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Appendix V: Protected Species Report (2022)

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Grandpont House, Abingdon Road, Oxford

Protected Species Report: Bat & Badger Surveys

August 2022



Grandpont House, Abingdon Road, Oxford

Protected Species Report: Bat & Badger Surveys

Client:	Netherhall Educational Association	
Report No.:	UE0490_Grandpont_PSR_0_220801	
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Abbreviations

BCT	Bat Conservation Trust
BLE	Brown long-eared bat
CHS	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
EPS	European Protected Species
KMBRC	Kent and Medway Biodiversity Records Centre
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
MAGIC	Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside
NE	Natural England
NERC	Natural Environment and Rural Communities (Act 2006)
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PEA	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
PRA	Preliminary Roost Assessment
PRF	Potential roost feature
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TN	Target Note
WCA	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

0 Executive Summary

0.1 Introduction

0.1.1 Surveys for roosting bats and badger *Meles meles* were carried out for the site of a proposed student residential development and refurbishment of the Grade II Listed building at Grandpont House, Abingdon Road, Oxford (Grid Reference: 451468, 205419).

0.1.2 The study was undertaken to establish the presence or likely absence of bats using potential roosts within the site, [REDACTED] identify and evaluate potential impacts of the development on roosting bats [REDACTED] and make recommendations accordingly. Bat surveys included one dusk emergence survey and two dawn re-entry surveys were undertaken in May and June 2022, with reference to current industry guidelines (Collins (ed.), 2016). The surveys were supplemented by an internal/external inspection of structures to assess their suitability for roosting bats and DNA analysis of bat droppings. [REDACTED]

0.2 Results

Roosting bats

0.2.1 The desk study data search returned 304 records of twelve species of bat from within 5km of the survey area, during a date range of 1983 to 2017. There are eight granted mitigation licenses for bats within a 2km radius of the site. There are 36 SSSI and no SAC within 10km of the survey area, none of which are notified for bat populations.

0.2.2 The site comprises c.0.73ha of partly developed land, comprising a mosaic of woodland, scattered trees and scrub, introduced shrub, tall ruderal, amenity grassland, running water, buildings and bare ground. The site is located in an area of moderate-quality habitats for foraging and commuting bats, lying at the southern edge of a densely developed city but adjacent to the River Thames with pasture and woodland beyond. The site itself is relatively wooded which provides some protection from off-site sources of artificial light. The Preliminary Roost Assessment concluded that buildings B1/B2/B3/B4 were of low suitability for roosting bats, the culvert under Abingdon Road was of moderate suitability, and B5 was of high suitability.

0.2.3 Three surveys were carried out using a team of between five and seven surveyors, one dusk emergence on 4 May 2022, and two dawn re-entry surveys on 25 May and 15 June 2022. No roosting bats were recorded using any of the buildings or culvert during the surveys. High levels of foraging activity were recorded over the River Thames tributary which passes through the site, with near constant, multi-bat, multi-species bat passes observed, which points to the watercourse including the culverts providing a frequently used foraging and commuting route. No bats were observed roosting in the culvert's retaining walls.

0.3 Evaluation

Roosting bats

- 0.3.1 The survey results provide a good level of confidence that roosting bats were absent from buildings B1/B2/B3/B4, B5 and the culvert under Abingdon Road during the 2022 peak breeding season.
- 0.3.2 No designated sites notified for their bat populations will be affected by the proposals for the site. No bats roosts in buildings/structures will be affected by the proposals for the site. No significant impacts are predicted to result from installation of two new footbridges over the River Thames tributary which passes through the site, provided the recommendations in relation to artificial lighting are implemented.
- 0.3.3 In conclusion, the survey results demonstrate that there are unlikely to be any direct or indirect impacts to bats, their breeding/resting places or foraging/commuting habitats as a result of the proposed development. Bats are not considered to present a constraint to development proposals for the site.

0.4 Recommendations

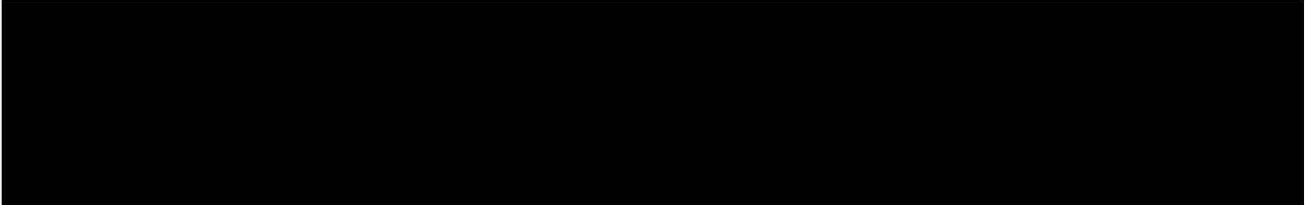
- 0.4.1 No specific avoidance, mitigation or compensation measures for bats are required to be implemented as part of the currently proposed scheme because no roosting bats were recorded. However, precautionary measures are nevertheless advised and are summarised in Table 6.1.

Table 0.1: Summary of recommendations

#	Recommended precautionary measures
R1	If commencement of the works is significantly delayed (e.g. by more than 18 months from the survey date), updated active season surveys will need to be undertaken to record any changes in roosting status.
R2	In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the works, site operatives will be advised to cease activity in the vicinity while advice from an ecologist is sought.
R3	Adopt 'soft felling' techniques to reduce the risk to roosting bats when felling or lopping low suitability trees. Tree felling or remedial works should be undertaken during March-April or September-October to avoid critical maternity and hibernation periods.
R4	Avoid the use of external lighting, or keep its use to the minimum required for its intended purpose, during both construction and operation. This will be of benefit to nocturnal species e.g. bats. Further specifications are detailed below. Lighting of the river corridors through the site and adjacent to the east will be avoided.
R5	Removal of nesting bird habitats (including vegetation and buildings) will be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season, which runs from 1 March to 31 August. It will therefore be carried out between September and February.

0.5 Conclusions

- 0.5.1 The proposed development is unlikely to result in negative impacts to roosting bats. Proportionate measures are recommended to manage residual risks associated with the site's ongoing suitability for these species.



1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was carried out in February 2022 for the site of a proposed student residential development and refurbishment of the Grade II Listed building at Grandpont House, Abingdon Road, Oxford (Grid Reference: 451468, 205419). It was recommended that further surveys should be carried out for: bats due to potential roost features (PRF) within the existing buildings and structures; [REDACTED]

1.2 Objectives and Approach of the Study

1.2.1 The study was commissioned to fulfil the following objectives:

- ▶ To determine the presence or likely absence of bats using potential roosts within the site or adjacent habitats which may be affected by works on the site;
- ▶ To establish the baseline assemblage and relative abundance of bat species using the site;
- ▶ To identify and evaluate the types of roost present and assess the potential impacts of the development on bats;
- ▶ To provide sufficient data to inform a European Protected Species (EPS) Mitigation Licence application for bats, if required;
- ▶ To identify the locations of potential badger setts, and record the extent of any badger activity within the site;
- ▶ To identify the type of sett(s) present within or adjacent to the site, and determine whether the sett(s) is in active use or could be considered as disused;
- ▶ To provide sufficient data to inform a Badger Licence application, if required; and
- ▶ To outline the measures required for avoiding and mitigating negative impacts, including compensation of habitat losses if necessary, and make recommendations for ecological enhancement.

1.2.2 To meet these objectives the survey approach involved:

- ▶ A desk study involving a review of bat and badger records from the local area and designated site citations;
- ▶ A Preliminary Roost Assessment of structures and trees, including internal/external inspection to assess their suitability for roosting bats;
- ▶ Emergence and return-to-roost surveys of potential bat roost features likely to be affected by proposed development, based on current industry guidelines (Collins (ed.), 2016), to establish the presence or likely absence of bats;

- ▶ A site walkover with the objective of searching for active setts, signs of badger activity and to establish the site's overall suitability for badgers; and
- ▶ An extended period of camera trap monitoring outside possible sett entrances, to record animal activity, determine whether potential setts were active and assess the level of use.

1.3 Survey Area

- 1.3.1 The survey area lies to the south of the centre of Oxford. The site comprises c.0.73ha of partly developed land, comprising a mosaic of woodland, scattered trees and scrub, introduced shrub, tall ruderal, amenity grassland, running water, buildings and bare ground.
- 1.3.2 The survey area is bounded to the north by a branch of the River Thames or Isis and the site of an educational establishment, to the east by the River Thames or Isis, to the south by a Holy Rood church and playing fields, and to the west by the A4144 Abingdon Road.
- 1.3.3 The wider landscape includes the built up area of Oxford, but also especially floodplain grassland, often set within hedgerows, and other greenspaces.
- 1.3.4 The extent of the survey area is outlined in red on Figure 1.1, and the Phase 1 habitats plan is included for reference at Appendix I.

1.4 Proposed Construction Activities

- 1.4.1 Planning consent is being sought for the refurbishment of a Grade II Listed Grandpont House (building B5), repurposing of B2, demolition of buildings B3, B4 and single storey extensions on B5, and construction of a new building to provide 21 student accommodation units, along with parking, access, landscaping and associated facilities. Figure 1.2 illustrates the proposed site layout.

Grandpont House, Abingdon Road, Oxford

 Site boundary



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Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Scale: 1:2,500 Created by: MT
Date: Feb 2022 Reviewed by: NP
Drawing number:
UE0490ECO-Grandpont_SiteMap_220209

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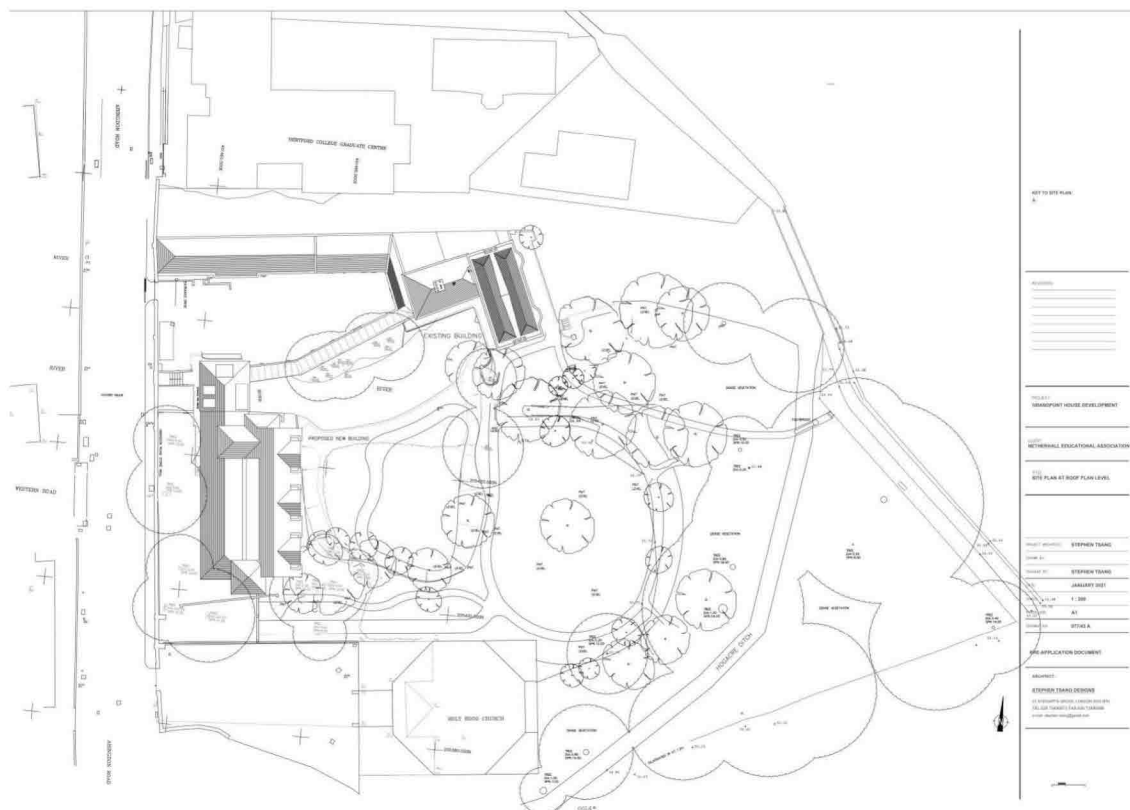


Figure 1.2: Proposed site layout



2 Distribution, Ecology and Status

2.1 Bats

Distribution

- 2.1.1 There are eighteen native species of bats found in the UK. These range from relatively common and widespread species such as common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and brown long eared bat *Plecotus auritus* to the rare species such as Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii* and barbastelle bat *Barbastella barbastellus*.
- 2.1.2 Both common pipistrelle and brown long eared bats can be found throughout the UK. However, many other bat species have a much more limited distribution. The greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* is confined to south-west England and southern Wales and Bechstein's bat is located exclusively in the south of England. However it should be noted that there may still be areas of the country where bats are under recorded, and hence the distribution of species is not fully understood.

Ecology

- 2.1.3 The habitat preferences of different bat species are diverse, with some species being specialists and others more generalist. For instance Bechstein's bat typically forages and hibernates in mature woodland whereas Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii* tends to hunt prey close to water. Pipistrelle bats on the other hand can be found foraging in almost any habitat and will roost in a variety of habitats ranging from hanging tiles on new buildings to beneath loose bark on trees.
- 2.1.4 Bat activity is highly seasonal and weather dependent. Generally they enter torpor when the temperature becomes unfavourable, usually from October to March, although bats may still emerge to feed on warmer nights. However, during the active period their behaviour is affected by weather conditions and breeding activity. Typically they are active in warm dry weather and are less active during heavy rain, high winds or in temperatures much below 10°C at dusk.
- 2.1.5 Mating occurs prior to hibernation with the young being born the following year around April and May. Female bats congregate in maternity roosts often numbering several hundred individuals and will give birth around June or July. Once the young are weaned the females will leave the roost to find mates prior to hibernation.

Status, Legislation and Policy

- 2.1.6 In the UK, the general trend is that bat populations have declined over the last century. In an attempt to halt this decline, all species of bat receive the greatest protection afforded by both European and UK wildlife legislation.

- 2.1.7 National legislation (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)) gives full protection to the species and their habitats and this is further strengthened by European-derived legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)) which provides protection from disturbance and disturbing activities. Under this legislation it is an offence to:
- ▶ Intentionally kill, injure or capture/take a bat.
 - ▶ Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, or obstruct access to any structure or place of shelter or protection. This is taken to mean all bat roosts whether or not bats are present.
 - ▶ Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it occupies such a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.
 - ▶ Sell, offer or expose for sale, or possess, or transport for the purpose of sale, any live or dead bat, any part of a bat, or anything derived from a bat.
- 2.1.8 Under the Habitats Regulations disturbance includes any activity which is likely to:
- ▶ Impair the ability of a bat to survive, breed, reproduce, or rear/nurture its young.
 - ▶ Impair the ability of a bat to migrate or hibernate.
 - ▶ Significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.
- 2.1.9 Local Planning Authorities are obliged to have regard to conserving biodiversity when undertaking their functions. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) places a duty on public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021 expands this duty to include biodiversity enhancement as well conservation. NERC Section 41 the Act requires the Secretary of State to maintain a list of Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England; the list includes several species of bat.
- 2.1.10 Furthermore, Government policy (National Planning Policy Framework – Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment) directs that planning decisions should be “*minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures*”.

Guidance and Best Practice

- 2.1.11 The methodology for the bat surveys was based on the latest *Good Practice Guidelines* from the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins (ed.), 2016; 3rd edition) as well as [Natural England Standing Advice on bats](#). The following documents were used for reference:
- ▶ *Acoustic Ecology of European Bats: Species Identification, Study of their Habitats and Foraging Behaviour* (Barataud, 2015);
 - ▶ Bat Conservation Trust websites; www.bats.org.uk and <http://roost.bats.org.uk/>;
 - ▶ *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* (English Nature, 2004);
 - ▶ *Bat Workers Manual* (Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 2004; 3rd edition);
 - ▶ *Bats of Britain and Europe* (Dietz & Kiefer, 2016); and
 - ▶ *Bat Calls of Britain & Europe: A Guide to Species Identification* (Russ, 2021).