Haich's Building, Firth Street, Huddersfield

Bat Roost Suitability Assessment

Shound Properties Ltd

13/11/2023

ER-7104-01

Report reference	**ER-7104-01 - BRSA**
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Report duration	In accordance with CIEEM (2019), unless otherwise stated the findings of this report remain valid for a period of 18 months. After this period advice should be sought on the scope of any updating work required.

Summary Statement

Haich's Building on Firth Street, Huddersfield, has been assessed as providing features with low bat roost suitability.

In line with guidance, a single nocturnal survey is recommended to ascertain the status of roosting. This should be carried out during the active bat survey season (May-August).

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological was commissioned by Shound Properties Ltd to carry out a bat roost suitability assessment at Haich's Building, Firth Street, Huddersfield (grid reference SE 1463 1594).
2. The application site, 'the Site', comprises an existing two storey building currently used for residential dwellings.
3. Proposals are to renovate existing interiors, and extend the building by two storeys to create additional units for student accommodation.

Figure 1 The Site boundary (red line).

Method

4. A thorough daytime inspection of the site was made in November 2023 to look for evidence of bats and assess suitability for roosting. Evidence of bats may take the form of droppings, feeding remains, live bats, dead bats, stains on masonry or timber from the oils in bats' fur and claw marks made by bats regularly roosting in the same location.
5. Bat roosting potential of the building was classified according to the following criteria set out in Table 1, taken from the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines (2023).

Table 1 Bat Roosting Suitability of Buildings.

Suitability	Criteria
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).
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 (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating 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 (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
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.

Box 1 *Bat roosts*

Bats roost in buildings and trees in different locations depending upon time of year and environmental factors such as position of the sun, proximity to heat sources and feeding grounds. The following types are commonly referred to:

Transitional roosts

Bats frequently gather early in the season (March to April) before dispersing to summer roosts. Bats can be found in high numbers in these roosts for a very short period. Transitional roosts can also be found shortly before hibernation in August to October when bats (depending upon species) can gather in roosts not used earlier in the season.

Maternity roosts

These are among the most important roosts and are normally occupied from May to August. Depending on the species involved, some maternity roosts can contain a very significant proportion of the local population.

Summer (non-breeding) roosts

Small groups of non-breeding female and male bats can gather in these roosts or bats from a local population may choose to roost individually. There are normally a large number of suitable locations for summer non-breeding roosts and these may be routinely used or used only on an occasional basis. Irregularly used summer roosts can be very hard to find without unreasonable survey effort.

Mating roosts

Around September bats will gather in roost to mate; these are often in different locations than summer or breeding roosts.

Hibernation roosts

As bats in hibernation roosts are highly vulnerable to disturbance and bats can be present in large numbers these are considered to be among the most important bat roosts. Many species of bats roost in large and nationally important hibernation roosts associated with underground sites, many of which are well known and protected. However, the most common bat in the UK (the common pipistrelle) is largely unaccounted for in winter but thought to disperse and roost individually or in small groups in thermally stable cracks and crevices in thick walls or trees.

Box 2 *Legal background*

Bats are afforded full protection under The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) plus amendments, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Under these Acts it is an offence among others, to recklessly kill, injure or disturb bats. It is also an offence to destroy or obstruct a roost even if bats are not in occupancy at the time of the action.

There are no defences against contravention of the Habitats Regulations 2010 which means that it is important for detailed and well-designed bat surveys to be carried out, prior to carrying out activities that may impact upon bat roosts such as demolition of buildings or removal of trees.

Where bats are found within a potential development site, a license from Natural England may need to be secured if works that could otherwise contravene legislation are to be carried out. These licences are only issued where Natural England is satisfied that works are unavoidable and would not have a negative impact on the favourable conservation status of bats. A Natural England license requires that the potential development site has full planning permission and that bats were a material consideration of the planning permission.

Records

6. The local records provider, in this case West Yorkshire Bat Group (WYBG), was asked to provide all records from within a 1km radius of the Site.

7. A total of 8 recent records were returned, including common pipistrelle, pipistrelle and unidentified vesper species of bat, relating to roosts and field records.

8. The closest record of a roost details an unidentified vesper species roost, of an unrecorded number of individuals, recorded some 260m southeast of Site in a private residential building.

National, regional, and local Status

9. The application Site lies within the natural range of 10 species of bat. These are summarised in Table 2 adjacent, together with a note on each species' national status, relative abundance, and status within the 1km search area.

EPSM Licences

10. There are three European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licences returned within 1km of the Site, detailing the destruction of resting sites for common and soprano pipistrelle, and brown long-eared bats. The most recent, relating to the destruction of a common pipistrelle resting place, was granted and ended in 2014 and is situated approximately 500m northeast of the Site.

Table 2 List of bat species known to occur in West Yorkshire, ordered in increasing level of significance to their national population.

Species	National Status	Within 1km radius	
		Recorded	Roosts known
Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	Common and increasing	Yes	Yes
Soprano pipistrelle *P. pygmaeus*	Common and stable	Yes	Yes
Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*	Common and increasing	-	-
Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*	Common and stable	Yes	Yes
Natterer's bat *M. nattereri*	Common and increasing	-	-
Whiskered bat *M. mystacinus*	Uncommon but stable	-	-
Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*	Uncommon but stable	-	-
Brandt's bat *M. brandtii*	Uncommon but stable	-	-
Leisler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri*	Uncommon and trend unknown	-	-
Nathusius' pipistrelle *P. nathusii*	Uncommon but stable		

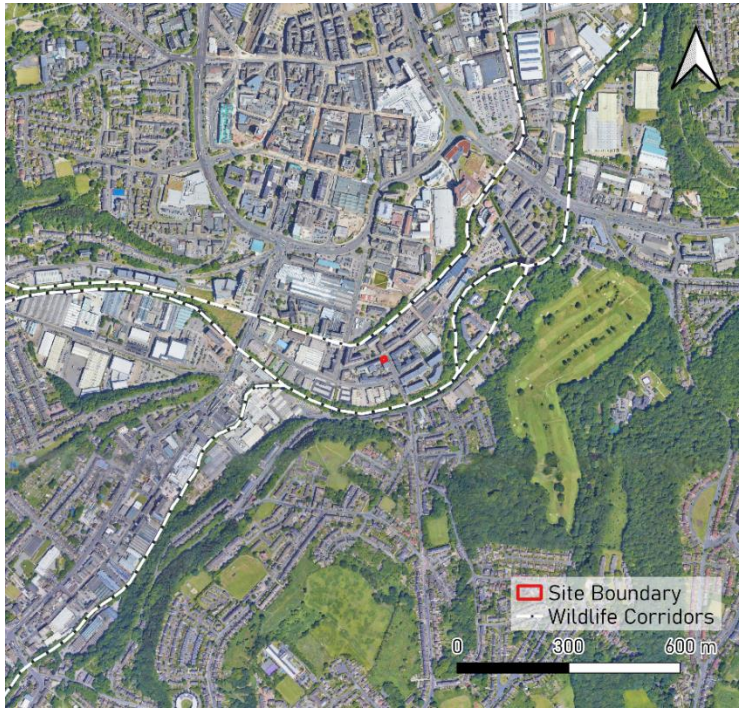
Site Context

11. The Site is located within the town of Huddersfield, some 23km southwest of Leeds, immediately bound to the north by Firth street, and to the east by King's Bridge Road. It's immediate surroundings are typical of urban settings, with residential and commercial buildings in all directions.

12. Huddersfield Canal and the River Colne comprise the closest significant linear features, bisecting the landscape from east to west, 70m north, and 130m south of the Site respectively. The river is well flanked by vegetation, and connects the structured habitats of Spa Wood and Ashing Hirst Plantation, present to the south of the Site. Both corridors and areas of woodland are well-separated from Site by urban development.

13. The wider landscape comprises urban development to the north and east, with the more suburban residential development well interspersed by woodland and open green space to the south and east.

Figure 2 Site context.



Survey Results

14. The Site comprises a two storey mortared sandstone brick building, with a mixture of wooden and uPVC window and door frames, dentilated eaves and a slate tiled hipped roof. A passageway connects Firth St. to the courtyard to the south of the building.

15. The surveyed building is bound to the west and south by adjacent buildings of a similar construction, both being an additional storey in height. As the proposed extension would join to these buildings, the affected elevations of these have also been considered.

Figure 3 Surveyed and adjoining buildings

16. The exterior walls of the main building are in generally good condition and mostly well-sealed, with the exception of holes in brickwork on the western and southern elevations, and some damage to the mortar within the passageway.

Figure 4 Showing hole on western elevation (l) and damaged passageway brickwork (r)

17. The windows are mostly uPVC framed, with some in wooden frames on the southern and western elevations. These are well sealed with the exception of a single hole in a first floor window frame on the southern elevation. The sills and lintels, constructed of sandstone all appear well sealed with no gaps present.

18. The doors, wooden framed to the northern and eastern elevations, and uPVC framed to the southern and western, were well sealed to the frames but with some weathering present to the sandstone surrounds and mortar.

Figure 5 Showing hole to window frame (l) and door surrounding mortar (r)

19. The eaves feature stone cornices to the front, and dentils to the courtyard, with wooden gutter casing. Some weathering to the casing is evident on the outer corner, but no roosting features were seen. Gaps are present between the cornice stones, however these appear to be from design and not weathering, and therefore are likely not to lead to any substantial space. Gaps to the eaves are present on the courtyard facing walls.

Figure 6 Showing gaps to cornice (l) and location of gap at eaves (r)

20. The roof appears in generally good condition, with the exception of some damage to ridge tiles and mortar.

Figure 7 Showing gap to roof ridge

Adjacent Buildings

21. Adjoining building 1 (AB1) to the west has a similar mortared sandstone construction, and a slate tiled, gabled roof. A chimney stack is also present and protrudes from the eastern elevation of this building.

22. Some weathering is evident to the brick mortar of the wall and chimney of AB1's western elevation, providing possible access to a potential roost site.

Figure 8 Showing weathering to mortar on AB1

23. Adjoining building 2 (AB2) to the south appears to have been built much more recently of mortared sandstone, with a top storey featuring metal cladding, and a flat roof. The walls and eaves appear in good condition, with no potential roosting features observed.

Summary

24. Based on the features present and the urban surroundings, the surveyed building has been assessed as having low suitability for supporting roosts.

Table 3 Summary of Roost Potential of Buildings.

Building	Key Features	Bat Roost Suitability
Main	Gaps to wall mortar in passageway, to casings of window and doors, damage to ridge tile	Low
AB1	Gaps in wall mortar to wall and chimney	Low

Figure 9 Showing bat roost suitability of on-site buildings.

Conclusions & Recommendations

25. In line with best practice guidelines (Bat Conservation Trust, 2023), further survey should be carried out to establish if potential roost features are being used by bats. This should take the form of a single dusk emergence survey, undertaken during the peak bat survey season, which runs from May to August inclusive, with September offering suboptimal conditions.

Standard precaution

26. It must be noted that bats frequently move between roost sites, can be very casual in their choice of roosting location and can turn up unexpectedly at any time.

27. On this basis the developer should always be mindful of bats as a potential constraint and have a protocol in place should any bats be seen or suspected during any works affecting this elevation: works should stop, a suitably licensed ecologist consulted, and their advice followed.

References

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