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BAT SCOPING SURVEY

At

Unicorn House
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Middleton
Manchester
M24 4DG

NGR: SD 86559 05625

Prepared for:
Written by:
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SP Architects Ltd
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Mooney', is written over a horizontal line.

Date:
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is written by Toby Leverett BSc MSc, Graduate Ecologist at United Environmental Services Ltd (UES). It provides an assessment of the potential impacts on bats as a result of the proposed development at Unicorn House, Middleton.

A bat scoping survey was undertaken on 29th January 2025. The objective of the survey was to establish the suitability of the buildings on site to support roosting bats, based on a site-specific survey and habitat assessment. The buildings were searched externally and internally (where accessible) for bat presence and features associated with bat activity, as detailed in Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance (2023).

The current development plans submitted to UES include the conversion of the commercial building on site into residential flats and the creation of new parking & amenity planting.

Unicorn House is situated in an area which presents poor-quality habitat to the east in the form of urban and suburban areas, along with higher-quality habitat to the west including woodland and waterbodies in Alkrington Wood and North Manchester Golf Course, to which the site is connected via a commuting corridor in the form of a treeline. The wider surrounding area features further built-up areas to the south and east, while semi-rural areas presenting higher-quality habitat are present to the west and north.

Unicorn House was assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats. This was due to the significant number of external and internal potential roosting features (PRFs) including gaps under ridge tiles, crevices in brickwork and damaged boxed soffits.

As the building on site was assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats, presence / absence surveys comprising two visits are required in order to determine whether bats are using the buildings onsite for roosting purposes, and if so, to determine the species and number of bats. The surveys should be undertaken by an appropriately licenced ecologist during the bat survey season (May to September inclusive), with at least one of the surveys conducted within the peak bat survey season (May to August inclusive).

The report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 4, which give visual representations of the survey results.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Author, surveyors and qualifications

This report is compiled and written by Toby Leverett BSc MSc and UES Graduate Ecologist. Other surveyors include:

- Robert Mooney MSc, UES Ecologist. Robert is listed as an accredited agent on the bat survey licence of Toby Hart (2015-15898-CLS-CLS (level 3) and 2015-15899-CLS-CLS (level 4)). As such, he has been deemed competent to undertake licensable activities such as using a torch and endoscope to survey for bats.

All surveyors have the knowledge, skills and experience identified within CIEEM's "Competencies for Species Survey: Bats" (2013) or were under the supervision of a surveyor with the required competencies.

1.2 Survey objectives

UES was commissioned in January 2025 to conduct site surveys which include the following activities:

- Conduct internal and external building inspections to look for field signs of bats
- Assess the suitability of the buildings for use by roosting bats
- Recommend further surveys, mitigation and compensation, where appropriate

1.3 Proposed development

The current development plans submitted to UES include the conversion of the commercial building on site into residential flats and the creation of new parking & amenity planting.

1.4 Structure of the report

This report sets out the methodology, results, and recommendations in relation to a specific bat survey. Recommendations are in line with statutory legislation and planning policy objectives.

The report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 4, which give visual representations of the survey results.



2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

All surveys were carried out to recognised guidelines, timings and weather conditions, with particular reference to Natural England and BCT publications (see references for further information).

The habitats on site and in the surrounding area were assessed during a walkover survey and by studying aerial photographs, in order to gauge their suitability to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats.

2.2 Building survey

The buildings onsite were searched both externally and internally for bat presence and features associated with bat activity, as detailed in BCT guidance (Collins, 2023). This was conducted on 29th January 2025 by Robert Mooney and Toby Leverett.

2.2.1 External inspection

The external inspection was carried out from ground level using binoculars, and also using ladders and an endoscope to investigate suitable gaps. The objective of the survey was to find and record any signs of bat use, for example:

- Bat droppings
- Feeding remains
- Grease staining / urine marks
- Corpses or skeletons

The bat signs listed above are visible from the outside of a building. The following areas were searched, where present:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| • Roof and ridge tiles | • Gaps under felt |
| • Lead flashing | • Cracks / holes in woodwork or behind cladding |
| • Eaves | • Gaps in brickwork and mortar |
| • Boxed soffits | • Air bricks |
| • Fascia and barge boards | • Grills |
| • Window sills and panes | • Vents |
| • Walls | |

2.2.2 Internal inspection

The internal inspection covered all of the accessible rooms and roof spaces within the buildings.

Bats regularly utilise specific areas within roof spaces, which were searched for any field signs of bats using high-powered torches and an endoscope, where considered necessary by the licenced ecologist. The following features were searched, where present:

- Roof beams and junctions



- Gaps under felt
- Dividing walls
- Chimney breasts
- Gaps in brickwork and mortar
- Cracks / holes in woodwork
- Floor or other surfaces on which droppings could accumulate

2.3 Survey limitations

The small section of the loft featuring a gable end was not accessible due to the loft's structure; however, it could be viewed from the main section from a near distance. As such, this is not considered to present a significant limitation.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Habitat assessment

The proposed development site has an area of approximately 0.08ha and is mainly comprised of hardstanding, a building and a section of sparsely vegetated land.

The immediate surrounding area is comprised mainly of residential and commercial buildings which make up the town of Middleton. Also present to the immediate south of the development is a large factory building which backs onto the Alkrington Wood local nature reserve (LNR). The river Irk also runs through the Alkrington estate, and a number of waterbodies are present; as such this area will provide high-quality foraging and commuting habitat. A line of trees found just to the south-east of the site provides a commuting corridor to the LNR. To the northwest of the development there are area of greenspace in the form of North Manchester Golf Course and recreational play areas.

The wider surrounding area, within 2km, is comprised of similar suburban and urban areas to the east and south which will provide generally poor-quality habitat, although some areas of greenspace such as parkland and a further golf course are present. Further to the north and west, however, area areas largely comprising pasture fields demarcated with tree lines and hedgerows, along with along with some small areas of woodland.

3.2 Building survey

3.2.1 External inspection

There is a single building included within the development boundary of the site. This building is a two-storey rendered brick building, which features a higher roof with a loft void and a lower roof with vaulted ceilings within (see Appendix 3 – Photographs, Photographs 1 & 2).

The higher roof of the building has a hipped structure featuring concrete roof tiles, although a small gable is present along the north-eastern aspect. The roof is in good condition with minimal damage to the pitch tiles; however, the hip tiles feature some gaps underneath, Created by the curved shape of the pitch tiles. A boxed soffit runs around the whole of the building and features damage by the gable, resulting in a potential point of ingress (Photograph 3).

The lower roof of the building has a pitched structure which likewise features concrete tiles, which are likewise largely in good condition; however, the tiles adjacent to the skylights present are slightly raised, as is the flashing by the skylights (Photograph 4). The lower roof section likewise features gaps under the ridge tiles at the apex. The soffit on this section is damaged at the gable, creating PRFs (Photograph 5).

The walls of the building feature potential points of ingress in the form of vent holes which are open (Photograph 6).

No bat droppings or other field signs of bats were found during the external building inspections.



3.2.2 Internal inspection

The loft of the higher roof of the building has W-shaped timber structure, and is approx. 3m from base to ridge (Photograph 7). The timbers in the loft are in generally good condition, as is the bitumen felt; however, some tears and areas where the lining has lifted away are present, particularly at the ridgeline, which will provide PRFs (Photograph 8). While most aspects of the building feature roof pitches or hips, a gable end is present in the loft which is constructed from breezeblock and features crevices between blocks. Numerous areas of light ingress can be seen from the eaves in numerous locations, and at one point from the apex, indicating potential points of ingress (Photograph 9). Both mouse and bat droppings were found throughout the loft (Photograph 10).

The ground and first floors of the building have been subject to an internal strip and numerous PRFs are present as a result. These include gaps in brickwork and between breezeblocks in on exposed walls, gaps around wooden beams where they enter walls, and gaps around window frames (Photographs 11 & 12). The lower roof section has no loft void, instead featuring vaulted ceilings with skylights.

A crawl space is present beneath the ground floor of the building, which can be accessed through a hole in the floor (Photograph 13). Crevices in brickwork are present in this area (Photograph 14); however, the crawl space is not considered to contain hibernation potential due to its low height (approx. 1m), dry conditions, and lack of points of ingress from the outside of the building (some vents are present but are too small to provide suitable points of ingress). Furthermore, as the building is on a hillside, the crawl space is largely above the outside ground level and as stated previously features vents; as such, it is unlikely to provide the stable conditions provided by classic hibernation roosts.

No bat droppings or other field signs of bats were found during during the internal building inspections.



4 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Evaluation of results

4.1.1 Qualitative assessment of foraging habitats

In summary, Unicorn House is situated in an area which presents poor-quality habitat to the east in the form of urban and suburban areas, along with higher-quality habitat to the west including woodland and waterbodies in Alkrington Wood and North Manchester Golf Course, to which the site is connected via a commuting corridor in the form of a treeline. The wider surrounding area features further built-up areas to the south and east, while semi-rural areas presenting higher-quality habitat are present to the west and north.

4.1.2 Qualitative assessment of roosting habitats

Unicorn House was assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats. This was due to the significant number of external and internal PRFs including gaps under ridge tiles, crevices in brickwork and damaged boxed soffits.

4.2 Mitigation and compensation measures

4.2.1 Bats

The building onsite was assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats. As such, bat presence absence surveys comprising two visits are required in order to determine whether bats are using the buildings onsite for roosting purposes, and if so, to determine the species and number of bats. The surveys should be undertaken by an appropriately licenced ecologist during the bat survey season (May to September inclusive), with at least one of the surveys conducted within the peak bat survey season (May to August inclusive).



5 CONCLUSION

Unicorn House is situated in a suburban area which features a mixture of higher-quality habitat such as woodland, to which the site is well-connected, along with poorer-quality built-up areas. The large number of buildings in the area will provide roosting opportunities for bats.

Unicorn House was assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats. This was due to the significant number of external and internal PRFs including gaps under ridge tiles, crevices in brickwork and damaged boxed soffits. As such, bat presence absence surveys comprising two visits are required in order to determine whether bats are using the buildings onsite for roosting purposes, and if so, to determine the species and number of bats. The surveys should be undertaken by an appropriately licenced ecologist during the bat survey season (May to September inclusive), with at least one of the surveys conducted within the peak bat survey season (May to August inclusive).



6 REFERENCES

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2013). *Competencies for Species Survey: Bats*.

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. (4th ed.) The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Department for Communities and Local Government (2021). *National Planning Policy Framework*.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004). *The Bat Workers Manual*. (3rd ed.) JNCC



APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Aerial Photographs



Unicorn House, Middleton

Aerial photograph

— Site Boundary





Unicorn House, Middleton

Wide aerial photograph



Site Location





Appendix 2 – Photographs



Photograph 1 – The south-eastern and north-eastern aspects of the building.



Photograph 2 – The south-eastern and south-western aspects of the building.



Photograph 3 – The gable on the north-eastern aspect of the building, showing the damaged boxed soffit.



Photograph 4 – South-eastern pitch of the single-storey roof, showing the raised tiles around skylights and the gaps under ridge tiles.



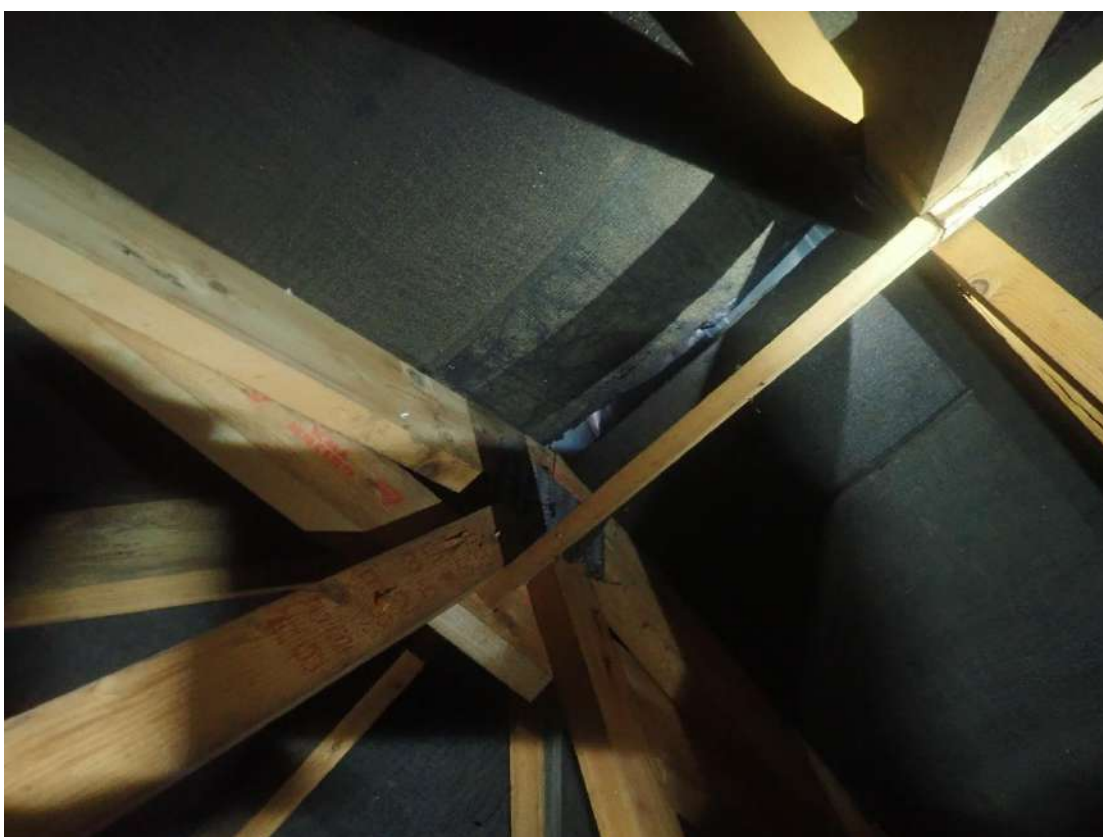
Photograph 5 – Damaged soffit on the single-storey gable.



Photograph 6 – Vent hole on the north-western aspect of the building.



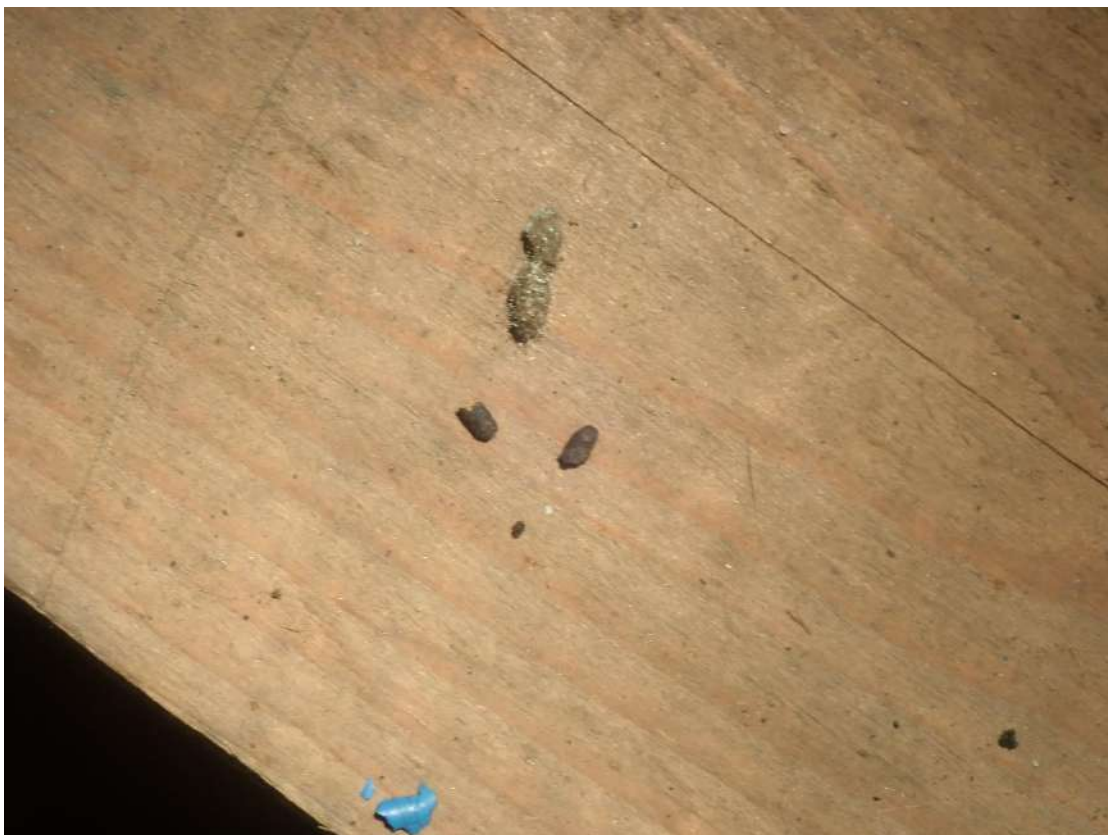
Photograph 7 – Centre of the loft void.



Photograph 8 – Lifted bitumen at the loft void's apex.



Photograph 9 – Light ingress from the eaves in the loft void.



Photograph 10 – Rat droppings in the loft void.



Photograph 11 – Gap in the brickwork on the building's first floor.



Photograph 12 – Gap around timber beam on the building's ground floor.



Photograph 13 – The crawl space under the building.



Photograph 14 – Crevices in brickwork in the crawl space under the building.



Appendix 3 – Statutory and Planning Context

Ecological assessments

Ecological assessments play an important part within the planning context; they include an initial assessment which highlights any specific interests of a site. From the initial site assessment, the surveyor assesses the suitability of habitats within the site to support protected species and makes recommendations for further survey works if required. The following paragraphs provide a brief interpretation of the legislative protection that is relevant to the findings of this report.

Bats

In the United Kingdom, all species of bat and their roosts are afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the “Habitats Regulations”). The Wildlife and Countryside Act is the domestic implementation of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention) and was amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a bat
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (even if the bat is not present at the time)
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead bat, any part of a bat or anything derived from a bat

Under UK law, a bat roost is *any structure or place which any wild [bat] ... uses for shelter or protection*. As bats often reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time of the activity taking place.

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

If an activity is likely to result in any of the above offences, a licence can be applied for to derogate from the protection afforded. These licences must provide appropriate mitigation and are issued by Natural England.

A Natural England mitigation licence application requires a Mitigation Method Statement and, in many cases, a Reasoned Statement of Application. The Mitigation Method Statement contains details of the proposed mitigation works. The Reasoned Statement needs to provide a rational and reasoned justification as to why the proposed development meets the requirements of the Conservation (National Habitats & c.) regulations 1994, namely Regulations 44(2)(e), (f) or (g), and 44(3)(a).

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) provides guidance on the interpretation of the law in relation to the natural environment and development.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 lists the following bat species as species of principle importance under Section 41:

- Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*
- Bechstein’s bat *Myotis bechsteinii*
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
- Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*
- Greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
- Lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

Section 40 requires every public body in the exercising of its functions ‘have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’ (all biodiversity and not just section 41 species and habitats); therefore making these bats a material consideration in the planning process and requiring a detailed ecological bat survey before planning permission can be granted.

Planning policy

National Planning Guidance is issued in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF). The most relevant section is 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Key relevant principles stated in 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment are;

- 174.** Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
 - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
 - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
 - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
 - e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
 - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 179.** To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity⁶¹; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation⁶²; and
 - b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity
- 180.** 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 reasons⁶³ 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.