Former Baptist Church, Manchester

Daytime Bat Survey

2024

RACHEL HACKING ECOLOGY

Client	Ealham Homes Ltd
Project Title	Former Baptist Church, Manchester
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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing commercial development at the Former Baptist Church, Manchester, 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.

Ecological Interest

The site offers **low potential** to support roosting bats. Access points were recorded, offering potential access to the roof lining (sarking) and no access into the roof void was possible.

Outcomes

The proposed development has the potential to result in impacts to bats or their roosts, should these be present. Further survey work is required to establish the status of roosting bats and inform mitigation requirements. It is recommended that **one** dusk emergence survey be undertaken between **May and August**.

Appropriate enhancement measures for bats and birds have been identified within the report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2023 by Ealham Homes Ltd to carry out a Daytime Bat Survey of the Former Baptist Church, Manchester, hereafter referred to as the 'site'. The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SJ 84566 99015 (see Figure 1).

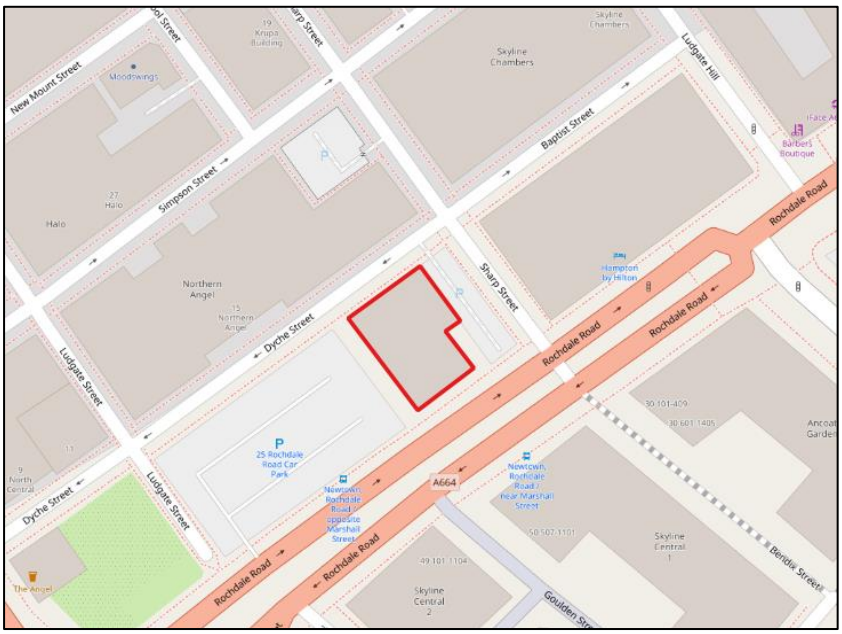

Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site courtesy of © OpenStreetMap Contributors

1.1.2 The site is an unused building constructed in 1907 which formerly operated as a Baptist Church. The building is immediately surrounding by residential/commercial buildings, hardstanding, and Rochdale Road. The site is located within the city centre of Manchester.

Description of Development

1.1.3 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the re-development of the building into a storage warehouse with associated features such as the provision of vehicle access via the construction of a warehouse garage door.

Relevant Planning History

1.1.4 No relevant previous surveys and/or planning applications have been recorded.

1.2 Scope of Work

1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to undertake an external and internal assessment of the building 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 (and nesting birds);
- Identify the requirement for any further detailed surveys.

2. Methods

2.1 Daytime Bat Survey

2.1.1 The exterior of the building 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 buildings, including the roof voids 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

Survey Details

2.3.1 The survey was undertaken by Samuel Adshead (Junior Ecologist) and Mark Ashton (Junior Ecologist on the 8th of April 2024. Both Mark and Sam are trained in undertaking Daytime Bat Surveys.

Site Conditions

2.3.2 The weather at the time of the survey was warm and mild, with an average temperature of 14°C. The site conditions were appropriate for a full assessment to be undertaken.

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[1] Collins, J. (Ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists-good practice guidelines. 4th edn.* The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

[2] Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.

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 Survey 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 Table 1 shows the constraint of the survey, and how this was mitigated.

Table 1. Survey constraints and mitigated response.

Constraint	Mitigated Response
Full access into the roof void was not possible during the survey due to the height of the access point and health and safety risks.	Despite the suboptimal location of the site in a heavily urban environment, the mentioned access features on the building along with limited views into the roof void mean that the building has been assessed as having low potential to support roosting bats.
Access into the basement (only available externally) was not possible during the survey	No access points are available to provide connection to the basement from the outside environment, so this constraint is considered negligible.

3.2 Habitat Appraisal

3.2.1 The site is located in an urban area within Manchester City Centre. The site is surrounded immediately on all sides by either roads, hardstanding, or residential/commercial buildings. Most of the surrounding habitat area is suboptimal or unsuitable for foraging bats. The closest features that could support limited bat foraging are the River Irk (330m northwest), St. Michaels Flags Park (scattered trees) approximately 170m northwest. There are four small patches of deciduous woodland north of the site within 1km.

3.3 External Survey

3.3.1 The site is a detached red brick building constructed in 1907. The roof is pitched and gabled covered by slate tiles and clay ridge tiles (see Photograph 1).

Photograph 1 showing the southwest elevations of the building

3.3.2 There are wooden soffits/facias present on the southwest and northeast facing elevations of the building. These appear in-tact (see Photograph 2).

Photograph 2 showing the wooden facias of the building

3.3.3 The external masonry appears to be in good condition. However, there are cracks and gaps present in the mortar between the walls and slate tiles on the verges of the lean-to sections of the building (see Photograph 3).

Photograph 3 showing the gaps in the mortar line

3.3.4 Occasional cracked, raised, or slipped tiles are present on both the northeast and southwest elevations of the roof (see Photograph 4 and 5).

Photograph 4 showing part of the roof on the southwest elevation

Photograph 5 showing the northeast elevation of the roof

3.3.5 Occasional gaps are present under ridge tiles (see Photograph 6).

Photograph 6 showing a gap under a ridge tile

3.3.6 Occasional gaps through cracks, raised tiles and lifted flashing are present on both lean-to structures (see Photograph 7).

Photograph 7 showing the roof of the lean-to on the northeast elevation

3.3.7 No trees are present on the site.

3.4 Internal Survey

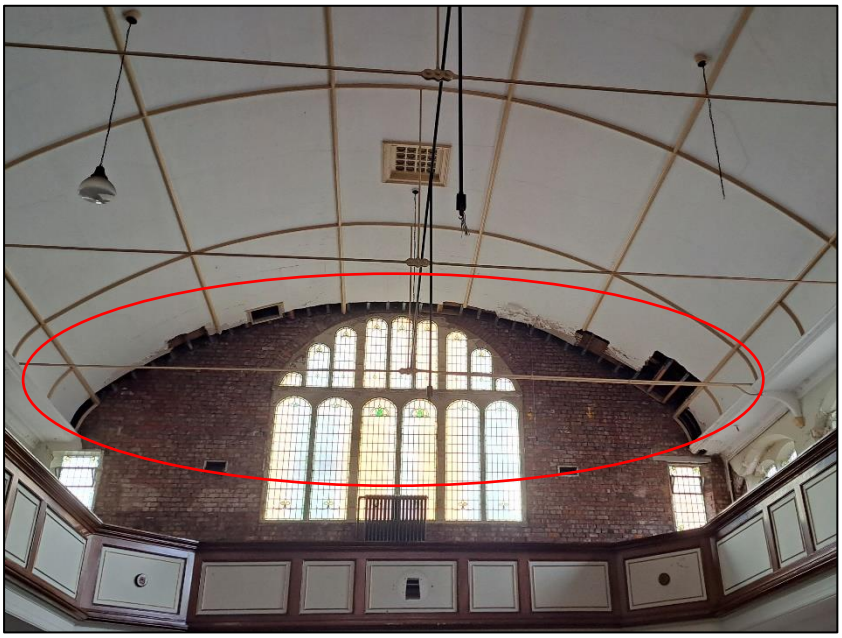
3.4.1 The main internal space of the building is unused, but has recently undergone clearance works. Light spill from the outside into the main space is moderate due to the abundance of windows (see Photograph 8).

Photograph 8 showing the main internal space of the building

3.4.2 There are occasional ventilation grilles that could potentially offer access into the building (see Photograph 9).

Photograph 9 showing one of the ventilation grilles

3.4.3 Areas of the ceiling in the open room of the building are damaged exposing the roof void (see Photograph 10).



Photograph 10 showing the degraded ceiling areas

3.4.4 The void is split into two side sections and one main section. A limited internal view of one of the side sections of the void was possible. The support timbers and the sarking lining under the roof tiles appear to be in good condition (see Photograph 11).

Photograph 11 showing a limited view of one side of the roof void

3.4.5 From the limited view, a small number of small gaps between sarking are present, that provide an opening between the void space and roof tiles (see Photograph 12).

Photograph 12 showing a gap between the roof voids wooden sarking

3.4.6 No evidence of bat activity (or nesting birds) was found during the survey.

4. Assessment

4.1 Interpretation of Results

4.1.1 The building offers a number of potential entry points that are large enough for bats to access and the roof void is lined with sarking which could offer suitable roosting features. Although no evidence of use by bats was found during the survey and that there is limited foraging habitat for bats in the immediate vicinity, due to the lack of access into the large roof void, this site is assessed as offering **low potential** to support roosting bats.

4.2 Potential Impacts

4.2.1 The proposed development has the potential to result in impacts to bats and their roosts, should these be present. Potential impacts include destruction of a bat roost and killing/injuring individual bats.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

5.1.1 Further detailed survey is required in order to determine the status of roosting bats at the site. A minimum of one dusk emergence survey should be carried out in accordance with current guidelines. The survey should be undertaken between May and August.

5.1.2 If evidence of a roost is identified, a licence will be required to avoid the **risk of an offence**. A licence can only be applied for once planning permission is obtained.

5.2 Mitigation Measures

5.2.1 The proposed development offers an opportunity to enhance the site for bats by installing bat boxes that can be placed externally onto the walls of the existing building during construction works. Bat boxes should be installed at eaves height, facing southeast to southwest, but not directly above windows or doorways.

5.2.2 The development also offers an opportunity to enhance the site for birds via the installation of external bird boxes on the retained building. Bird boxes should be installed at eaves height, facing northwest to northeast, but not directly above windows or doorways. Boxes designed for Swift *Apus apus* are generally the most suitable for buildings, as other species will use these too.

General Precautions

5.2.3 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 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 180, 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 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.