

Xaverian College, Manchester
Daytime Bat Survey (Sunbury)

2023



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Client AA Projects

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Report Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Methods	6
3. Results	7
4. Assessment	10
5. Recommendations	11
Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation	12



Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing a planning application to demolish the Sunbury building at Xaverian College, Lower Park Road, 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 has a low level of ecological interest. The site offers low potential to support roosting bats and no evidence of nesting birds was identified.

Outcomes

The demolition of site could result in impacts to bats and their roosts, should these be present. Further survey is required to establish the status of roosting bats and inform mitigation requirements.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2023 by AA Projects to carry out a daytime bat survey of the Sunbury building at Xaverian College, Lower Park Road, Manchester, hereafter referred to as the 'site'. The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SJ 853953– see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site

Description of Development

- 1.1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the demolition of the Sunbury building to enable construction of a new building.

Relevant Planning History

- 1.1.3 Numerous planning applications covering various parts of the college campus were identified. No records of roosting bats on site were identified.

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to undertake an external and internal assessment of the site.

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 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, 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 or on the ground below roost entrances, or staining from fur oil around roost entry points.
- 2.1.3 The interior of the site 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

Surveyor Details

- 2.3.1 The survey was undertaken by Simon Holden BSc (Hons), MCIEEM (Associate Ecologist). Simon has 18 years' professional experience of undertaking similar surveys and 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 mild, with an average temperature of 11°C. The 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.



3. Results

3.1 Constraints

- 3.1.1 It was not possible to inspect the roof fully. Consequently, some features of interest may have gone unrecorded.
- 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, 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.

3.2 Habitat Appraisal

- 3.2.1 The site is located in a suburban area with tree-lined streets and parks offering moderate quality bat foraging opportunities.

3.3 Building Assessment

- 3.3.1 The site comprises a three-storey building with rendered brick walls. It was constructed in the 19th Century and has been extended to the north. The roofs are hipped and covered with slate tiles.



Photograph 1 showing the northeast elevation



Photograph 2 showing the eastern elevation

- 3.3.2 A wooden soffit and fascia are present and occasional gaps were recorded behind these (see Photograph 3), some of which appeared to offer access to the roof lining.
- 3.3.3 The roof was largely obscured but the areas that could be seen appeared to be in good condition.



Photograph 3 showing a gap at the soffit

- 3.3.4 Internally, a very low roof void is believed to be present over the original part of the building. This was inaccessible. Elsewhere, the ceilings followed the profile of the roof, indicating the absence of a roof void (see Photograph 3).



Photograph 4 showing the interior ceiling

4. Assessment

4.1 Interpretation of Results

- 4.1.1 No evidence of roosting bats or nesting birds was recorded during the survey.
- 4.1.2 The presence of gaps behind the fascia and soffit offers potential access to bats.
- 4.1.3 The site offers low potential to support roosting bats.



5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

- 5.1.1 Demolition of the site could result in impacts to bats and their roosts, should these be present.
- 5.1.2 A single dusk emergence survey should be undertaken in accordance with current guidelines to establish the status of roosting bats and inform mitigation requirements. This will require four surveyors to provide visual coverage of the building. The survey should be undertaken between May and August.

5.2 Enhancement Measures

- 5.2.1 In accordance with NPPF (2021) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), development should seek to include measures to benefit wildlife. Bat boxes and/or bird boxes could be installed on any new buildings or on suitable nearby trees to provide opportunities for wildlife. Details of the types of boxes and their locations should be confirmed by a suitably qualified ecologist.

General Precautions

- 5.2.2 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.

