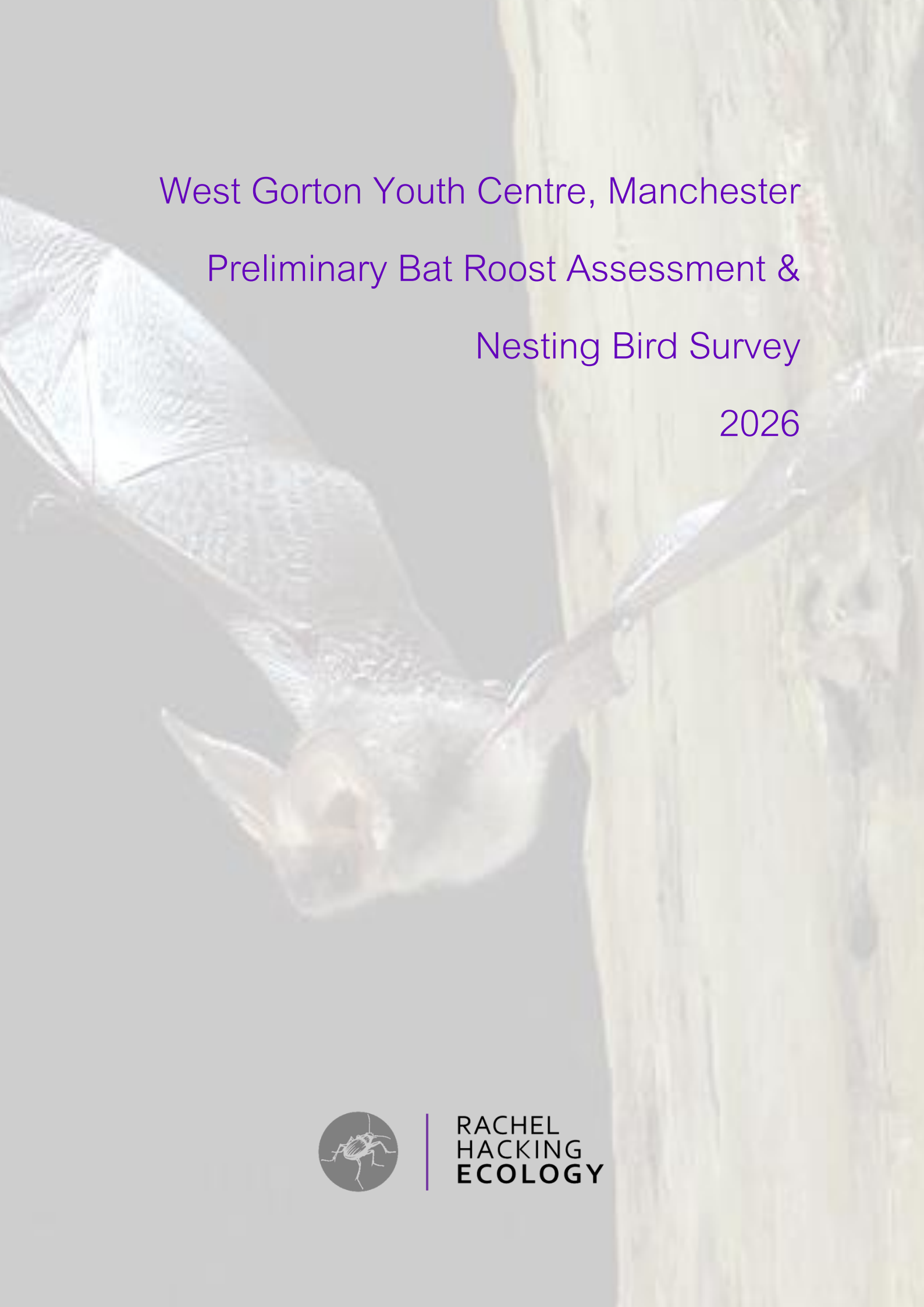


West Gorton Youth Centre, Manchester

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment &

Nesting Bird Survey

2026

RACHEL
HACKING
ECOLOGY

Client	Manchester City Council
Project Title	West Gorton Youth Centre, Manchester
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Project Leader	Holly Spencer
Contact Details	[redacted]

	Name	Position	Date
Author	Holly Spencer	Ecologist	06.02.2026
Checker	Simon Holden	Regional Manager	16.02.2026
Reviewer	Simon Holden	Regional Manager	16.02.2026
Revision			

RACHEL HACKING ECOLOGY

Manchester
0161 465 8971
The Stables, Paradise Wharf, Ducie Street, Manchester. M1 2JN
manchester@rachelhackingecology.co.uk

West Devon
01822 752 054
PO Box 255, Tavistock, Devon. PL19 1FU
devon@rachelhackingecology.co.uk

East Midlands
0115 678 1830
eastmidlands@rachelhackingecology.co.uk

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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing residential development at West Gorton Youth Centre, Manchester, hereafter referred to as the 'site'. The proposed works will include the refurbishment and conversion of the existing Youth Centre building complex into 27 individual residential units.

This report describes the potential for roosting bats and nesting birds at the site and assesses the potential impacts of the development on bats and birds. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Ecological Interest

The site offers **negligible potential to support roosting bats**, as all identified potential roost features and access points associated with the site were assessed as unsuitable due to factors including exposure to weather, light penetration, insufficient depth, and lack of shelter. In addition, no roosting bat evidence was identified when assessing both the internal and external structures of the building.

The building was **heavily occupied by pigeons** at the time of the survey, with substantial accumulations of droppings, nesting material, and several dead birds recorded both inside and outside the structure, which would also further discourage bats from using the building for roosting purposes. **No additional active nesting bird activity** was identified during the inspection.

Outcomes

A full environmental clean is taking place at the site in the upcoming week to flush out current nesting pigeons and remove droppings, disease risk etc. As no roosting bat potential or other nesting bird potential was noted during the inspection, this clean is deemed safe to go ahead as planned.

Although, no active nests were found, the building is heavily used by pigeons and new nesting attempts could occur after the environmental clean. Therefore, mitigation is required in the form of a **pre-works nesting bird check**. A qualified ecologist must check the site immediately before construction (ideally within 48 hours) if works are to take place during the breeding bird season

(March–August) to confirm the absence of nesting birds. In addition, it is also recommended that bird boxes are integrated into the post-development scheme to enhance nesting opportunities for urban bird species in the area such as house sparrows).

In regard to bats, no further survey work or mitigation is required due to the negligible potential of the building to support roosting bats. However, it is recommended that bat boxes are integrated into the post-development scheme to enhance roosting opportunities for urban bat species in the area.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Ltd (RHE) was commissioned in 2026 by Manchester City Council (the Client) to carry out a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and Nesting Bird Survey at West Gorton Youth Centre, Manchester (the 'site'). The site is an old brick-built youth centre and is located at O.S. grid reference: SJ 87315 96925 (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site (red polygon) courtesy of © Google Maps Satellite.

Description of Development

1.1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the refurbishment and conversion of the existing Youth Centre building to provide 27 individual residential units. The redevelopment works will include new roof coverings, extension works, new windows, recladding, insulation and associated cladding works.

Relevant Planning History

1.1.3 Planning permission for the proposed development is yet to be submitted.

1.2 Scope of Work

1.2.1 The Client commissioned RHE to carry out the following works:

- Undertake an external and internal assessment of the site affected by the development proposals;
- Undertake a ground-level assessment of any trees 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 and nesting birds;
- Identify the requirement for any further detailed surveys.
- Inform impact assessment and mitigation requirements.

2. Methods

2.1 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

2.1.1 The exterior of the building 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, windows or on the ground below roost entrances or staining from fur oil around roost entry points.

2.1.3 The interior of the building 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 Nesting Bird Survey

2.2.1 The exterior of the building and its surrounding features were inspected from the ground to identify any suitable nesting opportunities for birds. This included assessing ledges, cavities, gaps beneath rooflines, external cladding, soffits, masonry features, vegetation, and any sheltered recesses that could support nest construction.

2.2.2 Evidence indicating the presence of nesting birds was also searched for. Such evidence may include active nests, old nests that appear to be reused, nesting material, bird droppings associated with an active nest site, feathers, and behavioural signs such as birds entering or exiting potential nesting locations.

2.2.3 The interior of the building was inspected where safe and accessible, to identify any evidence of nesting activity. This may include established nests, nesting material, active chicks or eggs, bird droppings, feathers, and any visual or audible indications of birds utilising internal ledges, beams, cavities, or other structural features for nesting.

2.3 Assessment Criteria

2.3.1 Surveys were undertaken in accordance with current guidelines[1]. Interpretation of survey findings and assessment of roosting potential was undertaken using professional judgement and criteria described in published guidance[1,2].

2.4 Site Visit Information

Surveyor Details

2.4.1 The site was visited on the 4th of February 2026 by licensed bat ecologist Holly Spencer. Holly has over six years of experience undertaking similar surveys and is in possession of a Level 1 Bat Licence (2022-10160-CL17-BAT).

Weather

2.4.2 The weather at the time of the survey was dry and overcast with light winds. Ambient temperatures ranged between 6°C and 7°C. Conditions were suitable for a full assessment to be undertaken.

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

[2] 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..

3. Results

3.1 Survey Constraints

3.1.1 The enclosed metal-built stairwell at the front of the building was boarded-up at the time of the inspection and therefore could not be assessed for roosting bats or nesting birds. However, due to its exposed nature and the construction materials used, the structure was considered **unsuitable** for both roosting bats and nesting birds.

3.1.2 No further constraints were encountered during the survey.

3.2 Habitat Appraisal

3.2.1 The site is located within a heavily urbanised area of West Gorton, Manchester, surrounded predominantly by residential housing, roads, and ongoing redevelopment. The immediate landscape is characterised by hardstanding, buildings, and limited scattered trees, with no significant areas of greenspace or semi-natural habitat in close proximity. As such, the surrounding environment offers very limited foraging or commuting opportunities for bats.

3.3 External Survey

3.3.1 The site comprises a detached building complex which, for the purposes of this report, has been divided into two identifiable sections: the two-storey sports-hall section to the north called '**Sports Hall Block**', which incorporates the external metal-clad stairwell, and the adjoining one/two-storey structure to the south called '**Classroom Block**' to reflect it's former use when the building functioned as a youth centre.

Sports Hall Block

3.3.2 The Sports Hall Block is a two-storey structure built on metal supports with an open undercroft area below which comprises hardstanding paving slabs, surrounding the main entrance to the building at ground level. The building at ground level is predominantly comprised of brick, with mineral fibre ceiling tiles suspended above the undercroft area (Photo 2). The first floor comprises plasterboard walls, covered in corrugated steel cladding. An enclosed external staircase, also made from corrugated steel sheeting is adjoined to the front of this section, extending out onto the adjacent pavement (Photo 1). The roof comprises a low-pitched hipped design with a raised row of clerestory windows. The roof is finished with interlocking concrete tiles.

3.3.3 No potential bat roosting/access features were identified associated with this Sports Hall Block. Significant evidence of roosting pigeons was identified with the external of this building, particularly around the undercroft area to the front where birds were seen actively flying in and out of this structure at the time of survey, in addition to the presence of significant droppings. No additional nesting evidence was identified associated with the external structure of this building.

Classroom Block

3.3.4 The Classroom Block is a predominantly single storey brick-built structure with some two storey sections. The elevations comprise brickwork with areas of deteriorated painted render, and several door and window openings are secured with metal shutters or timber boarding. The single storey sections have a flat roof finished in bitumen felt, while the two storey sections are constructed with concrete roof slabs also finished in bitumen felt. Small strips of lead flashing are also present in places below the roofline. Facia and soffit elements are formed from timber boards and are heavily weathered. Original timber window frames remain in place and exhibit extensive rot and decay. A further metal-clad external stairwell is associated with this building, located along the western elevation (Photo 7).

3.3.5 Identified potential roosting features associated with this building included a small section of lifted lead flashing along the southern elevation (Photo 9), small gaps within the brickwork on the southern elevation, narrow gaps associated with the concrete roof slabs (Photo 10), and small gaps under the wooden facia boards along the staircase on the western elevation. However, following closer inspection, all these potential roosting or access features were assessed as **unsuitable** due to a combination of limiting factors, including exposure to weather, light penetration, insufficient depth, and a general lack of shelter

3.4 Internal Survey

Sports Hall Block

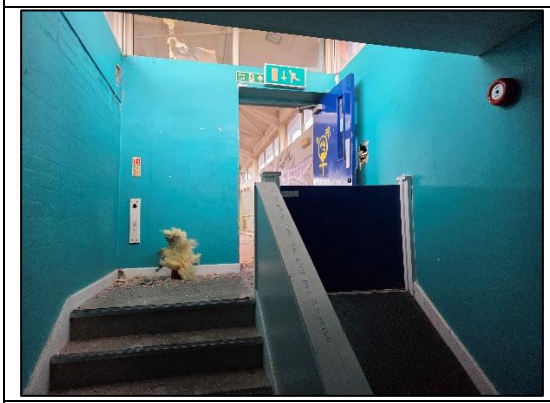
3.4.1 Internally, the Sports Hall Block comprises a small brick-built ground-floor section with timber flooring and plastered brick walls and ceiling. A small internal staircase (Photo 3) leads up to the main sports hall, which features timber flooring, plasterboard-insulated walls, and a metal-structured unlined roof system extending up to the clerestory windows (Photo 4). No roof void is present within this section of the building and due to the open, well-lit internal design, no internal roosting potential for bats was identified. The interior showed significant pigeon occupation, with extensive accumulations of feathers, droppings, nesting materials, and several dead specimens recorded throughout the large open sports hall area.

Classroom Block

3.4.2 Internally, the Classroom Block is constructed in a similar manner to the ground-floor section of the Sports Hall Block, comprising multiple rooms with timber flooring and plastered brick walls and

ceilings. On the first floor, several rooms contain wooden-clad ceilings and exposed brick walls (Photo 8). No roof void is present due to the flat-roof design, and therefore no potential bat roosting features or access points were identified within the interior of this building.

3.4.3 Site photographs, including building features, local landscape and any potential roosting features (PRFs), taken during the Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and Nesting Bird Survey at the West Gorton Youth Centre in Manchester, are presented below in **Table 1**.

	
Photograph 1. External Front view of the Sports Hall showing external metal stairwell	*Photograph 2. Undercroft view of Sports Hall showing the brick-built construction with mineral fibre tiles*
	
Photograph 3. Internal view of Sports Hall Block showing entrance to the hall from the lower level	*Photograph 4. Internal View of Sports Hall Block showing the metal roof structure and pigeon droppings*
	
Photograph 5. External View of Classroom Block showing the brick-built construction and flat roof design	*Photograph 6. External View of Classroom Block showing timber facia/soffits and boarded up doors*

	
Photograph 7. External View of Classroom Block showing metal-clad stairwell	*Photograph 8. Internal View of the Classroom Block Ground floor showing timber-clad ceiling*
	
Photograph 9. Lead flashing on the southern elevation of the Classroom Block, deemed unsuitable for bats	*Photograph 10. Gaps in roof slabs associated with the Classroom Block, deemed unsuitable for bats*

4. Assessment

4.1 Interpretation of Results

Bats

4.1.1 The site lies within a heavily urbanised area dominated by residential buildings, roads and hardstanding, with only limited scattered trees and no significant semi-natural habitat nearby. As a result, the surrounding landscape provides **very limited foraging or commuting opportunities for bats**.

4.1.2 There are no roof voids associated with either the Sports Hall Block or the Classroom Block. All identified potential roosting features were examined in detail and subsequently assessed as **unsuitable for roosting bats** due to factors such as exposure to weather, light penetration, insufficient depth, and a general lack of shelter.

4.1.3 In addition, no internal or external evidence of bat activity was found during the survey, so the presence of bats is not anticipated.

4.1.4 Given the negligible quality of the available roosting features, the heavily urbanised and poorly connected surrounding habitat, and the extensive artificial lighting within the wider landscape, it is considered highly unlikely that roosting bats would utilise the building or be affected by the proposed works. The site is therefore assessed as offering **negligible roosting potential**.

Nesting Birds

4.1.5 Only evidence of nesting pigeons was identified during the survey, with substantial accumulations of droppings, nesting material and several dead birds recorded within the building. These will be addressed as part of the forthcoming environmental clean. No evidence of other nesting bird species was found in or around the building complex.

4.2 Potential Impacts

Bats

4.2.1 The proposed development is unlikely to result in any impacts to bats or their roosts.

Nesting Birds

4.2.2 The proposed development is unlikely to result in any impacts to nesting birds.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

Bats

5.1.1 No further surveys are required in regard to roosting bats.

Nesting Birds

5.1.2 No further surveys are required, but a pre commencement check should be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior (ideally within 48 hours) to construction being carried out if works are to be undertaken during the breeding bird season (March-August). This is recommended due to the potential for new nesting attempts to occur following the upcoming environmental clean of the building complex.

5.2 Mitigation Measures

5.2.1 The site could be enhanced for bats by installing bat boxes as part of the proposed development. This could either include integral boxes, built into the brickwork, or externally mounted boxes. Bat boxes should be installed at eaves height, facing southeast to southwest, but not directly above windows or doorways. They should not be subject to artificial lighting. A recommended bat box model is provided in Appendix 2.

5.2.2 The site could also be enhanced for nesting birds by installing bird boxes as part of the proposed development. This could either be an integral box, built into the brickwork, or externally mounted boxes. Bird boxes should be positioned at least 4m off the ground, with clear, unobstructed access below the entrance hole to allow birds to enter and exit freely. The boxes should not be positioned south facing and where possible boxes should also be positioned near vegetation. Given the urban nature of the site, house sparrow boxes are recommended, as this species is in decline yet remains strongly associated with urban environments. A recommended bird box model is provided in Appendix 2.

General Precautions

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 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 187 and 193, shown below:

- 187. 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 and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
  - e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
  - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 193. 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 reasons70 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.

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.

Appendix 2: Bat & Bird Boxes

Bat Boxes

Recommended bat boxes to be installed post-development could include 'Greenwood's Echohabitat 2 Crevice Bat Box (or equivalent)' as illustrated in Figure 2 below. The boxes should be positioned facing south, at a minimum height of 4 metres on the building.



Figure 2 showing the Greenwood's Two Crevice Bat Box https://www.greenwoodsecohabitats.co.uk/shop

Bird Boxes

Recommended bird boxes to be installed post-development could include 'The Vivara Pro Woodstone House Sparrow Nest Box Double Chamber (or equivalent)' as illustrated in Figure 3 below. The bird boxes should be positioned at a minimum height of 3 metres. None of the boxes should be positioned facing south.



Figure 3 Showing double chamber sparrow box https://www.nhbs.com/vivara-pro-woodstone-house-sparrow-nest-box