

Land off Pitsford Road, Manchester

Aerial Tree Assessment

2024



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Client Bellway Homes Ltd (Manchester)

Project Title Land off Pitsford Road, Manchester

Project Reference RHE.3991.03

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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing a residential development at Land off Pitsford Road, Manchester, hereafter referred to as the 'site'.

This report describes the site in relation to bats' use of trees on site and assesses the potential impacts of the proposed works. Recommendations are provided so that the proposals are compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Outcomes

The survey assessed the trees to be affected by the proposed works. An aerial tree assessment was conducted. On closer inspection T12 was found to offer suboptimal features for individual bats. No evidence of bat activity or occupancy was found. The remaining trees were found to offer no roost features.

T12 is to be the subject of a pre-felling assessment.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2024 by Bellway Homes Limited (Manchester) to carry out aerial tree inspections for bats at land off Pitsford Road, Manchester. The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SD 86161 00165 (see Figure 1).

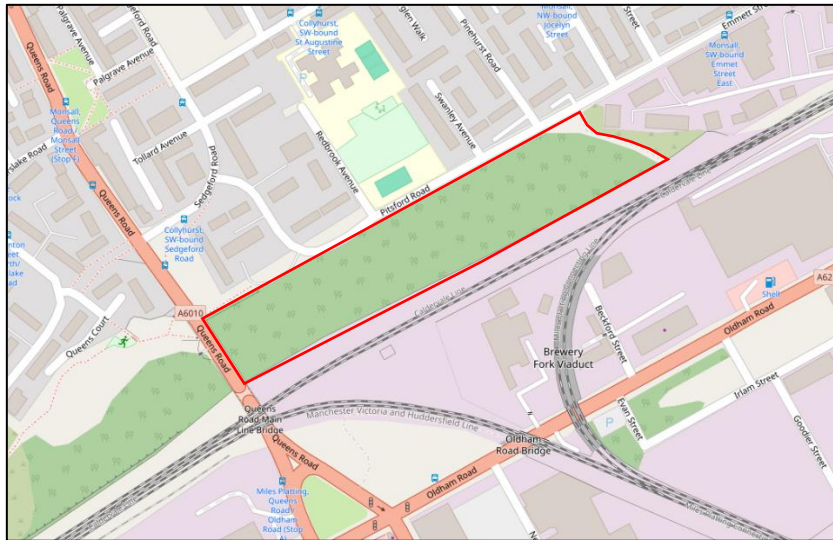


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the trees © Open Street Maps

Description of Development

- 1.1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application for residential development and associated infrastructure.

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to undertake an aerial tree climbing assessment of the trees proposed to be affected by the development.

1.3 Aims of the Survey

- 1.3.1 The aims of the survey were to:
- Assess the potential of the trees affected by the proposals to support roosting bats.
 - Identify the requirement for any further detailed surveys or mitigation.



2. Methods

2.1 Aerial Inspection

- 2.1.1 The trees proposed to be affected by the site plans were subject to a ground-level assessment. Trees identified were then subject to an aerial inspection to further assess their suitability. The trees were climbed and any PRFs were inspected using an endoscopic camera. The assessment was carried out in accordance with current guidelines¹.

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^{2,3}. Trees were categorised in accordance with the criteria shown in the tables below.

Table 4.2. Guidelines for assessing the suitability of trees on proposed development sites for bats, to be applied using professional judgement.

Suitability	Description
NONE	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present

Table 6.2. Guidelines for categorising the potential suitability of PRFs on a proposed development site for bats, to be applied using professional judgement.

Suitability	Description
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

Courtesy of Collins, J. (ed.) (2023)

¹ Bat Tree Habitat Key (2018) *Bat Roosts in trees: A guide to identification and assessment for tree-care and ecology professionals*.

Pelagic Publishing, Exeter

² Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good practice guideline (4th edition)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

³ Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.



2.3 Site Visit Information

Surveyor Details

- 2.3.1 The survey was undertaken by Ben Crossthwaite (Senior Ecologists) and Matt Bottomley (Ecologist). Ben has several years' professional experience and holds a Natural England Level 2 Class Licence for Bats (Licence number: 2020-48541-CLS-CLS), and both surveyors hold a CS38 Level 2 in Tree Climbing and Aerial Rescue qualification.

Survey Details

- 2.3.2 The survey was undertaken on the 13th March 2024. The weather on the day of the survey was overcast, and cool with showers.



3. Results

3.1 Survey Constraints

- 3.1.1 Bats' use of tree roosts is often transitory and trees with suitable PRFs may be used by bats at different times of year. The absence of roosting bats during a survey does not necessarily mean that a roost is not present.
- 3.1.2 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, for protected species it is likely that survey data will need to be no more than 18 months old.

3.2 Aerial Inspection

- 3.2.1 The trees identified during the ground-level assessment were climbed (see Appendices 2, 3 and 4). Suboptimal PRF's were found for individual bats. No evidence of roosting bats was recorded.



4. Assessment

4.1 Interpretation of Results

- 4.1.1 Though no evidence of bat activity or occupancy was found in any of the trees on site during the surveys, it is recommended that T12 is the subject of a pre-felling aerial assessment. This tree was found to support features that have the potential to provide suitable roosting habitat for individual bats, though are considered suboptimal. The remaining trees have been assessed and are deemed not to support potential roost features.
- 4.1.2 No evidence of nesting birds, was found during the survey of the trees.

4.2 Potential Impacts

The proposed works have the potential to affect roosting bats in the locality. Without mitigation, the proposed works may result in impacts at site level only. The trees form part of a linear landscape feature that offers suitable commuting and foraging habitat for bats.



5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys and Mitigation

Further Surveys

- 5.1.1 T12 is to be assessed prior to felling.

Bats

- 5.1.2 It is recommended that the trees are retained where possible. If trees are to be lost, it is recommended replacement planting is proposed to replace the linear landscape feature.

Nesting Birds

- 5.1.3 The proposed tree removals should be timed to avoid the nesting season (March to August). Should this not be possible a nesting birds survey should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 48 hours prior to work commencing.
- 5.1.4 Any active nests should be protected by a minimum 5m exclusion zone during works.

Enhancement Measures

- 5.1.5 In accordance with NPPF (2023) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), development should seek to include measures to benefit wildlife. It is recommended that bat boxes and bird boxes are installed on suitable retained trees/newly constructed units to provide opportunities for wildlife.

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 2023) 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 180 and 186, shown below:

- 180. 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.
- 186. 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.

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.



Appendix 2: Aerial Inspection Maps





Phase 1 Habitat Map

Key

- Site Boundary
- Climbed/Inspected Tree

Project Name:

Pitsford Road, Manchester

Project Reference:

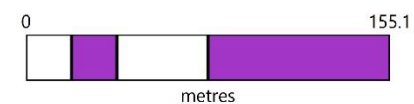
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Drawn By:

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Date:

14/03/2024



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Appendix 3: Survey Results

Tree Number	Tree Species	PRF on Stem/limb	PRF Type	Direction PRF Facing	Roosting Evidence	Humidity - Dry/Damp/Wet/Mildew	Apex Shape – Dome/Spire/Wedge/Flat LENGTH/WIDTH	Competitors – Birds/Mammals/Inverts	Suitability None/PRF-I/PRF-M
T1	Goat Willow	Stem	Fluting	East	-	Dry	Wedge, 2cm deep	-	None
T2	Goat Willow	Stem	Pruning crack	North	-	Dry	Wedge, 7cm deep, 1cm wide tapering to nothing	-	None
T3	Goat Willow	Limb	Pruning hole	North	-	Damp	Dome, 3cm deep, 3cm wide	-	None
T4	Goat Willow	Limb	Knot hole	East	-	Damp	Dome, 10cm wide, 2cm deep	Slugs	None
T5	Goat Willow	Stem	Wound	North	-	Dry/wet	Wedge/Spire/Dome, 1.2m long ,1-3cm deep	Slugs	None
T6	Goat Willow	Stem	Weld	East	-	Damp	Wedge, 1m long, 2-3cm deep, 1cm wide	-	None
T7	Goat Willow	Stem	Weld	North/South	-	Wet	Wedge, 1cm deep, 30cm long	-	None
T8	Silver Birch	Stem	Fluting	North	-	Damp	Wedge, 50cm long, 1cm deep, 1cm wide	Slugs	None
T9	Silver Birch	Stem	Lighting Strike	South	-	Damp	Dome/Spire, 2m long, 1-2cm wide, 1cm deep	-	None
T10	Goat Willow	Stems	Multiple welds	North/south	-	Damp	Wedge, 1m long, 2cm wide and 1cm deep	-	None



T11	Silver Birch	Stem	Snapped stem	East/west	-	Dry	Wedge, 20cm long, 3cm wide tapering to nothing	-	None
T12	Goat Willow	Stem	Canker	East	-	Dry-Damp	Dome, 30cm long, 5cm wide, 1-4cm deep	-	PRF-I
T13	Goat Willow	Stem	Knot hole	North	-	Damp	Dome, 5cm long, 2cm wide, 1cm deep	-	None
		Stem	Fluting	North	-	Damp	Wedge, 4cm long, 1cm wide, 1cm deep	Slugs	None
		Stem	Fluting	East	-	Dry	Wedge, 3cm long, 2cm wide, 1cm deep	-	None
T14	Silver Birch	Stem	Fire damage/lifting bark/scars	East	-	Damp	Wedge/dome, 3m long, 6cm wide, 1-2cm deep	-	None

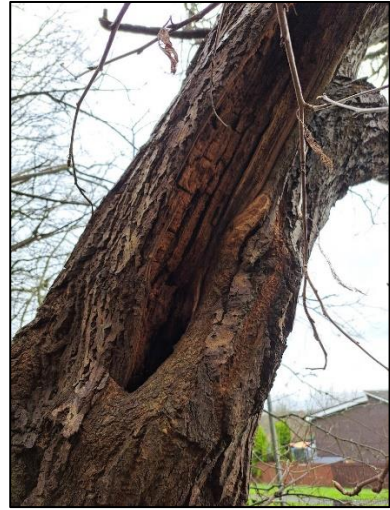
Appendix 4: PRF Photographs



T2



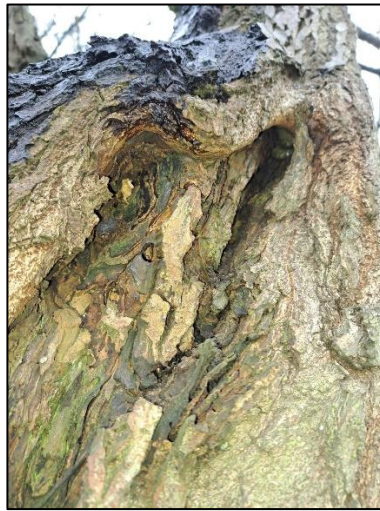
T11



T12



T9



T13