

Preliminary Roost Assessment and Ecological Walkover

541 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site Address	541 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester, M21 0AH
Coordinates	E 381833, N 393985
Site Area	Approximately 0.1 ha
Current Site Use	The site comprises a large, three-storey detached building. The building has previously been used as a daycare centre though is now disused.
Proposed Development	Demolition of all existing structures and erection of 3-storey residential building to include 9 no. affordable apartments and associated works.
Results	The building was assessed as having Moderate bat roosting potential due to numerous external roost features, as well as two internal access points within the roof. The building was deemed as being unsuitable for high-value roosts, such as hibernation and maternity roosts, due to the lack of roost features suitable for numerous bats, as well as the site's location within a heavily urban area. All on-site trees were assessed as having Negligible potential as they were too small to provide any suitable roosting features. The building was assessed as having nesting bird value, as feral pigeons were heard within the roof and signs of birds were identified on the second floor.
Conclusions and Recommendations	The building was assessed as having Moderate bat roosting potential. As such, Two Nocturnal Bat Surveys are required on the building between May and September (inclusive), with at least one survey being completed between May and August (inclusive). The surveys will be spaced three weeks apart. If bats are identified roosting within the building, a total of three surveys spaced three weeks apart would be required to characterise the roost and a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) would be required with up-to-date surveys from the survey season prior to the application submission. An EPSL can only be applied for when planning permission has been obtained and all wildlife conditions discharged. The building was assessed as having nesting bird value, as feral pigeons are currently occupying most floors. As feral pigeons nest at any time of the year, a nesting bird check will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist up to 48 hours before works commence. Should any nests, or nests in construction be located, a suitable stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged. The ecologist will advise on suitable standoff and provide a toolbox talk to all site contractors regarding their working limits and legal implications.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

E3P has been instructed by Southway Housing to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment and Ecological Walkover at 541 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, hereafter referred to as “the site”. A site walkover was also undertaken to assess the site for any additional protected species constraints.

This report was produced by Zach Squire-Watt, BSc (Hons) MSc, Consultant Ecologist at E3P. Zach has experience in completing Preliminary Roost Assessments at many sites across the UK.

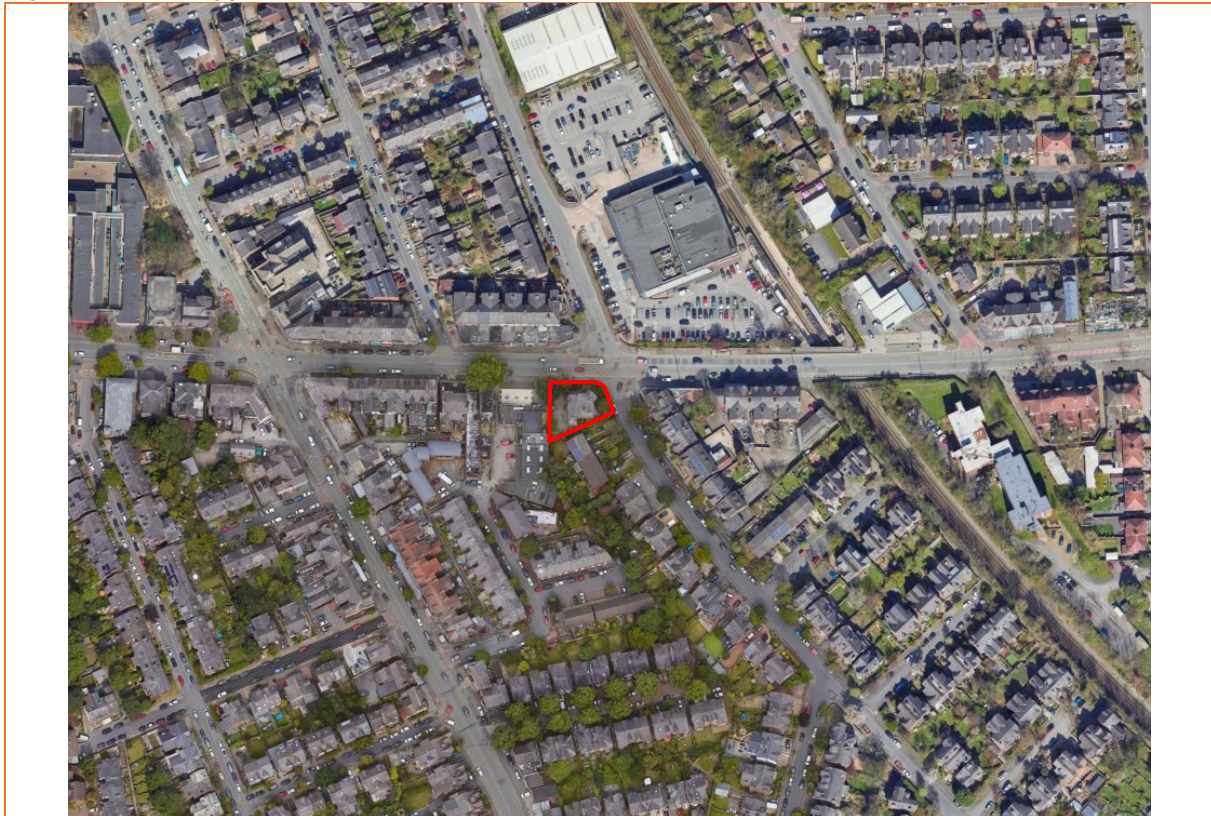
1.2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Demolition of all existing structures and erection of 3-storey residential building to include 9 no. affordable apartments and associated works.

1.3. SITE LOCATION

The site is located in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, a suburb in the south-west of Manchester. Wilbraham Road and Corkland Road define the site’s northern and eastern boundaries respectively. The surrounding habitats are predominantly commercial and residential development, with the closest greenspaces being Chorlton Park and Ryebank Fields, approximately 720 m south-east and 850 m north-west, respectively. The closest watercourse is Red Lion Brook approximately 700 m south. Please refer to Figure 1 for the site location.

Figure 1 **Approximate Site Location**





1.4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Preliminary Roost Assessment are as follows:

- ✦ Determine if bats currently, or could potentially, utilise the building for roosting.
- ✦ Determine whether further surveys (e.g. nocturnal bat surveys) and/or further mitigation is necessary for development to proceed.

The objectives of the Ecological Walkover are as follows:

- ✦ Identify the major habitats present.
- ✦ Ascertain the presence or potential presence of any legally protected species and habitats.
- ✦ Recommend any further surveys or mitigation that may be required.

The survey findings are detailed in this report, as well as any recommendations.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. DESK STUDY

The following sources of information and ecological records were consulted:

-  MAGIC – A government web-based interactive mapping system, demonstrating European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) and Natural England Licences which have been previously granted within England.
-  Information and species records from South Lancashire Bat Group.

A search via MAGIC was undertaken in December 2024 to identify EPSL within 1 km of the site boundary. This search area is considered suitable for the size of the development and the surrounding habitat.

2.2. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on 11th December 2024 by Zach Squire-Watt BSc (Hons) MSc QCIEEM, with assistance from Max McCormick BSc (Hons) QCIEEM. The weather was dry and overcast.

The survey involved undertaking a systematic search of the building and on-site trees, searching for signs of bats, or spaces where bats would be able to access. The methodology followed that described in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, 4th Edition (Collins, 2023).

The building and trees were categorised for their bat roosting potential as described in Table 1 and 2 in accordance with Collins (2023).

The survey was undertaken utilising suitable binoculars to access all areas where safe to do so.

Table 1 Bat Roosting Potential Classification of Buildings

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year.
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites 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.
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger 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. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.



Table 2 **Bat Roosting Potential Classification of Trees**

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

2.3. LIMITATIONS

Due to the height of the building, potential roost features on the southwestern aspect of the roof may have been missed during the survey. However, as features were identified on the visible aspects, this is not considered to be a major constraint.

Access into the loft was not possible at the time of survey, as such some features may have been missed.



3. RESULTS

3.1. LOCAL BAT GROUP RECORDS

Based on information from South Lancashire Bat Group, species present within the local area include; whiskered/Brandt's (*Myotis mystacinus/brandtii*) brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctule*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*).

3.2. MAGIC REVIEW

A MAGIC review identified one European Protected Species Licence within the 1 km search area. The licence was located approximately 340 m south west of the site, this was active between 2015-2020 for the destruction of a brown long-eared non-breeding roost.

3.3. SITE CONTEXT

The site comprised a disused three-storey building. Both the on-site habitats and habitats within the immediate surrounding area are anticipated to offer little value to local wildlife. The surrounding area is largely residential with associated amenities including schools, churches and playing spaces. Aside from the small value contributed by private gardens, the level of disturbance within these developed areas is expected to limit their ecological value. Two parcels of broadleaved woodland are within 1 km of the site: the closest, approximately 540 m west, may provide some roosting and foraging features for bats. The second parcel is located approximately 700 m south-east and follows a section of Chorlton Brook. The latter's proximity to the brook is likely to increase its potential for roosting and foraging bats, as watercourses such as Chorlton Brook often attract invertebrate prey that can be valuable foraging and commuting features for species including Daubenton's bat.

Approximately 780 m south-west is a mosaic of habitats associated with Chorlton Ees Nature Reserve. This comprises a large area of connected woodland parcels and corridors, grassland, open water and the River Mersey. The nature reserve is anticipated to be a major feature for bats within the landscape, as it is likely to provide a range of roosting, foraging and commuting features with relatively low levels of disturbance from light and noise.

3.4. SITE WALKOVER

The site was found to comprise colonised hardstanding surrounding the building, with species present including perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), ivy (*Hedera* sp.) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplanatus*) saplings. Four trees were also present within the boundary; species included sycamore, holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).

3.5. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on the building and trees on-site. All on-site trees were assessed as having Negligible potential due to a lack of suitable features for roosting bats. Please see Appendix I for the Preliminary Roost Assessment Plan which details the location of the potential roost features.



Figure 2 **Showing T3**



3.5.1. EXTERIOR

The building comprises a three-storey detached house. The building has previously been used as a daycare centre but was unused and had become derelict. The building is constructed with a red brick exterior with a number of gable ends and extensions that have been added to the structure. The building has a steep slated roof that was in relatively poor condition and much of the roof now has moss growing across it. Furthermore, numerous cracks within the brickwork, particularly surrounding the windows, were identified which are likely to provide roosts for crevice-dwelling species. No features allowing internal access were visible from the building's exterior from the ground-floor perspective.

Figure 3 **Showing Building Exterior**





Small gaps between the soffit and gable end were identified on the eastern-facing (Features A-C, north-east facing (Feature D, north-facing (Feature E) and west-facing (Features F & G) aspects of the building. As these features were approximately between 5 and 10 m high, close inspection to determine their depth/internal access was not possible. However, it is likely these gaps may provide roosts for a small number of bats on a regular basis, particularly during the summer months.

Figure 4 Showing Features A, B, C



Figure 5 Showing Feature D





Figure 6 **Showing Feature E**



Figure 7 **Showing Feature F**





Figure 8 Showing Feature G



Additionally, numerous cracks in the brickwork were identified on the building's exterior, predominantly on the building's western aspect. Features F and G were around 5 m and 4 m high respectively underneath the soffit. Elsewhere, features H-L were clustered in close proximity and descended from 4 m high (H) to 1 m (L). Features H, I and J were surrounding windows, while K and L were beneath piping. Given that the building has been unused for some time, the amount of disturbance from noise and light is reduced, which increases the potential for these external cracks and cavities to be utilised by crevice-dwelling species, despite the drainpipe potentially limiting access to K and L. Furthermore, given the number of features and their size and depth, small numbers of bats may utilise these on a regular basis.

Figure 9 Showing Features I, J





Figure 10 Showing Feature H, K, L



3.5.2. GROUND FLOOR

The interior of the ground floor is in relatively good condition. All windows have been blocked up using metal screens, limiting internal access at this level. No features that would allow internal access, bat droppings or field signs were identified on the ground floor.

Figure 11 Showing Ground Floor



3.5.3. FIRST FLOOR

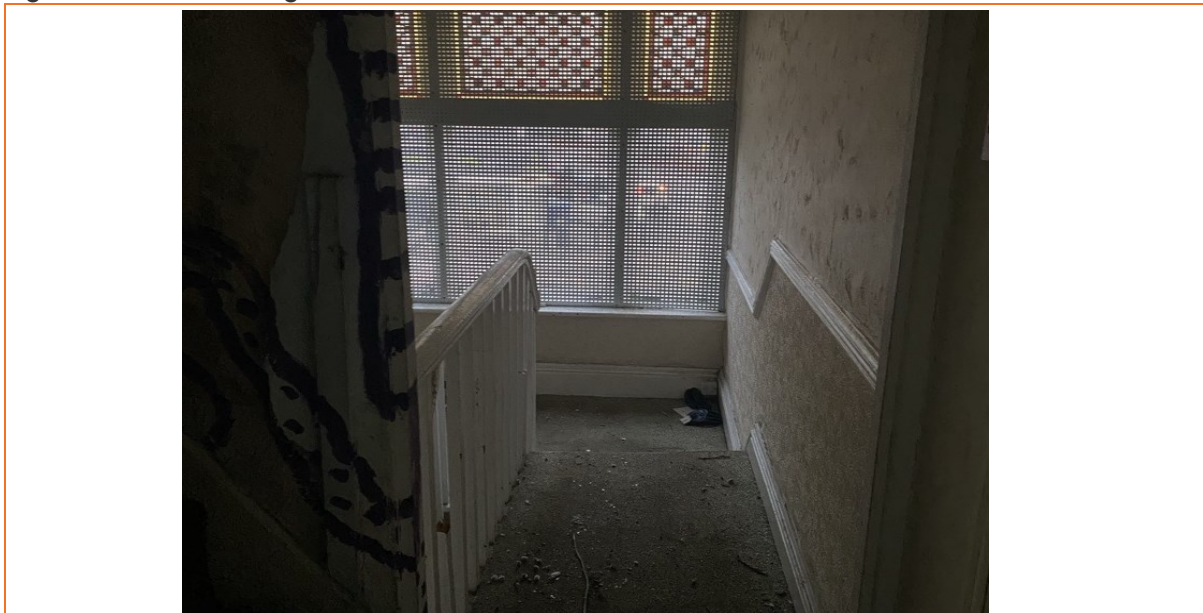
The first floor contains a number of small rooms. As with the ground floor, all windows are blocked up using metal screens. As such, internal access at this level was not possible and no field signs or droppings were identified.



Figure 12 Showing First Floor



Figure 13 Showing First Floor



3.5.4. SECOND FLOOR

The second floor is in a state of disrepair. Two access points were identified on the north-facing aspect of the building (AP1 & AP2); gaps in the roof tiles and underlying ceiling had collapsed due to water damage and exposure. No other access points were visible, however, two holes in the ceiling were identified in a room in the north of the building (Features M & N), through which feral pigeons (*Columba livia*) could be heard. While not visible from within the building, the presence of birds suggests internal access is possible through the roof. No bat droppings or field signs of bats were identified on the second floor.



Figure 14 **Showing AP1 and AP2**



Figure 15 **Feature M**





Figure 16 **Feature N**



Figure 17 **Visible loft interior**





4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. BATS

Overall, the building is assessed as having **Moderate** bat roosting potential due to the high number of external features identified during the PRA, which include cracks in the brickwork, gaps underneath the roof and between roof tiles. Furthermore, two internal access points were identified, with more anticipated in areas of the house that could not be accessed (most notably the loft).

However, the building is deemed as being unsuitable for high-value roosts, such as hibernation and maternity roosts. This is due mainly to the location of the building, as the surrounding urban development and associated disturbance limits its suitability for maternity roosts. Furthermore, as Figure 17 shows, there is no roof lining where the loft interior is visible, meaning a stable internal temperature is unlikely. Finally, AP1, AP2 and features M and N all appeared to be caused by water damage; if a leak in the roof is present, it is unlikely the loft will be suitable for high-value roosts. Therefore, two Nocturnal Bat Surveys spaced three weeks apart are required between May and September (inclusive) on the building with at least one survey undertaken between May and August (inclusive). If bats are identified roosting within the building, a further survey would be required to characterise the roost and a European Protected Species Licence will be required, with up-to-date surveys from the survey season prior to the application submission.

4.2. NESTING BIRDS

The building is assessed as having nesting bird value, as feral pigeons were heard within the loft cavity. Furthermore, the on-site trees were also likely to provide nesting potential/ Because of the nature of feral pigeons nesting at any time of the year, a nesting bird check will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist up to 48 hours before works commence. Should any nests, or nests in construction be located, a suitable stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged. The ecologist will advise on suitable standoff and provide a toolbox talk to all site contractors regarding their working limits and legal implications.



5. REFERENCES

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END OF REPORT

APPENDIX I

ROOST FEATURE PLAN



Key:

- Red line boundary
- Building
- Features
- Access points

Notes

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