



Leigh Ecology Ltd

Protected Species and Habitat Surveys

Blackpool Ambulance Service Hub,
1 Parkinson Way,
Blackpool.

On behalf of Galliford Try.

**Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat
Scoping Report**

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Author: J. Cooper

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Approved: R. Leigh

Office 01606892032 Mobile 07815711678

Directors R S Leigh & J J Leigh. 8 Hall Drive, Marston, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 6DT

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Appendix 1 – Phase 1 Habitat plan and legend

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leigh Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment of The Blackpool Ambulance Hub, Blackpool, and accompanying land. The survey was completed on the 11th of February 2021.

The site consists of a large fabricated building with an adjoining car park. The proposed development will see the demolition of the current Ambulance Hub and the construction of a new, three-storey building and an improved car parking area.

The site is situated in the middle of Blackpool with immediate access to Parkinson Way and Waterloo Road. It is bounded by the roads to the north and west, with private dwellings to the east and a business outlet to the south. The wider habitat is comprised of additional private dwellings, shops, and Blackpool South Station to the west. The site boundary is currently a temporary heras fence that separates the public walkways to the north and west. The southern and eastern boundaries are comprised of palisade security fencing.

In order to facilitate the extending and/or restyling of the building and surrounding habitat, a survey for protected species was required, namely bats species (*Chiroptera*), but including nesting birds, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals to inform the planning application.

The results of the survey on the Ambulance Hub building identified for enhancement show that it offers negligible potential for roosting bats. The surrounding site offers low potential for foraging and commuting habitat due to a lack of connectivity.

Evidence of nesting squirrels was identified in the south-east corner. Additionally, the site has the potential to support hedgehogs due to the dense introduced shrub and scrub. Furthermore, a small park is located to the north-west of the site which provides moderate connectivity.

A collection of non-native invasive species, *Cotoneaster* spp. were identified during the survey.

No ponds are located within 250m of the site and therefore, no additional actions are required.

Any vegetation clearance and demolition works should be undertaken outside the bird-nesting season, March-August to minimise any impact on nesting birds.

2. INTRODUCTION

Background

Leigh Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Galliford Try to undertake an Ecological Appraisal of buildings and land identified for enhancement in Blackpool (approx. National Grid Reference (NGR) SD312341); refer to the redline boundary shown in **Figure 2.1** below.

Sites of biodiversity conservation value, habitats, and species in UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPS) and protected species are material considerations in the planning process (Department for Communities and Local Government. 2012).

The study is documented in this report and includes the following:

- Preliminary ecological baseline for the site;
- Protected mammals’ assessment of the site;
- Potential ecological constraints to the development of the site; and
- Further ecological work necessary for a planning submission.

All Work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management’s (CIEEM) Code of Practice.

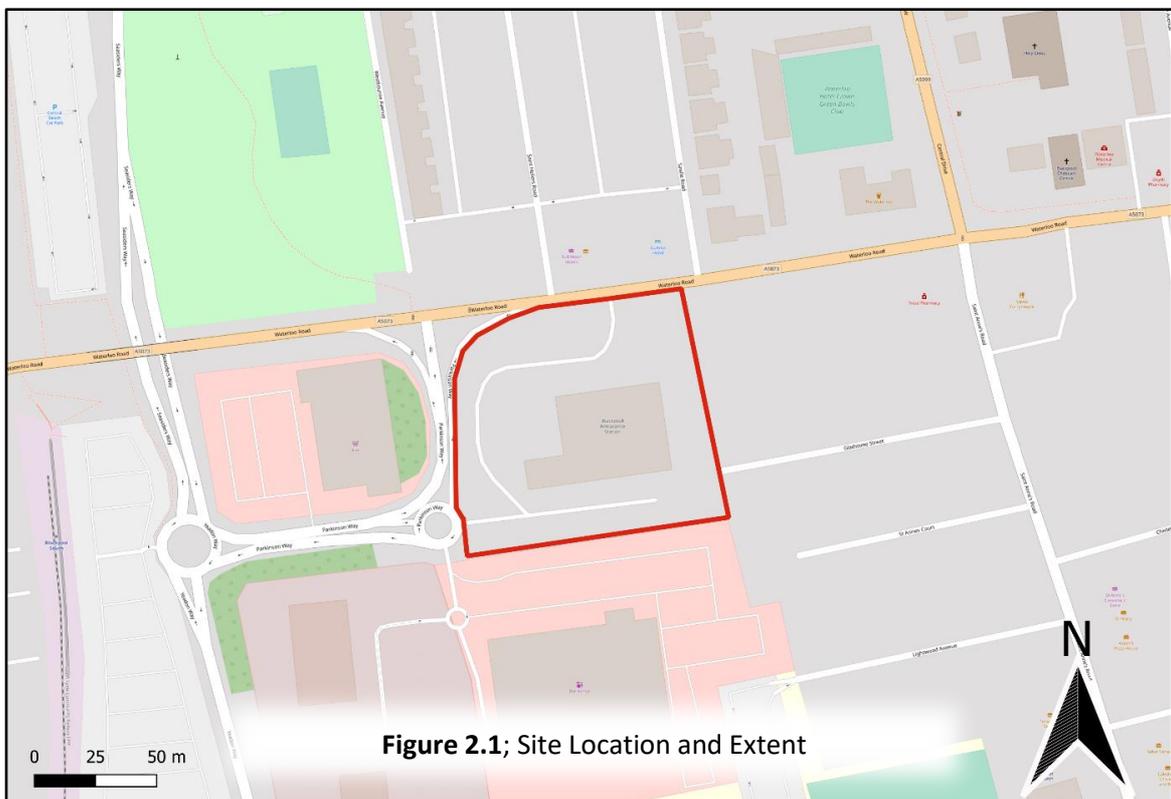


Figure 2.1; Site Location and Extent

3. METHODOLOGY

A preliminary understanding of the ecological baseline of the development site (hereafter referred to as 'the site') was derived through desk study and site survey.

Desk study

Designated sites of nature conservation value (statutory and non-statutory).

Information was also obtained from the following websites:

- www.magic.gov.uk – information on protected sites up to 1 km from the site;
- www.nbn.org.uk – protected species distribution.

The UK BAP and Lancashire BAP (LBAP) were also reviewed.

Site survey

A site survey to inform the Ecological Appraisal was undertaken on 11th February 2021 following Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) methodology (2010). This identified the habitat types on the site and the presence/absence of protected/notable species¹. The results of the survey were detailed on a Phase 1 Habitat plan; refer to Appendix 1.

Water bodies within 250m of the site were also identified from Ordnance Survey (OS) maps and through aerial photography.

Bat Surveys

The internal and external roost survey was undertaken by an NRW and Natural England licensed surveyor: Mr. Roy Leigh – NRW licence 58580-OTH CSAB -2014, NE licence 2015/15883-CLS and Ecologist Mr. Joe Cooper.

Survey methods were based-upon the standard and specification detailed in the BCTs Bat Surveys-Good Practise Guidelines (Hundt, 2016). The building was inspected externally on 11th February 2021.

¹ Notable species are those which hold a specific conservation status e.g., Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species, IUCN Red Data Species, etc. Some notable species may also be legally protected.

Tree Inspection

A ground-level external inspection of the trees on the boundary was undertaken; the primary objective of the survey was to locate any signs of bat activity, for example:

A full internal and external bat scoping survey was undertaken during the phase 1 survey.

- Bat droppings;
- Feeding remains;
- Grease staining/urine marks.

As tree roosts are extremely difficult to locate, it is prudent to note all potential roost entrances, cracks, cavities, woodpecker holes, and fissures in order to undertake emergence surveys should there be an impact on the trees.

External building inspection

The objective of the survey was to locate any signs of bat activity, for example:

- Bat droppings;
- Feeding remains;
- Grease staining/ urine marks;
- Corpses or skeletons;
- Potential access points to internal roosts.

The bat signs listed above are visible from the outside of the building. The following areas were searched using binoculars:

- Ground floor casing;
- Any cracks/ holes in the panels;
- Between wall panels and framework;
- On external panelling, and ridge.

Internal building Inspection

Bats regularly utilise specific areas within roof spaces/open roof configurations (see below), which were searched as a priority for any bat field signs:

- Beneath hip joints and junctions;
- Staining above/ around gaps;
- Within cobwebs;
- Staining around tile gaps;
- In cavities of walls within the roof wall joints;
- On the floor under specific beams and joints;
- Wall joints.

Any signs of bird usage including any current live or old nests, droppings, pellets, etc. were noted during the bat survey.

Survey limitations

There were no survey limitations and all areas of the site were accessible under the conditions of the current COVID lockdown rules in 2021.

Landscape Assessment

Bats use regular commuting and foraging routes; these are usually linear features such as hedgerows and watercourse corridors. The loss and severance of such a feature may have an indirect impact on the bats. Therefore, it is important that if the development impacts on these features, they are assessed.

Breeding Birds

An assessment of the potential habitat for breeding birds was undertaken.

Protected Mammal Surveys

The site and linear features were checked for feeding signs, prints, trails, droppings, holes, etc. for species including badger and hedgehog.

4. RESULTS

Desk study

No designated sites of nature conservation value were identified within the 1km search area.

Site survey

Habitats within the survey area

The results of the Phase 1 Habitat survey and details are shown in **Appendix 1**, with accompanying photographs shown within the text (below). Habitat descriptions are provided, and plant species are referred to using their English names.

The survey site covers the full extent of the land shown in **Fig 2.1**. The proposed development will see the enhancement of the building found onsite and the enhancement of the surrounding car park area.

Ecologically, the site is situated in the center of Blackpool and surrounded by private dwellings and retail property. Evidence gathered during the survey would suggest that the site provides little habitat for any notable species assemblage.

The building identified for enhancement is Blackpool Ambulance Hub, the building is currently in use. The ground floor building is a collection of open-floor plan workshops and an indoor parking area for ambulance vehicles. There are also some separate office spaces constructed from breeze blocks within the workshop areas, and a similar first-floor storage room in the main workshop area. Located in the south-west are a collection of ground-floor and first-floor office spaces, changing rooms, and break rooms. It is in good condition with little to no signs of wear, and the majority of external features being intact.

Surrounding the Ambulance Hub is a collection of small patches of amenity grassland, including some introduced shrub beds and trees. The dominant grass species included are perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), with patches of cock's foot (*Dactylus glomerata*) where areas are unmanaged. In amongst the areas of amenity grassland are species including creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), herb-robert (*Geranium robertianum*), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), chickweed (*Stellaria media*), hairy bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*), sticky weed (*Galium aparine*), hedge Bedstraw (*Galium mollugo*) wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), dandelions (*Taraxacum officinale*), daffodil (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*), thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), and wood avens (*Geum urbanum*). Some areas are covered in ruderal, which include species such as blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*), raspberries (*Rubus idaeus*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), and burdock (*Arctium lappa*).

There are collections of mature tree growth scattered around the site, including rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), cherry (*Prunus avium*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), goat willow (*Salix caprea*), and hazel (*Corylus avellana*). Additionally, there are a number of introduced beds which include mature dogrose (*Rosa canina*), coral berry (*Symphoricarpos vulgaris*), cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), and cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster sp.*).

A small, decorative planted bed was also identified on site. This contained mixed species, including New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax*), hebe (*Hebe spp.*), rosemary (*Salvia Rosmarinus*), silver ragwort (*Jacobaea maritima*), periwinkle (*Vinca sp.*) and Viburnum (*Viburnum spp.*), garden thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), an olive tree (*Olea europaea*), Bravo (*Euonymus japonicus*), periwinkle (*Vinca sp.*), and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*).

The habitat on site is also identified for enhancement and is a mixture of patches of amenity grassland, bare ground, a car park, and several decorative plant beds. These are well-tended with signs of maintenance and mowing throughout.

Site Boundaries

The site is bounded by a combination of heras fencing and palisade security fencing, separating the surrounding private dwellings and business properties.

Surrounding habitats

The wider habitat is a combination of private dwellings with adjoining amenity grassland along the northern and western boundary and business properties to the south and east.

The wider habitat surrounding the site is an extension of the private dwellings and the business properties. To the north-west is a small park referred to as the George Bancroft park, however, this does not connect to any wider habitats. To the south is a collection of amenity grassland fields, currently used by the surrounding schools and sports complexes.

A map showing the specific habitat areas is presented in **Appendix 1**.



Photograph 1; A view of the main entrance to the Ambulance Hub, including the western elevation.



Photograph 2; A view of the western elevation as seen from Parkinson Way.



Photograph 3; A view of the southern elevation and entrance to the workshop.



Photograph 4; A view of the southern elevation of the main entrance and offices.



Photograph 5; A view of the eastern elevation of the Ambulance Hub.



Photograph 6; A view of the aerial and mature tree growth in the south-eastern corner.



Photograph 7; A view of the amenity grassland and introduced shrubs towards to the north of the site. Note the private dwellings and business properties to the north.



Photograph 8; A view of the amenity grassland and bare ground to the west of the site. Note the private dwellings and business properties to the north-east of the site.



Photograph 9; A view of the amenity grassland and introduced shrubs to the west of the site. Note the business outlet to the west.



Photograph 10; A view of the mature trees, hedgerow species and car park to the east of the site. Note the business outlet to the south.



Photograph 11; A view of the amenity grassland and ruderal to the south-east of the site.



Photograph 12; A view of the private dwellings to the east of the site.



Photograph 13; A view of the wooden soffit that meets flush with the corrugated paneling of the walls, and the decorative-shaped metal roof features.



Photograph 14; A view of the vented soffits to the west of the building, which evidences a small gap as shown above. Pigeons are able to access the workshops and were present at the time of the survey.



Photograph 15; An internal view of the first-floor storage space with skylight.



Photograph 16; An internal view of additional storage rooms on the first floor. Note that the room is well-sealed with no access from the outside.



Photograph 17; An internal view of the workshop and indoor car parking for the ambulance vehicles. Note the lighting and skylights.



Photograph 18; An internal view of the additional storage rooms on the first floor. Note that the room is well-sealed with no access from the outside.



Photograph 19; An internal view of the office spaces on the first floor of the workshop area. Note the ceiling tiles and internal lighting.



Photograph 20; A view of the lighting behind the ceiling tiles which is likely unsuitable for roosting bats.



Photograph 21; An internal view of first-storey office landing space.



Photograph 22; An internal view of one of the first-storey office spaces. Note there is a small ceiling void behind the ceiling tiles.



Photograph 23; An internal view of the ceiling void above the first-storey office spaces. Note the lighting and no notable access from the outside.



Photograph 24; A view of a small suspected squirrel drey within the mature trees in the south-east of the site.

Protected and notable species

Invertebrates

No notable invertebrate species were recorded, however, given the amount of flowering vegetation, this will likely offer pollinating insects suitable foraging habitat.

Amphibians

Great crested newts are protected by Schedule 2 of the Convention of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended), which provide protection to both the individuals and the areas they use for rest, shelter or breeding. Great crested newts are also a UK BAP and LBAP priority species.

No ponds are present within 250m of the proposal site; therefore, it is unlikely that the site will impact the surrounding area.

Bats

Surrounding habitat and Tree Inspection

The site, given its location and surrounding habitat structure, does not offer any primary bat roosting or foraging habitat. The small number of mature trees and hedgerow species are likely unsuitable and offer little connectivity to the wider habitat.

Therefore, it is unlikely that any bat species will suffer negative impacts as a consequence of the proposed development.

External Inspection

The buildings at the Ambulance Hub are constructed from breeze block with steel support struts and finished with corrugated or molded metal sheeting. The roof is flat with metal paneling and decorative shaped edging. As a result, there are no 'typical' roofing features such as tiles or barge boards.

There are no notable voids from the external view, however, there is access from ventilation soffits present on the western elevation of the workshop. Overall, the condition of the building is good and well-sealed, with no noteworthy apertures or openings allowing access to the spaces within.

Internal Inspection

There are two levels within the Ambulance Hub, the ground floor is largely dominated by workshop spaces with large rolling gates to allow ambulance vehicles into the space. There are some office spaces, storage spaces, toilets, and break rooms for employees on the ground floor. The internal roofing structure is comprised of steel struts and support beams with no notable lining on the ceiling. Several skylights are built into the ceiling and the areas are heavy with human traffic and very well lit.

On the first floor of the main entrance are a number of offices and changing rooms for the staff. These are well-sealed with no roof voids, however, there are voids between the ceiling and the roof, but these are well lit and sealed. There are some additional first-floor rooms comprised of toilets, storage, and break rooms within the two main workshops which are again, well-sealed with no notable bat-friendly features.

Breeding Birds

The site contains some mature hedgerow species and trees along the southern and eastern boundaries, which offer potential nesting habitats for various bird species. Additionally, the fruit-bearing species, such as rowan, may attract wintering and migratory bird species. The mature trees on-site may also provide suitable habitat for nesting birds.

Badger

No signs of badger foraging activity were recorded during the field survey, within the proposal site, or a 30m buffer from the boundary.

Other mammals

The proposed site may present suitable transient habitat for mammal species, evidenced by a small grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) drey. In the south-east corner of the site is a patch of scrub and ruderal with fallen trees and leaf litter, which may provide habitat for hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*).

5. CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed development (within the red line site boundary as shown in **Figure 2.1**) will involve the demolition of the existing Ambulance Hub and the creation of a new building with modifications to the surrounding area.

Positioning, construction, and post-construction impacts are therefore possible upon both the habitats and species within and immediately adjacent to the site. Ecological constraints and recommendations with regard to any development of the site are discussed below.

Protected species

Bats

Due to the lack of evidence and suitable foraging and/or roosting habitat made available by the buildings and habitat within the Ambulance Hub site, it has been deemed as having **negligible** suitability for bats.

Where lighting is necessary for areas of tree/shrub planting, this will be low wattage, directional, low level, and/or shaded to minimise light spill (<1Lux) onto potential flight lines and foraging habitat, to ensure that the overall impact caused by lighting the site is negligible. The lighting scheme will be designed following guidance such as the Bat Conservation Trust Statement on the impact and design of artificial light on bats, and the Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance Notes, to minimise disturbance to bats and other wildlife due to artificial lighting.

Birds

Any potential removal of habitat associated with this development is regarded as relatively insignificant for birds, given the abundance of similar habitat in the surrounding landscape. However, nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments) and it would be an offence to damage or destroy a nest or otherwise disturb a nesting bird.

Because of the possible presence of nesting birds within the site boundary, it is recommended that any necessary removal of vegetation takes place outside of the bird breeding season (at least March to August). Should this not be possible, a pre-works check by a qualified ecologist should be undertaken to ensure that nesting birds are absent.

Some compensation in order to mitigate the loss of habitat may be required; this should be located to ensure linkage to foraging habitat, such as the planting of additional native hedgerows, scrub, and trees within the proposed site and along boundaries.

Other Mammals

Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) may frequent the area during their nightly foraging activity; therefore, it is suggested that any fences erected within the proposed development should contain hedgehog highway gaps to allow free movement between gardens and the wider area.

Biodiversity net gain

As part of a new government initiative, to increase the Biodiversity net gain defined as “development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before”, the following should be considered to enhance the habitat of the site post enhancement.

The introduction of some of the following to the planning designs:

- Bat and bird boxes;
- ‘Bug hotels’;
- Hedgehog hibernacula and gaps in the fencing;
- Flowering plant beds with nectar-rich native plants;
- Species-rich hedgerows.

Please find additional advice including practice and practical guidelines at <https://cieem.net/i-am/current-projects/biodiversity-net-gain/>.

6. REFERENCES

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Phase 1 Habitat plans

