

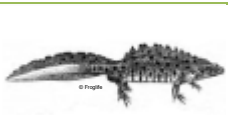
Inspection & Assessment in relation to Bats & Breeding Birds

October 2025

Project Reference: PR-25-0257

Holy Catholic Family Primary School
Hall Lane
Widnes
WA8 5DW

National Grid Reference: SD 3417 0238



Holy Catholic Family Primary School, Hall Lane, Widnes WA8 5DW
Inspection & Assessment in relation to Bats & Breeding Birds

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Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd will however consider forwarding data that is collected as part of its reports to the relevant wildlife records centre.

As per CIEEM Guidelines, in most cases ecological surveys are likely to be valid for 12 – 18 months. Beyond this, an updated site visit, desk study and/or report are likely to be required.

Executive Summary

As part of a proposed planning application with Knowsley Council concerning Holy Catholic Family Primary School, Widnes, Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd carried out a daytime preliminary roost assessment in relation to bats with an inclusive inspection for breeding birds in August 2025.

The survey was commissioned by Cunliffes Ltd; the proposals are understood to involve the extension of the school nursery to the west side of the school.

Detailed methods, findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented throughout the report; however, the reader should be aware of the following **Key** points:

Bats

Based upon the findings of the DBW and associated GLTA, covered through sections 5.0 – 6.0 of the report and supported by **Appendix I**, the building on site is determined to pertain to a bat roost suitability of '**None**', in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023).

Table 4.1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.		
Potential suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	Potential flight-paths and foraging habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).
Negligible ^a	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.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.

No further surveys or recommendations are therefore necessary in relation to bats.

Breeding Birds:

In relation to wider breeding bird species, viable nesting platforms are present within the trees and taller vegetation, which could provide suitable nesting locations within the nesting bird season of March – August, inclusive.

Any works impacting upon any of the above areas of nesting potential should therefore be carried out outside of the breeding bird season, typically March – September inclusive. For works within the breeding bird season, any areas that can support nesting birds should be checked by a professional Ecologist for nesting birds within 48 hours or less prior to works commencing.

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1.0 Introduction & Reasons for Survey

- 1.1 As part of a proposed planning application with Knowsley Council concerning Holy Catholic Family Primary School, Widnes, Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd carried out a daytime preliminary roost assessment in relation to bats with an inclusive inspection for breeding birds in August 2025.
- 1.2 The survey was commissioned by Cunliffes Ltd; the proposals are understood to involve the extension of the school nursery to the west aspect of the school. See **Figure 1.1** for site plans.

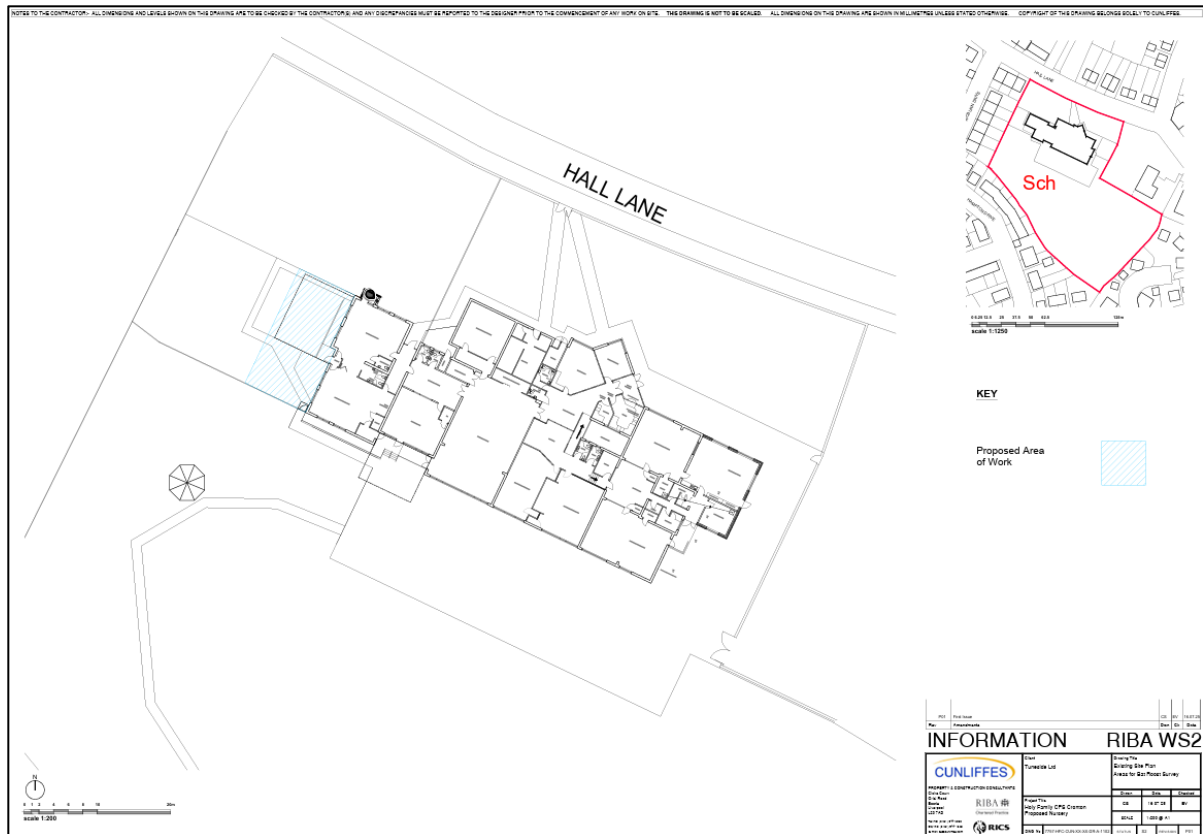


Figure 1.1 –Site Plan with redline site boundary (© Cunliffes Ltd)

- 1.3 The aim of the survey was to ascertain whether the building or surrounding vegetation are of value for bats / bat roosts, whilst an assessment of nesting and general suitability for birds was also carried out. If any potential roost features (PRFs) were found to be suitable for bats, or signs of use were observed, where suitable habitats and / or bat records exist in the locality, then more detailed surveys would be recommended i.e. dusk emergence surveys during the main active season of bats which is May – August (extending into September).
- 1.4 If additional surveys are required following the initial site visit, this report will outline the details of those further requirements, in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023).
- 1.5 If it was determined that bat(s) or their roost / place of rest / shelter will be subsequently impacted by the works then a European Protected Species (EPS) licence would be legally required to proceed with the development.
- 1.6 If evidence indicated breeding birds may be impacted by proposals, tailored recommendations would be made accordingly, species pending.

- 1.7 As part of the local authority's planning policies and obligations to the Planning Framework, ecological surveys are generally required prior to planning permission being granted where protected / priority habitats and species are, or may be present, that could be affected by the proposals for which the application seeks consent. Where more detailed surveys are recommended by the ecologist, following an initial daytime investigation, then Local Planning Authorities (LPA), on the advice of their ecological advisors, will not grant permission until such time that all relevant information is gathered.

2.0 Protected Species & Their Requirements

Bats

- 2.1 All British bats and their **roosts are afforded full protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and are listed in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019) (EU Exit). When dealing with cases where an EPS (all UK bats) may be affected, a planning authority is a competent authority within the meaning of Regulation 7 of the Regulations, and therefore has a statutory duty, as the local authority, to have due regard to the provisions of the Regulations in the exercise of its functions.

2.2 Uses of Buildings by Bats

- a) Summer breeding roost, and day/occasional roost (May – August)
- b) Hibernation roost (October – March)
- c) Transitional or temporary roost (other months)

- 2.3 Roost selection is often closely correlated to suitable foraging habitat within a reasonable commuting distance from the roost and different sites are used depending upon insect densities and abundance; climatic conditions can also affect their ability to successfully forage. All British bats are insectivorous.

*** The term roost is generically referred to as a place that bat/s use for the any of the above reasons, however it should be noted that under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019) (EU Exit) (Regulation 43 (d) the term roost is not used but refers to “a breeding site or resting place of such an animal” and is afforded legal protection. The roost, breeding site or resting place of bats, which ever terminology is used is legally protected whether or not bats are in occupation.*

- 2.4 Up to ten bat species have been regularly recorded within Merseyside to date, most of which use built structures, notably occupied residential buildings, for roosting. The most frequently encountered bat species is the common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and its abundant status in Merseyside is reflected throughout the UK.

Breeding Birds

- 2.5 All wild birds, no matter how common, together with their eggs, young, and nests (while being built or in use), are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. In addition, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity, which includes wild birds.
- 2.6 Any work that would damage an occupied nest, eggs or young of breeding birds, regardless of priority status, must be avoided; any damage to nests that may occur as a result of the development should be outside of the main breeding bird season (March – August). On occasions nests can become unoccupied during the breeding season but the status of the nest(s) should be determined by a suitably experienced ecologist / ornithologist.
- 2.7 Birds listed on Schedule 1 (Sch.1) of the WCA 1981, for example barn owl (*Tyto alba*) are afforded a greater level of protection and are also protected from disturbance as well as destruction.

Policy

- 2.8 Paragraph 193 of the National Policy Planning Framework (as revised in December 2024) states:

“When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons¹ and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.”

- 2.9 Knowsley Council's Local Plan: Core Strategy (adopted January 2016) echoes this national focus on preserving biodiversity in Policy CS8 – Green Infrastructure, stating:

“Knowsley's existing Green Infrastructure and its beneficial functions will be protected, managed and/or enhanced, primarily to sustain and promote biodiversity (including designated sites, priority habitats and protected and endangered species) in accordance with importance and contribution to ecological networks;

To achieve the above, planning powers and other interventions will be used to:

- Promote effective movement of wildlife through a network of strategic green links, by protecting, maintaining and improving existing and new open spaces, water courses (including water quality) and biodiversity assets;*
- Work in partnership with other districts and relevant bodies at a landscape scale to minimise the impact of development upon Knowsley's existing biodiversity and geological assets, and sustain the protection afforded to internationally important sites, including supporting habitat, for biodiversity outside of the borough.”*

Priority Habitats & Species

- 2.10 In the United Kingdom, legal protection and otherwise legislative recognition is afforded to particular habitats and species based on a variety of ecological factors. These are typically referred to as priority habitats and species, and can be identified under a variety of legislation and local policy, notably the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP), Section 41 (s.41) of the NERC Act as well as under Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPS).

¹ For example, infrastructure projects (including nationally significant infrastructure projects, orders under the Transport and Works Act and hybrid bills), where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat

3.0 Survey Methodology

- 3.1 As part of the Inspection & Assessment in relation to Bats & Breeding Birds report, a desk-top and field-based study is conducted. Methods for both components of the appraisal are given below.

Desktop Study

- 3.2 Prior to a site visit, a desktop study was conducted using online resources to obtain information pertaining to any sites afforded statutory (e.g. SSSI) and non-statutory (e.g. LWS) designations for nature conservation within 2.0 kilometres of the site boundary. To do so, the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGiC – provided by DEFRA) was accessed to gather such information; this particular interactive mapping service was also used to locate any locally granted European Protected Species Mitigation Licenses (EPSML) and species records to further inform conclusions concerning such species in the context of the study site and its proposed development.
- 3.3 Historic satellite imagery was reviewed using sources such as Google Earth (© 2024/25) to help establish past use of the land and determine the nature of adjoining and extending habitats; such information aids in the understanding of how the site might interact with its surroundings ecologically and its value in that context, and how the development may impact at a wider scale.
- 3.4 In addition, the Knowsley Council planning portal, including the 'Map Search', was utilised to help inform the desktop study by analysis of existing publicly accessible ecological survey results that have been carried out locally within the previous five years.
- 3.5 A commercial data request to the Local Environment Records Centre serving the area – in this case Merseyside Biobank – has not been sourced and is justified through application of the following recent guidance:

1) The Guidelines for Accessing, Using and Sharing Biodiversity Data in the UK (CIEEM, 2020) states:

"It is generally expected that a desk study, including a data search, will be a key part of the ecological surveys or reports produced to inform a planning application. Freely available web-based sources of data and contextual information should always be used; in some cases, it may be acceptable to not undertake a data search with the LERC or other relevant NSS or local interest groups, for example:

- ii) Situations where the **data search would be extremely unlikely to provide information needed to inform the assessment, due to the scale and location of the proposed development**. The appropriateness of excluding a data search will need to be judged on a case-by-case basis as, in most situations, it will be essential to carry out such a search even if the development is very small or is likely to have a low impact. It can be very difficult to demonstrate that a data search would not have provided relevant information without obtaining and reviewing those data.*
- iii) In some cases for Preliminary Roost Assessments of buildings in **low impact / small-scale scenarios**, such as an **extension to a residential property**, loft conversions (full or partial), installation of Velux/dormer windows, single modern agricultural or similar building conversion or demolition; however, it should not be assumed that data searches are never required for such scenarios and this must be judged on a case by case basis and justified accordingly.*

- 3.6 As exemptions as made **bold** above can be applied at the site, whilst following best practice, it is considered unnecessary to conduct a commercial data request following the desk study effort and daytime assessment at this time, which offers a proportionate level of survey effort. If, however, a data search is considered necessary by the Local Authority advisory body to inform the ecological impact assessment following any further surveys recommended in this report, a proportionate data search should be commissioned with results interpreted into the conclusions and recommendations of a re-issued / updated report.

Field Survey

- 3.7 In context with the above, a diurnal inspection and assessment of the building and the immediate environment in relation to bats and breeding birds was conducted on 26th August 2025 in warm, dry conditions (18°C), wind 1/12 (Beaufort scale), 5% cloud, by the following surveyor (see **Table 3.1**):

Table 3.1 – Site surveyor credentials

Name	Description of most relevant credentials
Mr. T. Lefebure Qualifying CIEEM	• A Junior Ecologist with a range of experience and currently undergoing extensive training, • MSc in Environmental Assessment and Management, • Accredited agent on the Natural England Class 2 Bat License (CLS-14227) of Mrs. K. Wilding, • Meets the requirements of CIEEM's Competency Framework Section S (Surveying) to Capable or higher level.

Bats

- 3.8 Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023), states:

“The guidelines should be interpreted and adapted on a case-by-case basis according to site-specific factors and the professional judgement of an experienced ecologist. The questions should not be whether the guidelines were followed, but were the defined objectives of the surveys met? Where examples are used in the guidelines, they are descriptive rather than prescriptive.”

- 3.9 The site was assessed for bats; a daytime bat walkover (DBW) was undertaken to observe, assess and record any habitats or features suitable for usage by bats, either as commuting, foraging or roosting provision. Wider connectivity to other habitats was also considered during the DBW.
- 3.10 Buildings and other permanent / semi-permanent structures (where present) were subject to a preliminary roost assessment (PRA), to identify potential areas which may be of value to bats and to determine evidence of use. This typically involves a systematic search of the external aspects of any structure(s), comprising an investigation of features known to be used by bats (for example roofing material, soffits, fascia, lead flashing hanging tiles) using a high-powered torch and close-focus binoculars, where necessary. An internal assessment of the structure(s) was also carried out, with the aid of a high-powered torch and endoscope, where necessary, to identify any evidence of bat use of a structure. Field signs of bats typically comprise bat droppings, urine splashing, fur-oil staining, incidental animal presence, dead specimens and / or the presence of prey items, such as moth wings.

- 3.11 Trees (where present) would be subject to a ground level tree assessment (GLTA) using equipment such as close-focus binoculars and a high powered-torch. Potential roost features (PRFs) can include woodpecker holes, rot holes, hazard beams, other vertical or horizontal cracks or splits in stems and branches, partially decayed lifted bark, knot holes, man-made holes, tear-outs, cankers in which cavities have developed, other hollows or cavities, including butt-rots, double-leaders forming compression forks with included bark, gaps between overlapping stems or branches, partially detached climbing species with stem diameters in excess of 50mm or pre-existing bat / bird boxes. These PRFs can then be determined as PRF-I or PRF-M, dependent on their suitability for individual / low numbers of bats or their capability to host multiple bats.
- 3.12 Criteria for roost assessment are based upon the determinants given in the Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023): (see **Figures 3.1 – 3.3** overleaf).
- 3.13 Factors considered during the preliminary roost assessment include:
- Practical experience of the surveyor,
 - Knowledge of bat species relevant to the site location and geographical range,
 - Nature of the immediate / surrounding habitat in relation to foraging opportunities,
 - Presence / absence of roost potential,
 - Value and types of roost potential, if present (i.e. – maternity, hibernation, transitional).

Birds

- 3.14 The site and any built structure(s) on site were inspected for evidence of nesting and suitability for relevant species. Bird species observed and heard were recorded on site, and a search was made for nest material, or areas suitable for nesting – this can take the form of searching structures, woody vegetation, semi-aquatic vegetation such as reeds and / or ground flora. Elevations of any buildings or structures on site were inspected for evidence of birds that show a high dependency upon built structures, many of which are in a state of decline. These might include the following species for example (list non-extensive):
- Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*): Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) red status
 - House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*): BoCC red status
 - House martin (*Delichon urbica*): BoCC red status
 - Swift (*Apus apus*): BoCC red status
- 3.15 Additional to the site's capacity to support generally common species for breeding, the area was also subject to an assessment for wider capacity to support species with extra protection under Sch.1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended), as well as those listed in s.41 of the NERC Act and on the North Merseyside BAP.

Quality Assurance (QA)

- 3.16 The results, conclusions and recommendations of this report have been assessed by Mrs. K. Wilding, the Director of Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd, and her assessment is consistent with that of the surveyor Mr. T. Lefebure.

Table 4.1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.

Potential suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	Potential flight-paths and foraging habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).
Negligible ^a	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.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
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 ^b and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats ^c).	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight-paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^b and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
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 ^b and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight-paths such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.
a Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant'. This category may be used where there are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute) but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute). b For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance. c Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten <i>et al.</i>, 2016 and Jansen <i>et al.</i>, 2022). Common pipistrelle swarming has been observed in the UK (Bell, 2022 and Tomlinson, 2020) and winter hibernation of numbers of this species has been detected at Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland (National Trust, 2018). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK, but ecologists should be aware of the potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in prominent buildings in the landscape, urban or otherwise.		

Figure 3.1 – BCT guidelines extract on categorisation of roost potential in structures and habitat suitability

Table 4.2. Guidelines for assessing the suitability of trees on proposed development sites for bats, to be applied using professional judgement.	
Suitability	Description
NONE	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present

Figure 3.2 – BCT extract on tree roost suitability criteria

Table 6.2. Guidelines for categorising the potential suitability of PRFs on a proposed development site for bats, to be applied using professional judgement.	
Suitability	Description
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

Figure 3.3 – BCT extract on tree roost categorisation criteria

4.0 Limitations

- 4.1 The survey was conducted in August, a time when bats are within their active season, and when evidence of bats can be most apparent. Survey timing is therefore not considered a constraint in this instance.
- 4.2 The survey took place within the breeding bird season (typically March – September), therefore incidental breeding bird behaviour has a higher probability of being encountered; timing is thus not considered to be a constraint in relation to breeding birds.
- 4.3 The presence of a hanging false ceiling meant that it was not possible to observe the underside of the roof of the building. However, based on the results of the survey, this is not considered significant and can be fairly discounted as a limitation.
- 4.3 In considering all potential survey constraints, no significant limitations were experienced that might adversely influence the results, conclusions, and recommendations of this report.

5.0 Desk Study Results

- 5.1 Holy Catholic Family Primary School (referred to in-part as “the application site” and “the site”) is situated immediately to the south of Hall Lane in Widnes, approximately 14.7km east of Liverpool city centre (see **Figure 5.1** below). The site has an approximate area of 1.40 hectares (ha) and features the main school building and a large area of amenity grassland, with semi-mature trees bordering.



Figure 5.1 – Location of the red line boundary within the landscape (©Google Earth Pro 2025)

- 5.2 The surrounding environment can be described as peripherally sub-urban within a wider rural setting, formed of open agricultural fields interspersed with hedgerows and tree lines to all aspects, with residential development located to the immediate west and east of the site. These residential properties are typically semi-detached structures, many of which have extensive gardens formed of heavily managed amenity grassland with scattered individual trees and hedgerows. The M62 is also present within close proximity, located approximately 1.0km north of the site.

Relevant Planning History

- 5.3 No previous planning applications are visible on the public access system at the site.
- 5.4 A number of applications have been made in proximity to the site, including the demolition of an existing industrial unit and erection of a new dwelling to the immediate east (25/00240/FUL²). A PRA was submitted in conjunction with the application, which was produced by Amenity Tree in February 2025, with the report finding both buildings to hold negligible potential for roosting bats.

² See: <https://planapp.knowsley.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=externalDocuments&keyVal=SUGHU7IXLRL00>

Designated Sites

- 5.5 No statutory designated sites for nature conservation occur within 2.0km of the site. However, the site is positioned within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the wider landscape, the closest of which is the Sefton Coast SSSI approximately 4.7km to the west.
- 5.6 Based on the IRZ – Threshold Checker³ available on MAGiC Maps 2025, the proposals do not present a likely risk of having a harmful effect on the surrounding terrestrial SSSIs and the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites that they underpin.
- 5.7 Where no impact to SSSI's is predicted, NE issue the following advice within their standing guidance on SSSI impact zones (NE, 2019):
- “It is important to note that the SSSI IRZs only indicate Natural England’s assessment of likely risk to the notified features of SSSIs. Where they indicate such a risk is unlikely, this does not mean that there are no potential impacts on biodiversity or the wider natural environment.”*
- 5.8 A number of non-statutory designated sites are present within 2.0km of the site, with the closest being Pex Hill Country Park located 380m to the east, a site designated for its heathland with associated areas of acidic grassland and oak dominated woodland overlying sandstone.
- 5.9 In addition to the above, Alder Brook, Cronton, a non-statutory designated brook, occurs approximately 548m to the south. This site is noted to be host to good habitat diversity, with a strong native plant population.
- 5.10 Despite the proximity of these designated sites, given the scale of the proposals at the application site, impacts can likely be ruled out.

Habitats

- 5.11 An online search of MAGiC Maps identified the following priority habitats within a 2.0km search radius (see **Table 5.1** below and **Figure 5.2** overleaf).

Table 5.1 – Priority habitats located within 2.0km buffer

Habitat Type	Designation	Distance to site
Deciduous woodland	Priority Habitat Inventory	0.1km south
Good quality semi improved grassland	Priority Habitat Inventory	0.5km east
Open mosaic	Priority Habitat Inventory	1.1km north-east
Traditional orchards	Priority Habitat Inventory	0.3km north-west

Bats

- 5.12 An online search of MAGiC Maps revealed that no European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSMLs) for bats have been granted within a 2.0km radius of the site boundary.

³ See: [https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0112304432050-es=11408&location=344691,386494%20\(IRZ%20polygon%20centre\)](https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0112304432050-es=11408&location=344691,386494%20(IRZ%20polygon%20centre))



Figure 5.2 – Priority habitat data within a 2.0km radius of the application site (©MAGiC maps 2025)

- 5.13 Habitats in the immediate vicinity of the site provide some commuting and foraging opportunities for bats, with treelines connecting to woodland parcels to the south, east and west, and these areas likely only dimly lit at night. These woodland areas provide abundant foraging habitat that would likely be favoured over the school building and associated amenity grassland that surrounds the application site. The woodland areas are likely to attract species such as the brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) bat which favour this habitat for foraging, while opportunities for species such as the common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) bat likely exist within the surrounding development, a species which often roosts in occupied dwellings.

NB: *Where quality habitat is present close to buildings then the percentage use of those buildings, by bats, increases given that roost opportunities are available and vice versa.*

Birds

- 5.14 The habitats in proximity to the site are suitable to host an array of bird species, with the open agricultural fields to all wider aspects being suitable for the hunting purposes of a variety of raptors, whilst the aforementioned Pex Hill Country Park to the west is likely to host a variety of passerines.
- 5.15 The site-surrounding habitats provide suitable commuting habitat for birds, with the pathways listed previously for bats also considered likely to afford connectivity to bird species in the surrounding habitat.

6.0 Field Study Results

Bats

- 6.1 One building is present within the application site boundary, a functioning primary school building which is spread across a large, complex layout. The structure is constructed of red brick, with a flat, bitumen-felt covered roof, to the approximate dimensions of 60m x 25m x 5m (length x width x height). The school features PVC doors, windows and guttering, with PVC cladding to areas above the doors and windows of the school. The location of the proposed works consists of a steel-framed cover, with a PVC roof and rooflights featuring. Security lighting is present throughout the school building. Whilst the surveyor is not qualified to assess structural integrity, the building was adjudged to be in good aesthetic condition with no signs of dereliction or dilapidation to the structure.
- 6.2 Internally, no loft space was present within the school. The majority of the rooms within the building follow a similar style, with each classroom consisting of a suspended ceiling that reaches to the flat roof of the school building, with some hallways featuring skylights. The school hall was found to be open to the roof and featured a small storeroom that was positioned above the doors but did not reach the roof of the building nor could be accessed from the exterior.
- 6.3 Climatic conditions inside the building were found to be warm, with a minor draught, and highly illuminated via numerous windows. Given no loft space was identified, the building is therefore considered broadly unsuitable for the breeding purposes of loft-dwelling species such as the brown long-eared bat; a species which requires dark, open loft spaces with consistent, warm thermal characteristics in which to raise their young. This does not necessarily discount use of the building for purposes other than breeding by such species. No evidence was located that would suggest use of the building by loft-dwelling bats; however, internal inspection was limited.
- 6.4 It is also unknown whether any roof lining is present beneath the roof; where present, a bitumastic underfelt can typically improve the value of a building for bats whereby they roost between the roofing cover and the underlining.
- NB:** *The breeding roosts of Pipistrelle bats are proportionally higher in occupied residential dwellings where the warm, dry conditions favour the requirements of a maternity colony but other structures are also used, especially for hibernation or by male bats which do not need the same conditions as a maternity colony.*
- 6.5 Externally, the building was found to be structurally tight throughout with very little opportunity for ingress via brickwork or the roof construction. Building features, such as the roof felt capping and PVC cladding were additionally found to be in good condition, with little potential for ingress.
- 6.6 Given the lack of suitable PRFs, the absence of a viable loft space and the general good condition the building was found to be in, the school building is duly categorised as pertaining to '**None**' bat roost suitability, in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023).
- 6.7 Several individual trees are present within the site boundary, though none of these offer any PRFs in relation to bats, and thus are assessed as pertaining to a bat roost suitability of '**None**' in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023).
- 6.8 From a habitat suitability assessment in relation to bat activity, the site provides moderate value foraging habitat; despite mostly being formed of the school building and hardstanding,

the amenity grassland and peripheral tree line around the boundary of the school make the space a potential habitat for bats to utilise in both a commuting capacity as well as possibly a foraging capacity.

- 6.9 All trees should be considered of value to commuting and foraging bats, whereby they act as landmarks for navigation and foci around which invertebrate prey species gather.

Breeding Birds

- 6.10 In relation to WCA Schedule 1 specially protected bird species such as barn owl, the site provides no suitable nesting platforms, and no direct evidence, or evidence of historic nesting was identified at the application site. It is considered unlikely that the site would be utilised by any specially protected bird species, despite the favourable habitat in the surrounding land.
- 6.11 In relation to more common bird species, the individual trees that surround the boundary of the site offer an abundance of suitable nesting platforms, which could support a variety of breeding passerine birds during the nesting bird season of March – August inclusive. These platforms are likely to be suitable for common garden bird species such as robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) and blackbird (*Turdus merula*). The site has no suitable habitat for ground-nesting species, although nearby agricultural land may hold some value for such species.

7.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

Designated Sites

- 7.1 No statutory designated sites for nature conservation occur within 2.0km of the site, though the site lies within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the wider landscape. Based on the IRZ – Threshold Checker, the proposals do not present a likely risk of having a harmful effect on the surrounding terrestrial SSSIs and the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites that they underpin.
- 7.2 No further consultation with Natural England (NE) in relation to specially protected sites is considered necessary. Similarly, given the small-scale and footprint of the proposed development, it is unlikely that it will impact upon any of the non-statutory sites which occur in proximity.

Bats

- 7.3 Based upon the findings of the DBW and associated GLTA, covered through sections 5.0 – 6.0 of the report and supported by **Appendix I**, the building on site is determined to pertain to a bat roost suitability of '**None**', in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023). See **Figure 7.1** below for a BCT guidelines extract. No further surveys are therefore recommended.

Table 4.1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.		
Potential suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	Potential flight-paths and foraging habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).

Figure 7.1 – BCT extract on 'None' suitability criteria

- 7.4 All of the trees on site are duly categorised as pertaining to a bat roost suitability of '**None**', in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th ed. (2023). See **Figure 7.2** below for a relevant BCT guidelines extract.

Table 4.2. Guidelines for assessing the suitability of trees on proposed development sites for bats, to be applied using professional judgement.	
Suitability	Description
NONE	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present

Figure 7.2 – BCT extract on tree roost suitability criteria

- 7.5 Installation of overly harsh artificial lighting as part of any development that exceeds current levels may have a negative impact upon foraging / commuting bats in the landscape, subject to their presence, particularly if increased light spillage occurs in areas that are currently free from illumination. A bat-sensitive lighting plan is therefore recommended in order to avoid potential impacts to bats. Several options to consider have been listed below, though the reader is referred to the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night' guidelines (August 2023) for further information.

Appropriate luminaire specifications: Light sources, lamps, LEDs and their fittings come in a myriad of different specifications which a lighting professional can help to select. However, the following should be considered when choosing luminaires and their potential impact on Key Habitats and features:

- All luminaires should lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, compact fluorescent sources should not be used.
- LED luminaires should be used where possible due to their sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability.
- A warm white light source (2700Kelvin or lower) should be adopted to reduce blue light component.
- Light sources should feature peak wavelengths higher than 550nm to avoid the component of light most disturbing to bats (Stone, 2012).
- Internal luminaires can be recessed (as opposed to using a pendant fitting) where installed in proximity to windows to reduce glare and light spill.
- Waymarking inground markers (low output with cowls or similar to minimise upward light spill) to delineate path edges.
- Column heights should be carefully considered to minimise light spill and glare visibility. This should be balanced with the potential for increased numbers of columns and upward light reflectance as with bollards.
- Only luminaires with a negligible or zero Upward Light Ratio, and with good optical control, should be considered - See ILP GN01.
- Luminaires should always be mounted horizontally, with no light output above 90° and/or no upward tilt.
- Where appropriate, external security lighting should be set on motion-sensors and set to as short a possible a timer as the risk assessment will allow. For most general residential purposes, a 1 or 2 minute timer is likely to be appropriate.
- Use of a Central Management System (CMS) with additional web-enabled devices to light on demand.
- Use of motion sensors for local authority street lighting may not be feasible unless the authority has the potential for smart metering through a CMS.
- The use of bollard or low-level downward-directional luminaires is strongly discouraged. This is due to a considerable range of issues, such as unacceptable glare, poor illumination efficiency, unacceptable upward light output, increased upward light scatter from surfaces and poor facial recognition which makes them unsuitable for most sites. Therefore, they should only be considered in specific cases where the lighting professional and project manager are able to resolve these issues.
- Only if all other options have been explored, accessories such as baffles, hoods or louvres can be used to reduce light spill and direct it only to where it is needed. However, due to the lensing and fine cut-off control of the beam inherent in modern LED luminaires, the effect of cowls and baffles is often far less than anticipated and so should not be relied upon solely.

Birds

- 7.6 No impacts are applicable in relation to any Sch.1 (WCA) specially protected bird species such as barn owl, and no further surveys or recommendations are necessary in relation to specially protected birds, with no evidence of Sch.1 raptors within the site boundary.

- 7.7 In relation to wider breeding bird species, viable nesting platforms are present within the trees and all denser vegetation surrounding the site, which could be utilised within the nesting bird season of March – August, inclusive.

NB: *All wild birds (with only minor exceptions) and their nests whilst being built or containing eggs or dependant young are protected from destruction, damage and disturbance under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is a punishable offence to interfere in any way with an active nest.*

- 7.8 Any works impacting upon any of the above areas of nesting potential should therefore be carried out outside of the breeding bird season, typically March – August inclusive. For works within the breeding bird season, any areas that can support nesting birds should be checked by a professional Ecologist for nesting birds within 48 hours or less prior to works commencing.

Point 3.24 of the British Standards Publication 42020:2013 defines a professional ecologist as: *“a person who has, through relevant education, training or experience, gained recognised qualifications and expertise in the field of ecology and environmental management.”*

- 7.9 Where / if active nests are / have been located by the Ecologist, then any works which may affect them would have to be delayed until the young have fledged and the nest has been abandoned naturally, this can be aided, for example, via implementation of appropriate buffer zone(s) around the nest site (typically 5 – 10 metres) in which no disturbance is permitted until the nest is no longer in use. This would have to be coordinated through the expert judgement of the professional ecologist and species pending.

- 7.10 The applicant might consider the erection of wildlife boxes as part of their biodiversity enhancement aims for the proposed development. Appropriate boxes suitable for an array of bat and bird species are provided within **Appendix II**.

8.0 Bibliography

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Appendix I: Site Photographs



Plate 1 – South elevation of the school, showing the area of proposed works to the outdoor nursery area



Plate 2 – Additional perspective of the outdoor nursery where proposed works are to be focused around



Plate 3 – General interior of the school building, note suspended flat ceiling with panels and fluorescent lighting used

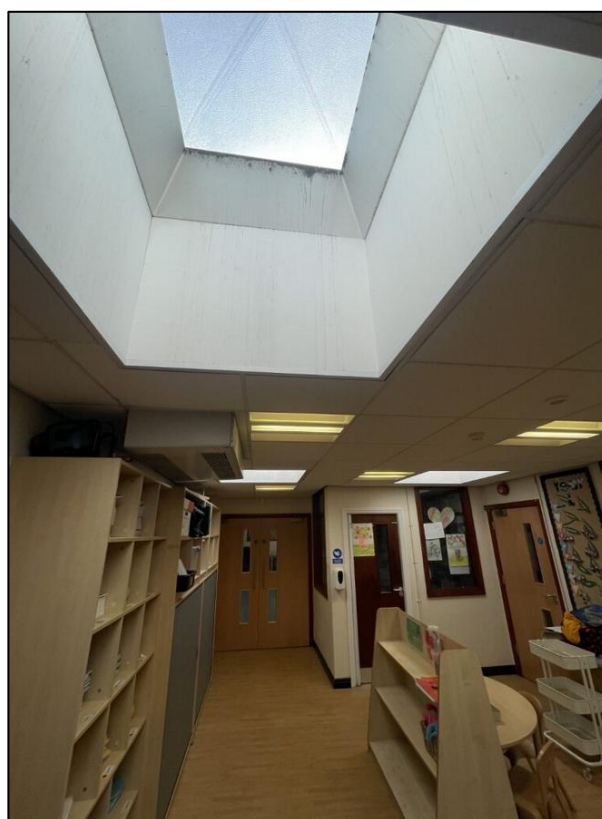


Plate 4 – Additional image of the interior of the school building with skylights featuring sporadically throughout



Plate 5 – Interior condition of the school hall, note this structure reaches to the roof with no loft space present



Plate 6 – Exterior character of the small closet space above the doors to the hall



Plate 7 – *Interior of the closet space identified in the hall, note this space has no access to the roof of the building*



Plate 8 – *General character of the playing field of the school, being made-up of primarily amenity grassland and hardstanding*



Plate 9 – *Additional perspective of the exterior of the school, with note to amenity grassland and hardstanding present*



Plate 10 – *Individual trees that are located opposite to the outdoor nursery area of the school*

Breeding Birds – House Sparrow

The sparrow terrace has been designed to help redress the balance of falling house sparrow numbers. The current UK population is now half of what it previously was in 1980 and this is widely attributed to habitat destruction and lack of suitable nesting spaces. House sparrows are social birds and like to nest in company, therefore, this terrace provides ideal nesting opportunities for three families. The terrace can be fixed on to the surface of a suitable wall or incorporated into the wall. It is suitable for all types of buildings.



Breeding Birds – Starling

Starling populations have declined dramatically in recent years and are now on the Red List of birds of high conservation concern. Loss of habitat is one of the major pressures on this species and household renovations and new buildings offer much fewer nesting sites than have previously been available. Providing these birds with a safe and secure habitat and nesting environment is a great way to help ensure their future survival.

This Vivara Pro WoodStone® Starling Nest Box has a 45mm diameter entrance hole which makes it ideal for starlings. It should be sited on an external wall or tree at a height of at least 1.5m using an aluminium nail or screw and wall plug (not included). Site near to vegetation if possible as this will provide additional protection and cover.



Breeding Birds – Swallow

Swallows are a migratory species which can typically be seen in the UK from Spring to Autumn. They create an open topped nest type referred to as a 'cup', often situated within open-sided or dilapidated barn buildings which provide shelter but allow free ingress.

The Vivara Pro Woodstone® Swallow Nest Box recreates these nesting opportunities, and should be situated beneath roofing materials with free access; suitable locations might include overhanging eaves or within an open-sided garage or bin-store.



Breeding Birds – Other

This traditional design has proved to be highly effective in attracting Robins, as well as other small species such as Black Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher and Wren. It is designed to be installed on the walls of houses, barns, garden sheds or other buildings and should be hung so that the entrance is to one side (at an angle of 90° to the wall). The front panel can be easily removed for cleaning.

This type of box should not be made conspicuous on a tree or bush because small predators can enter through the unprotected opening. By hanging on a wall, predators won't be able to reach the box. Alternatively hide the box in Ivy, Honeysuckle or other climbing plants.



Invertebrates – Bee bricks

The Bee Brick can be used in place of a standard brick or block in construction to create habitat for solitary bees. Alternatively, it can be used as a standalone bee house in your garden or wild patch. It will provide much needed nesting space for solitary bee species such as red mason bees and leafcutter bees, both of which are non-aggressive.



Each Bee Brick contains cavities in which solitary bees can lay their eggs before sealing the entrance with mud and chewed-up vegetation. The offspring will emerge the following spring and the cycle will begin again. Each cavity goes part way into the brick, which is solid at the back. Bee Bricks should be placed in a warm sunny spot on a south-facing wall at a minimum height of 1m, with no vegetation obstructing the holes. It is highly recommended that bee-friendly plants should be located nearby so that the bees using the bricks have food, otherwise it is unlikely that the brick will be used.

Available in a choice of four colours: white grey, dark grey, yellow and red.

Specification:

- * Material: Concrete
- * Origin: Cornwall, UK
- * Dimensions: W 215mm x D 105mm x H 65mm
- * Weight: 2.9kg
- * Colours: White grey, yellow, dark grey and red

Native Planting and/or Landscaping

New feature landscaping should incorporate native woody plants as opposed to non-native species that are of significantly less benefit to biodiversity. Species such as Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) are native and will provide a valuable resource for a myriad of wildlife as opposed to non-native, exotic species which are generally much less effective, particularly to pollinator groups including bees, butterflies and moths.

Suitable Trees	Suitable Woody Shrubs
English Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>)
Rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)	Honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>)
Wild Service Tree (<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>)	Guelder Rose (<i>Viburnum opulus</i>)
Silver Birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>)	Elder (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>)
Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	Wild Privet (<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>)
Goat Willow (<i>Salix capraea</i>)	Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>)
Beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)	
Wild Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i>)	