



Technical Note - Ecology

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Ref: The Guinness Partnership_Former Whitemoss Day Care_PBRA Technical Note	cc: Maisy.Jarvie@atkinsglobal.com, Juliette.Linford@atkinsglobal.com

Subject: The Guinness Partnership – Former White Moss Day Care – Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Results and Recommendations

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Document history

Revision	Purpose description	Originated	Checked	Reviewed	Authorised	Date
1.0	Draft for client comment.	MJ	RF	JL		



Introduction

Atkins, member of the SNC-Lavalin Group was commissioned by The Guinness Partnerships to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), informed by a desk study and walkover survey, in connection with the proposed construction of 20 affordable houses and required vegetation clearance at the Former White Moss Day Care Site (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Scheme). The PEA report¹ identified the requirement for further Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA) of trees, the results of which are detailed in this report.

The Proposed Scheme is located at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SD 8665 0351 at the Former White Moss Day Care, located in Greater Manchester (hereafter referred to as the Site). The Site is approximately 0.5 ha and comprises largely of neutral semi-improved grassland, with areas of introduced shrub, dense scrub and scattered mature and semi-mature trees. The Site is located within a residential area and is bordered by residential properties to the north and west, and residential minor roads to the south and east.

The PBRA was undertaken by experienced ecologists who have been assessed to be at least of capable competence following the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) competency framework and thus adhere to the rules of professional conduct of the Institution. All relevant UK and EU legislation relating to wildlife were considered when completing the assessments (see Appendix B).

Methods - Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

PBRA of trees within the Site where access allowed (the Survey Area) was undertaken by suitably experienced ecologists on 10/07/2023, in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Good Practice Guidelines². No structures were present within the Survey Area.

The PBRA involved the ground-level visual examination of the trees within the Survey Area, aided by the use of a torch, binoculars, and an endoscope. Surveyors recorded information on any potential bat roost features (PRFs), such as woodpecker holes, rot holes, cracked limbs, dense ivy and flaking bark, and searched for evidence of the presence of bats (such as live/dead bats and droppings).

Based on the location, aspect, orientation and characteristics of the PRFs identified, each tree was assigned a potential suitability value for bats. The assessment of potential suitability was carried out according to good practice guidance², which assigns each tree as either Negligible, Low, Moderate or High suitability for roosting bats.

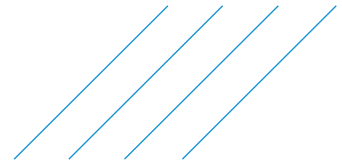
Table 1 below details the suitability categories for roosting bats, taken from the BCT Good Practice Guidelines².

Table 1 - Description of Suitability Categories for Roosting Bats

Roosting suitability	Description
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.
Low	A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.

¹ Atkins (2023) Former Whitemoss Day Care Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

² Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.



Moderate	A tree with one or more PRFs that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	A tree with one or more PRFs that are obviously suitable for use by large numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

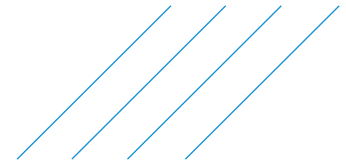
Limitations

Access was restricted in a number of locations across the Survey Area due to dense vegetation coverage, including bracken and brambles, surrounding the base of some trees. This meant that some PRFs could only be viewed from a distance with the aid of binoculars. In addition, July is a sub-optimal period to carry out PBRAs due to the dense leaf coverage on trees which can obscure PRFs. Due to these limitations, a precautionary approach was taken to assign suitability categories for trees where not all aspects were able to be viewed or leaf coverage obscured features.

Access to the land surrounding the Site was also restricted to the north and west due to the presence of residential properties, to which access was not possible. These locations are highlighted within the Former White Moss Day Care PEA Report³. Where possible, PRFs within the trees in these areas were viewed and assessed from public rights of way. Therefore, it is not considered that access limitations provide a significant constraint to the assessment.

Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the presence of plants and animals such as the time of year, migration patterns and behaviour. Bat roosts are transient, and bats may make use of features outside of the survey dates and in the future. The absence of evidence of bats from any tree cannot be taken as conclusive proof that the species is not present or that it will not be present in the future. However, surveys undertaken to date have followed best practice guidance and were completed in suitable weather conditions. A precautionary approach has been taken where appropriate, and as such the limitations identified above are not considered to have impacted the results of the assessment.

³ Atkins (2023) Former Whitemoss Day Care Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

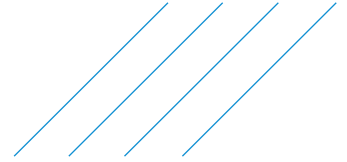


Results

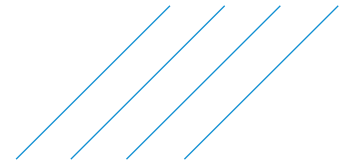
Results of the PBRA including photographs and descriptions of each PRF identified are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Summary of PBRA results

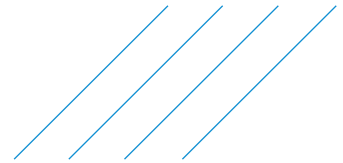
Tree reference	Description	Bat Roost Suitability	Photograph
T01	Mature willow tree (<i>Salix sp.</i>), approximately 20 m tall. Small areas of lifted bark and a few small knot holes, but don't appear to extend.	Low	
T02	Mature willow tree (<i>Salix sp.</i>), approximately 20 m tall with multiple dead limbs. PRFs include snap on an eastern-facing dead limb approx. 8 m high and a crack in a dead branch just behind - both with low roosting bat potential. Two knot holes also present, however not yet rotten enough for use by roosting bats.	Low	 



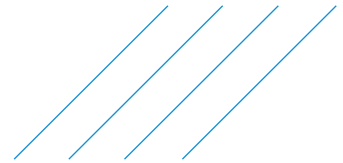
			 
T03	Mature ash tree (<i>Fraxinus sp</i>), approximately 15 m tall. No suitable PRFs identified. Limited view from one side due to access, however majority of crown could be inspected.	Negligible	



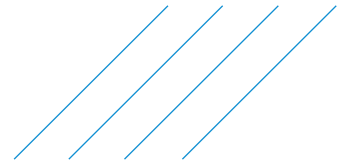
T04	Group of three mature trees (<i>Poplar sp</i>) with straight, mostly bare stems and majority of leaf growth on the north-facing side towards residential structures. No PRFs identified, however bark pattern, growth pattern, and maturity may lead to occasional PRFs in future. Access limited by residential area and dense bramble.	Negligible	
T05	Semi-mature tree (<i>Poplar sp</i>), located to the south of T04 and to the east of T06. Some gnarled bark present but no PRFs identified. However, bark pattern, growth pattern, and maturity may lead to occasional PRFs in future. Access limited by residential area and dense bramble.	Low	



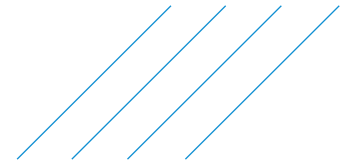
T06	Semi-mature tree (<i>Poplar sp</i>), located to f the west of T04. No PRFs identified, however bark pattern, the growth pattern between two limbs, and maturity may lead to occasional PRFs in future. Access limited by residential area and dense bramble.	Low	
T07	<i>Poplar sp</i> located slightly outside the Survey Area boundary Access limited due to dense vegetation, bramble and residential area.	N/A	



T08	Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>) & cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i>) trees present, however, were within the residential land outside of the Survey Area and unable to assess if any potential roost features due to access and leaf coverage.	N/A	
T09	Mature willow tree (<i>Salix</i> sp), approximately 28 m tall. Split is present in the trunk however it does not extend to become a PRF. No other PRFs were visible however access was limited by dense bramble and residential areas. Precautionary low potential due to appropriate age and size to contain potential features, limited access and leaf coverage.	Low	
T10	Willow tree (<i>Salix</i> sp), With a number of dead limbs visible at the top of the tree canopy. Access limited by dense bramble and residential areas. Precautionary low potential due to appropriate age and size to contain PRFs, limited access and leaf coverage.	Low	



T011	Line of immature trees at fence boundary, mainly sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>) with <i>Prunus</i> sp and silver birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>) also present. No PRFs identified.	Negligible	 
T12	Immature silver birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>). No PRFs identified.	Negligible	Photo not available
T13	Semi-mature ash (<i>Fraxinus sp</i>). No PRFs identified.	Negligible	



Conclusions and Recommendations

Bats are protected by UK and EU legislation under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which are outlined in Appendix B.

The PBRA identified six trees within the Survey Area with low suitability to support roosting bats (see Appendix A). There is potential for bat roosts to be destroyed or disturbed as a result of the proposed works. In line with BCT best practice guidelines, no further survey is required for trees with low bat roosting potential. However, it is recommended that the removal of trees with roosting bat potential (T01, T02, T05, T06, T09, T10) is to be done under a Precautionary Method of Working (PMW). The PMW should detail a sectional soft felling method for the trees under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist.

As the Site also has suitability to be used by foraging and commuting bats, the general recommendations included in the PEA Report² should also be adhered to during the works.

In the event of scope or programme changes or if works do not commence within 12 months of the date of this report, then updates to the surveys may be required to ensure the validity of the data, as per CIEEM guidance⁴.

⁴ CIEEM (2019) Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys



Appendix A. Proposed Site Plan and Trees to be Removed





Appendix B. Legislation Table for Bats

Species	Legislation	Offences	Licensing procedures and guidance
Bats <i>European protected species</i>	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) Reg 43	Deliberately ⁵ capture, injure or kill a bat; deliberate disturbance ⁶ of bats; or damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place used by a bat. [The protection of bat roosts is considered to apply regardless of whether bats are present.]	A Natural England (NE) licence in respect of development is required. Guidance documents: <i>NE Standing Advice for protected species 2013</i> <i>European Protected Species: Mitigation Licensing- How to get a licence</i> (NE 2013) <i>Bat Mitigation Guidelines</i> (English Nature 2004) <i>Bat Workers Manual</i> (JNCC 2004)
	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) S.9	Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection or disturb ⁷ a bat in such a place.	Licence from NE is required for surveys (scientific purposes) that would involve disturbance of bats or entering a known or suspected roost site.

⁵ Deliberate capture or killing is taken to include “accepting the possibility” of such capture or killing

⁶ Deliberate disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely a) to impair their ability (i) to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or (ii) in the case of animals of hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or b) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

⁷ Lower levels of disturbance not covered by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) although a defence is available where such actions are the incidental result of a lawful activity that could not reasonably be avoided.