



Former Laboratory, Lower Road Halewood, Liverpool

Bat Scoping Survey

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Kingdom Ecology have carried out a bat scoping survey of two former laboratory buildings located adjacent to Brookhouse Farm, Lower Road, Halewood, Liverpool, L26 3UB (National Grid Reference SJ 4699 8496). Proposals are to demolish the existing buildings and to redevelop the site.

Field surveys comprising of a daytime bat inspection were undertaken on the 2nd February 2022. Surveys were carried out by Richard Roe (BSc, MSc, MIEEM, CEnv). Richard has extensive experience of undertaking bat surveys as a professional ecological consultant with over twenty years' experience. Richard is also a licensed bat worker.

1.2 Purpose of Report

This report provides and outlines the findings of field surveys undertaken at the site.

The field surveys examined habitats present with a focus on the existing buildings' suitability to support roosting bats. Survey also examined the suitability of the site to support breeding birds. Survey comprised of a daytime assessment examining the interior and exterior of the building.

Following a description of the survey findings and an evaluation of habitats at the site, the report goes on to make recommendations for further works, mitigation and ecological enhancement measures where relevant.

1.3 Protected Species Legislation

1.3.1 Bats

All British bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and through their inclusion in Schedule II of the Habitats Regulations 2010 which transpose Annex II of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora ("EC Habitats Directive") which defines European protected species of animals.

British bats species are afforded further protection by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Taken together, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture bats.
- Deliberately disturb bats, whether at roost or not.
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts.
- Possess or transport bats, unless acquired legally.
- Sell, barter or exchange bats.

A bat roost is interpreted as “any structure or place, which any wild bat uses for shelter or protection.” (Bat Conservation Trust 2016¹). A bat roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time.

All species of British bat are considered a European Protected Species (EPS). The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations (2010) provide derogation against certain offences which could potentially affect an EPS through the EPS Licensing system.

1.3.2 Birds

All wild birds in England and Wales are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, or take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or its eggs.

¹ Bat Conservation Trust (2016) ‘Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition’

2 Field Survey Methods

2.1 Survey Aims and Objectives

Survey comprised of a site visit and inspection of the affected buildings. The survey aim was to assess the site as to its suitability to support roosting bats and to identify suitable habitats for any other protected species including breeding birds.

Survey also aimed to identify opportunities for ecological enhancement and to inform potential mitigation measures if required to ameliorate any negative impacts attributable to the proposed works.

2.2 Survey Methods

2.2.1 Daytime Bat Inspection

Each building was assessed as to its suitability to support bats following standard methodologies prescribed in English Nature's *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* (Mitchell-Jones 2004)² and the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines* 3rd Edition (BCT 2016)³.

Survey, comprising of an inspection of the interior and exterior of each building, was undertaken during daylight conditions using binoculars and a high-powered torch. The survey was undertaken during daylight hours on the 2nd February 2022.

In addition to searching for evidence of an actual bat roost the survey also aimed to assess the suitability of each building to support bats and consequently the likelihood of a bat roost being present but with no obvious field signs.

Survey assessed each building's roost suitability by examining structural features and the surrounding habitat. Structural features that will influence the suitability of a building to support roosting bats include the presence of a roof void; access points into a building including gaps beneath barge boards, gaps under lead flashing, gaps within masonry, loose tiles etc, complexity of any roof void, daytime light levels in roof void etc.

² Mitchell-Jones, A.J. 2004. *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

³ Bat Conservation Trust (2016) '*Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines* 3rd Edition'

Important habitat features surrounding the structures which could influence roost potential include: whether the structure is in a semi-rural or parkland location, proximity to a significant linear feature (e.g. watercourse, mature hedgerow, wooded lane) or an area of woodland etc.

Taking account of these architectural and habitat features, each building was assigned a level of roost suitability based upon professional judgement.

3 Survey Results

3.1 Site Description

The study site comprises of a former laboratory building and offices which closed in approximately 2015 (Buildings 1 and 2 on Figure 1 in the Appendix). The site has remained derelict and disused since.

The site is located within a rural setting on Lower Road to the east of the suburban village of Halewood. Brookhouse Farm is located immediately to the north of the site. The busy A562 dual carriageway is located immediately to the south of the site. Wider habitats principally comprise of large, open arable fields. Ditton Brook is located approximately 75m to the north-west of the site.

Habitats surrounding the buildings comprise of a hardstanding yard. A third building was present until relatively recently. This comprised of a temporary portacabin however this was demolished approximately two months ago.

The site boundaries are marked by chain-link fencing with young and the semi-mature ash trees. There is also a row of cypress along the south west boundary of the site.

There is a band of highways plantation woodland located on an embankment between the site boundary and the A562 dual carriageway. This plantation comprises principally of semi-mature ash trees.

Immediate surrounding habitats are considered to be of relatively 'low' value for bats with some limited bat foraging habitat offered along the highways plantation edge and over Ditton Brook. The study site's location is shown on Figure 1 in the Appendix. Photographs of the site are also provided in the Appendix.

3.2 Protected Species

3.2.1 Bats

The site comprises of two single-storey, commercial/office buildings. Each building measures approximately 18m x by 8m in area. Each building has a pitched roof clad in corrugated metal panels.

Building 1 is constructed of rendered chipboard which has also been partially clad in corrugated metal panels. The west facing pitch of the roof of the building has mostly blown off fully exposing the internal roof space. The building does not support any obvious external features suitable for roosting bats.

Internally, this building was previously used as an office. It comprises of several interlinked rooms with glazed windows and plastered walls and ceilings. Some parts of the ceiling have partially collapsed due to rain damage.

The roof void could be observed from the exterior owing to the missing roof panels. The internal face of the roof is unlined and the void space has been previously insulated with fibrous felt. The roof is supported on softwood timber trusses. The interior of the building is considered to be unsuitable for roosting bats.

Building 2 is of a similar construction to Building 1. Building 2 was previously used as a laboratory. The building is constructed from coated plasterboard with corrugated metal panels at the gables. The building has protruding extractor fan pipework at its east facing gable and a rectangular hole measuring approximately 30cm x by 20cm which goes through to the roof void space.

There is a length of chipboard fascia running beneath the roof eaves at a height of approximately 2.5 m. There is a 5 cm wide gap between the chipboard and the outer walls of the building. This leads back to a blind ending space which is approximately 15cm deep. The space could be fully viewed and explored during survey; it was observed to be partially cobwebbed over for much of its length. The space is not considered to offer suboptimal bat roosting habitat as it is very exposed.

Internally, this building comprises of a series of windowless laboratory rooms with plastered and tiled walls and ceilings. These rooms are considered to be inaccessible to bats. The building does not have a hatch to provide access to the roof space above. However, the interior of the loft space could be viewed from the exterior through the hole at its east facing gable. The loft space houses ventilation ducts and is unlined. The void space has been insulated with fibrous felt. The roof is supported on softwood timber trusses.

The building loft space and interior do not support any obvious suitable features for roosting bats.

No bat field signs were identified externally or internally.

No historic evidence of breeding birds was found either internally or externally.

Taking account of each building's structure and limited suitability of potential bat roosting features, the buildings are considered to offer a '**negligible**' bat roosting potential.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Protected Species

4.1.1 Bats

The daytime inspection did not identify any field signs indicative of roosting bats or breeding birds. Furthermore, the buildings were both found to be of limited suitability for roosting bats.

Building 1 was found to be entirely unsuitable for bats, whilst Building 2 supports a wide and shallow crevice behind fascia boarding below the building's eaves. The crevice was observed to be mostly cobwebbed over and the full extent of the crevice could be easily viewed with a torch. Whilst a bat could hypothetically roost in such a location, such usage is considered to be unlikely owing to the low height, broad width and exposed nature of the crevice.

No other potential bat roosting habitat was identified at the site.

The surrounding habitats are largely considered to be of low value for foraging bats.

Taking account of the above, the buildings are considered to offer only '**negligible**' bat roosting potential and it is considered to be very unlikely that any roosting bats would be affected by the proposals.

Nevertheless, it is recommended that a cautious approach is adopted during proposed works.

As a precaution, it is recommended that a visual inspection of the crevice behind the fascia boarding is carried out by an appropriately qualified ecologist immediately prior to demolition.

If any bats or bat field signs are encountered at any time, works should immediately stop and further advice should be sought from a licensed bat ecologist.

4.1.2 Nesting Birds

The cypress trees and young/semi-mature ash trees around the site boundaries are considered to offer some suitable nesting habitat for breeding birds.

Therefore, it is recommended that any works to remove or manage tall vegetation from the site take place outside of the breeding bird season (March-August inclusive). Where this is not possible, a check for nesting birds should be prior to the start of works.

In the unlikely event that any evidence of roosting bats or breeding birds is found, works should immediately stop and further advice should be sought from a licensed bat ecologist.

4.2 Ecological Enhancements

Paragraph 175d of the National Planning Policy Framework states that 'opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged'. It is therefore recommended that opportunities to enhance the ecological value of the development area are taken.

The proposed development should include provision for roosting bats and breeding birds. This can be achieved through the installation of bat boxes (recommended model Habibat 003) and sparrow nest boxes (model Schwegler 1SP) into the proposed new building at the site.

The bat and bird boxes can be built into the brick walls of the new building so as to remain visually unobtrusive. The precise location, model and number of bat and bird boxes should be determined by an appropriately qualified ecologist.

5 Appendix

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1- Building 1



Photograph 2- Building 2



Photograph 3- Fascia boarding beneath eaves of Building 2



Photograph 4- Loft space of Building 2



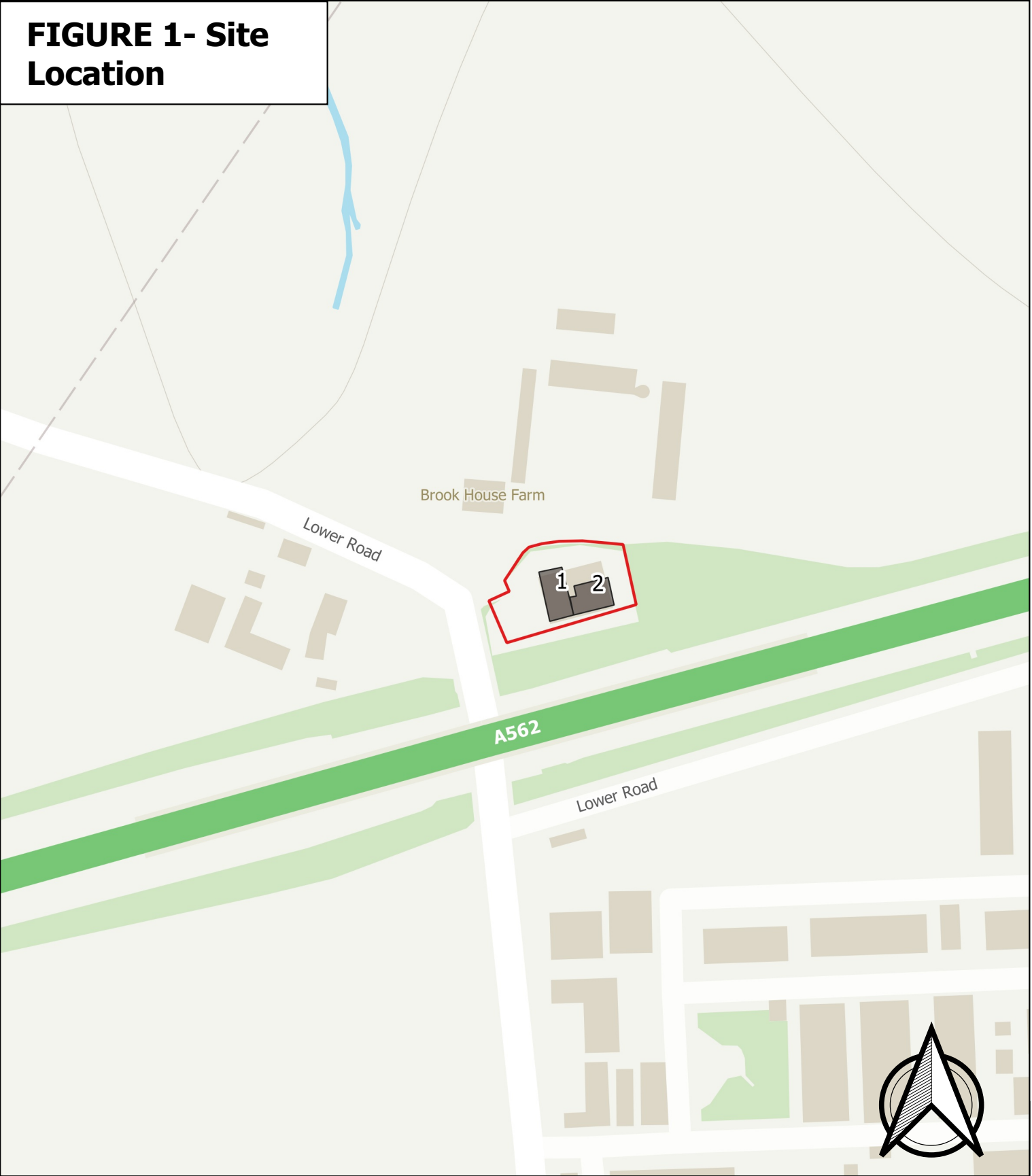
Photograph 5- East facing gable of Building 2



Photograph 6- Interior of Building 1



FIGURE 1- Site Location



KEY

-  Study Site
-  Building

