

Sir Ralph Abercromby Pub,
St Michaels
Bat Roost Inspection Survey



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Client Zerum

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Ltd was commissioned in February 2026 by Zerum to provide ecology consultancy services to support the proposed redevelopment of the Sir Ralph Abercromby Pub, St Michaels, Manchester, hereafter referred to as the 'site'. The site was previously subject to a preliminary bat survey/assessment in 2021 and bat emergence surveys in 2016 and 2019, undertaken as a component of the wider St Michaels development (WSP, 2021¹). This commission was to undertake a bat roost inspection survey to update and consolidate the preliminary work via a detailed endoscope inspection, as well as an assessment of breeding habitat for Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 The most recent previous survey¹ included an assessment of roost presence and an inspection of accessible bat roost features from the ground. No evidence of bats was recorded although it was noted that some features were not accessible to survey; the assessment concluded that the building is of 'Moderate' potential for roosting bats.
- 1.2.2 Previous bat emergence surveys comprised two dusk surveys undertaken in both 2016 and 2019¹. Both surveys recorded a low level of activity, and no bats were observed emerging from the building.
- 1.2.3 A walkover was undertaken in 2019 to assess the site for Black Redstart suitability, which noted that the buildings did contain flat roofs suitable for the species but that foraging opportunities were poor,

1.3 Aims

- 1.3.1 The aims of the survey were to inform the proposed development by seeking to establish the presence, location and status of any bat roosts on site and to inform mitigation requirements, via detailed inspection of crevice features via endoscope/torch.
- 1.3.2 Black Redstart are an Amber listed species commonly known to be present in central Manchester, and the survey aims to assess the presence, location and status of any breeding Black Redstart, and inform mitigation requirements.

¹ ST MICHAEL'S, JACKSON'S ROW BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT. WSP, 2021.



2. Methods

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC) was contacted to provide details of non-statutory designated sites and records of protected and notable species within a 2km radius of the site.

2.2 Detailed Endoscope Inspection

- 2.2.1 A detailed inspection using a torch and endoscope was undertaken in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (2023)². The survey was undertaken by Amy Donaldson (Senior Ecologist) and Holly Spencer (Ecologist) with support from Tim Palmer (Principal Ecologist). Tim has > 20 years of undertaking professional bat surveys and holds a Natural England class 2 survey licence (2015-14656-CLS-CLS). Amy and Holly acted as Accredited Agents, working under his licence.
- 2.2.2 Evidence indicating the presence of roosting bats was searched for both internally and externally. This included bat droppings on walls, windows or on the ground, below roost entrances or staining from fur oil around roost entry points, as well as the presence of live/dead bats within roosts. Higher features were accessed via ladder and torch where they extended beyond endoscope range.
- 2.2.3 Evidence of black Redstart nesting was also searched for internally and externally, including active and disused nests, as well as presence.

2.3 Assessment Criteria

- 2.3.1 The survey was undertaken in accordance with current guidelines². Interpretation of survey findings and assessment of roosting suitability was undertaken using professional judgement and criteria described in published guidance^{2,3}

2.4 Limitations

- 2.4.1 The building has significant water ingress and concerns were raised regarding structural integrity, and the subsequent health and safety of internal loft access. As a result, lofts were inspected from hatches using torches, but were not physically entered.

² Collins, J. (Ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists-good practice guidelines*. 4th edn. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

³ 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.

- 2.4.2 A number of external features were too high to safely inspect using ladders. Binoculars were used and a precautionary approach has been taken within the assessed in regard to these features.
- 2.4.3 The west of the site is fenced off in association with the construction works being undertaken. An assessment was made from outside, and a precautionary approach has been taken within the assessment.
- 2.4.4 Bat survey results are valid for a limited duration. 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. Results

3.1 Data Search

- 3.1.1 Records from GMLRC show roosting bats present within 2km, within the last 10 years these species include: Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, and *pipistrellus* species. There are also recorded of foraging/commuting Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*, Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*, and unidentified bat *Vesper spp.*
- 3.1.2 Multiple records of breeding Black Redstart were returned, the closest of which was of breeding pair with young at Llyod street in 2018, some ~60m distant from the site.

3.2 Habitat Appraisal

- 3.2.1 The site is located in central Manchester, Bootle Street, approximate central grid reference SJ 83656 98007. The surrounds are entirely urban, with the associated St Michaels development having commenced to the immediate north, east and west of the development. Mature scattered trees are present to the immediate west, and the remaining habitats comprise hard standing.
- 3.2.2 Given the setting of the site, lack of semi-natural habitat, and level of artificial lighting, is it expected that any bat foraging/commuting activity would be limited and restricted to species that are readily habituated to urban areas.
- 3.2.3 In accordance with standard guidelines for habitat assessment, the site and its surroundings are considered to be 'poor' quality bat foraging/commuting habitat. The proposed development is not expected to impact the assessment, and any associated landscaping is likely to be beneficial to bats.
- 3.2.4 The previous reporting suggests that Black Redstart is unlikely to utilise the site as foraging or breeding habitat as there are no suitable foraging habitats in the immediate vicinity. That said, the possibility of a pair breeding within the niche features associated with the building roof cannot be discounted, especially given the nearby and recent records of a successful pair.

3.3 External Survey

- 3.3.1 The building is of mid-1900's construction and is predominantly three-storey with later two-storey extensions (Plate 1). The main roof is pitched with slate tiles, which are lifted/missing in a considerable number of areas. The ridge tiles present are lifted in areas, and an original chimney stack has areas of missing mortar (Plate 2). Lead flashing is lifted where at the base of the chimney stack.



Plate 1. The Sir Ralph Abercromby Pub, subject to survey.

- 3.3.2 The extensions are located at the rear of the building, the first to has a bitumen flat roof and the second has a slate tile pitched roof. The latter is in a similar state to the main roof, with lifted tiles, ridge tiles, and lead flashing (Plate 2).



Plate 2. Lifted slate tiles and ridge tiles on the northern extension, and gaps in the chimney stack.

- 3.3.3 The walls are of coursed brick and there are gaps where mortar has come loose around the building, excepting the western wall of the rear extension and the northern wall of the original building which appear to have been recently repointed (Plate 2). The windows are original, and whilst some smaller gaps are present, a large gap is present above the central window in the front (south) of the building (Plate 3).

- 3.3.4 Significant gaps are present along a length of partially demolished wall to the west (Plate 3); a close inspection could not be made here due to access restrictions.



Plate 3. Large gap above the central window; partially demolished wall to the north.

- 3.3.5 Good cavities were present under signage and a steel tie plate to the rear of the building (north) (Plate 4), endoscope inspection showed no evidence of bat activity.

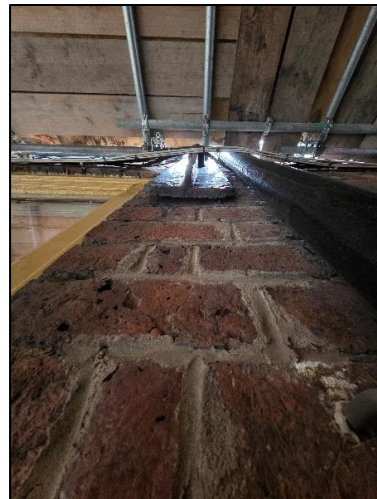


Plate 4. Cavities behind signage and steel plates to the north of the building.

- 3.3.6 Smaller cavities are also present under the fascia boards around the building (Plate 5).



Plate 5: Gaps behind fascia boards.

3.4 Internal Survey

- 3.4.1 Inside, the loft areas are accessed through two hatches. The first leads to a small pitched roof and the latter leads to a large pitched roof (Plate 6), although in the latter large water containers hindered visibility.
- 3.4.2 Both loft spaces had a bitumen felt liner in place; this was torn in places but was generally in a good condition and no daylight was visible. Water ingress was noted and there was significant damp/mould in the upstairs living area.
- 3.4.3 Mouse droppings, cobwebs and disused wasps nests were noted within the loft spaces, no evidence of bat use was observed.

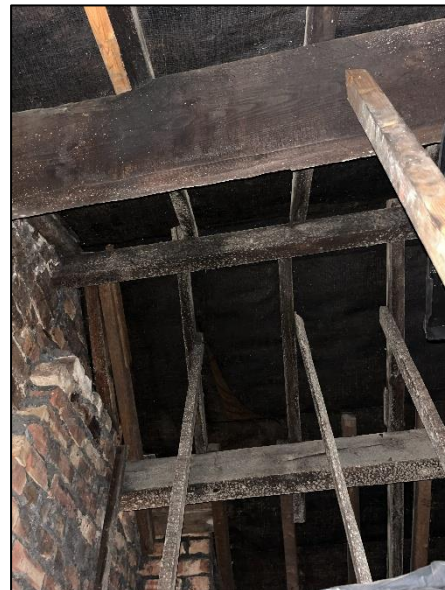


Plate 6. Loft spaces accessed during the survey.

4. Assessment

4.1 Assessment of Impacts

- 4.1.1 Under examination of the potential roosting features this survey confirms the earlier assessments i.e. the building is of **'Moderate' suitability for roosting bats**, in accordance with guidelines (Collins, 2023).
- 4.1.2 The building is also considered to be of **sub-optimal suitability for breeding Black Redstart**.
- 4.1.3 The proposals will involve the refurbishments of the building, likely to involve removal and disturbance of features. It is not expected that any associated lighting scheme will adversely impact bats nor Black Redstart, given the location of the site and extent of urban lighting currently present.

4.2 Recommendations

- 4.2.1 Although some potential roosting features were able to be closely examined by endoscope, not all features could be exhaustively searched due to health and safety concerns. It is therefore considered that further survey is required to determine the status of roosting bats within the building. This should comprise **two emergence surveys** undertaken between May and September, with at least one survey timed between May and August. Surveys should be spaced a minimum of 3 weeks apart and supported by the use of Night Vision Aids (NVAs).
- 4.2.2 It is not considered necessary to undertake detailed breeding Black Redstart surveys, however as a precautionary measure it is recommended that **static acoustic monitoring** is undertaken for a minimum of one month, to determine the status of Black Redstart on site. Monitoring should be done during the period April – June (inclusive).

Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) 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 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.

