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Preliminary Roost Assessment and Ecological Walkover

Great Underbank, Stockport

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PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT AND ECOLOGICAL WALKOVER

Great Underbank
Stockport

Prepared for:
Kion Developments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site Address	51 Great Underbank, Stockport, SK1 1NE
Coordinates	E 389557, N 390463
Site Area	Approximately 0.03 ha
Current Site Use	The site comprised a three-storey commercial building with an associated hardstanding car park to the south.
Proposed Development	Development proposals include the renovation of the building to include a series of apartments. The ground floor will be retained for commercial use.
Results	<p>Externally, the building was largely in good condition. Though, crevices and damage to the brickwork was noted in areas. Roost features were identified internally, though the building was well sealed, with no potential access points.</p> <p>Overall, the building was assessed as having Low bat roosting potential as the external features may support crevice dwelling bats on an occasional basis.</p>
Conclusions and Recommendations	<p>One Nocturnal Bat Survey is required on the building between May and August (inclusive) following guidance from Collins (2023). If bats are identified roosting within the building, a further two surveys would be required to characterise the roost and a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) will be required and with up-to-date surveys from the survey season prior to the application submission.</p> <p>Alternatively, due to the low suitability features and urban location of the site an ecologist will attend site during the initial phases of the works. This will avoid further delays to the planning application. If the application is submitted after May 2024, it's likely further surveys would be required. An ecologist would supervise the works affecting the sensitive areas during the initial works. This would comprise a search for bats prior to the works commencing, including the removal of the crevices and damage to the brickwork. If bats are found roosting within these features works will cease and an EPSL will be required.</p>



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

E3P has been instructed by Kion Developments to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment at Great Underbank, Stockport, hereafter referred to as “the site”. A site walkover was also undertaken to assess the site for any additional protected species constraints.

This report has been prepared by Lowri Thomas, BSc (Hons), ACIEEM, Project Manager - Ecology at E3P, who has four years professional experience as an ecological consultant. Lowri has experience in completing Preliminary Roost Assessments at many sites across the UK and holds a Natural England Class 1 Bat Licence.

1.2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Development proposals include the renovation of the building to include a series of apartments. The ground floor being retained for commercial use.

1.3. SITE LOCATION

The site is located within the centre of Stockport, within a predominantly commercial area. A series of commercial units are situated to the east and west of the site. Great Underbank defines the site boundary to the north and Pickford’s Brow defines the site boundary to the south, which joins High Bank Side. The River Mersey, River Tame and the River Goyt converge at approximately 380 m north-east of the site boundary. Stockport Viaduct and associated railway line is located approximately 500 m west of the site boundary. Please refer to Figure 1.1. for the approximate site location.

FIGURE 1.1 APPROXIMATE SITE LOCATION



1.4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Preliminary Roost Assessment are as follows:

- ✦ Determine if bats currently, or could potentially, utilise the building for roosting.
- ✦ Determine whether further surveys (e.g. nocturnal bat surveys) and/or further mitigation is necessary for development to proceed.

The objectives of the Ecological Walkover are as follows:

- ✦ Identify the major habitats present.
- ✦ Ascertain the presence or potential presence of any legally protected species and habitats.
- ✦ Recommend any further surveys or mitigation that may be required.

The survey findings are detailed in this report, as well as any recommendations.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. DESK STUDY

The following sources of information and ecological records were consulted:

- ✦ MAGIC – A government web-based interactive mapping system, demonstrating European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) and Natural England Licences which have been previously granted within England.
- ✦ Information and species records from South Lancashire Bat Group.

A search via MAGIC was undertaken in November 2023 to identify EPSL within 1 km of the site boundary. This search area is considered suitable for the size of the development and the surrounding habitat.

2.2. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on 02nd October 2023 by Lowri Thomas who has undertaken multiple PRAs on buildings and trees across the UK. Lowri also holds a Class 1 Bat Licence (2021-55376-CLS-CLS). The weather was dry and overcast.

The survey involved undertaking a systematic search of the building, searching for signs of bats, or spaces where bats would be able to access. The methodology followed that described in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, 4th Edition (Collins, 2023).

The building was categorised for their bat roosting potential as described in Table 2.1 in accordance with Collins (2023).

The survey was undertaken utilising suitable binoculars and ladders to access all areas where safe to do so.

TABLE 2.1 BAT ROOSTING POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION OF BUILDINGS

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
NONE	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year.
NEGLIGIBLE	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
LOW	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats.
MODERATE	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.



CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
HIGH	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.

2.3. ECOLOGICAL WALKOVER

A site walkover was undertaken by Lowri Thomas on 02nd October 2023 to assess the site for any protected or notable species.

The walkover survey was undertaken to the standard methodology as detailed by the JNCC Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (2010). The assessment follows the methodology as per "Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal" (CIEEM, 2017).

Searches were made for uncommon, rare and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and species which are indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019).

Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on the revised (April 2010) Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) including but not limited to Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

2.4. LIMITATIONS

On the eastern and western aspects, the visibility was limited in areas due to the adjoining properties. This has been considered during the assessment.

Access to all areas within 30 m of the site was not possible due to the private properties bordering the site to the east and west, however, due to the urban nature of the site and surrounding habitats, this is not considered to be a major constraint.



3. RESULTS

3.1. LOCAL BAT GROUP RECORDS

Based on information from South Lancashire Bat Group, species present within the local area include Brandt's bat (*Myotis brandtii*) brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), Nathusius' pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), and whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*).

3.2. MAGIC REVIEW

A MAGIC review found one European Protected Species Licence located within the 1 km search area. The licence was located approximately 140 m north-west of the site boundary, which comprised a series of licences associated with a bridge. The licences were active between 2011 and 2021 for the destruction of a Daubenton's bat maternity roost and non-breeding roost.

3.3. SITE CONTEXT

The site comprised a single building with associated hardstanding car park, within a predominantly urban area. The on-site habitats and habitats within the surrounding area are anticipated to offer little value to local wildlife.

The River Mersey, River Goyt and River Tame converge at approximately 380 m north-east of the site boundary. The River Tame extends further to the north, with the Goyt to the east and Mersey to the west. These watercourses are anticipated to offer high value foraging and commuting habitat for bats, especially those which specialise feeding along watercourses such as Daubenton's bat. These watercourses also provide connectivity to high-value habitat in the wider area including broadleaved woodland, a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitat, with the closest areas located approximately 270 m east and 360 m north. The areas of woodland are anticipated to offer several valuable resources for local wildlife, in particular for bats by attracting invertebrate prey.

Stockport railway line and the associated red brick viaduct is situated approximately 500 m west of the site is anticipated to provide roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling bat species within the brickwork. This feature may also act as an important commuting corridor for local bats.

3.4. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on the building on-site, as well as the retaining wall to the south. No other buildings, structures or trees were present within the site boundary. Please see Appendix I for the Preliminary Roost Assessment Plan which details the location of the potential roost features.



3.4.1. BUILDING 1 (B1)

The building comprised a commercial unit on the ground floor, comprising Old Town General Store. The first and second floor had also previously been used for commercial purposes but were vacant at the time of the survey. Internally, on the ground floor the building was in good condition. However, it was evident that the upper two floors had been subject to partial renovation works. Crevices in brickwork and areas of peeling paint and wallpaper were noted across the first and second floor. These features may provide suitable roosting opportunities for opportunistic bats. Windows were smashed on both the first and second floor, though these had been adequately boarded. Thereby, preventing bats from accessing the internal roost features within the building.

PLATE 1 SHOWING FIRST FLOOR



Externally, the building comprised red brick and plastic clad walls, with a flat roof formed of concrete. On the northern aspect of the building the brickwork was largely well sealed, providing no potential roosting opportunities for local bats. Missing cladding was noted above the main door on the northern aspect, revealing the underlying concrete and mortar. On assessment, this feature was determined to be too exposed and liable to fluctuating temperatures. As such, bats are not anticipated to use this feature for roosting purposes. However, lifted flashing was noted above the door, running the extent of the front of the building. This could offer crevice dwelling species with roosting opportunities, however, the lifted flashing was located on the northern aspect of the building, directly above the commercial shop, facing the busy high street, thus limiting its overall value for roosting bats as it is likely subject to regular disturbance. No other potential roosting features were noted on the northern aspect of the building.



PLATE 2 SHOWING MAIN ENTRANCE ON NORTHERN ASPECT



PLATE 3 SHOWING MISSING CLADDING AND LIFTED FLASHING (F1)



On the eastern and western aspects, the visibility was limited in areas due to the adjoining properties. However, overall, the brickwork was well sealed with no areas of damage or missing mortar noted.

On the southern aspect, the second floor did not extend across the entirety of the building, creating a terrace above the southern aspect of the first floor. The terrace was well sealed with no roosting features identified. However, gaps within the brickwork surrounding the pipework were noted on the external of the second floor. These features may provide opportunities for crevice dwelling bats such as pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus sp.*) on an occasional basis. In addition, areas of missing mortar were noted above the window on the southern aspect.



PLATE 4 SHOWING DAMAGED SOUTHERN ASPECT



PLATE 5 SHOWING CREVICES SURROUNDING PIPEWORK AND WINDOW (F2)



PLATE 6 SHOWING GAPS SURROUNDING PIPEWORK (F3)



On the southern aspect beneath a window ledge, adjacent to pipework a crevice in the brickwork was identified. The feature was approximately 20 cm south-west of the window on the southern aspect of the building.

PLATE 7 SHOWING DAMAGED BRICKWORK (F4)



No other potential roost features were identified externally. The features were identified as providing roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling species on an occasional basis only. The building lacked a cellar and loft void, and no features were found to be suitable to support hibernating bats or maternity colonies. Overall, the building was assessed as having Low bat roosting potential.



The building is not anticipated to support nesting birds due to the lack of suitable features externally. Furthermore, birds could not access the inside of the building due to the boarded and sealed windows.

3.4.2. WALL 1 (W1)

A red brick retaining wall was noted south of B1, defining the hardstanding car park. The wall was approximately 2 m in height at its maximum. The western aspect was dense with ivy (*Hedera helix*) coverage and as such could not be fully inspected for potential roost features. However, due to the density of the ivy it is expected to prevent bats from roosting within any potential roost features beneath. The remainder of the wall was well sealed with no potential roost features observed. Therefore, the wall was assessed as having Negligible bat roosting potential.

PLATE 8 SHOWING RED BRICK RETAINING WALL



3.5. ECOLOGICAL WALKOVER

The remainder of the site comprised a hardstanding car park, which was colonised in areas by spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*), ivy, hemp agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*), American willowherb (*Epilobium ciliatum*) and oxford ragwort (*Senecio squalidus*). Due to the expanse of hardstanding and sparse vegetation the site offers limited ecological value for local wildlife.



PLATE 9 SHOWING HARDSTANDING CAR PARK



4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the presence of potential roost features for bats located within brickwork, the building was assessed as having Low bat roosting potential. The building was determined as being unsuitable for nesting birds. Therefore, the following surveys and/or mitigation is recommended:

- ✦ The building was assessed as having Low bat roosting potential. As such, one Nocturnal Bat Survey is required on the building between May and August (inclusive). If bats are identified roosting within the building, a further two surveys would be required to characterise the roost and a European Protected Species Licence will be required and with up-to-date surveys from the survey season prior to the application submission.

OR

- ✦ Alternatively, due to the low suitability features and urban location of the site an ecologist will attend site during the initial phases of the works. This will avoid further delays to the planning application. If the application is submitted after May 2024, it's likely further surveys would be required. An ecologist would supervise the works affecting the sensitive areas during the initial works. This would comprise a search for bats prior to the works commencing, including the removal of the crevices and damage to the brickwork. If bats are found roosting within these features works will cease and an EPSL will be required.

During the survey no other protected species constraints were identified. Furthermore, the site will fall under the Biodiversity Net Gain exemption as the number of dwellings to be provided is less than 9 on a site which is less than 1 ha.



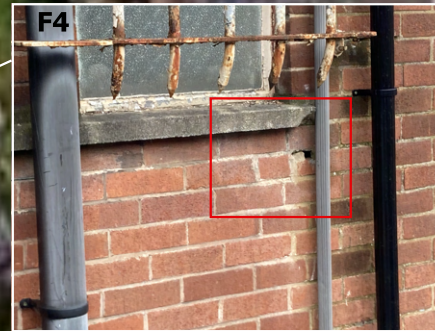
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END OF REPORT



**APPENDIX I
PRELIMINARY ROOST
ASSESSMENT PLAN**



Key:

- Site boundary
- Building
- Wall
- Potential Roost Feature

Notes

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