

14 Blackfield Lane, Salford Biodiversity Survey

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Contents

1	Introduction	2
1.2	Aims and Objectives	2
1.3	Legislative and Planning Context	2
2	Methods and Approach	4
2.1	Field Survey	4
3	Results	5
3.1	Field Survey	5
4	Discussion	6
4.1	Assessment and Recommendations	6
5	References	7

1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Dunelm Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a biodiversity survey at 14 Blackfield Lane, Salford. The survey was carried out in support of a planning application to extensively renovate the existing un-occupied dwelling. This would include re-roofing and re-building part of the building. It is understood that no trees would be impacted by the proposals.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

- 1.2.1 Taking into consideration the proposals and the site's character/location, the survey principally focused on bats and breeding birds although evidence of other protected species was also noted. This report provides a brief overview of the legal protection afforded to bats and birds in the UK. It includes a detailed description of the survey methods used and the results of the study. The implications of the survey findings are discussed; with an assessment of potential impacts provided and recommendations given as to what further measures are considered necessary.

1.3 Legislative and Planning Context

Bats

- 1.3.1 All British bat species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, which has been amended by later legislation, including the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Taken together, the above legislation makes it an offence to:
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection.
 - Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a bat.
 - deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat,
 - deliberately disturb bats, in such a way as –
 - i) to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear their young, or
 - ii) to hibernate or migrate, or
 - iii) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of bats;
 - damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.
- 1.3.2 Under the 2019 Regulations it is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place whether a bat is in occupation or not.

Breeding Birds

- 1.3.3 All wild species of breeding birds and their nests are protected under Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, as amended by later legislation including the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Part 1 (Section 1:1) of the WCA states that it is an offence to intentionally:
- (a) kill, injure or take any wild bird;
 - (b) take, damage or destroy a nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
 - (c) take or destroy an egg of any wild bird,
- 1.3.4 Part 1 (Section 1:5) of the WCA (amended by the CROW Act 2000) refers to specific birds listed on Schedule 1 of the WCA including barn owl, and makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:
- (a) disturb any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or
 - (b) disturb dependent young of such a bird.
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- 1.3.5 Seven native British bat species, and barn owl, are listed as 'Priority Species' and are referred to as 'species of principal importance' for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales within Section 74 of the CROW Act 2000 and Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.
- 1.3.6 The effects of developments on protected species are considered in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Section 11 of the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity. The NPPF also includes the requirement to contribute to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity and to promote the reservation, restoration and recreation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets. Reference is also made to Circular 06/2005: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System* which states that protected species and habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.
- 1.3.7 Local authorities in England are required to ensure that where significant harm resulting from development cannot be avoided (through locating on alternative sites with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for; planning permission is refused.
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2 Methods and Approach

2.1 Field Survey

Bats

- 2.1.1 A detailed inspection survey of the dwelling was carried out during daylight hours on 4 May 2022 following the methodology outlined in the *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* (Mitchell-Jones 2004) and *Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins 2016). The survey involved systematically searching the exterior and interior of the building for bats and their field signs with the aid of ladders, endoscope (Snakevision), close-focusing binoculars (Opticron Countryman BGA 8x42) and a powerful torch (Clulite 1M candle-power). Such signs may include insect remains, droppings, grease marks, urine stains and smoothing or lack of cobwebs. In addition, the dwelling was assigned to a roost potential category, based its suitability for supporting roosting bats (see Table 1).

Table 1 Roost Assessment Criteria

Roost Potential Category	Description of Roosting Habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.
Low	A structure or tree 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 numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	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.

Birds

- 2.1.2 Birds were surveyed for in conjunction with the bat survey. This involved searching the interior of the building for signs of occupation including droppings or splashing, pellets (regurgitated prey remains), feathers and nests.

3 Results

3.1 Field Survey

Bats

- 3.1.1 Table 2 below provides the results of the daytime inspection survey. In summary, no bats or signs of bats were recorded during the survey, although the building is assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats owing to the presence of several gaps around the eaves and under roof/ridge tiles while the dwelling is located immediately adjacent an extensive area of woodland which slopes down to the River Irwell 290 m to the south. Such habitats mean bat roosts are likely to be abundant in the area.

Table 2 Daytime Inspection Survey Results

Description	Roosting Opportunities & Signs of Bat Use	Roost Potential
Bungalow dating from c.1920. The dwelling is constructed from cavity brick walls (some of which are rendered with pebbledash) set under a triple pitched roof clad with blue slates. Most of the roof space could not be accessed but those sections surveyed appear to be largely unlined although some pitches have been lined with a modern plastic membrane. Floor to apex height is approx. 1.5 m in the sections of void that were accessed. Two brick outbuildings of similar age and construction to the house are present on the northern edge of the site.	No evidence of bats was recorded. There are however several gaps present around the eaves on the south and east elevations while occasional gaps exist under the odd roof slate and ridge tile such as on the western and south bay roofs. The other roof pitches could not be viewed.	Moderate

Breeding Birds

- 3.1.2 No evidence of nesting birds was recorded during the survey although species such as blue tit may utilise gaps around eaves while dense ivy growth is present around the north elevation.

Other Species

- 3.1.3 No other signs of protected species were recorded but the Himalayan balsam was recorded growing in the rear garden adjacent the house. *Montbretia crocosmia* and Japanese knotweed are also present. Both species are listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to spread or cause such species to grow in the wild. Knotweed is located at least 15 m away from the house while *Montbretia* is located within a flower bed that is unlikely to be impacted.

4 Discussion

4.1 Assessment and Recommendations

Bats

- 4.1.1 There is no evidence that the building is used by roosting bats although it is assessed as having moderate roost potential. Some bat species such as pipistrelle spp. are itinerant in their roosting habits and sometimes leave no clues of their presence, particularly when only low numbers of bats are present (Mitchell-Jones 2004) and bats utilise external roosting features. The possibility of a non-breeding roost occasionally used by solitary or low numbers of bats should therefore not be discounted. Further survey effort in the form of dusk emergence and/or return to roost surveys is therefore recommended to give confidence in the initial negative survey result and to comply with best practice guidelines (Collins 2016). Such surveys can only be undertaken between May and August during suitable weather conditions i.e. warm ($>8^{\circ}\text{C}$), calm and dry, with at least two weeks between each survey.
- 4.1.2 Should further survey confirm the presence of bats and roost sites be directly impacted, then renovation works will need to be completed under licence from Natural England. Roost sites for bats should be incorporated into the scheme whether bats are present or not, in accordance with the NPPF which seeks net gains in biodiversity. This could be achieved by installing several integral bat roosting units within the external walls.

Birds

- 4.1.3 If works cannot be undertaken outside the nesting season which lasts from March to August inclusive, then a pre-works check should be undertaken no more than 48 hours of work commencing. If nesting was confirmed, then works within 5 m of the nest would need to be postponed until chicks had fledged the nest. This approach is recommended to avoid infringement of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which protects all wild birds and their nests.
- 4.1.4 As with bats, several nest boxes/nesting units should be incorporated within the scheme either on adjacent trees or within external walls.

Schedule 9 Plant Species

- 4.1.5 Himalayan balsam is present within close proximity to the property and could therefore be inadvertently spread which would constitute an offence under UK legislation. Balsam should be treated and eradicated with an appropriate herbicide during the growing season in advance of ground works commencing. Any soils may need to be treated as contaminated waste given that seeds can lie dormant for several years within the ground. Machinery should be cleaned before leaving site to ensure seeds are not inadvertently spread. It is understood that no works are proposed within 7 m of the identified Japanese knotweed stand so there is negligible risk of this species being spread. Likewise, *Montbretia crocosmia* is unlikely to be affected by the proposals.

5 References

Collins J (2016). *Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines*. Third Edition. BCT, London.

Mitchell-Jones AJ (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.



Plate 1 Roof void



Plate 2 Outbuilding



Plate 3 Gaps under eaves on east elevation



Plate 4 Occasional gaps exist under roof slates and ridge tiles

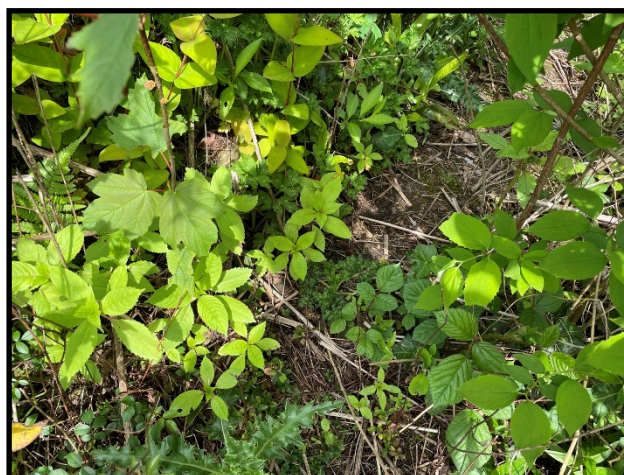


Plate 5 Himalayan balsam



Plate 6 Woodland to south of site