



Prescot Police Station Derby Street, Prescot

Protected Species Scoping Report

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Kingdom Ecology have carried out a Protected Species Assessment of a set of disused buildings located at the former Prescot Police Station, Derby Street, Prescot, L34 3LG (National Grid Reference SJ 4692 3083).

The assessment has been carried out to identify any ecological constraints which should be considered during proposed works to redevelop the site. The development proposals are to convert the main police station building, to remove several outbuildings from the site and to construct new apartments.

Field surveys comprising of an initial daytime inspection of the site was undertaken on the 5th October 2022 with follow-on bat dusk activity surveys carried out in June 2023. Surveys were led by Richard Roe (BSc, MSc, MIEEM, CEnv). Richard has extensive experience of undertaking habitat and protected species 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 the findings of field surveys undertaken at the site.

Surveys aimed to identify habitats and species which are either of importance in terms of their conservation value or are afforded statutory legal protection. The presence of such habitats or species would form a material consideration during the planning process and could pose a constraint to the redevelopment of the site.

Survey comprised of a daytime assessment examining the interior and exterior of the buildings; an assessment of the surrounding grounds; and follow-on bat dusk surveys.

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

The survey aim was to assess the site as to its ecological importance by assessing the value of habitats and their suitability to support any protected or notable species. The purpose of this was to highlight any ecological constraints associated with future development proposals.

Survey comprised of an ecological walkover survey and bat roost scoping assessment, this included an assessment of habitats at the site in terms of their suitability to support any protected species including bats and nesting birds.

Species that are considered unlikely to be significantly affected by the proposed development, even if known to be present in the general vicinity, were 'scoped out' of the assessment.

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 Ecological Walkover Survey

An initial Ecological Walkover of the site was undertaken on the 5th October 2022.

The aims of the walkover survey were to:

- identify areas or habitats that are of particular ecological interest for nature conservation and which require more detailed investigation;
- provide a broad botanical description of habitats present;
- provide additional information regarding incidental observations of protected species or non-native, invasive species;
- to assess the site as to its ecological importance by assessing the value of habitats and their suitability to support any protected or notable species (including badgers, bats and breeding birds).

A map of the study site is shown on Figure 2. Typical habitats recorded at the site are also shown in photographs in the Appendix.

2.2.2 Daytime Bat Inspection

The buildings were assessed as to their 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 5th October 2022 and on the 27th June 2023.

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

Survey assessed the 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.

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. This assessment considered roost suitability criteria as summarised in Table 1 below and taken from the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines* 3rd Edition.

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

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

Table 1- Bat Roost Suitability Criteria

<i>Suitability</i>	<i>Description of Potential Roosting Habitats</i>
<i>Negligible</i>	Structure has Negligible habitat features likely to be used by roosting bats.
<i>Low</i>	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. 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 number of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground of features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
<i>Moderate</i>	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, condition and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
<i>High</i>	A structure or tree 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.

2.2.3 Bat Activity Survey Methods

Following the completion of the initial bat scoping survey, additional bat dusk surveys were undertaken of all buildings offering suitable bat roosting habitat. Dusk surveys were completed on the 6th and 27th June 2023.

In order to fully assess all affected areas of potential bat roosting habitat, it was considered appropriate to assess the buildings from five survey positions, as shown on Figure 2 in the Appendix. This allowed the full extent of the buildings to be assessed at least twice via dusk surveys.

The surveyors were equipped with heterodyne and time expansion bat detectors (Anabat Walkabout, Anabat Express, Echometer Touch 2 Pro and Elekon Bat Scanner).

Surveyors were supported by five Canon XA infrared night vision cameras, combined with infrared flood lights.

The dusk surveys commenced 15 minutes before sunset and continued up to 90 minutes after sunset. All bat species and bat behaviour were recorded.

3 Survey Results

3.1 Site Description and Habitats

The study area comprises of the former Prescot police station complex. The area comprises of the main former police station building plus a series of outbuildings and sheds. The area comprises principally of bare, hardstanding car park with scattered buddleia scrub which has started to colonise the site. Further vegetation includes scattered patches of tall herb typical of recently vacated urban sites and includes spear thistle, creeping thistle, broadleaved willow-herb, common ragwort, Canadian fleabane, red valerian, and ash saplings. There is a small stand of tall herb vegetation at north-east corner of site which comprises of nettle, great willowherb, Canadian fleabane, and rank grasses with cock's foot, Yorkshire fog and false oat-grass. There are no trees present at the site.

The site is situated in an urban setting to the west of Prescot town centre. Immediate surrounding land use principally comprises of residential housing. However, Prescot Churchyard and Cemetery are located approximately 200 m to the south of the site. Knowsley Safari Park is located approximately 500 m to the north of the site. These areas offer blocks of woodland, grassland and mature trees, such habitats offer good quality potential bat foraging opportunities.

The study site's location and the site layout are shown on Figures 1 and 2 in the Appendix. Photographs of the site are also provided in the Appendix.

3.2 Protected Species

3.2.1 Bats Scoping Assessment

The main Police Station Building (Building 1) is a large, two storey, detached, brick-built, Victorian structure. The building has a part hipped and gable ended roof clad in tightly fitted slate. The roof was replaced approximately 10 years ago and is lined internally with modern breathable roof membrane. The building has been disused for several years. The ground floor and front facing windows are boarded over.

Internally, the police station rooms have plastered walls and ceilings with areas of polystyrene false-ceiling. During daylight hours, the interior of the upper floor of the building is brightly lit by glazed windows. The interior of the building has been damaged by vandals with broken upper floor windows throughout.

The main police station has a large central courthouse room which is approximately 6 m in height. There is a small, inaccessible void space above the vaulted ceiling of the courthouse. This small loft space is likely to be approximately 1 m in height. There are further loft spaces running above the gabled section of roof located alongside Derby Street. The loft spaces in this section are approximately 3m in height; the internal face of the roof is lined in modern breathable roof membrane and the loft spaces themselves are not insulated. No bat droppings or other bat field signs were found within the main building interior.

Externally, the building has several upper floor, broken windows however these have been sealed with netting to prevent pigeons from accessing the building interior. As the roof has been recently replaced, the slates and ridge are tightly fitted and in good condition. There are no obvious gaps at the building's eaves or gable ends, which also appear tight and well-sealed. There is a short parapet wall extending above the height of the eaves on the building's south face with Derby Street and so this face is completely sealed.

There are some minor areas of lifting lead flashing located around the bases of the building's chimneys and around ventilation features which link to the void space above the main courthouse. Otherwise, no obvious potential bat roosting features were identified to the building's exterior. These small areas of lifting lead flashing could offer suitable roosting habitat for individual or low numbers of non-breeding bats.

The building was assessed as offering a '**low**' bat roosting potential. However, it is understood that the roof of the building will not be affected by development proposals, with works exclusively affecting the building interior. The internal rooms of the building are considered to be of negligible suitability for roosting bats.

Additional buildings at the site include two traditional, 19th century brick, slate-roofed outbuildings with upper floor haylofts (Buildings 2 and 4 of Figure 2). The buildings have 15 cm x 15 cm holes at the apexes of each gable. These holes provide potential bat and bird access to the building interiors. The internal faces of the roof are unlined and supported on the original roof trusses. The haylofts are approximately 3m in height. Two very old brown long-eared bat droppings were found within the hayloft of Building 4. Historic evidence of roosting feral pigeon was found throughout the upper floors of these buildings. However, no evidence of recent pigeon activity was observed.

No evidence of any recent bat activity was found within the interiors of these buildings. Both of the buildings were assessed as offering a '**moderate**' bat roosting potential. The interiors of the buildings were re-examined on 27th June 2023, no new/additional bat field signs were identified.

Further buildings at the site include an open sided, lean-to and single-storey brick outbuildings; all of which have mono-pitched roofs clad in slate (Buildings 3, 5 and 6). There are areas of loose and missing slate associated with the roofs of these buildings. The buildings are open and draughty, with the identified areas of loose slate considered to offer habitat of 'low' suitability for roosting bats. No old or recent bat field signs were found associated with these buildings.

The remaining buildings at the site comprise of sets of concrete garages with flat-roofs clad in interlocking concrete tiles (Buildings 7 and 8). Both of these buildings were assessed as offering a 'negligible' bat roosting potential.

3.3 Further Bat Activity Surveys

Further bat emergence surveys of the building were undertaken on the 6th and 27th June 2023. As works will not affect Building 1, survey focused on the potential roosting features associated with Buildings 2-6.

The buildings were assessed from five survey points to allow full coverage of the identified potential bat roosting features (surveyor locations shown on Figure 2 in the Appendix). Each survey points was equipped with a night vision camera with infrared lighting. All camera footage was reviewed following the completion survey.

Emergence survey on the 6th June

Weather for the first dusk emergence survey was recorded as dry, clear and calm. The temperature was 14°C. Sunset was recorded at 21.34.

In summary, low levels of bat activity were recorded during survey. Bat activity comprised of intermittent common pipistrelle passes over the site, with the first bat registration recorded at 21.58, with the bat arriving at the site from the west.

No bats were recorded roosting in the buildings. No other bat species were recorded and no other significant bat activity was recorded during survey.

Emergence survey on the 27th June

Weather during the second emergence survey was recorded as calm, overcast and dry; with temperatures of 18°C. Sunset was recorded at 21.43.

In summary, moderate levels of bat activity were recorded during survey.

Activity recorded comprised of intermittent common pipistrelle bat passes and spells of foraging activity from 21.51 onwards; with individual common pipistrelle bats recorded foraging over the car park habitats around the north-east corner of the site until 22.10.

After this, intermittent spells of common pipistrelle bat foraging activity were recorded for the remainder of the survey. Bats were generally recorded arriving from the east of the site.

No bats were recorded emerging from the buildings. No other bat species were recorded and no other significant bat activity was recorded during survey.

4 Summary & Recommendations

4.1 Habitats

4.1.1 Summary

Kingdom Ecology have carried out a Protected Species Assessment of a set of disused buildings located at the former Prescot Police Station, Derby Street, Prescot. Development proposals are to convert the main police station building and to remove several outbuildings from the site.

The daytime inspection did not identify any field signs indicative of recent use of the buildings by roosting bats.

Two old brown long-eared bat droppings were identified within the interior of Building 4. However, these droppings were considered to be several years old; with no recent bat field signs recorded during either the October 2022 building inspections or the June 2023 building inspections.

The daytime building inspections assessed the main police station building (Building 1) as offering a 'low' bat roosting associated with the building's roof. However, the development proposals will only affect the building's interior with the potential roosting features to be unaffected.

The daytime building inspections recorded outbuildings at the site as offering varying levels of suitability for roosting bats, with Buildings 2 and 4 offering a 'moderate' bat roosting potential; Buildings 3-6 were assessed as offering a 'low' bat roosting potential; whilst Buildings 7 and 8 were assessed as offering a 'negligible' bat roosting potential.

The site was further assessed through two sets of bat emergence surveys.

The first survey recorded low levels of bat activity at the site; whilst the second survey recorded moderate levels of bat activity at the site. Bat activity comprised exclusively of individual, passing and foraging common pipistrelle bats.

No evidence of roosting bats was observed during the additional activity surveys.

Taking the survey findings into account, it is considered to be very unlikely that the site currently supports any roosting bats.

4.2 Protected Species

4.2.1 Bats

Taking the previous preliminary Bat Scoping assessment findings and the latest emergence survey results into account, it is considered to be very unlikely that the site supports roosting bats. However, it is advised to exercise caution during the proposed building works. In the event that any bats or signs of bats are encountered, all work should be halted immediately, and additional guidance must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

4.2.2 Birds

The patches of young scrub and the internal areas of the open buildings could be used by nesting birds during the breeding bird season.

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.

It is therefore recommended that future development of the site including any vegetation clearance avoid taking place during the breeding bird season (March-September inclusive).

Where this is not possible, a check for breeding birds should be carried out immediately prior to the start of works by an appropriately qualified ecologist.

If during works any nesting birds are found, works should immediately stop and further advice should be sought from an appropriately qualified ecologist.

4.3 Ecological Enhancements

It is recommended that opportunities to enhance the ecological value of the development area are taken.

4.3.1 Bat and Bird Boxes

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 buildings at the site.

The bat and bird boxes can be built into the brick walls of the proposed buildings 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- South face of Building 1



Photograph 2- North face of Building 1



Photograph 3- Interior of Building 1



Photograph 4- Vaulted ceiling of courthouse



Photograph 5- Loft space of main police station (Building 1)



Photograph 6- Exterior of Building 2



Photograph 7- Interior of Building 2



Photograph 8- West face of Buildings 3, 4 and 6



Photograph 9- North face of Buildings 3, 4 and 6East



Photograph 10- Interior of Building 4



Photograph 11- Buildings 7 and 8



Photograph 12- Habitats at the site



Prescot Police Station Bat Scoping Survey

Bat Roost Suitability

Building 1- Low
Building 2- Moderate
Building 3- Low
Building 4- Moderate
Building 5- Low
Building 6- Low
Building 7- Negligible
Building 8- Negligible

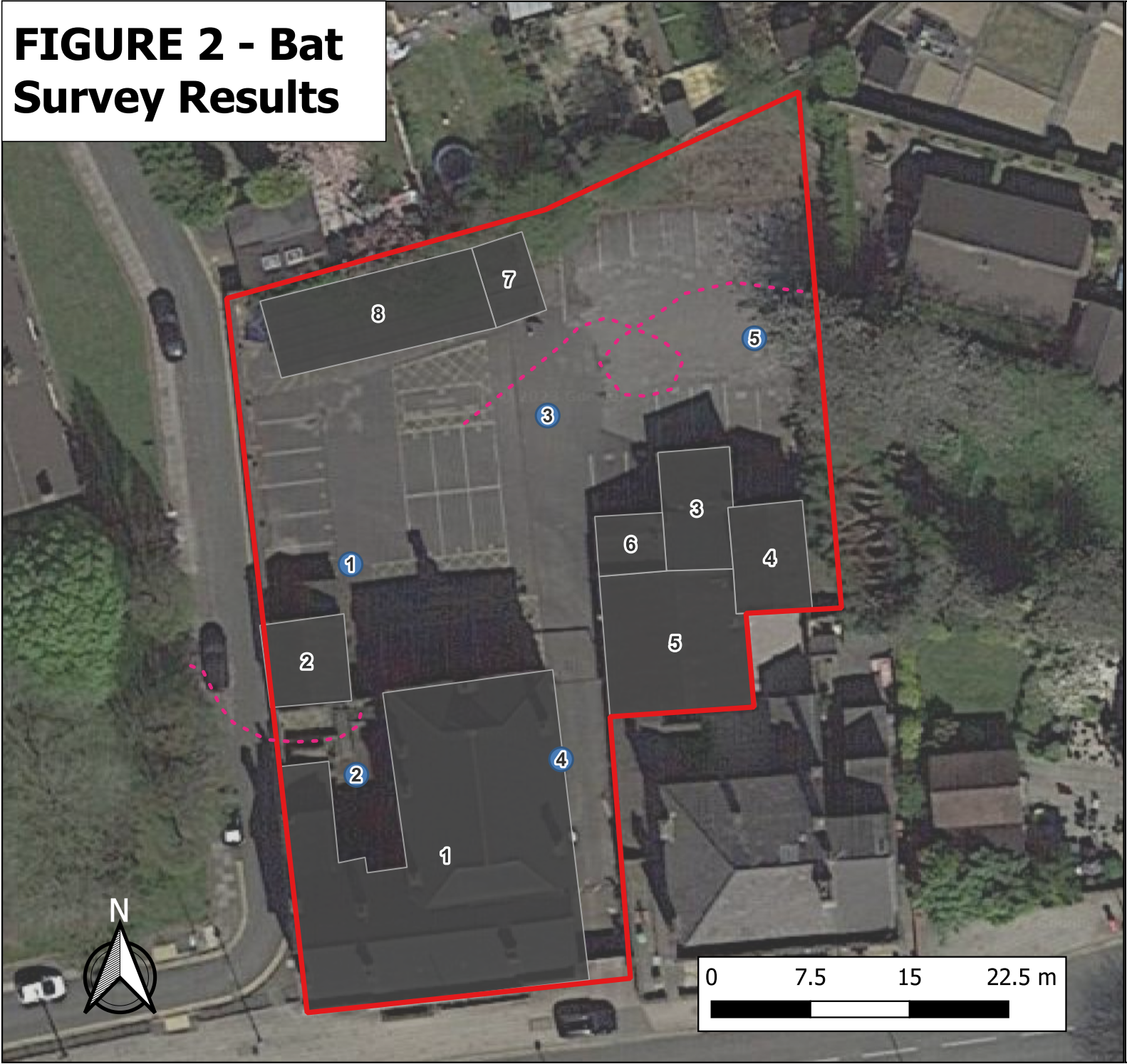
-  Study Site
-  Surveyor Location
-  Building

0 5 10 15 20 25 m



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**FIGURE 2 - Bat
Survey Results**



KEY

-  Study Site
-  Buildings
-  Bat Activity
-  Bat Surveyor Location