PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT

1-3 Chequer Lane
Up Holland
Wigan
Lancashire

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A report for

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July 2023

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION:

1.1 REASONS FOR SURVEY:

Pennine Ecological have been commissioned by Steven Abbott Associates, to undertake a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA) of buildings at 1-3 Chequer Lane, Up Holland, Wigan, Lancashire.

The study is required in association with a proposal to redevelop the site.

The study also includes a barn owl survey and a full evaluation of the ecological significance of the survey and recommendations/precautions where appropriate.

The surveys were undertaken by Ian Ryding a surveyor with over 36 years' experience in a wide range of ecological survey and assessment.

1.2 SITE LOCATION:

1-3 Chequer Lane, Up Holland, Wigan, Lancashire WN8 0DA.

Central grid reference SD 5070 0505.

The location of the study area is shown on Figure 1 in this report.

1.3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY:

The methodology applied is as follows.

1.3.1 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment:

The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on the 7th July 2023. following the methodology outlined in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn)* Collins, J. Bat Conservation Trust (2016)

The survey included the following standard non-intrusive searches for potential roosts in the buildings on the site.

- Searches for feeding remains, staining and bat droppings on floors around the edge of the interior/exterior walls.

- Searches for suitable entry and exit points in gaps between masonry, around eaves, soffits, ridges, flashing and/or under roof sheets etc.

The building's exterior was surveyed from ground level using close focusing Leica 8x32 binoculars.

The survey was undertaken by an experienced preliminary assessor of bat roosts and accredited agent of a Level 2 licenced bat ecologist.

1.3.2 Barn Owl Survey:

The site was visited on the 7th July 2023 and the buildings affected searched for typical signs of occupation using guidance provided by the Barn Owl Trust. It is acknowledged that the survey was undertaken during the 'typical' breeding season of barn owl which is April-October, and it is confirmed that the survey was conducted in a non-intrusive and considerate manner.

1.3.3 Surveyor Experience:

The surveyor and author of this report, Ian Ryding, has over 36 years' experience in ecological survey and evaluation. Key skills include the following.

- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey/Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and National Vegetation Classification Survey.
- Highly proficient field botanist, including some difficult plant groups.
- Mammal surveys including surveys for badger, water vole*, otter*, brown hare and preliminary bat roost survey.

*Over 250km of river reaches surveyed in England.

- Breeding and wintering bird survey.
- Expert witness delivering proof of evidence in respect of nesting birds at public inquiry in 2018 and 2020.
- Extensive experience in great crested newt (GCN) survey, evaluation, licensing and mitigation. Natural England Class Licence WML-CL08 held.
- Ecological Evaluation and Impact Assessments in association with large scale commercial development and civil engineering.

1.4 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS:

There were no significant constraints to the survey of the outbuildings.

The upper floor of the house has a vaulted ceiling and there is no accessible loft space, therefore the general structure of any roof voids that might be present is not known.

Externally, there was no constraint to the inspection of the house, with all elevations and roof visible from ground level.

1.5 BAT ECOLOGY & LEGISLATION:

Bats are comprehensively protected by European legislation.

All British bats and their roosts[1] are also afforded protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and are listed in Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/579).

When dealing with cases where a European Protected Species (EPS) (all UK bats) may be affected, a planning authority is a competent authority within the meaning of the Regulation 7 of the Regulations, that has a statutory duty as the local authority to have due regard to the provisions of the Regulations in the exercise of its functions.

Paragraph 180 of the National Policy Planning Framework (as revised in July 2021) states:

[1] The term roost is generically referred to as a place that bat/s use for the any of the above reasons, however it should be noted that under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019) (EU Exit) (Regulation 43 (d) the term roost is not used but refers to "*a breeding site or resting place of such an animal"* and is afforded legal protection. The roost, breeding site or resting place of bats, which ever terminology is used is legally protected whether or not bats are in occupation.

180. 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 reasons63 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.*

Use of Buildings by Bats:

a) Summer breeding roost.
b) Hibernation.
c) Transitional or temporary roost.

Roost selection is often closely correlated to suitable foraging habitat within a reasonable commuting distance from the roost and different sites are used depending upon insect densities and abundance, climatic conditions can also affect their ability to successfully forage. All British bats are insectivorous.

Up to eleven bat species have been regularly recorded in Lancashire, most of which use built structures, notably occupied residential properties for roosting. The most frequently encountered species is the Pipistrelle bat; its abundant status in Lancashire is reflected throughout the UK.

PART 2 SURVEY RESULTS:

2.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The buildings affected are a 19th century cottage and former butcher's shop, a garage, and a series of ancillary commercial buildings associated with the butchery and catering business that formally operated on the site.

- The house and former shop has 'moderate' bat roost potential and further survey is required.

- The garage and ancillary buildings being previously used in food processing are sealed from bat ingress and largely of steel sheet construction, all have 'negligible' bat roost potential.

- No evidence of nesting/roosting barn owl was found during the survey, and it can be conclusively stated that the buildings affected have no value for the species.

- No evidence of other nesting birds including swallow was found during the survey.

2.2 PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT:

The preliminary bat roost survey was undertaken on the 7th July 2023 following the methodology outlined in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn)* Collins, J. Bat Conservation Trust (2016)

The survey included standard non-intrusive searches for potential roosts in the buildings on the site. See the location plan in the appendix for the location of the buildings surveyed.

General Description:

The buildings affected by the proposal are a 19th century stone built former butcher's shop and attached cottage, and a connected group of ancillary buildings associated with the former business.

The house sits adjacent to Chequer Lane, whilst the ancillary buildings are located in a yard area at the back of the property.

The buildings are described in detail below.

Building 1 (B1):

The shop and house are estimated to have been constructed in the second half of the 19th century.

The building is of solid stone construction with no cavity, the roof is of slate and has a 'roll top' ridge typical of the period. The ridge is firmly bedded on to the roof, and all joints pointed up.

There is a small flat-roofed porch extension off the southern gable, and another extension/connecting building off the back of the property. (See B2).

The owner confirmed that the upper rooms have vaulted ceilings and there is no accessible loft space.

There is an integral stone gutter on the front elevation and no fascia boards or soffits. The rear elevation has a timber fascia board its entire length.

There are two chimney stacks, one of which appears redundant and has mortar gaps in the upper brick courses.

The verges are mortared and a timber batten is strapped to the outer edge of the roof on its above the northern gable, presumably to prevent slates lifting during strong winds.

There is a well maintained covering of ivy on one of the gable elevations.

Potential roost features include the following.

- Several small gaps below the slates on both aspects of the roof.
- Gaps at the verge where mortar has fallen out on both gable elevations.
- Wide gaps behind the fascia board on the rear elevation where bats might be able to access gaps below the slates via the wall plate.
- There are gaps below the batten on the roof, however this is an exposed feature and any roosting here would be entirely opportunistic and by very occasional singular bats only.
- One of the chimney stacks has mortar gaps along its top course that are probably subject to rain ingress.

The presence of good foraging in the park opposite and locally might generate an uptake of use, and overall, the bat roost potential in B1 is considered to be 'moderate' for crevice-dwelling bats.

The ivy isn't on the southern gable whilst locally extensive isn't particularly thick and offers little shelter. The ivy is kept neatly trimmed and has 'negligible' bat roost value.

Building 2 (B2):

This is a collective target note that covers a series of interconnected buildings formerly used in connection with the butchers and catering business that operated from the site.

The buildings include cold stores, food/meat processing areas, food storage areas, sealed modular containers and staff welfare facilities.

The buildings are generally steel portal frame construction with some walls of brick and concrete block, and others clad in 'plastisol' coated box profile sheeting.

The roofs are box profile steel or are flat sealed units.

The buildings are well sealed and profile fillers are extensively used to prevent ingress of any fauna into the food processing and storage areas or fabric of the buildings.

A single-storey building with cement-rendered walls and a flat roof* connects the house/shop to the main processing buildings, this building has a tight-fitting UPVC fascia board with no gaps. A narrow walkway between the buildings is also present.

*The roof is pitched immediately where it connects to the back of the house, however it is still felted. Lead flashing overlaps the felt its entire length.

The buildings are highly unsuitable for bat habitation being sealed and having surfaces where bats cannot land and an absence of suitable external niches where bats might possibly roost.

Overall bat roost potential in B2 is considered to be 'negligible'.

Building 3 (B3):

This is a single storey garage with an apex roof that is connected to the single storey porch on the house.

The garage is relatively modern and of brick construction with a standard concrete tile roof and matching ridge. There are no gaps between the slates and the ridge is mortared and pointed throughout.

There are steel verge cappings and a dry verge system on the gable elevations.

There are timber soffits that fit tightly to the walls with no gaps.

The garage has a modern UPVC door with no gaps that might allow bat ingress.

Bat roost potential in B2 is considered to be 'negligible'.

An internal/external search of the buildings revealed no bat droppings or feeding remains.

Foraging Areas:

The buildings are located opposite a park area with trees and shrubs of varying size, areas of coarse grassland, tall herb, and a fishing pond, which potentially provide good foraging opportunities for bats locally.

Very extensive good foraging habitat is present at Beacon Country Park approximately 400m north of the site.

Conclusions:

Based on the condition of the buildings, the number and quality of potential roost features noted and the level of potential foraging locally, it is concluded that Building 1 has 'moderate' bat roost potential.

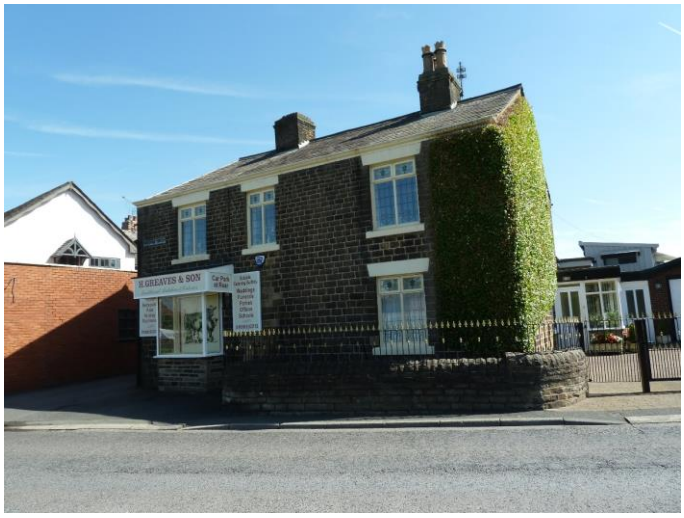
The group of connected buildings forming B2 and the garage (B3), all have 'negligible' bat roost potential.

As B1 has 'moderate' bat roost potential, in line with the BCT guidance further survey is required.

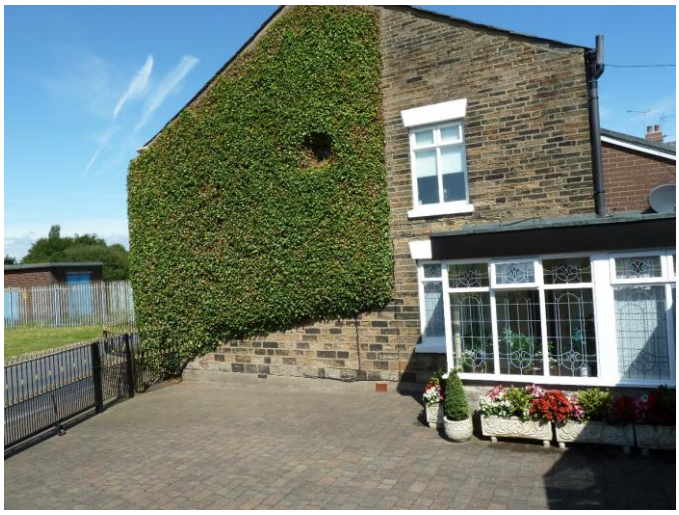
The locations of the buildings surveyed are shown on Map 1 in the appendix. The plans submitted with the planning application should be referred to in respect of the detailed proposals.

The photographs below show the general conditions in the buildings surveyed.

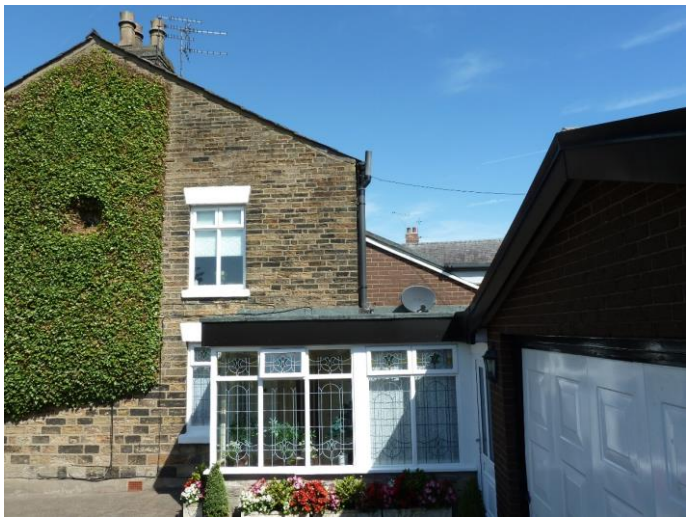
Site Photographs: Bats:



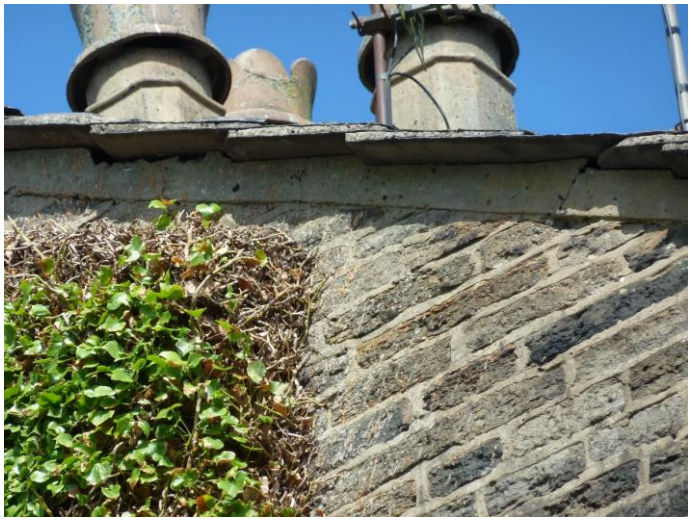
Photograph 1: – B1 general view front elevation.



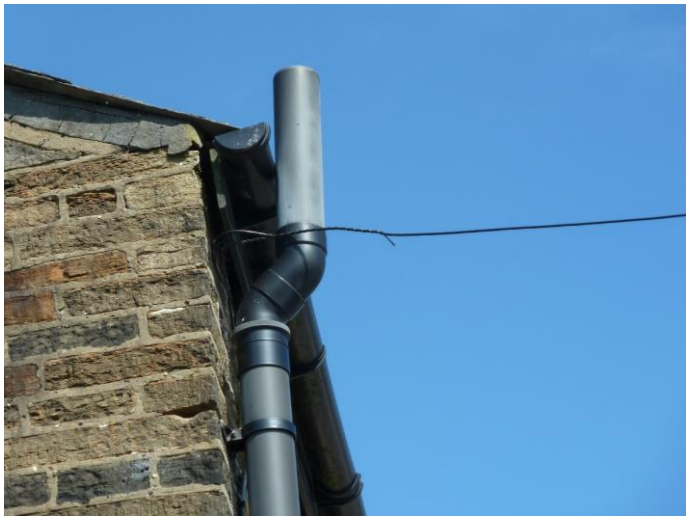
Photograph 2: – B1 General view – south gable elevation.



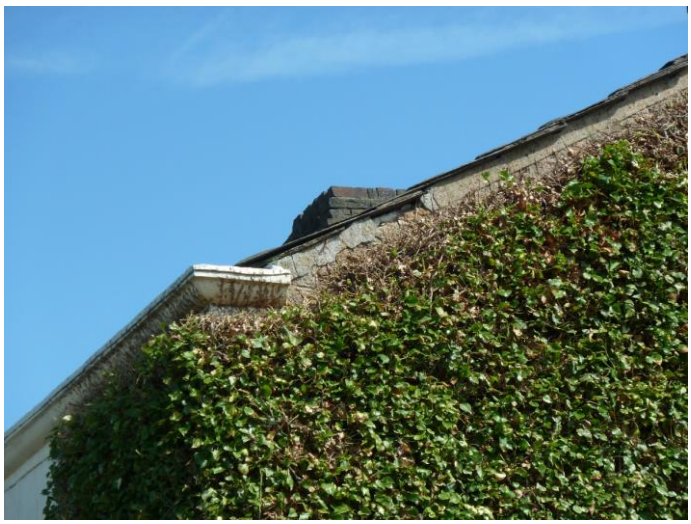
Photograph 3: – B1 General view – south gable elevation.



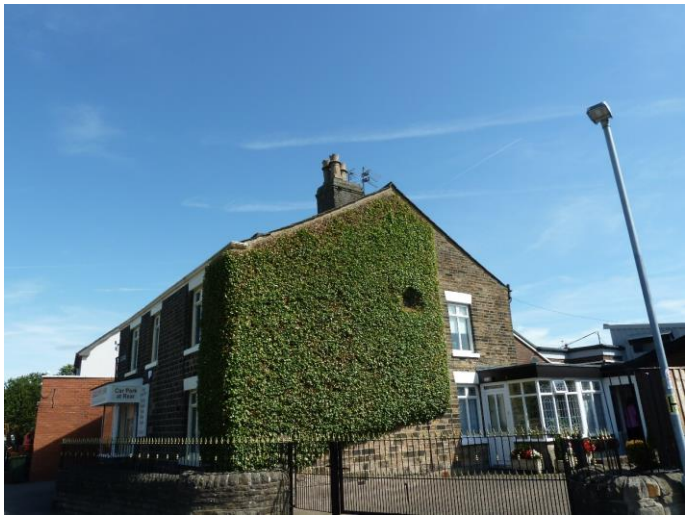
Photograph 4: – B1 mortar gap at verge – south gable elevation.



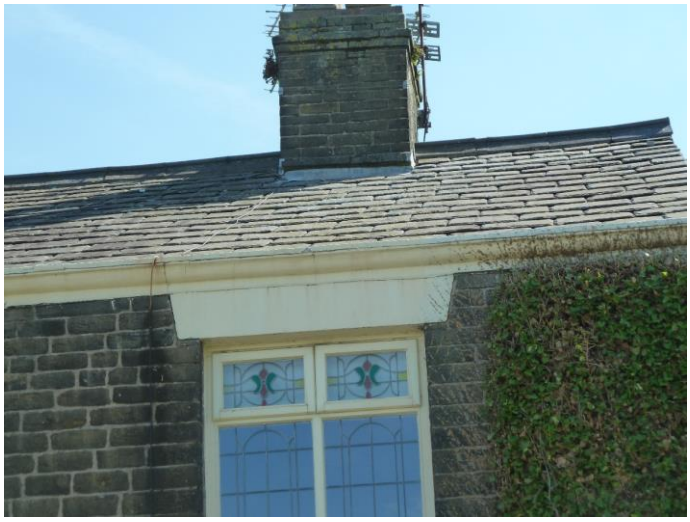
Photograph 5: – B1 corner of south gable and east elevation – wide gap behind fascia board.



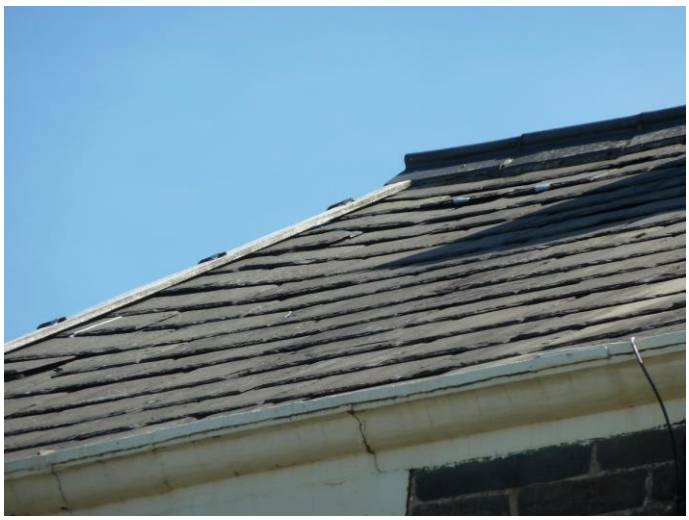
Photograph 6: – B1 south gable gap between slate at verge.



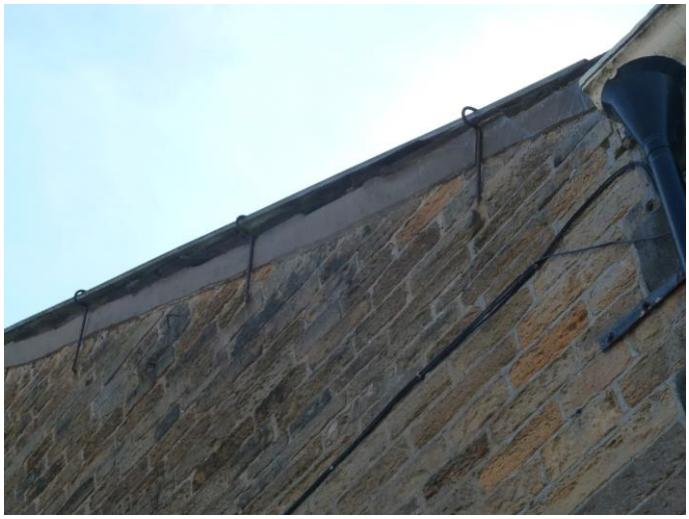
Photograph 7: – B1 general view – south gable elevation.



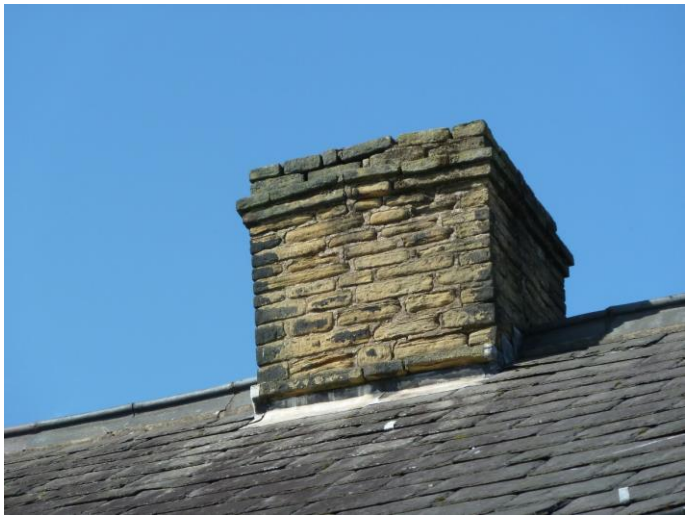
Photograph 8: – B1 general view of roof from across road.



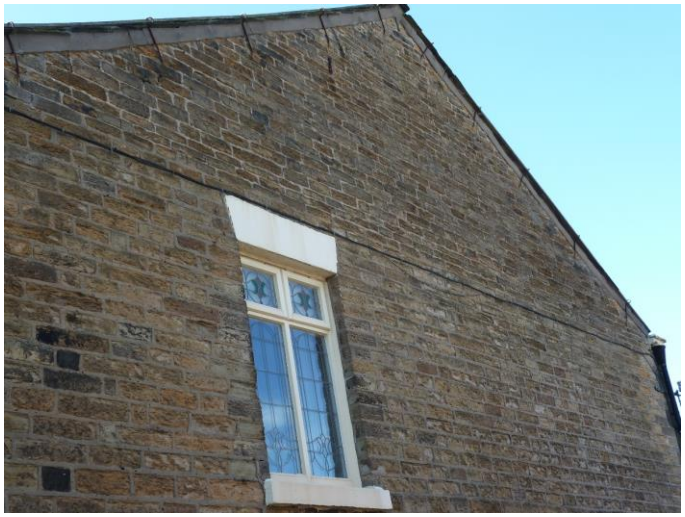
Photograph 9: – B1 gaps below slates – front elevation + small gap below batten (exposed).



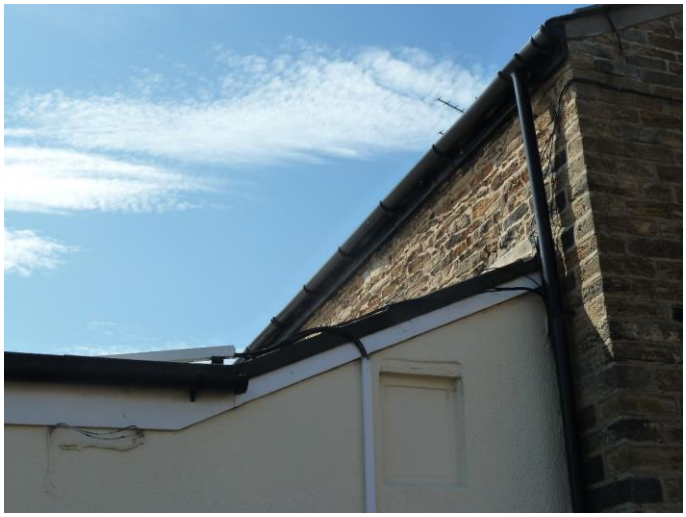
Photograph 10: – B1 mortar gap at verge on north elevation, strapping on batten visible.



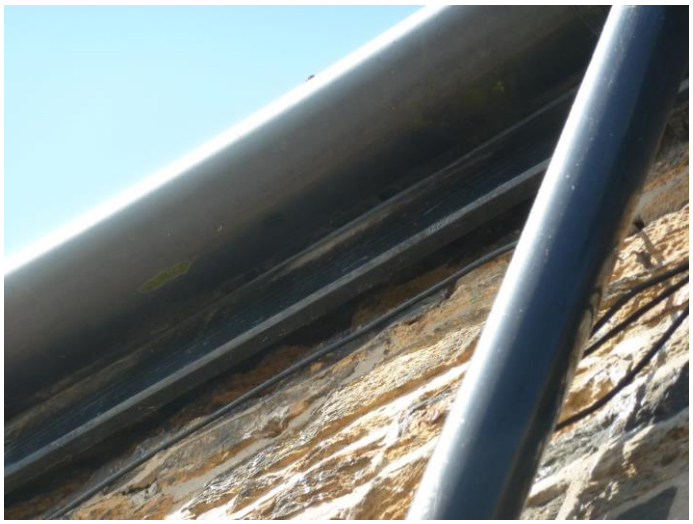
Photograph 11: - B1 chimney stack with mortar gaps along top course – probably subject to rain ingress.



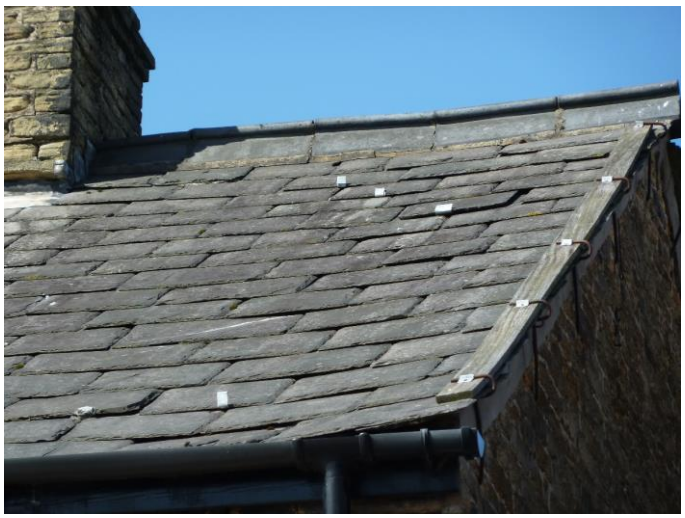
Photograph 12: – B1 north gable elevation general view.



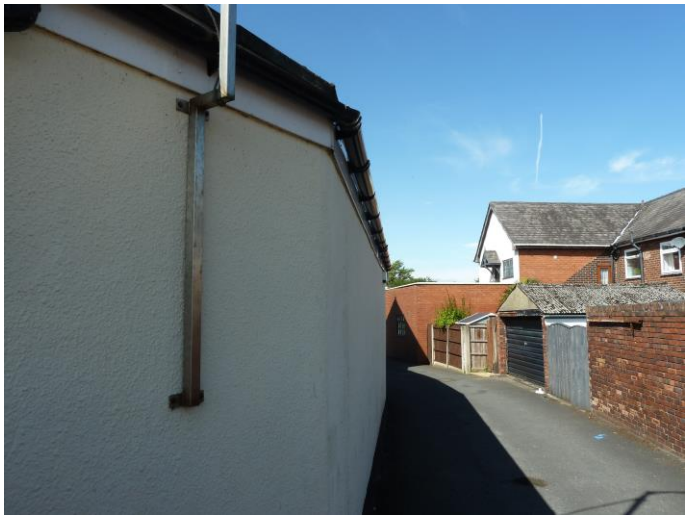
Photograph 13: – B1 gap behind fascia board east (rear) elevation – potentially leads to wall plate. The connecting rendered building is B2.



Photograph 14: – B1 gap behind fascia board east (rear) elevation – potentially leads to wall plate.



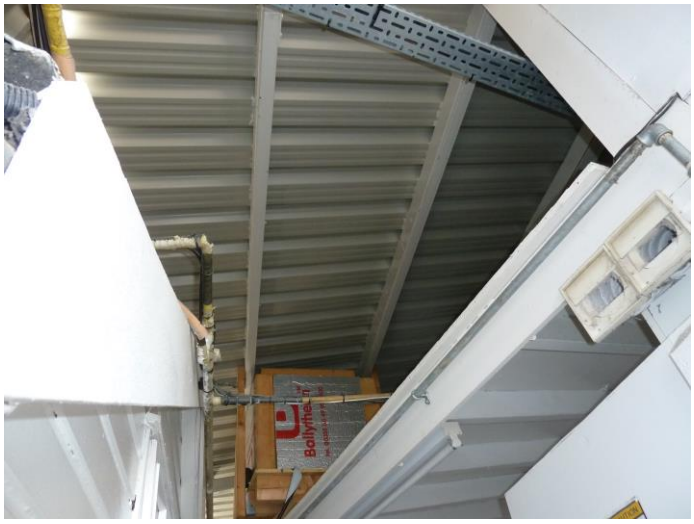
Photograph 15: – B1 roof rear elevation – several gaps below/between slates.



Photograph 16: - B2 the single storey flat-roofed building to the rear of B1. All fascia bords tight fitting, no gaps.

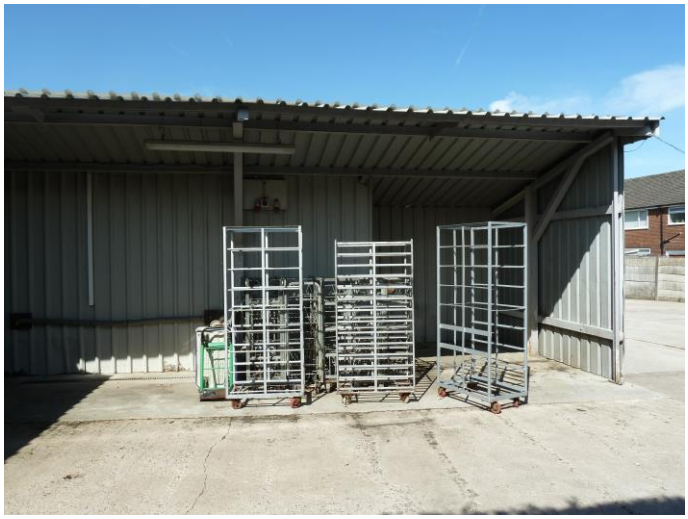
Photograph 17: - B2 general view of construction type of food preparation and storage areas.

Photograph 18: - B2 general view of construction type of food preparation and storage areas.

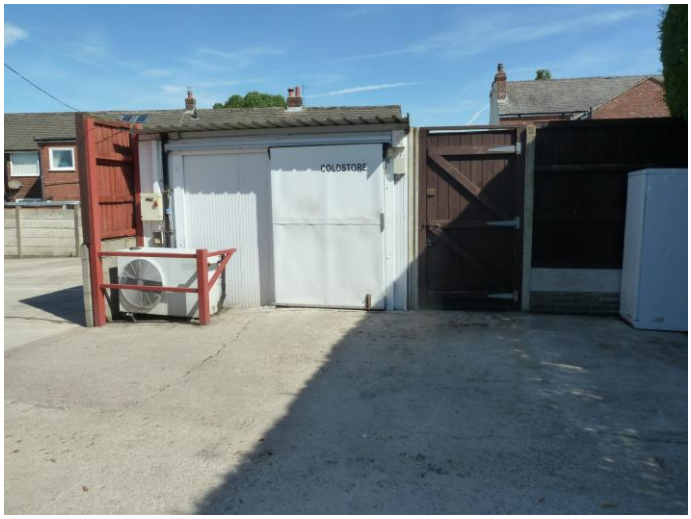


Photograph 19: - B2 general internal view of austere construction type.

Photograph 20: - B2 general view of construction type, austere, sealed units, no gaps.



Photograph 21: - B2 general view of construction type of outdoor storage area. austere, single-skin, no gaps or void spaces.

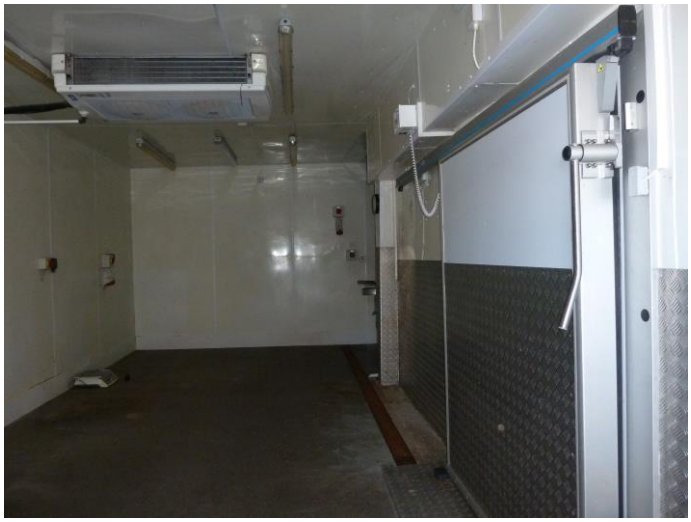


Photograph 22: - B2 general view of construction type, austere, sealed units, no gaps.

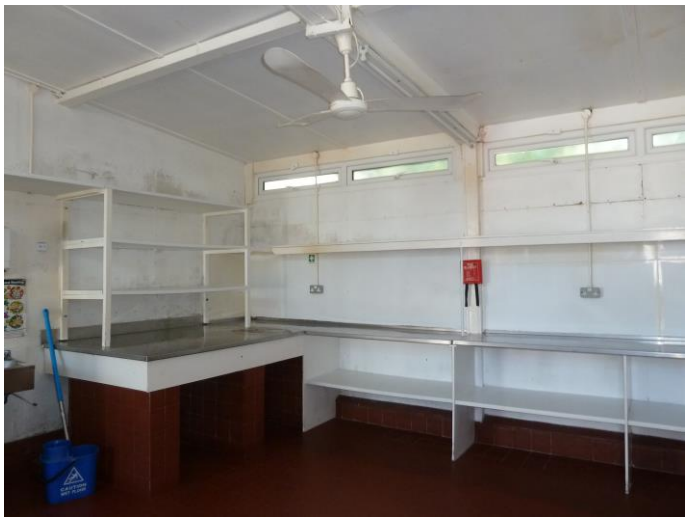
Photograph 23: - B2 general view of construction type of outdoor storage area. austere, single-skin, no gaps or void spaces.

Photograph 24: - B2 general view of construction type – sealed units, no gaps or means of bat access.

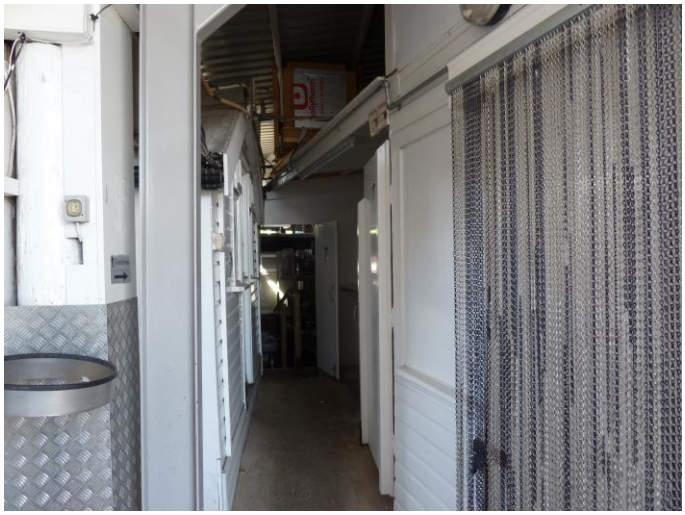
Photograph 25: - B2 general view of construction type of food preparation and storage areas.



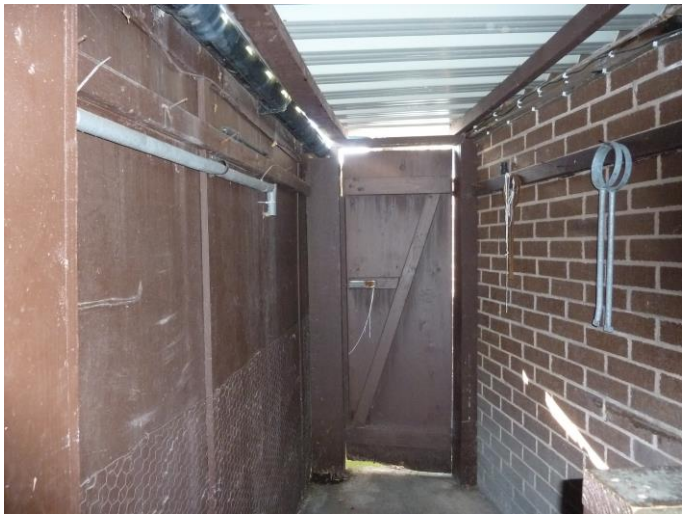
Photograph 26: - B2 internal view of food preparation and storage areas.



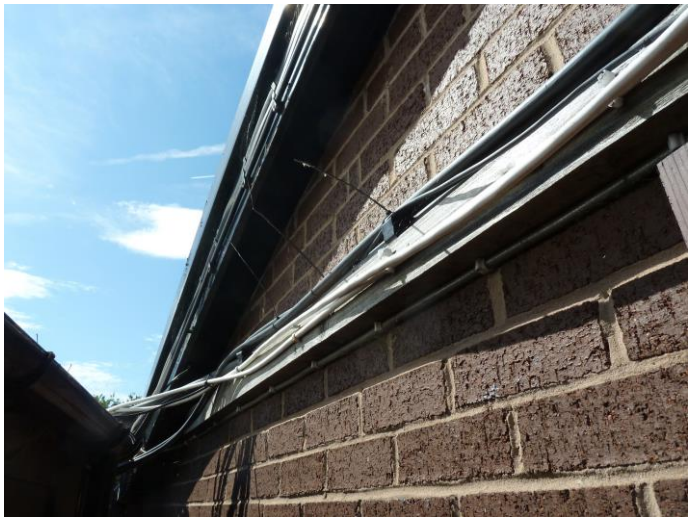
Photograph 27: - B2 internal view of food preparation and storage areas.



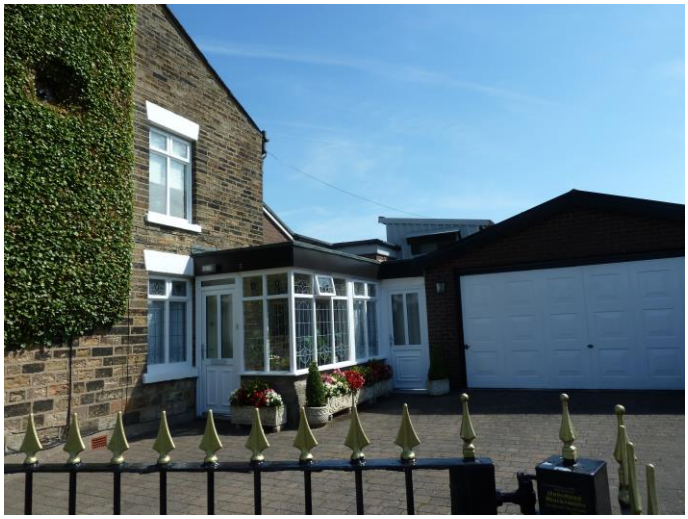
Photograph 28: - B2 internal view of food preparation and storage areas.



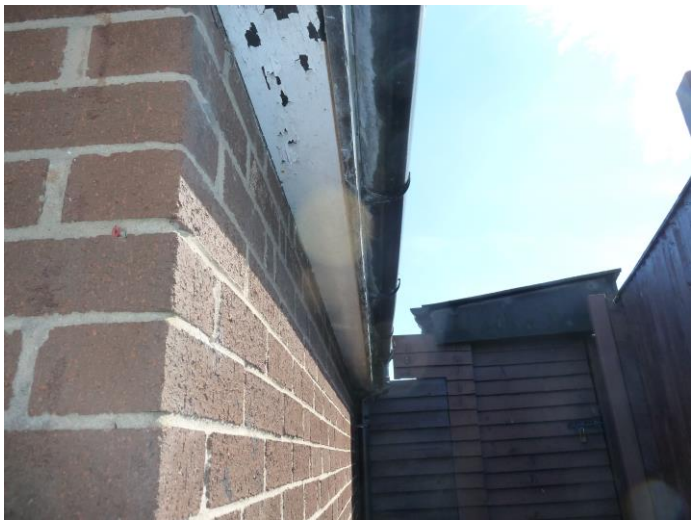
Photograph 29: - Connecting passageway to B2 along the side of B3. No gaps or void spaces and high levels of natural light.



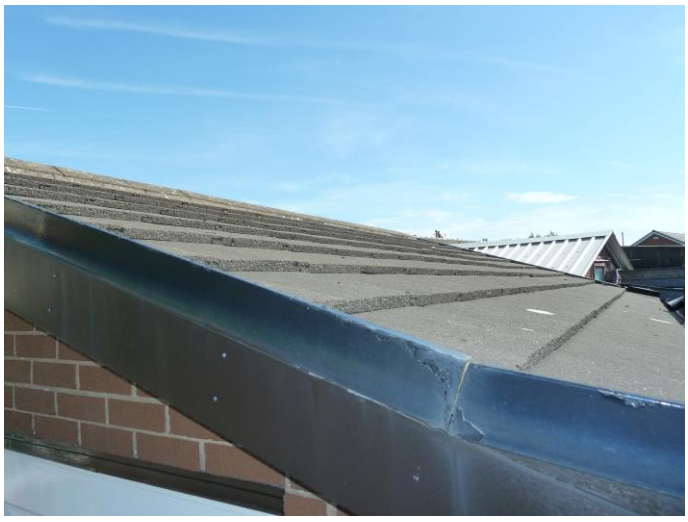
Photograph 30: - B3 rear elevation with soffit box fitted tight to wall. Steel verge capping over the top of soffit fascia has a gap but is unsuitable for roosting bats due to high temperature variations.



Photograph 32: - B3 front elevation.



Photograph 33: - B3 south elevation with entrance to covered passageway visible. (See photo 29)



Photograph 34: - B3 front elevation with steel verge cap fixed to the wall and dry verge system above. Roof is in very good condition with no gaps.

2.3 BARN OWL SURVEY:

The buildings on site were assessed in respect of nesting/roosting barn owl and were subject to standard searches for the following features.

- Presence of owls.
- Potential nest sites.
- Potential roosting sites.
- Faecal splashing on walls floors and beams.
- Presence of barn owl pellets and feathers.

The buildings are described in the bat survey, however, in addition, the following statements can be made.

Barn owl cannot access the interior of any of the buildings on the site.

Barn owl could access some of the open outdoor storage areas, however, no sign of use was present and given the site's location the likelihood of them doing so is considered remote.

2.4 OTHER BIRDS:

No evidence of current or historical nesting by swallows, house martin or swift was observed during the survey.

There was no breeding by house sparrow or any other species noted. House sparrow might be able to utilise gaps behind the fascia board of the house for nesting.

PART 3 SUMMARY EVAULATION & RECOMMENDATIONS:

3.1 SUMMARY EVALUATION OF FINDINGS:

The field survey and evaluation of the site revealed the following information.

3.1.1 Bats:

The proposal affects a single building (B1) with 'moderate' value for roosting bats, therefore, adverse effects may occur as a result of the proposed development of the site.

Roost suitability in Buildings B2 and B3 are considered to be 'negligible' on account of the lack of suitable roost features.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following section outlines any further survey, mitigation or precautions required in respect of the survey findings.

3.2.1 Bats:

The survey has determined that B1 has 'moderate' bat roost potential, therefore, in line with the recommendations provided in the BCT Good Practice Guidelines (2016)*, **further bat surveys are required to determine the level of use by bats. These surveys must be undertaken prior to determination of planning consent, they cannot be subject to planning conditions.**

**Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn)* Collins, J. Bat Conservation Trust (2016).

It is recommended that two dusk surveys are undertaken of B1 and led by suitably experienced/licenced ecologists. The surveys must be undertaken between May - September with at least one of the surveys undertaken between May - August. See BCT guidance on Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1 Recommended timings for presence/absence surveys to give confidence in a negative result for structures (also recommended for trees but unlikely to give confidence in a negative result).

Low roost suitability	Moderate roost suitability	High roost suitability
May to August (structures) No further surveys required (trees)	May to September[a] with at least one of surveys between May and August[b]	May to September[a] with at least two of surveys between May and August[b]

[a] September surveys are both weather- and location-dependent. Conditions may become more unsuitable in these months, particularly in more northerly latitudes, which may reduce the length of the survey season.

[b] Multiple survey visits should be spread out to sample as much of the recommended survey period as possible; it is recommended that surveys are spaced at least two weeks apart, preferably more, unless there are specific ecological reasons for the surveys to be closer together (for example, a more accurate count of a maternity colony is required but it is likely that the colony will soon disperse). If there is potential for a maternity colony then consideration should be given to detectability. A survey on 31 August followed by a mid-September survey is unlikely to pick up a maternity colony. An ecologist should use their professional judgement to design the most appropriate survey regime.

Any mitigation and licencing, if required, will be guided by the findings of the dusk bat surveys.

Depending on the outcome of these surveys, data in respect of bats should be obtained from LERN in relation to this study.

3.2.2 Birds:

No current or historical evidence of barn owl use was found to be present in the buildings surveyed and no recommendations for barn owl are provided.

In regard to other birds, in order to generate an uplift in biodiversity, it is recommended that integrated house sparrow terraces are provided in the new buildings on their north or eastern elevations.

REFERENCES:

A. J. Mitchell-Jones & A. P. McLeish (eds.) (2004) *Bat Workers Manual – 3rd Edition 2004*. JNCC.

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn)* Bat Conservation Trust.

DEFRA (2006) Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 – Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England. DEFRA/Natural England

English Nature (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines,* English Nature.

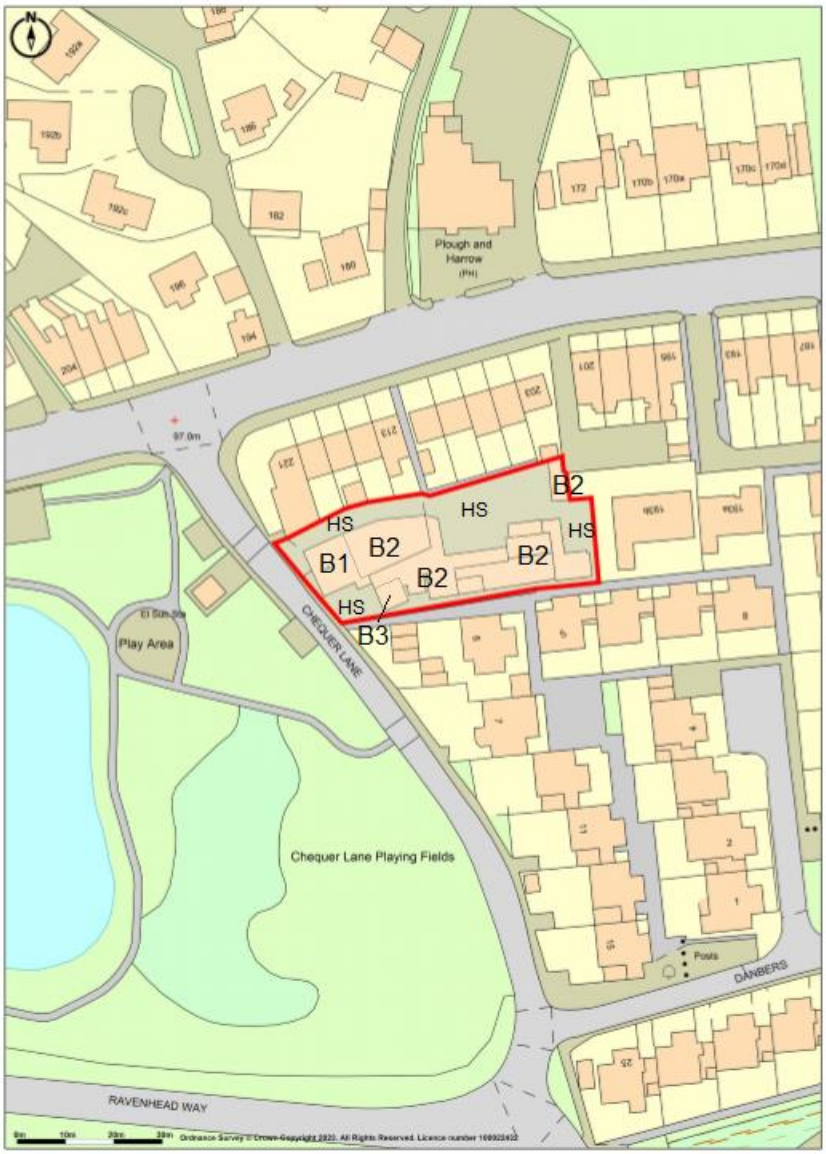
Lancashire County Planning Department, (1998) *Biological Heritage Sites. Guidelines for Selection.* Lancashire County Council

Nature Conservancy Council (1990) *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A Technique for Environmental Audit*. Nature Conservancy Council.

Appendix 1:

Site Location Plan

Site Location Plan
Former Butchers, 1-3 Chequer Lane, Up Holland, Skelmersdale, WN8 0DA
Plan Ref: SAA.3890.1



Promap LANDMARK INFORMATION

Plotted Scale - 1:1250. Paper Size – A4

Map Key:
B1 Building 1 - House
B2 Building 2 - Former processing/storage areas
B3 Building 3 - Garage

HS Hardstanding