

Neptune, Chapeltown Street, Manchester

Daytime Bat & Bird Survey

2023



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Client	Capital & Centric
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Project Reference	RHE.3860.01
Project Leader	Dr Rachel Hacking
Contact Details	rachel@rachelhackingecology.co.uk

	Name	Position	Date
Author	Dr Rachel Hacking	Principal Ecologist	29/06/2023
Reviewer	N/A		
Revision			



**RACHEL
HACKING
ECOLOGY**

The Stables
Paradise Wharf
Ducie Street
Manchester
M1 2JN

0161 465 8971

www.rachelhackingecology.co.uk

mail@rachelhackingecology.co.uk



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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing a commercial development of Neptune (formally Chapeltown Mill) Chapeltown Street, Manchester, hereafter referred to as the 'site'.

This report describes the bat and bird interest of the site. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Ecological Interest

The site has a low level of ecological interest. No evidence of bat activity or nesting bird activity was found. A small number of potential bat roosting features were identified on the exterior of the building.

Outcomes

Further survey work is recommended to determine bat presence/likely absence within the potential roosting features. One precautionary dusk emergence survey will be undertaken in summer 2023.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2023 by Capital & Centric to carry out a Daytime Bat and Bird Survey of Neptune, Chapeltown Street, Manchester (O.S. grid reference: SJ 85081 97979 – see Figure 1).

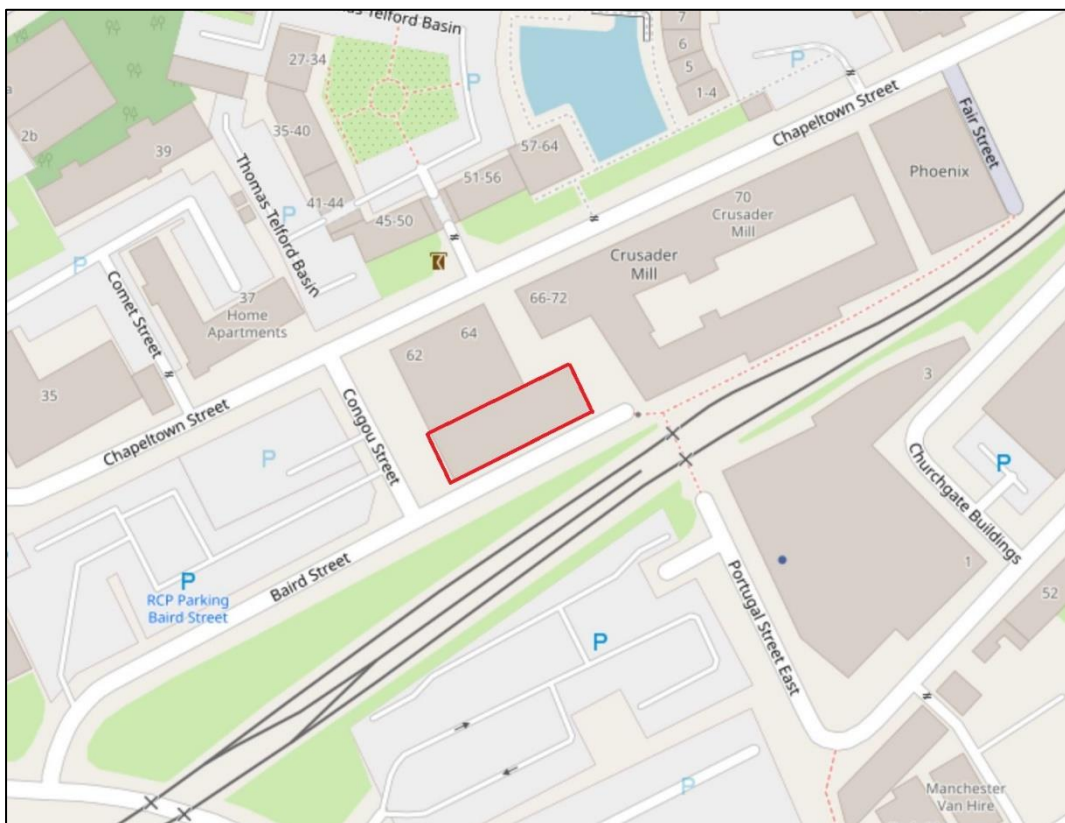


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site outlined in red, courtesy of © OpenStreetMap Contributors

- 1.1.2 The proposed development site is a former brick-built mill of four-storeys with an open loft area. The site is located within Piccadilly East part of Manchester city centre, surrounded by commercial and residential units. The Metrolink line runs to the south. The Ashton Canal and associated basins exists to the north. There is limited suitable bat foraging habitat in connection with the building, but the canal and to some extent, the tramline, offer some foraging and commuting habitat.

Description of Development

- 1.1.3 The site is the subject of a planning application and Listed Building consent application with Manchester City Council (MCC) for the conversion of the mill for commercial/business use (planning

references: 136865/FO/2023 & 136866/LO/2023). The proposed works include removal of roof tiles and installation of skylights, works to the existing windows and minor works to the external masonry.

1.2 Scope of Work

1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to carry out the following works:

- 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;
- Assess the potential of the site to support nesting birds;
- Identify the requirement for any further detailed surveys.



2. Methods

2.1 Daytime Bat & Bird Survey

- 2.1.1 The exterior of the site 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, missing bricks or windows 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 site, including the roof void, 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.
- 2.1.4 The interior and external features of the site were searched for evidence of nesting bird activity, including nests, bird droppings, feathers, eggs and nesting behaviour.

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

Timing and Surveyor Details

- 2.3.1 The survey was undertaken on 26th June 2023 by Dr Rachel Hacking (Principal Ecologist) and Simon Holden (Associate Ecologist). Both surveyors have over 20 years' professional experience of undertaking similar surveys and Simon holds a level 2 class survey licence (Reference 2019-42937-CLS-CLS).

Site Conditions

- 2.3.2 The weather at the time of the survey was warm and dry, with an average temperature of 22°C. The site conditions were appropriate for a full assessment to be undertaken.

¹ Collins, J. (Ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists-good practice guidelines*. 3rd edn. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

² Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

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 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 The survey was undertaken at an appropriate time of year. Most of the building allowed full access, with only the roof shed, housing the lift winding gear, inaccessible.

3.2 Habitat Appraisal

- 3.2.1 The site is located in an urban area, surrounded by residential and commercial development and roads. A tramline runs adjacent to the site, with minimal greenspace connected to the site. The Ashton Canal occurs to the north. The location of the site offers limited bat foraging and commuting habitat.

3.3 External Survey

- 3.3.1 Neptune is a four-storey brick-built former mill (see Photographs 1 and 2). It has a slate-tiled pitched roof, which cannot be viewed from the roads. The majority of the brickwork is intact. No bricks are missing but small areas of mortar and brick have crumbled in places. All windows are intact with all glass in place. The window frames and door frames appear to be flush to the brickwork.



Photograph 1 showing the southern elevation



Photograph 2 showing the northern elevation (the lift gear shed can be seen)

- 3.3.2 The external roof could not be viewed from surrounding land, due to the height and shallow pitch. The roof mortar is crumbling at the edges, particularly on the western gable end (see Photograph 3).



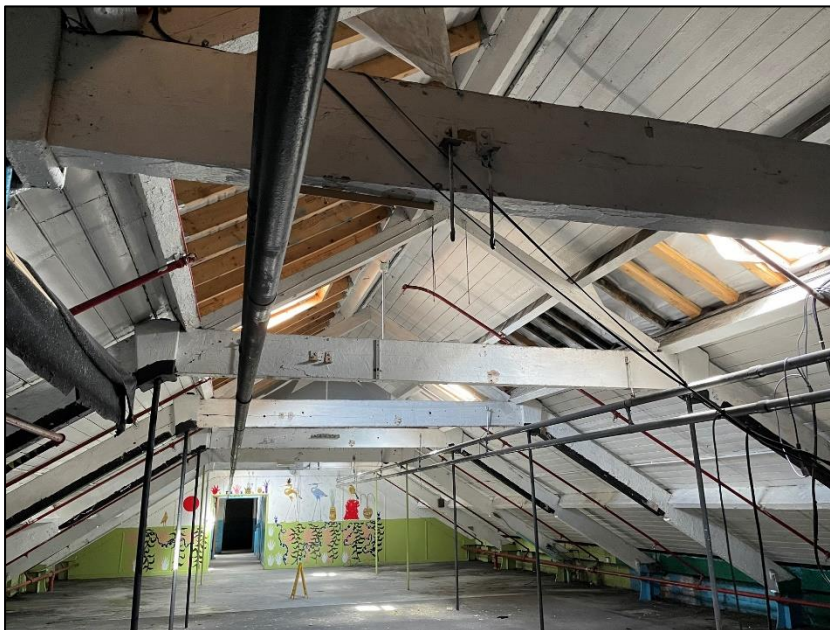
Photograph 3 showing the western gable

3.4 Internal Survey

- 3.4.1 The ground, first, second and third floors are mostly open spaces, with the support pillars intact (see Photograph 4). Some areas have been sectioned off with plasterboard, to create offices. All these floors are well-lit from windows on each side. No concealed areas exist. All interior walls and ceilings are intact. The final floor is the loft area and this has been converted (see Photograph 5). The roof has been lined with wooden sarking, which is painted. Skylights exist throughout. The wooden beams are intact and flush, and are supported by steel beams. The roof appears to be lined between the tiles and the sarking. The loft area is well-lit throughout. No potential access points for birds or bats was found.



Photograph 4 showing one of the open floors



Photograph 5 showing the open loft area

- 3.4.2 The stairwells are also well-lit and painted. Internal brickwork is intact throughout. No other loft voids, or concealed areas or cavities exist.
- 3.4.3 No evidence of bat activity was found on any of the floors at Neptune. No evidence of bird nesting activity was found.

4. Assessment

4.1 Interpretation of Results

- 4.1.1 No evidence of bat activity was found during the survey. The building is well-sealed and well-lit internally. However, gaps exist on the exterior of the building, including within the walls and on the roof edges. These gaps could be used by individual or small numbers of crevice dwelling bat species.
- 4.1.2 The site is located in an urban area with sub-optimal bat foraging habitat connected to the site. Further afield, the Ashton Canal offers suitable bat habitat.
- 4.1.3 Given the small number of potential roosting features, but sub-optimal location, the site is assessed as offering low potential to support roosting bats.
- 4.1.4 No evidence of nesting birds was found during the survey. The site is sub-optimal for birds such as Black Redstart, due to a lack of suitable nesting cavities.



5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

- 5.1.1 A precautionary dusk emergence survey is recommended to be undertaken at Neptune, during the months of May – August. If a bat emerges, a second dusk survey will be necessary to inform a mitigation licence.

5.2 Mitigation Measures

- 5.2.1 Once the results of the emergence survey are known, mitigation can be designed. This is likely to be two Woodcrete or integrated bat boxes.

General Precautions

- 5.2.2 It is not always possible to prove absence of roosting bats. Bats can roost in suitable features opportunistically and are not always identified during surveys. Following a negative result from the further survey work, it is recommended that roof coverings are removed with due caution. Should a bat/bats be identified at any time, work should stop in that area and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted to attend site and advise how to proceed.
- 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 2021) 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 174 and 180, shown below:

- 174. 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; etc...
- 180. 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

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty on every public authority to have regard to conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the same Act requires that the Secretary of State must publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitats that are of 'Principal Importance' for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Secretary of State must take steps, as appear reasonably practicable, to further the conservation of those living organisms and habitats in any list published under this section. The list of species and habitats of principal importance currently includes 943 species and 56 habitats.

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.

