



**MILNROW LIBRARY,
MILNROW, ROCHDALE**

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

**Prepared for
Rochdale Borough Council**

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Apex Ecology Limited
Cauldon Locks
Shelton New Road
Cliffe Vale
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 7AB

01782 346494
enquiries@apexecology.com

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Report author	Helen Ball, MSc, MCIEEM, CEnv
Report reviewer	Max Robinson, BSc, MCIEEM

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared for Rochdale Borough Council. It presents the results of a Preliminary Roost Assessment of Milnrow Library, Rochdale during February 2024.
- 1.2 The building requires extensive restoration works including ridge tile re-setting and other roof repairs, repairs to the ventilation turret, works to the stone work and windows and re-surfacing of the flat roof. The works proposed are shown on the drawing *Roof Plan & Proposed Works* prepared by Bradshaw, Gass and Hope (drawing reference 2215.57.302 Rev P3, dated April 2023).
- 1.3 The building is Grade II listed. It dates from 1907 and combines the styles of both Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau. The front elevation is set back from the street. It is sandstone and has stone relief carvings and ornamentation. Downstairs the library retains its original layout including a top-lit borrowers' hall and lending library and interconnecting barrel-vaulted reading room, with a former lecture hall on the first floor, originally shared with the adjacent town hall offices.
- 1.4 The building is situated on Newhey Road in an area known as Milnrow, 3.7km to the southeast of Rochdale. The building is in a residential area, with woodland and farmland relatively close by. Amenity greenspaces of Hollingworth Academy lie 280m to the northeast and Tunshill Golf Club 580m to the northeast. Hollingworth Lake Country Park lies 2km northeast and wide densely wooded edges of the M62 are located 140m southeast. The River Beal runs in a south to north direction 230m to the west of the building. The Butterworth Brook joins the River Beal from the west and runs 150m to the north. The OS grid reference for the building is SD 93180 12173.
- 1.5 The report describes the methods used for the survey and any constraints encountered, along with the results of the survey, including a description of the building and any evidence of bats found. The findings are then assessed in light of the proposals and recommendations for further survey or action are given where appropriate.
- 1.6 The legislation relating to bats is given in Appendix I.

2. METHODOLOGY

Search of Existing Records

- 2.1 The local record centre, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU), was contacted for existing records of bats within 1km of the site.
- 2.2 The results of a record search can help to set a site into the context of its surroundings, as well as provide valuable information on the known presence of bats in the local area.

Survey Methodology

- 2.3 For the purposes of the survey and report, the building has been divided into numbered sections. The layout of the building is shown on Figure 1.
- 2.4 A Preliminary Roost Assessment was undertaken on the 22nd February 2024 by Helen Ball and Max Robinson. Both ecologists hold 25 years' experience working in the ecology sector. The surveyors are licensed to survey for bats and their Natural England licence numbers are listed below:

Max Robinson: 2015-14473-CLS-CLS (class 2)

Helen Ball: 2018-37791-CLS-CLS (class 3) & 2018-37792-CLS-CLS (class 4)

- 2.5 An assessment of the building was made in terms of its suitability to support roosting bats. Factors considered included internal conditions, presence of features suitable for use by crevice dwelling and free hanging bats, proximity to foraging habitats/cover and potential for disturbance.
- 2.6 A description of the building was made, and any potential roost features catalogued. The building was assigned to one of the following categories according to the potential to support bats:
 - Bat roost – evidence of use by bats present. Further survey (usually a minimum of three evening emergence surveys) would normally be undertaken to confirm the type of roost and number of bats present, etc. Additional surveys are sometimes needed to help characterise the roost. Works affecting the roost would need to be undertaken under a statutory licence from Natural England, with precautionary and mitigation measures implemented as specified by the licence.
 - High Potential – building exhibiting features very suitable for use by roosting bats (such as gaps between tiles and underfelt, gaps below ridge tiles, significant crevices within the walls) and offering optimal roosting opportunity, including for maternity roosting. Often several suitable features will be present. Further survey (usually a minimum of three evening emergence surveys) would normally be undertaken to establish use by bats and, if confirmed, the type of roost and number of bats present, etc. If no roost is identified, precautionary measures would need to be implemented during works to the building.
 - Moderate Potential – building exhibiting features less suitable for roosting bats (such as superficial gaps within walls, gaps containing debris or cobwebs, limited

- areas of tiles or generally well-sealed tiling) and offering less suitable roosting opportunity. Suitable roosting opportunity may be limited to a smaller number of features. Further survey (usually a minimum of two evening emergence surveys) would normally be undertaken to establish use by bats and, if confirmed, the type of roost and number of bats present, etc. If no roost is identified, precautionary measures would need to be implemented during works to the building.
- Low/Negligible Potential – building exhibiting features very unlikely to be used for roosting or no features suitable for roosting. For low potential buildings, further survey (usually a single evening emergence survey) would normally be undertaken to establish use by bats and, if confirmed, the type of roost and number of bats present, etc. Precautionary measures may need to be implemented during works to the building, although sometimes no further action would be required.
- 2.7 A detailed visual inspection of the exterior of the building was undertaken. In addition, access was provided via internal tower scaffolding to enable inspection of two of the roof voids. The inspection followed standard methodologies set out in the *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines*, Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2023).
- 2.8 Externally, a visual inspection of features such as gaps in the fabric of the building was made for evidence of bat use from ground level. Evidence searched for included droppings and staining from fur-oil and urine. The survey was undertaken from the ground and aided using close-focusing binoculars and a high-powered torch where necessary.
- 2.9 The internal survey of the roof voids followed a similar approach, with a search made for bat droppings, prey residues (such as fly or moth wings) and urine stains, as well as resident bats.
- 2.10 The weather conditions during the survey were as follows: overcast with recent rain and light breeze (Beaufort Scale 2) with a temperature of 9°C.

Constraints

- 2.11 There was no access into a small roof void at the rear of the building (Section 1). Externally, some parts of the roof and walls could not be viewed clearly from the ground due to the height of the building and proximity of adjoining buildings.

3. SURVEY FINDINGS & INTERPRETATION

Review of Existing Records

- 3.1 GMEU provided information on bats that have been recorded within 1km of the site.
- 3.2 Bats have been recorded on 49 occasions within the search area, with five species known to be present: common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Nathusius' pipistrelle *P. nathusii*, noctule *Nyctalus noctule*, Leisler's *N. leisleri* and Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*. Several records are not identified to species level.
- 3.3 Four bat roosts have been recorded locally, all either common pipistrelle or unidentified pipistrelle roosts. The closest of these are two adjacent pipistrelle roosts located 750m to the north. A common pipistrelle roost also lies 800m to the northwest, with another 900m to the south. Several records describe grounded or injured bats, all of which are either pipistrelle or common pipistrelle and are generally from locations to the west of the building.
- 3.4 Other records are of bats recorded in flight either foraging or commuting. This includes two records of Nathusius' pipistrelle recorded from the Milnrow area (precise locations unknown). Daubenton's have been recorded twice adjacent to Butterworth Hall Brook, 300m to the northeast.
- 3.5 A search of the MAGIC maps website has been carried out for evidence of Natural England European Protected Species Licences granted for bats. The nearest licence covers common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats *Plecotus auritus* and relates to a site located 800m to the northwest. No other sites covered by a licence fall within 3km of the building.

Survey Findings

- 3.6 The layout of the building is shown on Figure 1 and depicted in the Plates.
- 3.7 The building comprises a two-storey section that fronts Newhey Road that has a pitched and hipped roof clad in slates. To the rear the building is single-storey and supports a pitched roof and an interconnecting flat roof. The front elevation is built from stone; elsewhere the building is brick.
- 3.7 Section 1 is two-storey and fronts Newhey Road. The slate roof is pitched and hipped and supports a ventilation turret. The front and rear gable ends have a parapet wall with stone copings. A sloping skylight roof is present on the southeastern side, which protects an original stained-glass skylight ceiling below. Gaps are present below ridge tiles and some of the slates, as well as below lead flashing at the base of the turret where it joins the roof. Gaps are also present behind the fascia board on the southeastern wall (above the skylight roof) and potentially the northwestern wall. Gaps are also present behind roofing felt where the skylight roof adjoins the wall. The windows are stone mullion, and the lintels

- are solid. Some are in poor condition, although no gaps suitable for use by bats were evident. The brickwork appears well sealed.
- 3.8 A large roof void, 1b, is present in Section 1 of the building. This extends above the stairwell and southern end of the former lecture hall on the upper floor. The roof void is L-shaped in plan view. It is approximately 1.5m in height. The roof is supported by struts, which clutter the void making access to some parts difficult. The roof has a ridge beam, and the tiles are lined with a breathable roofing membrane. The roof void is very dusty.
- 3.9 A smaller void, 1a, is located below the pitched and bay roof at the front elevation of the building. The void is approximately 1.5m high by 2m wide above the bay. The pitched roof is lined with a breathable roofing membrane whilst the bay roof is lined with sarking boards. The void is very dusty and contains cobwebs that span the void floor to roof. No evidence of bats was found in either roof void.
- 3.10 A small void may be present at the rear of this section but is not accessible. No other roof voids are present as the ceiling throughout much of the lecture hall is vaulted.
- 3.11 Section 2 is single storey. It contains a single room with a barrel-vaulted, plastered ceiling; no roof void is present. It is built from brick and has a pitched and slated roof, with a hip at the southwestern end. Several gaps are present below the ridge tiles where mortar is missing, with gaps also likely at the hips. Occasional gaps are present below the slates or where a slate has slipped or is missing. The gable ends have parapet walls with stone copings. Lead flashing lines the back of the parapet walls and in places this has lifted or buckled, and gaps are present below.
- 3.12 Section 3 connects Sections 1 and 2 and has a flat roof. Again, it is built from brick and supports parapet walls with stone copings. The copings are laid on lead flashing and appear well sealed. The flat roof is lined with lead. The brickwork is well sealed as are the stone casement windows.

Interpretation of Survey Findings

- 3.13 The building holds high potential for roosting by bats due mainly to the presence of gaps associated with the ridges, slates, flashing/felt and fascias. The roosting potential is limited to Sections 1 and 2, with Section 3 holding negligible roost opportunity.
- 3.14 The front elevation may receive some light pollution from the streetlighting along Newhey Road, although the building is set back and may be shielded to an extent.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 As the building holds high potential for roosting, follow-on bat surveys will be necessary. The surveys would determine whether bats make use of the building for roosting and, if present, the extent of bat use; the species of bat present; the status of any roost/s; numbers of bats; and locations of roost and access points, thus enabling impacts to be assessed and appropriate compensation and mitigation to be designed where applicable to off-set impacts on bats. The recommendation for follow-on survey follows the advice on assessment of buildings contained within *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, 2023).
- 4.2 The follow-on surveys would need to consist of evening emergence surveys, with surveyors positioned externally watching for bat emergence from, and activity associated with, the building.
- 4.3 Surveys need to be undertaken during the time of year when bats are most active. Surveys can be undertaken between May and September according to Bat Conservation Trust guidelines, with May to August being the optimal period (September is considered sub-optimal). Surveys need to be spaced by a minimum of three weeks and, where maternity roosts could be present, timed to cover both the pre-parturition and post-parturition (i.e., the periods before and after bats give birth). When three or more surveys are needed, consideration to covering the mating period (August/September) should be given.
- 4.4 A minimum of three evening surveys would be necessary. If roosting is confirmed, additional evening surveys may be needed to characterise the roost, as per standard bat survey guidance.

5. REFERENCES

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

PHOTOS



1. Milnrow Library – front elevation (Section 1)



2. Section 2 (to right) with flat-roofed Section 3 (to left) – northwest and northeast elevations



3. Section 2 (foreground) and Section 1 behind – southeast elevations

APPENDIX I - LEGISLATION

The information below is intended only as guidance to the legislation relating to bats. It relates solely to England and does not purport to provide legal advice. It is recommended that the legislative documents be referred to for the full legal wording and the services of a relevant specialist sought where legal advice is required.

There are eighteen different species of bat in the UK; some are very rare whilst others are widespread. However, because the populations of most species have declined in past decades, all British bats have been protected by law.

Bats are protected in England under European Legislation via the Conservation (Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna (92/43/EEC)) or 'The Habitats Directive'. The Directive is transposed into UK law via the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the Habitats Regulations). Due to their inclusion on Schedule 2 of the Habitats Regulations, bats are considered 'European Protected Species'.

In summary, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- deliberately disturb a bat;
- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any bat;
- possess a bat (alive or dead) or any part of a bat.

Disturbance of bats includes in particular any disturbance which is likely:

(a) to impair their ability:

- (i) to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
- (ii) to hibernate or migrate; or

(b) to affect the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

Bats are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which has also been amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act, 2000.

In summary, this 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 which any bat uses for shelter or protection.

NERC ACT AND BIODIVERSITY

A number of UK habitats and species are also included on the list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England as required under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act. The NERC Act came into force on 1st Oct 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The list has been drawn up in consultation with Natural England, as required by the Act.

The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under section 40 of NERC Act to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions.

Fifty-six habitats of principal importance are included on the S41 list. These are all the habitats in England that were identified as requiring action in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) and continue to be regarded as conservation priorities in the subsequent UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. They include terrestrial habitats such as upland hay meadows to lowland mixed deciduous woodland, and freshwater and marine habitats such as ponds and subtidal sands and gravels.

There are 943 species of principal importance included on the S41 list. These are the species found in England which were identified as requiring action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and which continue to be regarded as conservation priorities under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. In addition, the Hen Harrier has also been included on the list because without continued conservation action it is unlikely that the Hen Harrier population will increase from its current very low levels in England. In accordance with Section 41(4) the Secretary of State will, in consultation with Natural England, keep this list under review and will publish a revised list if necessary.

The impact that this legislation has on the Planning system is also outlined in ODPM 06/2005 Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory obligations and their Impact within the Planning System. This states:

The presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. Local authorities should consult English Nature [now Natural England] before granting planning permission. They should consider attaching appropriate planning conditions or entering into planning obligations under which the developer would take steps to secure the long-term protection of the species. They should also advise developers that they must comply with any statutory species' protection provisions affecting the site concerned.