



Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3DH

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment



KWT Consultancy Services



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Report Verification

Client	Kent Wildlife Trust
Site / job	Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3DH
Central Grid Reference	TQ52185636
Report Title	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment
Report Reference	KWTEC/ECOSER002/SevenoaksNR

Quality Assurance

Report Version	Date	Prepared By	Reviewed By	Approved By
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This report has been prepared in accordance with British Standard 42020:2013 “Biodiversity, Code of practice for planning and development”.

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Executive Summary

Background

Kent Wildlife Trust is seeking to obtain planning permission for a new nature and wellbeing centre at Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve.

The proposals will include the development of a new visitor centre with associated car and coach parking areas. The works will impact on a c.2ha area in the south of the Reserve, which is dominated by bare ground with adjacent areas of semi-natural broadleaved woodland and dense scrub.

Five structures within the development footprint will be removed as part of the proposals. Two additional buildings, the existing Jeffrey Harrison Visitor Centre and 'Tadorna' will not be removed at this time.

Under separate proposals, for reasons of public health and safety, it may also prove necessary to remove or replace a disused two-storey bird hide – Tower Hide. The building footprint is 115m² and works would also require limited removal of adjacent ruderal/scattered scrub vegetation and individual semi-mature trees to enable machine access.

A KMBRC desktop study highlighted presence of eight bat species within the reserve and surrounding 1km-radius. A known hibernation roost of Daubenton's bat is located within a bat box on the existing Jeffrey Harrison visitor centre building.

These records suggest that the proposed development may negatively impact the local bat populations through a combination of loss of roosting potential (building and individual tree removal), loss of foraging and commuting routes (loss of woodland edge, tree-lines and dense scrub), and changes in bat foraging behaviour caused by increased lighting (e.g. light emission from glazed sections of the buildings after dark and any increased lighting of car parks or paths).

The aim of this survey was to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment of all structures and mature and semi-mature trees within the visitor centre development footprint and Tower Hide survey area.

Results and Recommendations

Structures.

- B1. Low Suitability. Single emergence survey recommended.
- B2. Broadly unsuitable for bats. However, internal inspection of the building is recommended to further assess the presence of hanging places, timber crevices and/or signs of bats and to determine any need for further survey.
- B3. Low suitability. Single emergence survey recommended. Prior to survey, information regarding the presence of a void above the porch should be obtained.
- B4. Negligible suitability. No additional surveys required.
- B5. Low Suitability. Single emergence survey recommended. Prior to this survey, an internal assessment should be carried out if it is safe to do so given the purpose of the building.
- B6. Moderate suitability. Two presence/absence surveys recommended: one dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey.
- B7 'Tower Hide'. Moderate potential. An internal inspection is recommended of the tower section of the hide, to further assess light levels, the presence of hanging places, timber crevices and/or signs of bats to inform the focus areas for further surveys. On the basis of current information, two presence/absence surveys for void-dwelling and crevice-dwelling bats are recommended, to include one emergence and one dawn re-entry survey.

In addition to those detailed above, further surveys may also be required in order to classify the type and size of any roosts identified.

Trees.

Twenty-seven trees across the two survey areas were found to support potential bat roost features.

Fifteen trees were found to have **Low** suitability for roosting bats. Should any of these trees require removal, soft-felling under ecological supervision will be required, together with appropriate compensation.

A further six trees were assessed as having **Moderate** suitability for roosting bats; should any of these six trees require removal then two surveys including one emergence and one dawn re-entry survey will be required to assess presence/absence of roosting bats. One tree was assessed to have **High** suitability for roosting bats: T27 is located on the western edge of the Visitor Centre development footprint, surveys are recommended to inform the sensitive lighting plan for the development. The tree will require three survey visits, including at least one dusk and one dawn re-entry survey.

Further surveys may also be required in order to classify the type and size of roost. Alternatively where tree climbing is appropriate an aerial assessment of trees with Moderate or High suitability may reduce or remove the need for the emergence or dawn re-entry surveys.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Kent Wildlife Trust is seeking to obtain planning permission for a new nature and wellbeing centre at Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve.

The proposals will include the development of a new visitor centre with associated car and coach parking areas. The works will impact on a c.2ha area in the south of the Reserve, which is dominated by bare ground with adjacent areas of semi-natural broadleaved woodland and dense scrub. The central OS grid reference for the development area is TQ 51942 56702.

The proposals for the site are detailed in Drawing no. 207-PRE-L01: Option 3 indicates the preferred location for the Visitor Centre (Figure 1). Five structures within the development footprint will be removed as part of the proposals. Two additional buildings, the existing Jeffrey Harrison Visitor Centre and ‘Tadorna’ will not be removed at this time.

The proposed new Visitor Centre building will be a three-storey glass-fronted structure, with the third floor being built within the roof-space / vaulted ceiling; the glass-frontage of the building will be north-facing, towards the lake and associated woodland edge.

Under separate proposals, for reasons of public health and safety, it may also prove necessary to remove or replace a disused two-storey bird hide – Tower Hide - located at TQ 52446 56909. The building footprint is 115m² and works would also require limited removal of adjacent ruderal/scattered scrub vegetation and individual semi-mature trees to enable machine access.

1.2 Site Location and Overview

The proposed development area is located within Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve and SSSI, on the northern periphery of Sevenoaks town in Kent. The Reserve is owned and managed by Kent Wildlife Trust and comprises a 73ha area including five lakes and surrounding areas of broadleaved woodland with dense scrub, numerous smaller ponds, wet woodland and reedbed, with a number of bird hides and trails for public use. The river Darent flows through the north of the site. The south-west of the site includes the existing Jeffrey Harrison visitor centre and adjacent outdoor education area.

The reserve is all designated as SSSI and is designated for its breeding wetland bird assemblage and Downy Emerald dragonfly. The reserve also sits in an area identified in the Sevenoaks District Plan as: Area of Archaeological Potential, and Metro Greenbelt.

Maps showing the locations of the proposed development area and the Tower Hide are included at Figures 2a and 2b.

1.3 Survey Objectives

A desktop data search for historical records of bats within the site and surrounding 5km was undertaken by Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC; ENQ/19/537) in

December 2019¹. The search results indicated that ten species of bat have been recorded, with records dating back to 1986. For the Reserve and surrounding 1km-radius there are records of Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*, Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, Natterer's *Myotis nattereri*, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*.

A known hibernation roost of Daubenton's bat is located within a bat box on the existing Jeffrey Harrison visitor centre building.

These records suggest that the proposed development may negatively impact the local bat populations through a combination of loss of roosting potential (building and individual tree removal), loss of foraging and commuting routes (loss of woodland edge, tree-lines and dense scrub), and changes in bat foraging behaviour caused by increased lighting (e.g. light emission from glazed sections of the buildings after dark and any increased lighting of car parks or paths).

The aim of this report has been to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment of:

- The six structures lying within and immediately adjacent to the visitor centre development footprint;
- The Tower Hide structure;
- All mature and semi-mature trees within the visitor centre development footprint;
- All mature and semi-mature trees within a 20m buffer of the Tower Hide structure.

¹ Requested in connection with preparation of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Structures

The six structures within/immediately adjacent to the visitor centre development footprint and the Tower Hide structure were subject to external assessment in dry and still conditions during March 2020 (B1 and the single storey section of B7 Tower Hide were also assessed internally).

The assessment was undertaken by Dr Clair Thackray, Consultant Ecologist at KWT Consultancy Services.

2.2 Trees

All mature and semi-mature trees within the visitor centre development footprint and within a 20m-radius of the Tower Hide structure were subject to a preliminary ground level assessment: all sides of the trees were observed and any features with potential to support roosting bats were further investigated using 8x42 binoculars.

The assessment was undertaken by Dr Clair Thackray and Neil Coombs, Land Management Consultant at KWT Consultancy Services.



Figure 1: Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve. Drawing No: 207-PRE-L01: Option 3 indicates the preferred location for the visitor centre

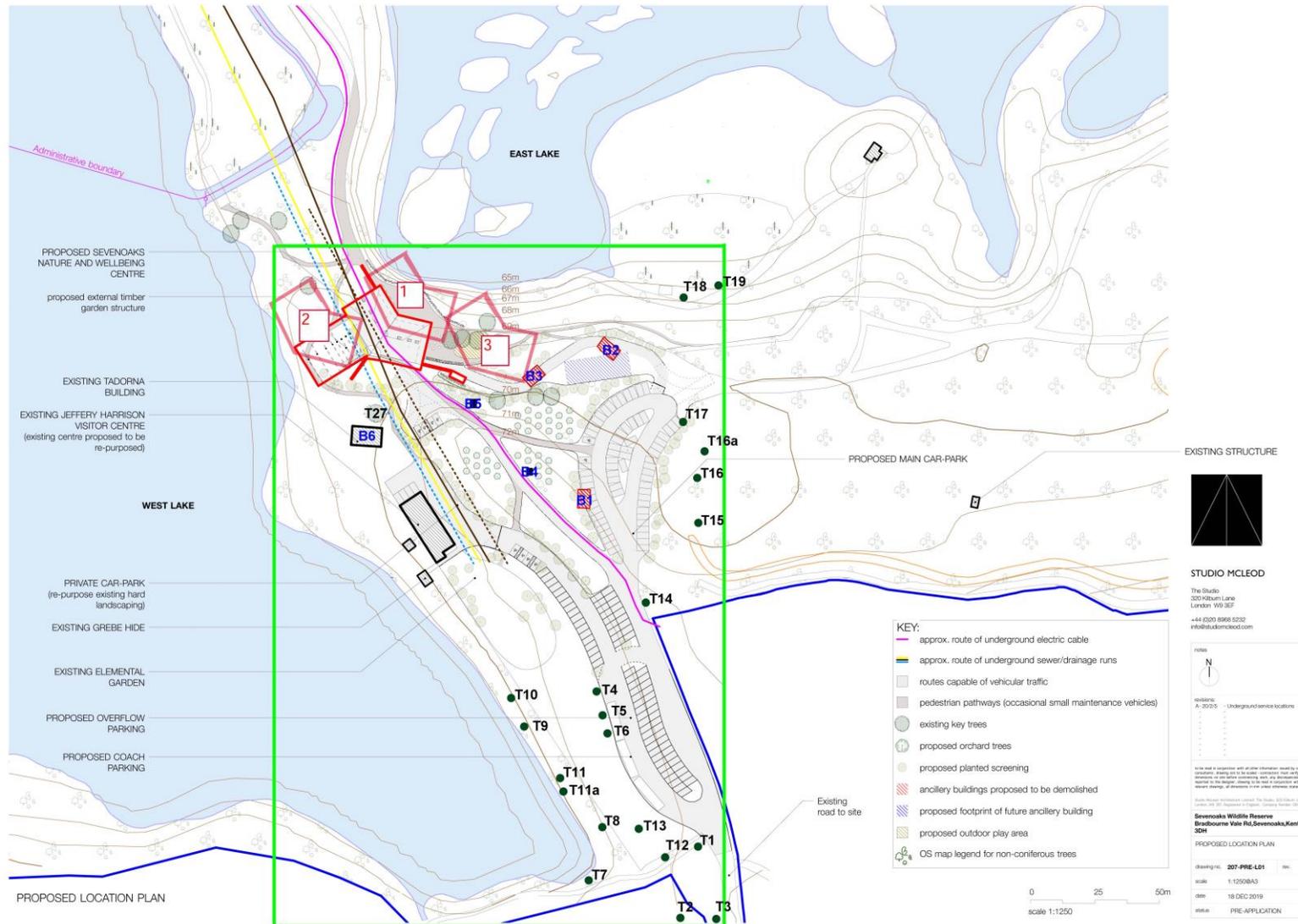
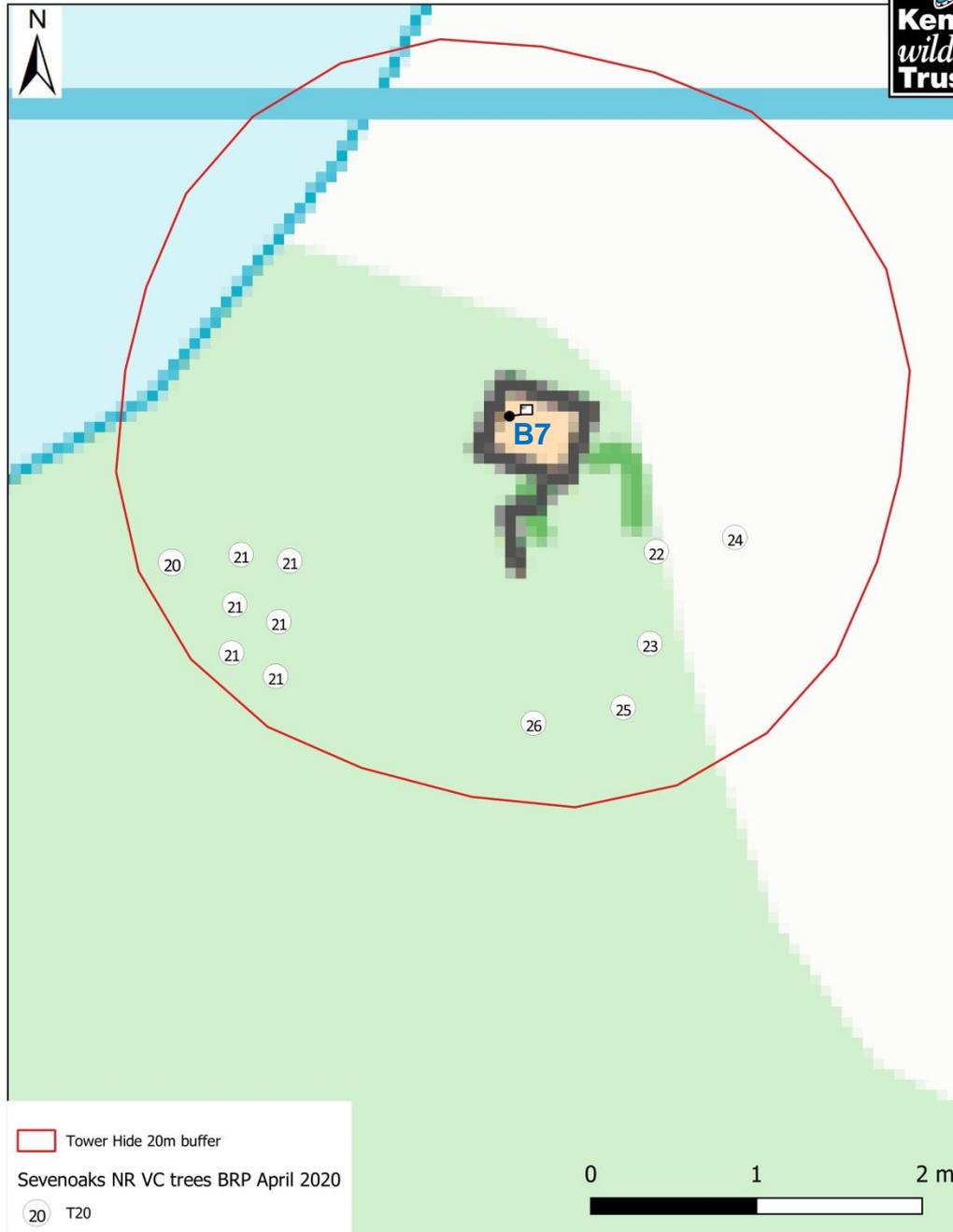


Figure 2a: Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve. Visitor Centre application site / survey boundary shown outlined in green. Six structures assessed are labelled B1 – 6. Trees assessed as having bat roost features are labelled T1 – T19 and T27. (Locations are indicative only)

Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve Tower Hide. Trees / Building assessed for Bat Roost Potential



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Figure 2b: Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve. Tower Hide + 20m buffer survey area (red line). Trees identified as having potential bat roost features are labelled T20 – T26. (Locations are indicative only)

3 RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Structures

Descriptions of each of the structures labelled B1 – B7 on Figures 2a and 2b are given in Table 1 below. Photographs of these structures taken during the survey are included at Appendix A.

Table 1. Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of Structures at Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve

Structure	Description	Suitability	Survey Recommendations
B1	Brick and concrete structure. The roof, doors and windows are all absent and the internal area is well-lit and draughty. Sheltered features for crevice-dwelling species were limited to gaps behind plywood boarding which is fixed to small areas of the concrete partition walls and western outer wall, and gaps above the wooden door and window frames. No droppings or staining below potential roosting features were noted. The floor of the building was covered in leaf litter and dead wood, with occasional self-sown buddleja and items of disused furniture present.	Low suitability for crevice dwelling species - may be used on an opportunistic basis by individual bats.	Single Emergence Survey.
B2	Single storey timber-framed corrugated metal outbuilding. The building was locked and the survey was limited to an external assessment. The corrugated metal roof and walls create a largely unsuitable environment for roosting bats due to the extreme temperature fluctuations associated with this material. Gaps between the timber soffits and metal walls were of suitable size for crevice dwelling species but are considered unsuitable. Gaps into the building were noted above the doorway and at corners of the building. An open-sided extension is located on the western elevation; potential hanging places were noted within. The building is located within a shaded area which may reduce temperature fluctuations and the lack of windows or skylights will create a dark interior.	This structure is broadly unsuitable for bats due its being constructed of corrugated metal. Timber hanging points were noted within the open-side extension and access points into the main building were noted.	Internal inspection of the building recommended to further assess the presence of hanging places, timber crevices and/or signs of bats and to determine any need for further survey.
B3	Single storey building of timber construction with a low pitched roof covered by tightly fitting felt. The building is in frequent use and brightly lit internally due to several large windows. Internally the ceiling of the main room is boarded at the rafters with no void space. The northern edge of the pitched roof covers a small porch; there is potential for a void space above this porch depending on the extent of the ceiling boarding but no access opportunities were	Low suitability features for crevice dwelling bats on the western elevation.	Single emergence survey recommended. Prior to survey, information regarding the presence of a void above the porch should be obtained.

Structure	Description	Suitability	Survey Recommendations
	noted externally. The soffits behind wooden fascia on the eastern and western elevations are open and of limited suitability. A flat roof extension is present to the rear of the building; the building was well sealed with tightly fitted roofing felt. Lifted timber cladding was noted on the western elevation at c. 1m and 2.5m height; on the same elevation damaged timbers provide access to a cavity space behind the timber cladding.		
B4	Two adjacent container structures previously used as public toilets. The containers are of metal construction with flat roofs and tightly sealed metal locked doors. A c.10cm dark gap is present between the two containers but the metal walls do not provide any suitable hanging places. There are two low ventilation points on the roof which have both metal and plywood walls and crevices were noted beneath lifted metal panels.	Negligible suitability for roosting bats due to the thermal instability of the building materials and lack of hanging/sheltering places.	No additional surveys required
B5	Electrical storage unit. The structure is timber-framed and of double-skin construction, with plywood outer walls and an inner wall comprised of asbestos boards covered with plastic sheeting. A cavity is present between the two layers and access into this cavity was noted on the southern and western elevations. The structure is likely to be dark internally due to the lack of windows. The building is flat-roofed and the roofing felt overhangs the soffits; a lifted section of roofing felt was noted on the western elevation. The soffits are all boxed and mostly well-sealed; a split in the soffit was noted on the eastern elevation, and gaps were noted between the wall and soffit on the eastern elevation and between roof timbers at the corners of the structure. A narrow gap was noted at the top of the locked door, providing potential for access into the structure, and there were gaps behind wooden boards attached to the walls on western and southern elevations. Flight lines on the western and southern elevations are cluttered by dense vegetation.	Low suitability features for crevice dwelling bats on the southern, western and eastern elevations.	Single emergence survey recommended. Prior to this survey, an internal assessment should be carried out if it is safe to do so given the purpose of the building.
B6	'Tadorna'. Education bungalow. Red brick built structure with cladding of 'sweet chestnut shakes' covering the walls on all sides. The majority of the wall tiles are intact and tightly fitting; on the western elevation a low number of slightly lifted wall tiles were noted and a small hole at c.2.5m height provides potential access to any space behind the wooden cladding. The roof is single-pitched and covered by	Moderate suitability for crevice dwelling species with a reasonable number of small crevices with potential for regular use by individual bats.	An internal inspection is required to assess any void present. Two presence/absence surveys recommended: one emergence and a separate dawn re-

Structure	Description	Suitability	Survey Recommendations
	roofing felt and 'sweet chestnut shakes' – many of these roof tiles are warped or lifted, particularly on the southern elevation; many of the potential sheltering spaces are small and exposed as the tiles have curled up on three sides. The ridge tiles – also wooden – have larger crevices beneath, and the lead flashing at the base of the chimney has also lifted. Two access holes into the wooden soffit were noted on the northern elevation.		entry survey.
B7	<p>Tower Hide. A single storey hide with an attached two-storey tower. The entire structure is of timber construction with flat roofs covered by tightly fitted roofing felt. Externally the hide supported a limited number of features for crevice-dwelling bats, including a low number of lifted timbers on the southern and western elevations, and gaps between a wooden panel (which covers the tower access door) and the hide wall. All soffits of the hide are shallow and open and considered to have limited potential for roosting. The northern and eastern elevations were not visible during the external survey.</p> <p>The single storey section of the hide is open to the public and thereby subject to some low level disturbance. Internally this section is well-lit due to several open viewing windows; some slightly darker/more sheltered corners are present where windows are boarded and small crevices were noted between ceiling timbers. Access to the interior is provided by the open windows and a small gap was also noted at the eaves on the western elevation. Evidence of bird nesting was noted within the roof timbers.</p> <p>The tower structure has been closed to the public and Reserve staff for at least 12 months. Several viewing windows have been boarded up while many remain open, providing both darker/sheltered corners and potential access for bats at height. The timber construction is likely to provide suitable hanging places.</p>	<p>The single storey part of the hide is assessed to have Low potential for crevice dwelling bats.</p> <p>The tower structure is considered to be of Moderate suitability for both void and crevice-dwelling bats.</p>	<p>An internal inspection is recommended of the tower section of the hide, to further assess light levels, the presence of hanging places, timber crevices and/or signs of bats to inform the focus areas for further surveys. On the basis of current information, two presence/absence surveys for void-dwelling and crevice-dwelling bats are recommended, to include one emergence and one dawn re-entry survey.</p>

3.2 Trees

Twenty-seven trees within both survey areas were found to support potential bat roost features. These are shown in Figures 2a and 2b. Descriptions are included in Table 2 below, with photographs included at Appendix B.

Fifteen trees were found to have **Low** suitability for roosting bats. Should any of these trees require removal, soft-felling under ecological supervision will be required, together with appropriate compensation.

A further six trees were assessed as having **Moderate** suitability for roosting bats; should any of these six trees require removal then two surveys including one emergence and one dawn re-entry survey will be required to assess presence/absence of roosting bats. One tree was assessed to have **High** suitability for roosting bats: T27 is located on the western edge of the Visitor Centre development footprint, surveys are recommended to inform the sensitive lighting plan for the development. The tree will require three survey visits, including at least one dusk and one dawn re-entry survey. Further surveys may also be required in order to classify the type and size of roost. Alternatively where tree climbing is appropriate an aerial assessment of trees with Moderate or High suitability may reduce or remove the need for the emergence or dawn re-entry surveys.

Table 2. Bat tree assessment at Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, March 2020

Tree	Location	Feature	Suitability
T1 Semi-mature (SM) hawthorn – decaying but with live shoots at base.	TN35	Dense thick stemmed ivy	Low
T2 Ivy covered hawthorn	TN35	Dense ivy covering	Negligible – cluttered access
T3 SM Elder	TN35	Dense ivy covering	Negligible – lack of thick stems
T4 Goat willow coppice	TN37	Crevice between branch and stem at 2m height. No staining. Shallow splits on northern and southern elevations do not appear to extend.	Low
T5 Goat willow coppice	TN37	Crevices between stems at 0.5-1m height.	Low
T6 Cricket bat willow	TN37	Branch with lifted bark on western elevation at 7m height.	Negligible – small branch diameter.
T7 Willow sp.	TN39	Split branch on southern elevation	Moderate
T8 Alder	TN39	Thick-stemmed ivy	Low
T9 Alder	TN39	Lifted bark on lower half of trunk	Low
T10 Standing deadwood	TN39 shoreline	Holes on NW elevation	Moderate
T11 Alder	TN39 shoreline	Moderate ivy may obscure features. Tree in open location.	Low
T11a Alder	TN39 shoreline	Tree with bat boxes, no other features	Moderate
T12 Decaying Elder	TN39	Hollow tree with access on southern elevation at low height (<1m). Majority of trunk obscured by dense, thin stemmed ivy.	Low
T13 Willow at southern end of tree line	TN38	Feature at 4m on southern elevation	Low
T14 SM damaged oak	TN41	Lifted bark on several limbs on W/SW elevations at c.3m height. Broken limb on southern elevation - upward facing crevices.	Low

Tree	Location	Feature	Suitability
T15 Willow	TN41	Fallen willow with partially healed scar with crevices at the edge.	Low
T16 Decaying silver birch	TN41	Standing deadwood with woodpecker hole at 5m on western elevation. Fungi present. No staining.	Moderate
T16a Telegraph Pole	TN41	Small wooden box attached to pole, open at base	Low
T17 Decaying silver birch (bird box present)	TN42	Standing deadwood with open top, potentially hollow. Splits and lifted bark noted.	Moderate
T18 Multi-stem alder	TN46	Split limb	Moderate
T19 Decaying alder	TN46	Numerous crevices between limbs and lifted bark. Potentially hollow but limited access features.	Low
T20 SM Alder	TN47 to south of main path	Numerous branches showing signs of decay, tree possibly hollow. Split branch on eastern elevation (small diameter) two holes at 8m and 9m appear not to extend.	Low
T21 Group of SM alder	TN47 to south of main path	Specimens noted to have branch scars and small broken limbs; majority of features upward facing.	Negligible
T22 alder	TN47 to SW of Tower Hide	Holes at 10m and 12m	Moderate
T23 alder	TN47 to SW of Tower Hide	Upward facing damaged branch; hole at 5m on southern elevation.	Low
T24 alder	TN47 behind T23	Hole at 9m on eastern elevation. Numerous damaged limbs.	Low
T25 standing deadwood	TN47 to SW of Tower Hide	Standing deadwood leaning on silver birch; lack of crevices.	Negligible
T26 SM alder	TN47 to SW of Tower Hide	Damaged alder with hollow trunk. Top open, limited sheltered crevices.	Low
T27 Mature/decaying Oak	Adjacent to B7	Frost crack or lightning strike has damaged the main trunk of the tree, resulting in a large cavity extending upward from 2.5m on the western side. At c.6m on southern elevation an upward extending hole appears to lead into the main trunk cavity. On the northern elevation a hole at 5m extends upwards into the lowest western limb	High

Appendix A. Photographs of Structures within Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve



B1 – Derelict brick and concrete structure without roof, windows and doors



B1 – Potential for crevice dwelling species behind hanging plywood



B2 - Timber framed outbuilding with corrugated metal roof and walls



B2 - open-sided extension showing potential hanging places on timber beams



B3 - Timber construction building



B3 - showing gaps behind timbers on western elevation



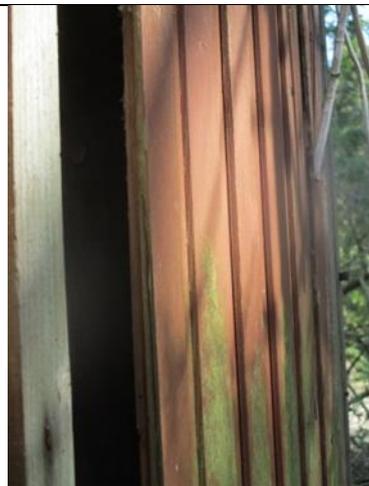
B4 - Metal container structures



B4 - showing roof vents which have partially lifted metal on the top and sides



B5 - Timber structure showing overhanging felt



B5 - Double skin walls with access to cavity

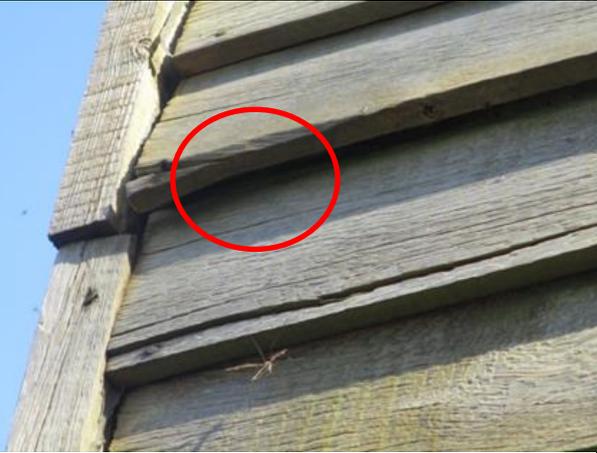


B5 - Crevice in timber soffit box



B5 - Lifted roofing felt on western elevation

	
<p>B6 'Tadorna' – Hole at the end of the timber soffit on north-western corner of building</p>	<p>B6 'Tadorna' – Lifted roof and ridge tiles on southern elevation</p>
	
<p>B6 'Tadorna' – brick built structure with wooden tile clad walls</p>	<p>B6 'Tadorna' - Hole in tile on western elevation at c. 2.5m height.</p>
	
<p>B7 'Tower Hide' - showing single storey and tower sections with broadleaved woodland habitat to the south and west</p>	<p>B7 'Tower Hide' - Scattered scrub habitat to the east of Tower Hide; East Lake lies to the north.</p>

	
<p>B7 'Tower Hide' - showing accessible features on upper storey and boarded entrance</p>	<p>B7 'Tower Hide' - Crevices beneath lifted timbers on western elevation of Tower Hide</p>
	
<p>B7 'Tower Hide' - Potential access point into single storey section of hide</p>	<p>B7 'Tower Hide' - Boarded viewing windows on southern elevation</p>
	
<p>B7 'Tower Hide' - Open viewing windows within the single storey section creating brightly lit interior</p>	<p>B7 'Tower Hide' - Crevices behind roof timbers within single storey section</p>

Appendix B. Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve - Selected Photographs of Trees with potential bat roost features

	
<p>T1 - showing thick stemmed ivy. Low potential.</p>	<p>T4 – Crevices between adjacent stems at low height. Low potential.</p>
	
<p>T7 – Willow with split limb on southern edge of West lake – Moderate potential.</p>	<p>T10 – Standing dead wood on eastern shoreline of West lake. Hollow with holes on NW elevation. Moderate bat potential.</p>
	
<p>T12 - Decaying elder with features at low height – Low potential.</p>	<p>T13 - Feature at 4m on southern elevation with Low potential.</p>

	
<p>T14 - Mature oak showing example of lifted bark. Low potential.</p>	<p>T17 - Decaying potentially hollow silver birch with numerous features. Moderate potential.</p>
	
<p>T18 - Multi-stemmed alder with split limb. Moderate potential.</p>	<p>T19 - Decaying alder - limited access points. Low potential.</p>
	
<p>T20 - Split branch on eastern elevation; numerous signs of damage, possibly hollow. Low suitability.</p>	<p>Example of Low suitability semi-mature alder within group T21 showing upward pointing features</p>

	
<p>T22 - Alder with holes at 10m and 12m – Moderate suitability.</p>	<p>T23 - Low suitability - Upward facing damaged branch; branch collar at 5m on southern elevation, feature does not appear to extend.</p>
	
<p>T24 - Alder with hole at 9m on eastern elevation, does not appear to extend. Low suitability.</p>	<p>T25 - Standing deadwood leaning on silver birch; lack of crevices. Negligible suitability.</p>
	
<p>T26 - Damaged alder with hollow trunk; limited crevices. Low suitability.</p>	<p>T27 - Mature/decaying Oak adjacent to building B7. High suitability</p>