Former George Hotel, Duke Street, Southport

Bat Report



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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Purpose and Scope of this Report

- RammSanderson Ecology Ltd (RS) were commissioned by Central England Cooperative, via DB3 architects, to undertake a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA) and subsequent nocturnal bat emergence surveys to determine presence/likely absence of bat roosts at a former public house and hotel, known as the George Hotel, to be re-developed (hereafter referred to as the Scheme), located on Duke Street, Southport. All land situated within the red line of the Scheme is hereafter referred to as the Site and is shown on Figure 1.
- This appraisal is based on a review of the development proposals provided by the Client, and surveys of the Site. The aims of this survey and report are to:

Investigate the presence / likely absence of bats on Site or in the immediate vicinity; Identify potential impacts on bats (if present); and Provide outline recommendations for mitigation or compensatory measures where applicable.

- This report pertains to these results only; recommendations included within this report are the professional opinion of an experienced ecologist and therefore the view of RammSanderson Ecology Ltd.
- ii The surveys undertaken as part of this review and subsequent report are prepared in accordance with the British Standard for Biodiversity: Code of Practice for Planning and Development (BS42020:2013).

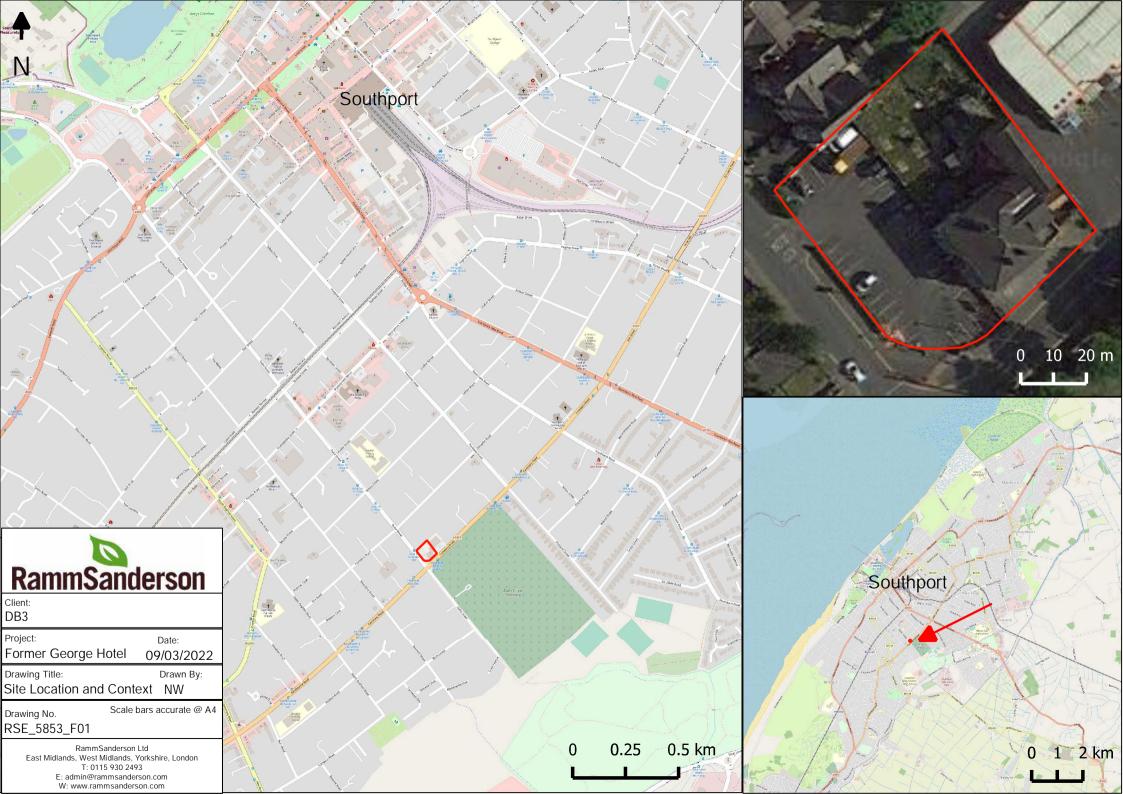
1.2 The Scheme

- I lnitially, the Scheme involved the conversion of the former public house into a supermarket. A suite of surveys were conducted, alongside two iterations of bat report and an enhancement plan, to inform the planning application for the Scheme, submitted in 2022.
- Following this, it is understood that some issues have been encountered with regard to the conversion of the building and a new planning application is to be submitted to seek permission to demolish and rebuild as an alternative. The existing building footprint is to be retained, with the appearance of the new build to be maintained as close as possible to the original. The demolition is planned to take place before summer 2024.
- iii The Proposed Site Plan is shown in drawing '16765-DB3-B01-00-DR-A-90002 Proposed Site Plan' (Appendix 2).

1.3 The Site

- The building, a disused public house and hotel known as the George Hotel (grid reference SD 33952 15900) is located in the town of Southport, Merseyside. This is situated to the north of Liverpool and the south-west of Preston.
- The building is located in an urban coastal setting, at the busy junction of two main roads in a largely residential area. It is close to a cemetery to the east, with all associated street lighting and other infrastructure associated with an urban location. The nearby cemetery and gardens associated with residential properties provide foraging habitat and alternative roost locations in the wider context.





2 METHODOLOGY

The overall value of the Site and its connectivity to the wider countryside was assessed with habitats and species recorded. As well as the daytime assessment for bats the survey took into account presence of nesting birds and took account of the likelihood of other protected species occurring on Site.

2.1 Impact Appraisal

In appraising any impacts, the review considers the Client's Site proposals and any subsequent recommendations made are proportionate and appropriate to the site and have considered the Mitigation Hierarchy as identified below:

Avoid: Provide advice on how the development may proceed by avoiding impacts to any species or sites by either consideration of Site design or identification of an alternative option.

Mitigate: Where avoidance cannot be implemented mitigation proposals are put forward to minimise impacts to species or sites as a result of the proposals. Mitigation put forward is proportionate to the Site.

Compensate: Where avoidance cannot be achieved any mitigation strategy will consider the requirements for Site compensatory measures.

Enhance: The assessment refers to planning policy guidance (e.g. NPPF) to relate the ecological value of the Site and identify appropriate and proportionate ecological enhancement in line with both national and local policy.

2.2 Bats

The overall value of the Site and its connectivity to the wider countryside was assessed in relation to bats.

The likelihood of bats roosting at the Site or moving through the Site between local roost sites and foraging/mating/hibernation habitats was considered.

2.2.2 Building Bat Roost Suitability Assessment

- The building was assessed by an ecologist and graded as to its suitability for supporting roosting bats using the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Survey Guidelines* (Collins, J. Eds. 2016), an extract of which is provided interpreted in the table below. These guidelines have since been superseded, however, the methodology utilised for these surveys are still considered valid given the context.

 The building was inspected using close-focusing binoculars (Pentax Papilio 8.5 x 21) to determine possible
- The building was inspected using close-focusing binoculars (Pentax Papilio 8.5 x 21) to determine possible access points such as cavities in walls and the roof structure.
- Using ladders, all safely accessible external features of the building were closely inspected using Lenser H14 and X21 cool light torches. Where possible, any cracks, crevices and likely access points or potential roost features were checked for signs of use by bats e.g.; droppings, scratch marks and staining. An endoscope was used to inspect cavities that could be accessed safely via ladders.



Table 1: Criteria for bat roost potential assessment of buildings

Roost Potential	Description	Surveys Required
Confirmed roost	Evidence of roosting bats found during initial daytime inspection.	3 – including 1 dawn as a minimum
High *	Structures with one or more features suitable for bat roosting, with obvious suitability for larger numbers of bats.	3 – including 1 dawn as a minimum
Moderate	Structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used due to size, shelter and protection but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.	2– including 1 dawn as a minimum
Low	Structure with one or more potential roosting sites used by individual bats opportunistically. Insufficient space, shelter or protection to be used by large numbers of bats.	1 Survey
Negligible	No or negligible features identified that are likely to be used by roosting bats	None

^{*} Unless it is a confirmed roost, additional surveys are required of buildings to assess presence / likely absence of a roost. The number of surveys are indicative to give confidence in a negative result, i.e. where no bats are found, confidence in a result can be taken.

2.2.2 Dusk emergence surveys

- All surveys were carried out in optimal weather conditions, within the bat active period and followed Bat Conservation Trust methodologies (BCT, 2016).
- ii The dusk surveys commenced 15 minutes before sunset and continued for 1.5hrs after sunset.
- During the surveys, four surveyors were strategically positioned, focusing on features identified in the bat roost suitability assessment to ensure observations could be made of any bats leaving or entering potential roost locations.
- iv All observed bat passes were recorded; noting the time, the location and, where possible, the direction of flight, species and behaviour of the bat (i.e.; commuting, foraging, social calling).
- v After completion of each survey session, digital recordings of bat echolocation taken during the survey were analysed using Anabat Flight and Analook sonogram analysis software for recordings taken using Anabat Scout, Batbox Duet Heterodyne and Frequency Division detectors and Echometer 2 Pro. An SM2+ detector was also used to aid species identification.
- iv Infra-red scopes (Pulsar Challenger GS1X20 74099) were also used to aid surveyors in visual observation of bats in low light conditions.



2.3 Limitations

- It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the Site, no investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment.
- ii An internal inspection of the roof void of the building was not conducted due to health and safety issues with respect to the height and position of access hatches, and overall condition of the roof.
- Some features with potential for supporting bat roosts could not be accessed for physical inspection due to the position at which they are located. As such, these features were limited to visual inspection from ground level using close-focussing binoculars to inspect for field signs of bats around the exterior of the cavities. External field signs of bats can be lost over time due to weathering and damp conditions. Droppings and other field signs are not always visible through routine, non-invasive inspection surveys as bat species associated with buildings roost in crevices that may not be fully accessible to survey. This survey does not cover every month of the active and hibernation seasons.

2.4 Accurate lifespan of ecological data

- The majority of 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 approximately 2 years, notwithstanding any considerable changes to the Site conditions.
- ii Therefore, if demolition is not conducted prior to May 2024, survey work should be updated.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Surveyor Competency

- The building bat roost suitability assessment survey was conducted by Rob Nicholson, BSc (hons) MCIEEM.

 Rob holds a class 2 licence for bats (2015-14102-CLS-CLS) and is appropriately qualified and experienced to undertake this type of survey. Rob has been 'named ecologist' on numerous European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) for bats for a range of species and roost types in both England and Wales.
- ii Rob led the emergence surveys with assistance from Sharon Blackhurst, Mark Cookson and Ami Weir, all experienced bat surveyors.

Table 2: Summary of conditions during survey

Abiotic Factor	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 2
Survey type	Bat building assessment	Dusk Emergence 1	Dusk Emergence 2
Date completed	24/02/2022	23/05/2022	06/06/2022
Temperature	6° C	15° C – 12° C	17° C – 14° C
Wind speed (Beaufort Scale)	4	3	1
Cloud cover	80-90%	<100%	<100%
Precipitation	1	0	0

3.2 Bat Survey Results

Building and Site Description

- The building is a detached, two storey former Public House of brick construction with a large beer cellar area. The building is glazed to all aspects on the ground and first floors with original window frames (glazing intact). Brick work is largely intact but with some minor cracking to the upper south-western aspect. There are various vents and vent bricks present externally and floor grates ventilating the cellar.
- The roof is multi-pitched with the main pub section comprising a hipped roof, and a secondary main section to the north being single pitch. There is a small terracotta slate roof to a single storey section to the north and a flat roof to the east. The main roofing is comprised of interlocking concrete tiles with timber fascias or timber soffits to most roof edges. Internally, the main roof is underlined with timber sarking. The roof is in poor condition with numerous missing tiles and rotten timber soffits/facias providing access into the fabric of the roof.
- The interior of the building comprises of multiple rooms over two levels. The ground floor comprises of the main public house, kitchen and utility rooms. The upstairs comprises of the former living quarters with bedrooms, living spaces, kitchen and bathrooms. The cellar was a beer cellar and utilised for other storage.
- iv Externally, there is a large carpark to the south of the building and a former beer garden to the west (comprising of unmanaged amenity grassland).



Figure 2: Northern elevation



Figure 3: Eastern elevation



Figure 4: Southern elevation



Figure 5: Southern elevation and context



Figure 6: Western elevation



Figure 7: Cellar



Figure 8: Ground floor



Figure 9: First Floor



2.2.2 Potential Access Points/Roosting Opportunities

- The main roof areas provide potential roost features for bats with gaps at eaves/soffits and damage to the roof tiles to all aspects. Gaps at soffits and beneath ridge tiles provide potential access to small gaps suitable for crevice dwelling species such as Pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus spp.*).
- ii The cellar would potentially be suitable as a hibernation roost, however, access would be limited, with the only potential access noted being the stairs down from the main interior of the building, meaning bats would



have to work their way through the whole building to access the cellar to hibernate. When in use, disturbance levels would have been too significant with the cellar used to store beer kegs and with strip lighting fitted throughout.

iii The main body of the building lacks crevices/internal potential roost features for bats other than cupboards or similar.

2.2.2 Bat Evidence

No evidence of the presence of bats was identified during the survey, however, roof voids were not accessed.

3.2.4 Nocturnal Bat Survey Results

23rd May 2022 - Dusk

- I Four surveyors were optimally positioned to survey the building, as shown in Figure 10.
- The emergence survey commenced at 21.05hrs, sunset was at 21.20hrs and the survey ended at 22.50hrs.

 The survey lasted 1 hours 45 minutes in total and was uninterrupted.
- iii No bats were recorded emerging from the building throughout the survey.
- During the survey a Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), was recorded by the surveyors at 21.52hrs (32 mins after sunset) commuting west-east through the Site.
- v Further activity within the Site was limited to occasional foraging (single common pipistrelle) to the west of the building between 21.56 and 22.20. Distant foraging was also recorded, with no visual confirmation but it is likely that foraging was occurring in association with garden trees to the north west of the Site and cemetery to the south east.
- iv One noctule (Nyctalus noctula) pass was heard (not seen) at 22.30.





6th June 2022 - Dusk

- Four surveyors were optimally positioned to survey the building, as in the previous survey.
- ii The emergence survey commenced at 21.22hrs, sunset was at 21.37hrs and the survey ended at 23.07hrs.

 The survey lasted 1 hours 45 minutes in total and was uninterrupted.
- iii No bats were recorded emerging from the building throughout the survey.
- During the survey, bat activity was recorded in association with the Site but not the building.
- v Common Pipistrelle (single bat/s) were observed for commuting between the cemetery and gardens to north west, largely along the northern edge of the Site.
- iv Noctule were again recorded passing overhead (but not observed).
- vii No prolonged foraging occurred within the Site.

3.3 Nesting Birds

- During survey 1, two jackdaws (*Corvus monedula*) were noted to exit the roof void at the southern aspect, indicating nesting in the main roof void (which is easily accessible to birds).
- During the dusk survey on the 6th June, jackdaw also appeared to be nesting in the roof of the building on the eastern aspect.
- iii There is potential for other birds to nest in the building also.



4 IMPACTS

4.1 Bats

- Due to the suitability of the structure to support roosting bats, presence of numerous access points and potential roost features, but relatively poor location (with the exception of the nearby cemetery for good quality foraging) and absence of any bat field evidence, the building has been identified as having 'moderate' potential and subsequently 2 nocturnal surveys have been completed at this Site to determine presence / likely absence of bats.
- Following completion of the dusk emergence surveys, no evidence to suggest the presence of bat roosts was identified in association with the building. No further survey is therefore considered necessary to demonstrate a likely absence of bats at this Site.
- The northern edge of the Site appears to be used by a low number of common pipistrelle bats as a commuting route between residential properties/gardens to the northwest and the cemetery to the southeast.
- The east of the Site is very heavily lit by artificial lighting (street lighting) but bats still cross between the Site and cemetery despite the elevated artificial light levels.
- v The Site is in an urban location and does not contain, nor is it in close proximity to, particularly high-quality foraging habitat with the exception of the cemetery.

4.2 Nesting Birds

- During the surveys, jackdaws were observed to be using the building in a manner that suggested nesting.
- ii All species of bird, whilst nesting are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended.

 Construction works to the building during the bird nesting season have the potential to destroy or disturb bird nests and any chicks within them.



5 MITIGATION AND COMPENSATION RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Mitigation - Bats

No further survey or mitigation is recommended at this stage, however, should at any stage of works a bat roost be found or suspected, then works should cease and an ecologist should be consulted.

2.2.2 Lighting

- Artificial lighting can affect the way that bats use habitats in a number of ways, depending on the species and proximity to a roost.
- ii Any proposed artificial lighting should be sensitive to wildlife (including bats) and should avoid illumination of trees and shrubs and the northern edge of the Site (which appears to be favoured by commuting bats travelling to and from the cemetery to the southeast.
- iii Directional, motion sensor or timer-based lighting should be incorporated, avoiding upward light-spill that may deter bats from the area, and could include low-level lighting or similar solutions to prevent artificial light levels from deterring bats from the Site and surrounding area
- iv When considering lighting, reference should be made to the following guidance:

Artificial lighting and wildlife. Interim guidance: Recommendations to help minimise the impact of artificial lighting (Bat Conservation Trust, 2014); and

Bats and lighting: overview of current evidence and mitigation guidance (Stone, 2014).

Bats and artificial lighting guidance note (ILP, 2018)

5.2 Mitigation – Birds

- I f possible, building demolition will be undertaken outside the core bird nesting season (1st March and 31st August, though it should be noted that variation in dates is possible, for example from geographical variations in climate, or due to a particularly mild winter) to avoid damage or destruction of occupied nests or harm to breeding birds.
- If this cannot be achieved, works within the core bird nesting season will require an inspection of vegetation to be cleared for breeding birds and their occupied nests by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 24 hours prior to any works being undertaken. If any nesting birds are identified during the survey, they will be left in situ for their entire nesting period and alternative approaches to the work proposed. This may include leaving an exclusion zone around the nests to avoid disturbance.



6 ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- The NPPF encourages biodiversity enhancements through the planning process. Sites such as this can easily and cost effectively achieve localised enhancements through inclusion of a range of nest boxes for birds and bats.
- Where possible, in order to enhance the potential biodiversity value of the Site, the proposed development should seek to include planting of small trees or shrubs that might contribute to bat foraging habitat locally. In particular the northern edge of the Site could be reinforced as a commuting route for bats through planting of the above and avoidance of any additional artificial lighting affecting this area.
- Where new landscape planting is proposed species commonly occurring such as oak (*Quercus robur*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*) and wild cherry (*Prunus avium*) are suggested. Ash and elm should be avoided at present due to Dutch elm disease and ash die back as stocks of these trees cannot be ensured to be free from this disease. Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) is recommended at this provides berries for local fauna species. Hedgerows are also a simple way to improve the ecological value of a Site. The Site boundaries may include planting of hedges inclusive of species such as field maple (*Acer campestre*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinose*), elder (*sambucus nigra*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). Under planting of these hedgerows with species such as honey suckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and bramble (*rubrus fruticosus*).



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8 APPENDIX 1: LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY

8.1 General & Regionally Specific Policies

Articles of British legislation, policy guidance and both Local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and the NERC Act, 2006 are referred to throughout this report. Their context and application is explained in the relevant sections of this report. The relevant articles of legislation are:

The Environment Act 2021

The National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

ODPM Circular 06/2005 (retained as Technical Guidance on NPPF 2021)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019;

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;

8.2 Bats

British bats are fully protected within UK Law under *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) through their inclusion in Schedule 5. Under the Act, they are protected from:

Intentional or reckless killing, injury, taking;

Damage to or destruction of or, obstruction of access to any place of shelter, breeding or rest;

Disturbance of an animal occupying a structure or place;

Possession or control (live or dead animals);

Selling, bartering or exchange of these species, or parts of.

This law is reinforced by the UK's transposition of the EU Habitats Regulations under *The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations* 2019. These Regulations also prohibit:

the deliberate killing, injuring or taking of great crested newt or bats;

the deliberate disturbance of any great crested newt or bat species in such a way as to be significantly likely to affect:

their ability to survive, hibernate, migrate, breed, or rear or nurture their young; or

the local distribution or abundance of that species.

damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place;

the possession or transport of great crested newt or bats or any other part of.

- Under certain circumstances a licence may be granted by Natural England to permit activities that would otherwise constitute an offence. In relation to development, a scheme must have full planning permission before a licence application can be made.
- In addition, seven British bat species are listed as Species of Principal Importance (SPI) under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, 2006. These are barbastelle (*Barbastellus barbastellus*), Bechstein's (*Myotis bechsteinii*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), greater horseshoe (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*) and lesser horseshoe (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*).
- v Under the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 the presence of any protected species is a material planning consideration. The Framework states that impacts arising from development proposals must be avoided where possible or adequately mitigated/compensated for and that opportunities for ecological enhancement should be sought.



8.3 Birds

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the principle legislation affording protection to UK wild birds. Under this legislation all birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is an offence, with certain exceptions, to recklessly or intentionally:

Kill, injure or take any wild bird;

Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;

Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

- For birds listed on Schedule 1 of the Act, it is an offence to disturb any bird while it is building a nest, is at or near a nest with young; or disturb the dependant young of such a bird.
- Species listed in Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive 1994 (e.g. barn owl) are required to have special conservation measures taken to preserve their habitats and sites to be classified as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) where appropriate.



