed, humid places are important as hibernation sites. Most species will tuck themselves into small crevices e.g. between bricks/stonework, and can easily pass the winter there unnoticed.

3.9 Bats are usually concealed in crevices, behind roofing felt, in cavity walls, behind soffits and barge boards, in old timber joints or under ridge tiles and are only occasionally seen out in the open in lofts. Consequently, the key identification feature is the presence of droppings. Sometimes droppings may be found on the outside of buildings e.g. on windows, walls or windowsills. On other occasion's droppings found in loft spaces beneath ridge-boards and around chimneys or gable ends is also typical of bats. Hibernating bats leave little or no field signs.

3.10 Bats are sometimes drawn to open water tanks in lofts in search of a drink. They fall into the tank, can't get out and eventually drown. Dead bats are often found in these 'open' tanks in roof spaces where bats habituate.

3.11 Another clue to the presence of bats is a characteristic odour. A polished or clean surface near a place where light enters may also indicate habitual usage by bats. Sometimes bats can be heard "chittering" but this is usually in warm summer weather or when they are about to leave the roost to forage at dusk.

3.12 The species most commonly occurring in buildings (usually modern houses in summer) are the two pipistrelle species (Pipistrellus pipistrellus, Pipistrellus pygmaeus). These highly gregarious small bats use buildings for breeding during the summer and, in general, the bats disperse during the autumn. They often roost

behind soffits, in cavity walls or behind external cladding. In such cases droppings are often found on external surfaces below the roost entrance/exit. The most likely place to find droppings in the roof void are at the gable end wall and along the eaves. In some cases, the bats may roost beneath ridge tiles, on top of the ridge beam or under insulation close to the eaves. Pipistrelles are frequently found overwintering deep in the cracks, crevices and cavities of usually uninhabited buildings (e.g. barns) and in such cases they leave little or no field signs.

3.13 The brown long-eared bat (Plecotus auritus) is the second most common species in Britain but is the one most likely to be encountered in roof voids and may occasionally be seen clinging on to timbers near the apex of the roof. Like the pipistrelle, highest numbers may be seen on hot days between June and September when breeding colonies may be present. During the autumn and in cool weather, bats remain concealed in crevices or hollow walls but may appear on mild days or if disturbed. Brown long-eared bats tend to fly around in the open roof void and hang from the ridge during the night, so droppings are usually found scattered over the floor or concentrated in piles beneath favoured roosting areas, typically beneath the ridge beam. In hipped roofs, piles of droppings may also be found in the junction between two hips.

3.14 A number of other species - serotine (Eptesicus serotinus), greater horseshoe bat (Rhinolophus ferrumequinum) and lesser horseshoe (Rhinolophus hipposideros) are dependent on roofs but are not found locally in the area, though there has been the occasional record of serotine in the North West.

3.15 Whiskered (Myotis mystacinus), Brandt's (Myotis brandtii), Natterer's (Myotis nattereri) and Daubenton's (Myotis daubentonii) bats may be present in the area and may be found in roofs but they are not particularly common in such sites. Roosting position is variable but they will be found in the same sorts of places as other species.

3.16 There are six different types of bat roost (A M HUTSON 1993)

Spring gathering roosts
Maternity roosts
Mating roosts
Night roosts and feeding roosts
Prehibernal roosts
Hibernation roosts

Bats regularly move from site to site even within the above categories.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 The buildings were searched internally and externally, where safe to do so, for evidence of bat usage as detailed in Section 3.0 above.

4.2 Ladders, a powerful hand lamp and a fibre optic endoscope were used as aids.

5.0 TIMING OF THE SURVEY

5.1 The survey was conducted on the 13th August 2013.

5.2 The weather was essentially bright but with periodic heavy showers and a temperature of 16° - 18° C.

6.0 LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY

6.1 This was a daytime survey only. No evening emergence or dawn re-entry surveys were conducted due to the lack of evidence found, the poor state of the buildings and very limited potential for bat usage, the poor sub-optimal habitat for bats and the plethora of alternative and relatively more attractive roosting sites in the immediate area.

6.2 Most of the main building and outbuilding are in a derelict roofless state and some areas could not be safely accessed. However, the buildings were searched internally to a large extent including the only intact roof void and cellar areas of the former inn. Given the state of the buildings the searches covered a surprisingly large area.

7.0 RESULTS

7.1 No evidence of bat usage was found anywhere in the site buildings during the survey. There is a major pigeon infestation throughout.

7.2 This included searches of the only roof void present, cellars, behind boarded windows and within rooms that could be safely accessed.

7.3 The area around the site is considered to be poor for local foraging and commuting bats.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The site is a very unlikely place for roosting bats, the building is too derelict and roofless to offer suitable sites for significant bat roosting and the surrounding area is of little attractiveness for foraging and commuting.

8.2 All in all, the site is considered to have very low potential for roosting bats and it is not considered worthwhile to conduct further surveys.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 As no evidence of bat roosting was found a Natural England licence is not currently required before demolition.

9.2 However, bats can, and do, change their roost sites regularly. If a roost is subsequently found the situation is likely to change and a licence required.

9.3 In the unlikely event that bats are found during demolition work must cease immediately in that area, the bats left alone and a bat consultant contacted for advice.

9.4 Site workers should not handle bats on health and safety grounds. If this is absolutely unavoidable (unlikely) then thick leather gloves should be worn to avoid being bitten.