7 ELVETHAM ROAD, FLEET

Bat Survey Report

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Bat Survey Report
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RPS were commissioned by Birchcroft to carry out Phase 2 bat surveys at 7 Elvetham Road, Fleet, Hampshire following a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the site (. The PEA in June 2020 highlighted one building with high potential to support roosting bats. The further bat surveys were undertaken in 2020 and are reported here.

The site is located in Fleet, Hampshire and consists of 7 Elvetham Road along with the surrounding outbuildings and gardens. The site is approximately 0.15 ha in size. The National Grid coordinates for the centre of the site are SU 8136 5518.

The site comprises existing buildings, hardstanding, amenity grassland, rough grassland and native hedgerow. Habitats directly surrounding the site comprise predominantly residential buildings and associated gardens, hardstanding and road networks. A mainline railway line is located approximately 20 metres to the north of the site.

Proposals for the site include the demolition of an existing care home and associated outbuildings, erection of a block of 4 one bedroom and 10 two bedroom apartments with associated access, car and cycle parking and bin store.

Building one (B1) on the site was identified as having high potential for supporting roosting bats during the PEA. Therefore, it was recommended that internal inspections of all known roof voids were completed, where safe to do so, to look for evidence of bats.

Aspect Ecology have undertaken previous bat surveys on site in 2018 and recorded bat droppings within B1. No bat roosts were identified within B1 during the further 2020 surveys undertaken by RPS, no evidence of bats was noted.

However, due to the presence of bat droppings within the loft of B1 in 2018, it is recommended that the roof is soft stripped with an ecologist present as a precautionary approach. In the unlikely event that a bat or evidence of bats is found during works, all works must cease immediately, and professional ecological advice sought. In this event it is likely that a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence would be required from Natural England in order to avoid unlawful actions. The process of obtaining a licence can take up to ten weeks and is subject to requirements of adequate assessment and satisfactory compensatory mitigation.

Four species of bat were recorded around the site during the 2020 emergence/re-entry surveys: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, serotine and noctule. Given the low numbers recorded (<10 passes per hour), it is unlikely that the site represents a significant foraging resource for the local bat population. The site is dominated by existing buildings, amenity grassland and hardstanding. The low activity level could be due to urban location and amount of light generated by nearby buildings and streetlights.

A series of bat boxes are recommended within the final development to enhance the on-site roosting potential. These should be sited with the advice of a suitably qualified ecologist.

Further enhancements to the grassland area such as wildflower seed mix could be included within the final development plan. These additions could improve the roosting and foraging potential for bats across the site.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and scope of this report

1.1.1 RPS were commissioned by Birchcroft to carry out Phase 2 bat surveys at 7 Elvetham Road, Fleet, Hampshire following a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the site. The PEA was undertaken in June 2020 and highlighted one building with high potential to support roosting bats. The further bat surveys were undertaken in 2020 and are reported here.

1.2 Study area

1.2.1 The site is located in Fleet, Hampshire and consists of 7 Elvetham Road along with the surrounding outbuildings and gardens. The site is approximately 0.15 ha in size. The National Grid coordinates for the centre of the site are SU 8136 5518.

1.2.2 The site comprises existing buildings, hardstanding, amenity grassland, rough grassland and native hedgerow. Habitats directly surrounding the site comprise predominantly residential buildings and associated gardens, hardstanding and road networks. A mainline railway line is located approximately 20 metres to the north of the site.

1.2.3 The site location is shown below on Figure 1.1. Aerial imaging available via Google Earth Pro was also reviewed to assess the site in relation to its context in the wider landscape.

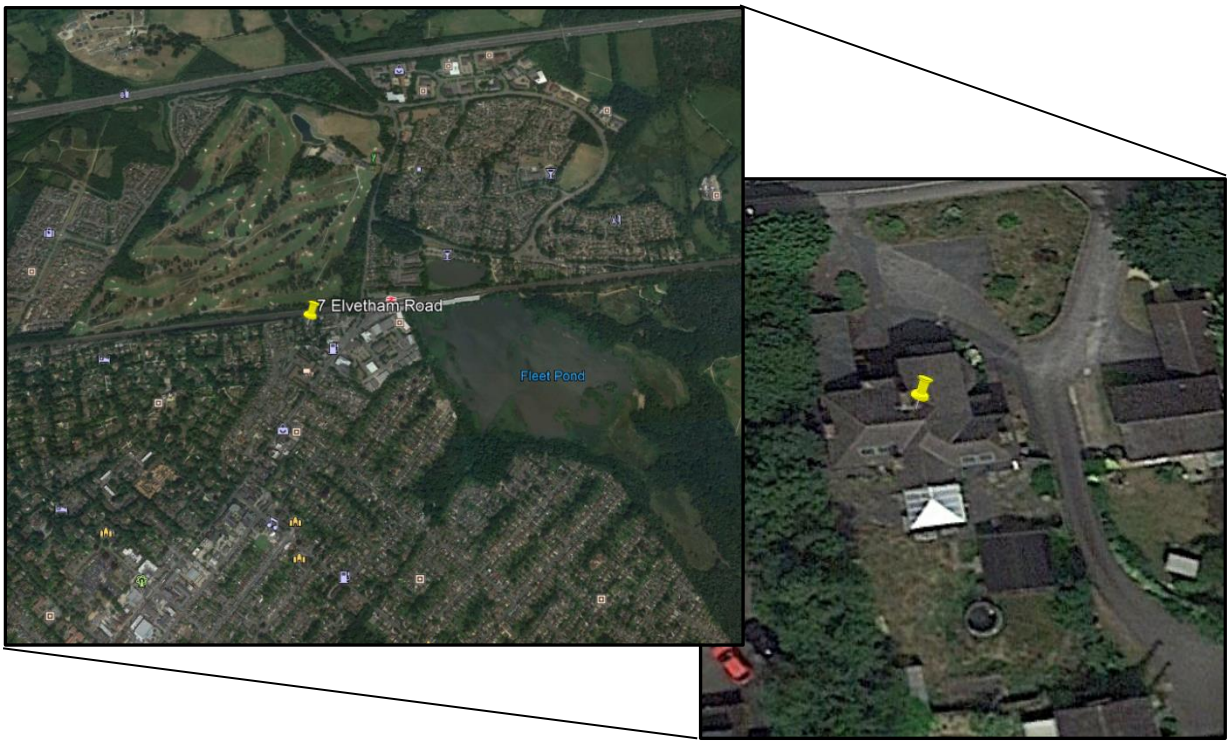

Figure 1.1 Aerial photograph displaying site location (Google, 2020)

1.3 Development proposals

1.3.1 Proposals for the site include the demolition of an existing care home and associated outbuildings, erection of a block of 4 one bedroom and 10 two bedroom apartments with associated access, car and cycle parking and bin store.

1.3.2 The objective of the study was to determine the current use of the site by bats, to inform the future development of the site. The study aimed to determine the potential impacts (if any) of the development by establishing:

- Whether any bats were roosting on site;
- The general level of bat activity on the site;
- The range of species using the site; and
- The best course of action to minimise the impacts of the development on the local bat population.

1.4 Legislation and policy

1.4.1 All British bat species are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. All bat species are also included on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017, as am. Taken together, these pieces of legislation make it an offence to:

- intentionally or recklessly kill, injure of capture bats;
- deliberately or recklessly disturb bats (whether in roost or not); and
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts.

1.4.2 A roost is defined as 'any structure or place which [a bat] uses for shelter or protection'. As bats tend to reuse the same roosts, it is considered within legal opinion that a roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time of the survey.

1.4.3 Barbastelle bats *Barbastella barbastellus,* Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii,* noctule *Nyctalus noctula,* soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus,* brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus,* greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* and lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* are listed as being species of principle importance to the conservation of biodiversity in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

1.4.4 Barbastelle, Bechstein's, greater horseshoe and lesser horseshoe bats are listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive. As such a site may be designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to the presence of these species.

2 METHODS

Internal Loft Inspection

2.1.1 Following the review of a previous ecological appraisal for the site, it was noted the bat dropping were discovered within the loft of building one (B1) in 2018 (Aspect Ecology, 2018).

2.1.2 Following an updated site survey by RPS in June 2020, one building on the site was identified as having high potential for supporting roosting bats. Therefore, it was recommended that internal inspections of all known roof voids were completed, where safe to do so, to look for evidence of bats.

2.1.3 The internal inspection was undertaken on the 03rd June 2020 by Frances Morris (EPS Class 1 bat licence holder), to survey internally for bats. All loft spaces with safe access were surveyed internally using a Clulite and headtorch. Loft voids, where safe to do so, were searched systematically for evidence of bats (droppings; feeding remains; fur/urine staining and live/dead bats). A summary of the findings for each building are provided below and surveys were undertaken within Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016).

Bat Emergence Survey

2.1.4 Further to internal inspections undertaken on the 03rd June 2020, RPS conducted emergence/re-entry surveys on buildings with potential for supporting bats. B1 was subject to three emergence/re-entry surveys (with at least one dawn) between June and July 2020.

2.1.5 Two experienced bat surveyors, led by Frances Morris, and two infra-red cameras paired with static detectors were positioned in four locations. These locations can be seen in Appendix 1.

2.1.6 Surveys were completed between June and July 2020 and included two dusk emergence surveys and one dawn re-entry survey. Table 1 below provides a summary of survey conditions.

2.1.7 Bat activity was recoded using batlogger M detectors and notes taken to determine flight paths and any emergence/re-entry points.

2.1.8 Echolocation calls were subsequently analysed using computer software (BatExplorer) for confirmation of species.

Table 1: Phase 2 bat survey details

Survey date	Survey type	Duration	Weather conditions	Sunset/sunrise time
03-06-20	Emergence	20.57 - 22.42	16°C; Light rain at start; 100% cloud; wind f0	21.12
17-06-20	Emergence	21.07 – 22.52	18°C; cloud 100%; wind f0, dry	21.22
02-07-20	Re-entry	03.24 – 05.14	14°C; wind f1; cloud 60%; overcast	04.54

Limitations

2.1.9 There were no weather limitations during the surveys. At the start of the emergence survey on the 3rd June 2020 light rain was present . This eased and foraging activity was recorded in the nearby area; therefore, this is not considered a limitation to the survey.

Accurate Lifespan of Ecological Data

2.1.10 Most ecological data remain valid for only short periods due to the inherently transient nature of the subject. The survey results contained in this report are considered accurate for two years, assuming no significant considerable changes to the site conditions.

3 RESULTS

Internal Inspections

Building 1 (B1)

3.1.1 B1 was subject to an internal inspection during the updated RPS PEA and all loft voids that were safe to access were inspected for signs of bats.

3.1.2 Three loft voids were present within the building. Two to the north west above the single-storey extension (loft one and two) and a third above the second storey of the main section of the building (loft three):

- Loft one was approximately 6 metres long and four metres wide with wooden beam fink roof truss. Many cobwebs were present with no evidence of bats such as droppings, feeding remains or fur/urine staining. The loft void was well insulated with no obvious gaps to the outside;
- Loft two was located to the south of loft one, within the western section of the building and separated with plaster board. The loft is approximately ten metres by three metres with timber rafters, ridge beams and trussed purlins. The void was well insulated with fibre glass insulation with no obvious gaps to the outside. Most of the loft was bitumen felt lined, although a section of sarking board was visible on the southern aspect. Loft three was located above the second floor of the building in a cross; and
- Loft three was approximately fifteen metres long and two and a half metres high at the apex. Wooden rafters, ridge beams and trussed purlins are present, and the roof was lined with bitumen felt. Water tanks are present, and the loft is largely empty and uncluttered. A gap to the outside was located on the southern elevation. External features on building one with potential for supporting bats are broken and damaged soffit boxes to the north, east and south and lifted tiles to the north and south.

3.1.3 B1 is considered to have high potential for supporting roosting bats. It was therefore recommended that further phase 2 emergence/re-entry bat surveys were completed. Surveys comprised three emergence/re-entry bat surveys with at least one re-entry survey. Surveys must be completed between May and September with at least two between May and August.

Bat Emergence Surveys

3.1.4 Bat activity can be strongly dependent on weather conditions. The surveys were therefore only carried out in favourable conditions when bat activity was deemed to be likely (sunset temperature 10ºC or above, no rain or strong wind). Surveyor positions were located to view features with potential to support bats on each survey, refer to Appendix 1 for surveyor locations. Table 2 below summarises the survey results.

3.1.5 No bats were recorded emerging from B1 during the three emergence and/or re-entry surveys in June and July 2020. During the 2020 survey visits, a total of four species comprising common pipistrelle Pipistrellus pipistrellus, soprano pipistrelle Pipistrellus pygmaeus, serotine Eptesicus serotinus and noctule Nyctalus noctula were recorded commuting high above the site, foraging in surrounding vegetation or heard and not seen around the site during the surveys. Table 2 below provides details of the species, numbers and locations of bats recorded during the Phase 2 bat surveys.

Table 2 Emergence/re-entry survey results

Survey date	Bat roosts identified	General bat activity
03-06-2020	None	The first bat recorded was a soprano pipistrelle at 21.26 which commuted through the site from west to east. Hereafter, a low number of common pipistrelle bats were heard and not seen throughout the survey until 22.36. One serotine was recorded heard and not seen at 21.49 and one noctule at 22.06 was recorded passing high above the site from east to west. No further activity was recorded.
17-06-2020	None	The first bat recorded was a noctule which seen foraging high above the site at 21.21. Hereafter, a low number of common and soprano pipistrelles were occasionally heard and not seen throughout the survey. The last bat recorded was at 22.25 which was a common pipistrelle and was heard and not seen.
02-07-2020	None	The first bat recorded was a noctule which was heard and not seen at 03.47. Thereafter, three further noctule passes were recorded at 03.53; 04.11 and 04.24. No further activity was recorded.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1.1 No bat roosts were recorded within B1 during the 2020 surveys and no evidence of bats noted.

4.1.2 However, due to the presence of bat droppings within the loft of B1 in 2018 during the previous internal inspection, it is recommended that the roof is soft stripped with an ecologist present as a precautionary approach. In the unlikely event that a bat or evidence of bats is found during works, all works must cease immediately, and professional ecological advice sought. In this event it is likely that a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence would be required from Natural England in order to avoid unlawful actions. The process of obtaining a licence can take up to ten weeks and is subject to requirements of adequate assessment and satisfactory compensatory mitigation.

4.1.3 Four species of bat were recorded around the site during the 2020 emergence/re-entry surveys: common pipistrelle; soprano pipistrelle; serotine and noctule. Given the low numbers recorded (<10 passes per hour), it is unlikely that the site represents a significant foraging resource for the local bat population. The site is dominated by existing buildings, amenity grassland and hardstanding.

4.1.4 Given the low numbers of recorded passes during the emergence/re-entry surveys, the site is not of significant importance to the foraging nature of bats. It is considered that development of the site may not have a significant negative effect on bats populations in the area.

4.1.5 The addition of bat boxes could be incorporated within the new development which could also further enhance the potential of the site for bat usage. Bat tubes and boxes (such as the 1FR Schwegler Bat Tube, 1FQ Schwegler Bat Roost, or the Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box ‘C’) could be incorporated within the buildings of the development. These boxes should be sited with the advice of a suitably qualified ecologist.

4.1.6 Further enhancements to the grassland area such as wildflower seed mix could be included within the final development plan. These additions could improve the roosting and foraging potential for bats across the site.

REFERENCES

Aspect Ecology, 2018. *Ecological Appraisal Report*.

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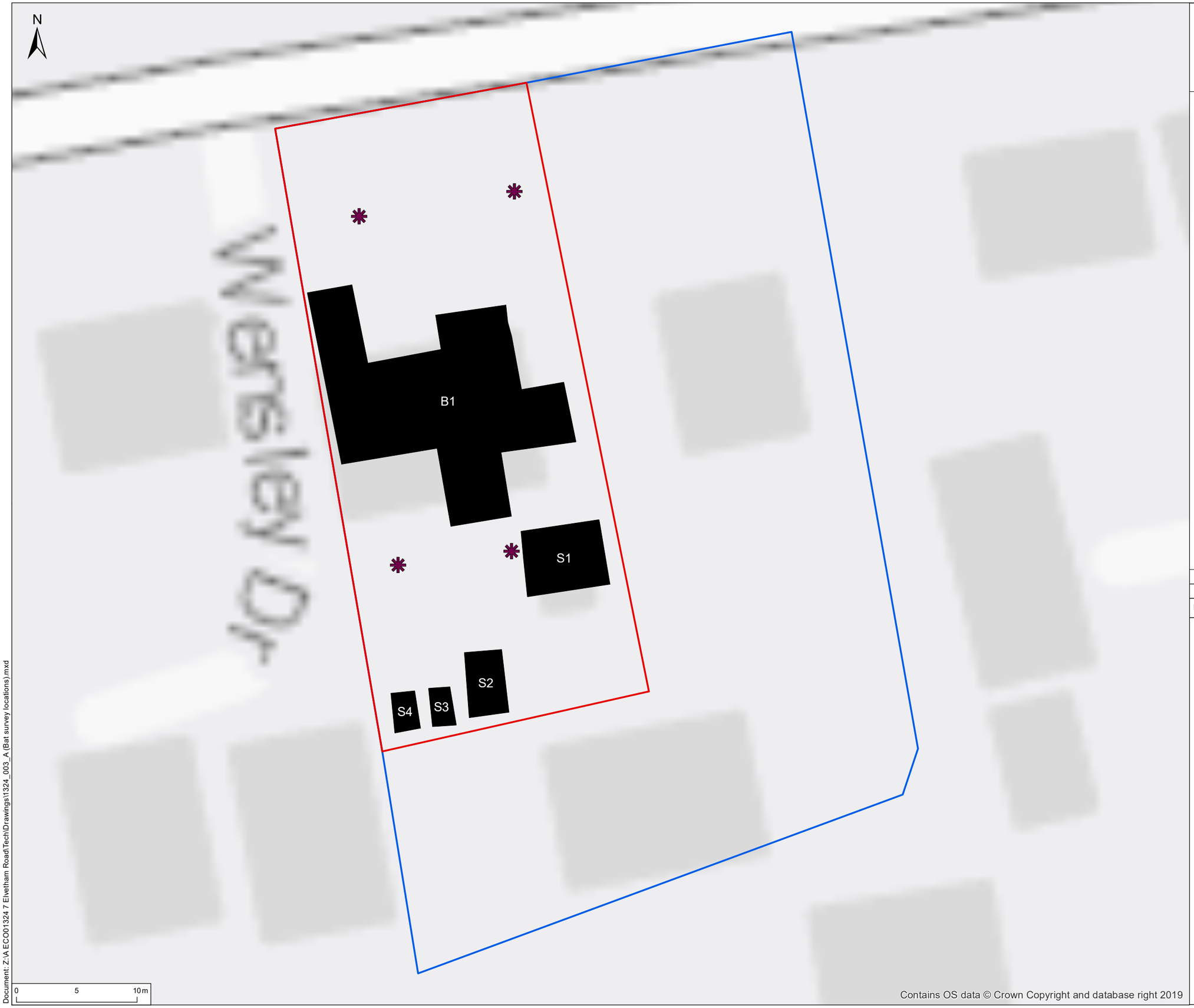
APPENDIX 1
Bat Surveyor Locations



Notes
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Site boundary
Ownership boundary
Buildings
Surveyor location

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

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Project: 7 Elvetham Road, Fleet

Title: Bat surveyor locations

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