



WE KNOW SERVICES

Bat Survey Report

Site

Southmead Children's Centre, Whiston,
Knowsley

Client

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – Aspinall Street, Prescott



Quality Assurance

The information which the author has prepared and provided is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

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Summary

A bat survey was commissioned to take place in July 2024 by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, of Southmead Children's Centre, Whiston, Knowsley.

The survey was commissioned to support a planning application for the demolition of the buildings on site. No other proposals are known at the time of writing.

Following the completion of the bat emergence survey of the buildings, very limited bat activity was recorded and no evidence to suggest the presence of bat roosts was identified in association with the buildings proposed for demolition.

In view of the results of the survey, the site is not considered to be of any notable value for bats currently. As such there is unlikely to be any significant affect upon the conservation status of bats as a result of re-development or refurbishment.

However, any development of the site provides an opportunity to enhance the site for bats by comparison to the current state.

In order to enhance the site for bats in the long-term, it is recommended that consideration is given to the use of bat bricks or bat boxes upon any existing retained buildings or trees. In addition, where possible, any the lighting scheme associated with the site should be designed to ensure that it is sensitive to wildlife, including bats foraging and commuting through the site.

In view of the results of assessment, no further survey is considered necessary where works affecting the buildings are commenced prior to April 2026 (before the active season for bats begins). Where works take place beyond this date the results of this assessment should be reviewed. However, should at any stage of works a bat roost be found or suspected, then works should cease and an ecologist should be consulted.

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1 Introduction

A bat survey was commissioned to take place in July 2024 by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, of Southmead Childrens Centre, Whiston, Knowsley.

The survey was commissioned to support a planning application for demolition of the building in its entirety. No further development proposals are known at the time of writing.

1.1 Site Description

The site is located in Whiston, Knowsley, Merseyside (Grid Reference: SJ 47585 90721) and currently consists of a disused children's centre, car-parking areas, lawns/playing field, small areas of plantation woodland, and associated soft landscaping which is limited to ornamental shrubs and amenity trees. The site is situated in an urban area comprised of mainly residential properties and in close proximity to open greenspace such as Whiston Woods to the east and woodland to the south of Lickers Lane.



Figure 1. Site and surrounding landscape character.

1.2 Proposed Development

No detailed development plans were available at the time of assessment and writing this report but it is assumed demolition of all structures will be included in proposals.

1.3 Personnel & Quality Assurance

Rob Nicholson BSc (Hons) MCIEEM is a Class 2 Bat licence holder (Natural England), has over 15 years' relevant experience as an ecologist and is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). 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.

The survey was led by Rob Nicholson with assistance from Sharon Blackhurst, Ami Weir MSc, Mark Cookson and Tiernan O'Oceallaigh. All experienced bat surveyors.

All field work and assessment was undertaken in accordance with current best practice guidelines (Collins, 2023).

2 Legal Status

Bats

In England, all British bats and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

These pieces of legislation combine to give substantial protection to bats and their roost sites, making it an offence to:

- Deliberately or intentionally kill, injure or take a bat;
- Damage, destroy or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (this is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not);
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

3 Methodology

3.1 Desk Study

To inform the survey, a desk study was conducted using available ecological information relating to ecology for the area surrounding the site. Online resources, including Multi-Agency Geographic Information Centre (MAGIC), were consulted in relation to the presence of sites and habitats of importance in the wider context.

A data request to the Local Records Centre (LRC) for the area (Merseyside) was made for full species records and list of non-statutory designated sites (e.g., local wildlife sites) within 2 km of the site (full details available upon request).

Other organisations in the county that may hold relevant ecological data were not consulted (the full extent of data can be provided upon request).

3.2 Bat Emergence Surveys

The emergence survey was informed by a daytime inspection (internal and external undertaken of the building as part of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (We Know Services, 2024)).

One dusk emergence survey was undertaken on 16th July 2024 covering all aspects of the main Southmead Childrens Centre (in line with current Bat Survey Guidelines for buildings assessed to be of 'Low potential' for supporting bat roosts).

The dusk survey commenced 15 minutes before sunset and continued for 1.5hrs after sunset.

During the survey, five surveyors were strategically positioned, focusing on features identified during the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (We Know Services, 2024) to ensure observations could be made of any bats leaving or entering potential roost locations.

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).

After completion of each survey session, digital recordings of bat echolocation taken during the survey were analysed using Bat Sound sonogram analysis software for recordings taken using Anabat Scout full spectrum detectors. Infra-red night vision aides (Nightfox Whisker) and supplementary infra-red lighting (Nightfox XC5) were also used to aid surveyors in visual observation of bats.

During the surveys, the following details were noted as appropriate:

- Weather and temperature;
- Time bat detected/observed;
- Frequency at which the bat was detected;
- Location within the survey area;
- Whether bats emerged from/re-entered a potential roost location;
- Direction of flight;
- Number of bats observed; and
- Whether the bats appeared to be foraging or commuting.

Temperature, wind speed and cloud cover were recorded at the beginning and end of the survey, along with any significant weather changes during the survey.

3.3 Evaluation Methods

The 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines' (4th edition) (Collins, 2023) are used as a basis to evaluate the value of features for their potential to support bats. In addition, the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Reason and Wray, 2023) was referred to. The potential impacts on bats, bat habitat or their roosts as a result of the proposals are assessed within this report using the above criteria, together with an ecological judgement by an experienced bat surveyor.

4 Constraints

The survey does not cover every month of the active and hibernation seasons. No other constraints to the emergence survey were experienced.

It is important to note that most species are greatly under-recorded and therefore a lack of records for a location should not be taken as an absence of the species concerned.

Furthermore, a historical record for a habitat or species does not necessarily confirm its current presence.

5 Results

5.1 Desk Study

There are 107 records (various types of record) of bats within 2 km of the site within the last 20 years. Species include:

- Common Pipistrelle (Common Pipistrelle)
- Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)
- Brown Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*)
- Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*)
- Noctule Bat (*Nyctalus noctula*)

The nearest of these records is for a Common Pipistrelle foraging within 150m of the site. All other records are remote from the site and there are no records that coincide with the site.

According to MAGIC website, there is one record of granted European Protected Species Licences for bats within 2 km of the site. This is for a Common Pipistrelle resting place (non-breeding), dated 2017-2018, located 1.3km east of the site.

5.2 Field Survey

Emergence Survey Results

The emergence surveys were conducted with the aim of recording any bat activity associated with features identified upon the building, in order to identify any bat roosts if present.

The survey was undertaken under suitable weather conditions with temperatures greater than 10°C.

A plan indicating the locations of the surveyors in relation to the building is provided in Appendix 1 and full results of the survey are provided in Appendix 3.

Southmead Childrens Centre– Dusk Emergence Survey – 16th July 2024

The emergence survey commenced at 21.15hrs, sunset was at 21.30hrs and the survey ended at 23.00hrs. The survey lasted 1 hours 45 minutes in total and was uninterrupted.

No bats were recorded emerging from the building throughout the survey.

During the survey only very limited bat activity was recorded, with the first bat record being a Noctule bat commuting over-head at 21.48hrs. The first Common Pipistrelle pass was recorded near the woodland at the north eastern aspect of the site at 21.49hrs, followed by a single Soprano Pipistrelle pass at 22.02hrs in the same location.

A Common Pipistrelle bat was recorded foraging along the woodland edge between 22.06 and 22.30hrs, along with a single Soprano Pipistrelle commuting to the south of the site at 22.28hrs, after which activity then dropped off, with only two Noctule Bat passes at 22.47hrs and 22.52hrs respectively.

5.3 Roosts and Habitat

Following completion of the surveys, no evidence to suggest the presence of bat roosts was identified in association with the buildings. Taking into account the results of this assessment it is considered unlikely that bats currently use the buildings or roost anywhere within the wider site.

5.4 The Value of the Site for Bats

In view of the results of the assessment the buildings it is considered likely that no bat roosts are present in association with the buildings currently. The site is in a relatively urban location although it is in reasonably close proximity to areas of high-quality foraging habitat (e.g. Whiston Woods and Stadt Moers Park).

Over the course of survey, only limited bat activity has been recorded within the site and habitats present are not extensive, though two small areas of woodland on site, provide good foraging habitat at site level. As such the site is considered to be of 'low value' for bats in the local context (Mitchell-Jones, 2004).

Overall, there is an abundance of suitable buildings for roosting in the vicinity of the site (residential properties), though artificial light sources (street/car park lighting) were observed to be significant in most areas of the site which may further reduce the potential suitability for bats locally.

6 Impacts

The proposed development consists of the demolition of the buildings (no further details were available at the time of writing).

In view of the assessment of “low potential” to support bat roosts in relation the building, and absence of any evidence of the presence of bat roosts identified via survey in 2024, the scale of impact upon the conservation status of the species in relation to the proposed works is ‘negligible’.

7 Advice and Recommendations

It is advised that bats and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

It is advised that it is illegal to deliberately/intentionally or recklessly: kill, injure or take a bat; damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (this is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not); and disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

7.1 Further Survey & Mitigation Measures

In view of the results of the survey and absence of any evidence of a bat roost, 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.

In order to enhance the site for bats in the long-term, it is recommended that consideration is given to the use of bat bricks or bat boxes upon existing/retained buildings or trees within the woodland areas (which should be retained). Bat bricks/boxes would need to be installed at a height of >4m, with a southerly aspect, and be unobstructed by lighting, windows or other features. This is to enhance the site by providing potential roost features for bats in the long term.

Chillon Woodstone Bat boxes (or similar) (<https://www.wildcare.co.uk/vivara-pro-chillon-woodstone-11245.html>) are hardwearing and can be mounted on walls or in trees.

Any proposed lighting scheme associated with the future development of the site should be designed to ensure that it is sensitive to the presence of wildlife, including bats foraging and commuting through the site. This would include low-level lighting or similar solutions to prevent artificial light levels from deterring bats from the site (please see Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night' ILP Guidance Note (2023) for further information).

8 Conclusions

In view of the above, where the above recommendations are followed, it is considered the appropriate level of assessment will have been completed (as per Collins, 2023), and the conservation status of the bats will not be adversely affected by the proposed works.

9 References

Bat Conservation Trust website: <http://www.bats.org.uk/>

Collins (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines, 4th edition. Bat Conservation Trust.

ILP (2023) Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night' ILP Guidance Note GN08/23

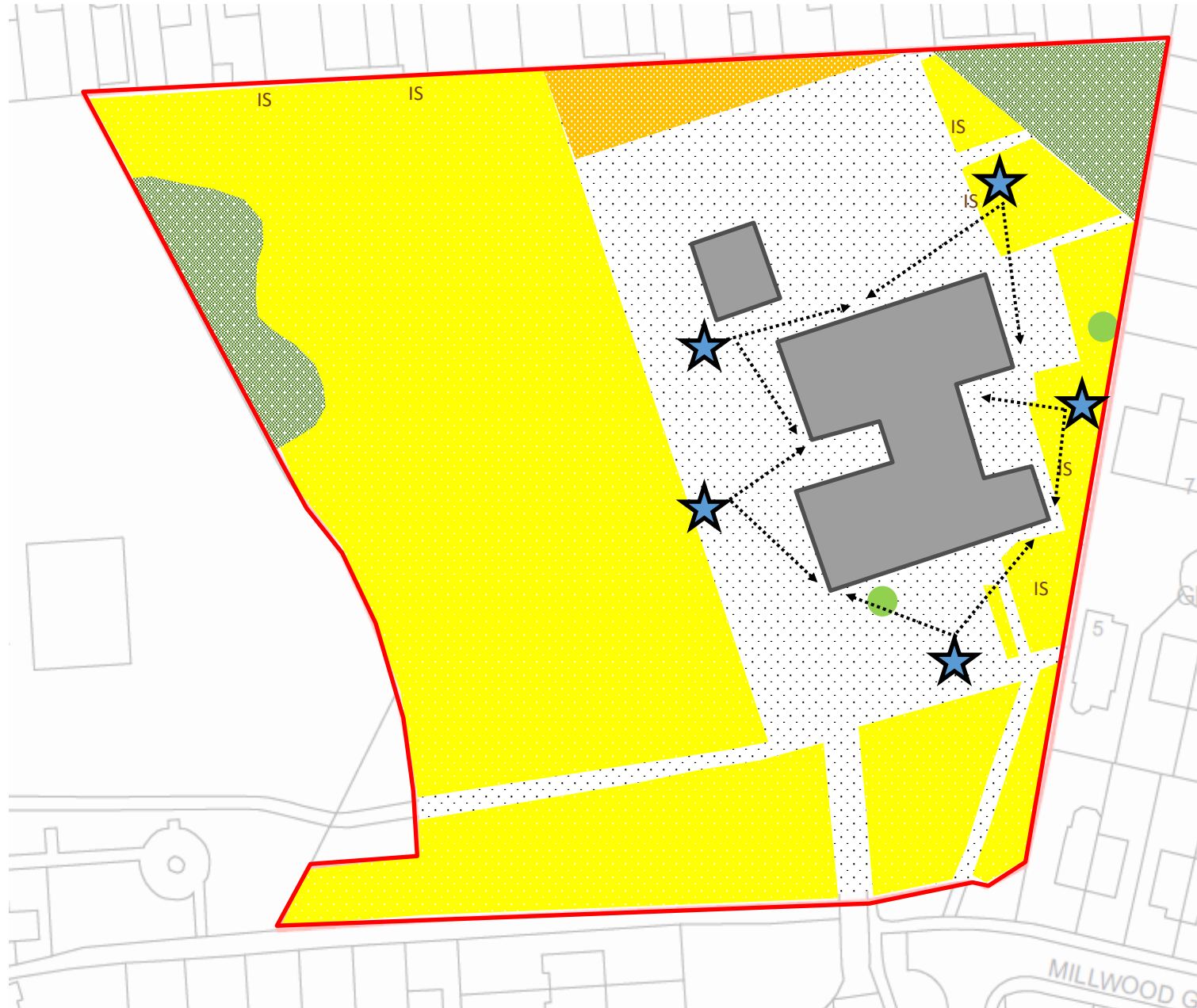
Multi-Agency Geographic Information Centre: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.

We Know Services (2024) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report - Southmead Childrens Centre, Whiston.

APPENDIX I – Surveyor Locations

See next page



Bat Survey Plan

Southmead Childrens Centre,
Whiston, Knowsley

July 2024

Client: Knowsley MBC

Key:

Habitats:

-  Sealed surface u1b
-  Modified Grassland (g4)
-  Other neutral grassland (g3c5,10, 17)
-  Other Broadleaved Woodland (w1g)
-  Scattered Trees (11)
-  Building u1b5
-  Redline Boundary
-  Introduced Shrub

Bat Survey:

-  Surveyor Locations

APPENDIX 2 – Additional Site Photos/ Infra-red Camrea Images



Note: High levels of security lighting which became active from dusk and remained on for the duration of the survey.

APPENDIX 3 – Bat Survey Data

<i>Date</i>	<i>Start /End</i>	<i>Structure Reference / Location</i>	<i>Equipment Used</i>	<i>Weather Conditions (Start /End temps, precipitation, Beaufort wind-scale.</i>
16/07/2024	21.15hrs - 23.00hrs. Sunset 21.30hrs	Southmead Children's Centre	Anabat Scout, Nightfox Whisker.IR Illuminators.	14C – 14C. Precipitation nil, Wind 1 Cloud cover: <10%
Comments (to include # of surveyors used for each visit): 5 Surveyors				

<i>Date</i>	<i>Species/Activity</i>	<i>Roost Type</i>	<i>Structure Reference</i>	<i>Roost Location</i>	<i>Access Points</i>	<i>Dimension of existing roosts/ Explanation of where the roost is</i>
16/07/2024	None	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Notes/observations: Very limited bat activity recorded with C.pip and S.pip foraging the woodland to the north-east corner of the site and occasional Noctule passes over the site.						