

Bat

Presence-Absence Survey

Unicorn House

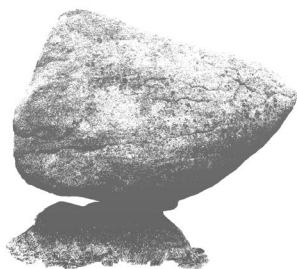
Cheetham Street

Middleton

M24 4DG

For

Signature Estates (NW) Ltd



Gritstone Ecology

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Non-technical summary

A preliminary roost assessment completed by United Environmental Services in February 2025 assessed the building as having moderate suitability for use by roosting bats, and recommended that two dusk emergence surveys should be completed.

A building inspection and two dusk emergence surveys were completed in April and May 2025 by Gritstone Ecology. No indications of use by bats were recorded during the building inspection, and no bats were recorded roosting in the building during the emergence surveys.

As no bats were recorded roosting in the building, and as no indications of use by bats have been found during the surveys, it is unlikely that bats will be affected by the proposed works.

No further survey, licensing, or mitigation work is required with regard to bats.



1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the report

The report is written by Stewart Bradshaw for Signature Estates (NW) Ltd. Stewart carried out a building inspection and bat presence-absence surveys of Unicorn House, Middleton in May 2025. The survey report will be used to provide supporting information for a planning application on the site.

The surveys were commissioned following a preliminary roost assessment, carried out by United Environmental Services in February 2025. The report concluded that the building had moderate suitability for use by roosting bats, and recommended that two dusk surveys were completed.

1.2. Survey aims

The aim of the survey was to determine the presence or absence of bats, and assess the need for further survey or mitigation.

1.3. Surveyor details

Stewart is licensed to disturb, take and handle all species of bats in all counties of England under licence number 2015-15615-CLS-CLS. He has more than 15 years of experience in ecological consultancy, including the planning & preparation of bat surveys, and mitigation licences. Experienced assistant surveyors were used during the presence-absence surveys to cover all angles of the building.

1.4. Proposed development

The development proposals are for the conversion of a commercial building into a number of residential apartments. The majority of the work proposed is internal changes to the layout of the building. Externally, dormers will be constructed on the rear section of the roof, and new window openings will be created.

1.5. Site context

The building is located to the south of The A576 Manchester Old Road, on Cheetham Street, Middleton, Manchester, M24 4DG, GR SD 86563 05624, approximately 200m west of Middleton Shopping Centre. The building is close to the western edge of Middleton, and is surrounded by industrial and commercial buildings to the south and east, with housing and busy roads to the north, and higher quality habitat 250m to the southeast around Alkrington Hall.

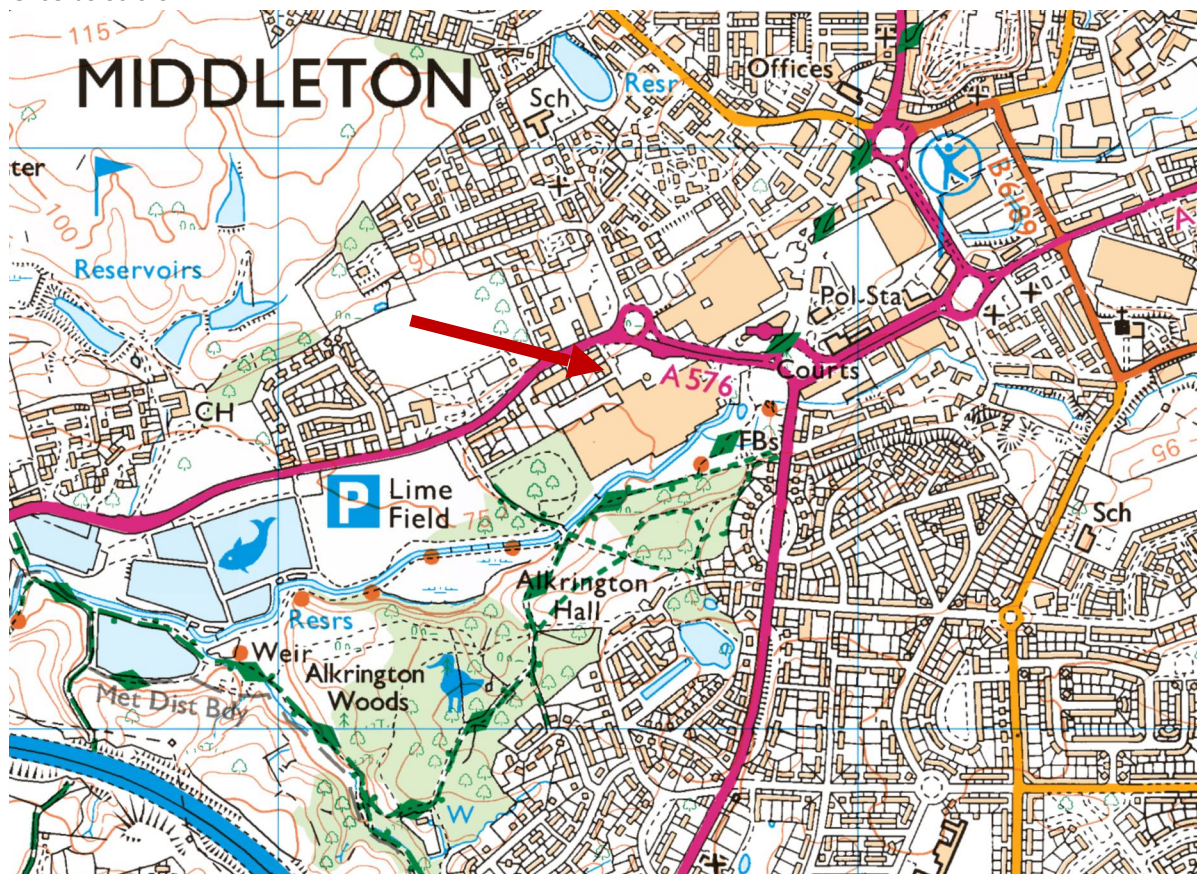
The site includes a two storey height, commercial building, which was formerly used as a fitness club, and small areas of concrete hardstanding.

Habitat within 50m of the site includes; houses, gardens, mature trees, areas of hard landscaping, commercial and industrial units, and busy well-lit roads. Habitat within 500m includes housing and busy roads, linked back gardens, commercial and industrial units, woodlands, ponds, and watercourses.

Linked back gardens, trees, woodlands, and watercourses, in the wider area potentially provide good foraging opportunities for bats. However, the area in general is heavily fragmented by well-lit roads, noise, traffic, and other human activity. The site and immediate surrounding area provide moderate quality foraging, commuting, and roosting opportunities for bats, with higher quality, and less disturbed habitat, 250m to the southwest.



1.6. Site location



1.6a – Unicorn House – site location.



1.6b – Unicorn House – aerial photograph.

2. Methods

2.1. Survey timings

A building inspection was completed on 7th April, dusk emergence surveys were completed on 1st May, and 28th May 2025. Although the surveys were completed early in the season, the weather throughout April and May has been warm and dry, and bats have been recorded in flight throughout this period.

2.2. Desk study

No formal desk study of the site was undertaken, prior to the preliminary roost assessment. A preliminary roost assessment was undertaken by United Environmental Services in February 2025. The report was used to gather baseline data for the site. The development has a small footprint, and impacts beyond the site boundary are unlikely. A site-specific investigation was considered more suitable.

2.3. Habitat assessment

The habitat on site and in the surrounding area was assessed using Ordnance Survey mapping, and aerial photography. Habitat features on site, and those in the surrounding area were assessed for their suitability for use by bats during the site visit.

2.4. Building inspection

A systematic search of the exterior of the building was made to identify potential or actual bat access points and roosting places, and to locate any evidence of bats such as live or dead specimens, bat droppings, urine splashes, fur-oil staining and or squeaking noises. Bat specimens and droppings are the most reliable type of evidence; the other types are not always the result of bat activity. Sometimes bats leave no visible sign of their presence on the outside of a building (even when they do wet weather can wash evidence away.)

The search included (where present) the ground beneath potential access points, windowsills, window panes, walls, behind peeling paintwork and lifted rendering, hanging tiles, weatherboarding, eaves, soffit boxes, fascia's, lead flashing, gaps under felt, under tiles / slates and in existing bats boxes. Gaps in brickwork and stonework were searched (where present). All evidence of use by bats, or features with the potential to be used by bats was recorded and photographed.

A systematic search of the inside of the building was undertaken to identify potential or actual bat access points and roosting places, and to locate evidence of bats. Bat specimens (live or dead) and droppings are the most reliable type of evidence. Other evidence can include urine splashes, fur-oil staining, feeding remains, squeaking noises, bat fly (Nycteribiid) pupal cases (Hutson 1984) or odour. Areas inspected include;

Within rooms

- floors and surfaces
- behind wooden panelling
- in lintels above doors and windows
- behind window shutters and curtains
- behind pictures, posters, furniture, peeling paintwork, peeling wallpaper, lifted plaster and boarded up windows



- inside cupboards and in chimneys accessible from fireplaces.

Within roof spaces

- the tops of gable end and dividing walls
- the top of chimney breasts
- ridge and hip beams and other structural timbers
- mortise and tenon joints
- all beams
- the junction of roof timbers, especially where ridge and hip beams meet
- behind purlins
- between tiles and the roof lining (where accessible)
- under flat felt roofs.

The areas listed above were inspected (where present), any additional areas with potential for use were also inspected.

2.5. Presence-absence survey method

Ecologists visited the site at dusk, to listen to, and record bats, and look for bats emerging from, or returning to roosts, and compile information on species, numbers, access points, and locations. The surveys were informed by a building inspection, which identified potential roosting and access points. These points were covered by an observer during the surveys.

2.6. Equipment

The equipment listed below was available for use during the surveys and was used where required.

Clulite CB2 1,000,000 candlepower torch. Rigid Seesnake CA-300 digital endoscope with 0.9m cable reach with 17mm and 6mm imaging heads. Digital camera with 50x zoom. 8x25 close focussing binoculars, 4m ladders, bat handling gloves, DNA sampling tubes.

Elekon Batlogger M – full spectrum bat detector. The Elekon Batlogger M - records bat echolocation calls in high quality, along with temperature and GPS location data. The information is stored on an SD card, and later analysed in detail using Elekon Bat explorer software.

Elekon Batlogger A+ - passive full spectrum bat detector. The Elekon Batlogger A+ records bat echolocation calls in high quality, along with temperature data. The information is stored on an SD card, and later analysed in detail using Elekon Bat explorer software.

Wildlife Acoustics Echometer Touch II Pro - full spectrum bat detector fitted to smartphone or iPad. The device records bat echolocation calls in high quality, along with location data taken from the attached device (where available). The information is stored internally, and later analysed in detail using Wildlife Acoustics Kaleidoscope software.

Infra-red night vision video cameras and powerful infra-red lamps were used to observe the building. The cameras recorded for the full length of the survey, the videos were checked during and after the surveys were completed.

Motorola two- way radios, were used to relay information between surveyors.



3. Results - building inspection

3.1. External Inspection



3.1a - The front of the building, from Cheetham Street.

Unicorn House is a former fitness club, which is currently empty and un-used. The building has two distinct sections as described below. The eastern section of the building adjacent Cheetham Street is two storey height, with a pitched hipped roof, covered with bitumen tile-effect roofing sheets. Internally there is a single roof void. The roof has a timber trussed structure, lined with bitumen felt. The pitched roof has been constructed on top of a flat concrete roof.

The rear, western section of the building has a pitched roof covered with bitumen tile-effect roofing panels, with Velux skylight windows. Internally there is no enclosed roof void and ceilings are fully vaulted. The roof has a timber rafter and purlin structure lined with bitumen felt.

Roof pitches face north, south, east, and west. Lead flashing was fitted at the base of flues, in roof valleys, and where roofing materials abut brickwork. However, much of the leadwork has been stolen. Painted timber fascia boards and boxed soffits are fitted at the eaves. Walls are brick with an insulating cavity, with a white painted cement render. Concrete lintels are fitted, sills are brick; window and door frames are timber, all glass is intact.

The building is in reasonable condition, although there are some features present which could be used by roosting bats. In particular where lead flashing has been removed, and where timber fascia boards have perished.

Features which were highlighted in the UES report include gaps between roofing materials, gaps around roof-light windows, and damaged fascia boards.

3.2. Indications of use

No bat droppings or other indications of use by bats were present during the inspections in February or April 2025.

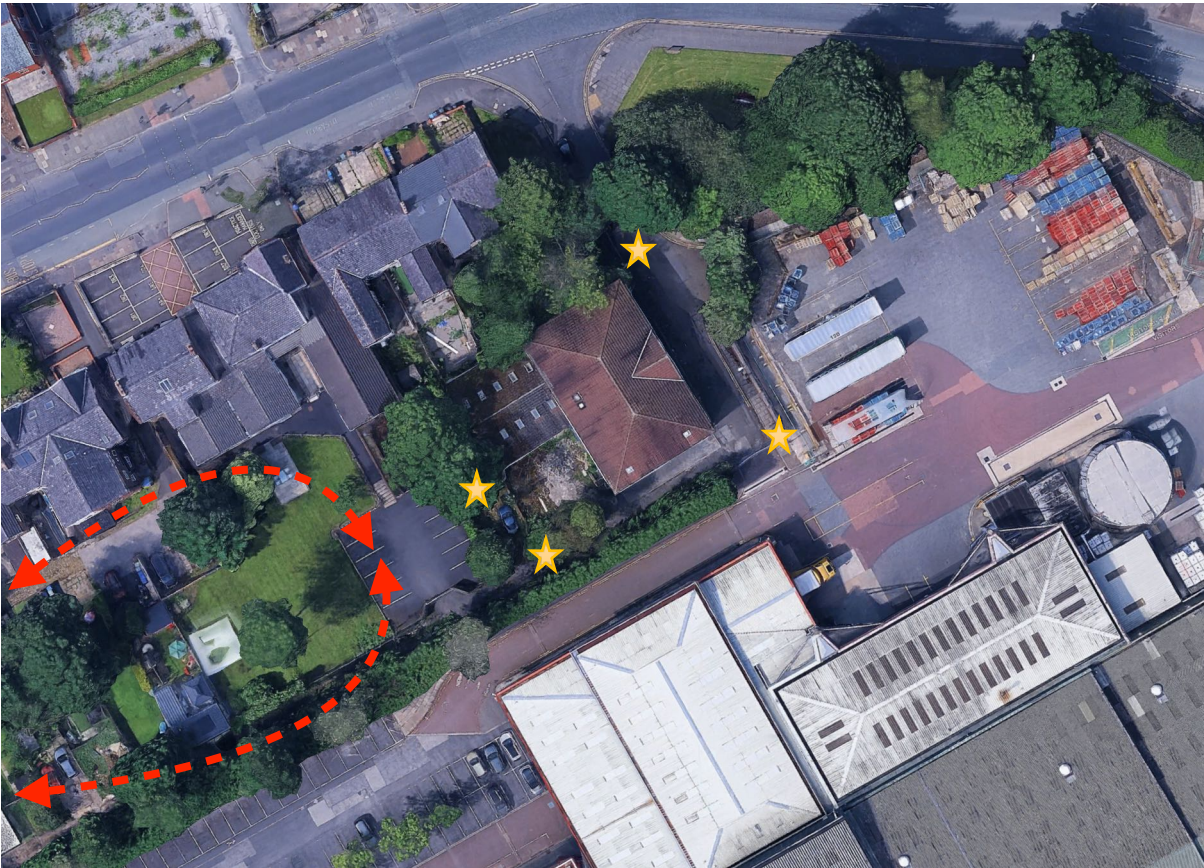
3.3. Level of suitability

The survey carried out by United Environmental Services in February 2025 concluded that the building had moderate suitability and recommended two separate survey visits.



4. Results - presence-absence surveys

4.1. Survey 1



4.1a – Surveyor locations and bat activity.

Date	Survey type	Sunrise / sunset	Start time	End time
01/05/25	Dusk	20:40	20:20	22:40

Surveyor / position	Equipment
1 - north of building	EM Touch II Pro & infrared camera
2 - south of building	Batlogger M & infrared camera
3 - east gable end of building	EM Touch II Pro & infrared camera
4 - west of building	EM Touch II Pro & infrared camera

Temperature	Wind	Rain	Cloud	Other
16°C	Still	Dry	Clear	N/A

Description Warm dry evening following a warm day during a period of warm weather.
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4.1b - Weather, surveyor locations, and equipment.



The first bat recorded during the survey was at 21:09, 29 minutes after sunset. The bat was seen flying south from the gardens approximately 100m west of the site, and foraging over gardens, before flying out of sight.

At 21:27 a single common pipistrelle was recorded flying northeast over gardens to the west of the site and towards Manchester Old Road.

At 21:28 a single common pipistrelle was recorded foraging around gardens and along the access road to the west of the site.

At 21:45 a single common pipistrelle was recorded foraging around gardens and along the access road to the west of the site.

At 22:10 a single common pipistrelle was recorded foraging around gardens and along the access road to the west of the site.

The level of bat activity during the survey was low with only 5 passes recorded. However, bats were recorded in flight throughout the survey. All activity was from single common pipistrelle bats foraging around gardens to the west of the site. No activity was recorded to the north or east of the site.

No bats were recorded emerging from the building during the survey.

The bat species below were recorded:

- Common pipistrelle - *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Survey 1 - summary of activity

- No bats were recorded emerging from the building during the survey. Foraging activity was recorded around gardens and trees to the west of the site.

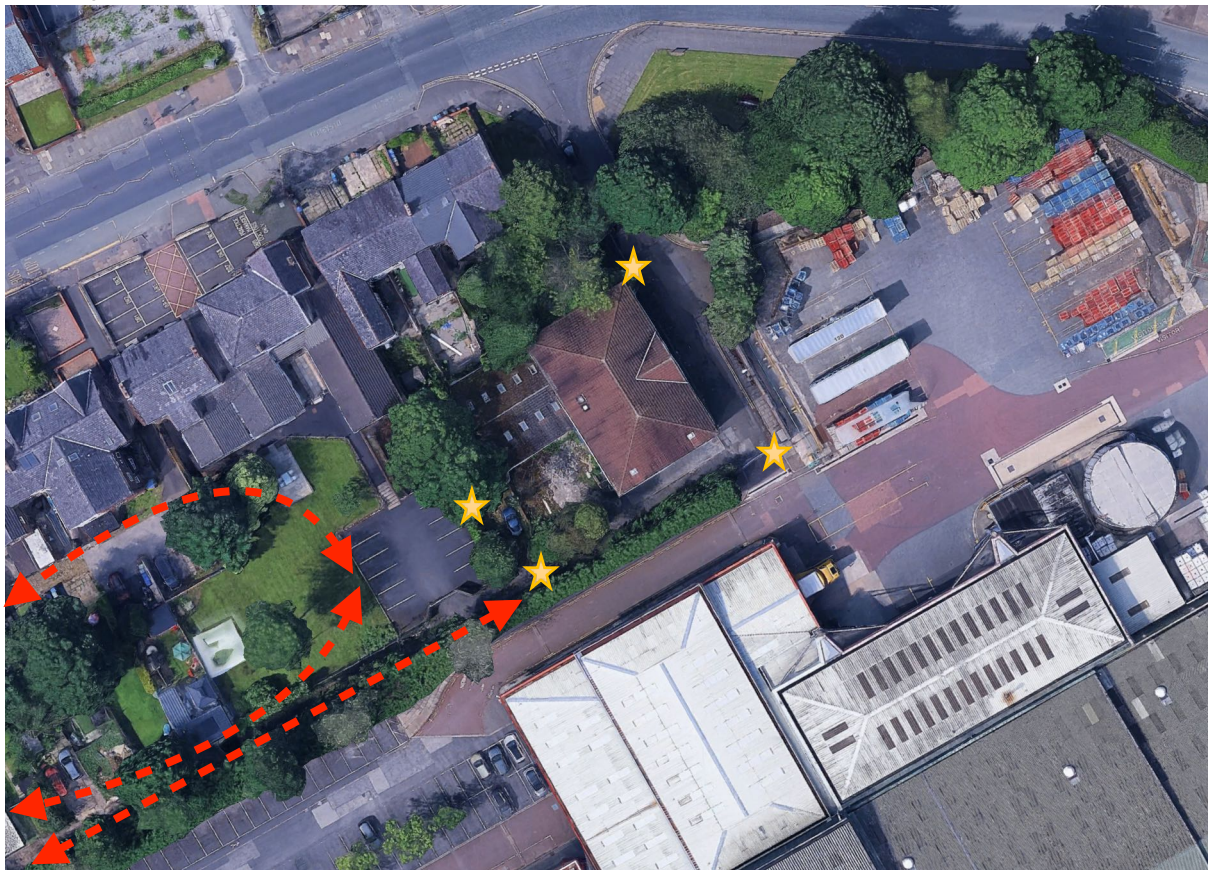
Limitations

The survey was completed on a warm dry evening. Temperatures throughout the survey were suitable for bat activity and bats were recorded in flight during the survey.

The site is in a noisy urban location, and is lit by streetlights from the east and west, and by security lighting from the site adjacent to the south.



4.2. Survey 2



4.2a – Surveyor locations and bat activity.

Date	Survey type	Sunrise / sunset	Start time	End time
28/05/25	Dusk	21:20	21:00	23:20

Surveyor / position	Equipment
1 - north of building	EM Touch II Pro & infrared camera
2 - south of building	Batlogger M & infrared camera
3 - east gable end of building	EM Touch II Pro & infrared camera
4 - west of building	EM Touch II Pro & infrared camera

Temperature	Wind	Rain	Cloud	Other
14°C	Light breeze	Dry	50%	N/A

Description Warm dry evening following a warm day with some showers, during a period of warm weather.

4.2b - Weather, surveyor locations, and equipment.



The first bat recorded during the survey was at 21:51, 31 minutes after sunset. The bat was recorded foraging over gardens to the west of the site, before flying west along the access road and out of sight.

Between 22:00 and 23:09 there were regular short bouts of foraging by a single common pipistrelle bat, with the bat foraging along the access road and around gardens to the west of the site. In total there were 11 bouts of foraging during this period. No bats were recorded after 23:09.

All activity was from single common pipistrelle bats foraging around gardens to the west of the site and along the access road. No activity was recorded to the north or east of the site.

No bats were recorded emerging from the building during the survey.

The bat species below were recorded:

- Common pipistrelle - *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Survey 2 - summary of activity

- No bats were recorded emerging from the building during the survey. Foraging activity was recorded around gardens and trees to the west of the site.

Limitations

The survey was completed on a warm dry evening. Temperatures throughout the survey were suitable for bat activity and bats were recorded in flight throughout the survey.

The site is in a noisy urban location, and is lit by streetlights from the east and west, and by security lighting from the site to the south.



5. Evaluation

The building is set in an area which, in general, provides moderate quality habitat, for foraging, commuting, and roosting bats, with higher quality and less disturbed habitat to the southwest, further away from light and noise disturbance.

Sports pitches, woodlands, trees, rivers, and linked back gardens locally provide good foraging habitat for bats, in an area which is subject to high levels of disturbance from light, noise, and other human activity.

Woodlands 250m to the southwest of the site, and habitats along The River Irk, are likely to provide higher quality, less disturbed habitat for bats.

The building has external features which could be used by roosting bats, and which could allow access to the inside of the building. However, no indications of use were found during the building inspections, and no bats were seen to use these features during the emergence surveys.

The lack of any indications of use inside the building, such as droppings or feeding remains, reduces the likelihood of a significant roost being present. If bats were present inside the building, even in lower numbers, some evidence of use would be likely to persist.

The February 2025 Preliminary Roost Assessment by UES incorrectly identified the roofing materials as concrete roof and ridge tiles, and identified gaps between ridge and roof tiles. The roof of the building is covered with light weight tile-effect bitumen roof and ridge panels. The ridge panels are typically fixed onto a rail system, which has a vented ridge fitted with plastic grilles. The grilles at the vents prevent birds or bats from using these gaps to roost.

The roof was inspected in detail using a camera drone, and is in generally good condition with no obvious gaps along the ridge or hips. The only viable gaps in roofing materials are around Velux roof light on the eastern section of the roof, and in areas where lead flashing has been removed, exposing the edge of the roofing panels.

All accessible features with the potential to be used by roosting bats were checked for signs of use prior to the start of the surveys, and observed using infrared cameras throughout the surveys. No bats were recorded using these features during the emergence surveys, and no droppings or other indications of use were present.

Common species of bats were recorded foraging along gardens and tree-lines to the rear of the site during the emergence surveys. Levels of bat activity were relatively low, with only single bats making occasional passes to the rear of the site. No bat activity was recorded to the north or east sides of the building.

5.1. Legal and planning context

All species of bats in the UK and their roosts are legally protected by UK and European legislation. The UK the legal protection is summarised as follows:

You will be committing a criminal offence if you:

1. Deliberately* capture, injure or kill a bat
2. Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats
3. Damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time)



4. Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat
5. Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost even if bats are not present at the time

*In a court, 'deliberately' will probably be interpreted as someone who, although not intending to capture/injure or kill a bat, performed the relevant action, being sufficiently informed and aware of the consequence his/her action would most likely have.

If bats or bat roosts were present in the building, the proposed works to the roof would likely result in an offence being committed.

5. Impact assessment

The development proposals are for the conversion of a commercial building into a number of residential apartments. The majority of the work proposed is internal changes to the layout of the building. Externally, dormers will be constructed on the rear section of the roof, and new window openings will be created.

The building inspections carried out by UES in February 2025 and by Gritstone Ecology in April 2025 found no indications of use by bats, and no bats were recorded roosting in the building during the emergence surveys.

The Level of bat activity recorded during the surveys was low. The proposed work is unlikely to impact bats or bat roosts; and, once completed is unlikely to provide any increase in levels of disturbance for bats locally.

6. Required actions

No field signs of use by bats were found internally or externally during the building inspections, no bats were recorded roosting in the building during the emergence survey, and no further survey or licensing work is required.



7. References

Department for Communities and Local Government (2012). National Planning Policy Framework.

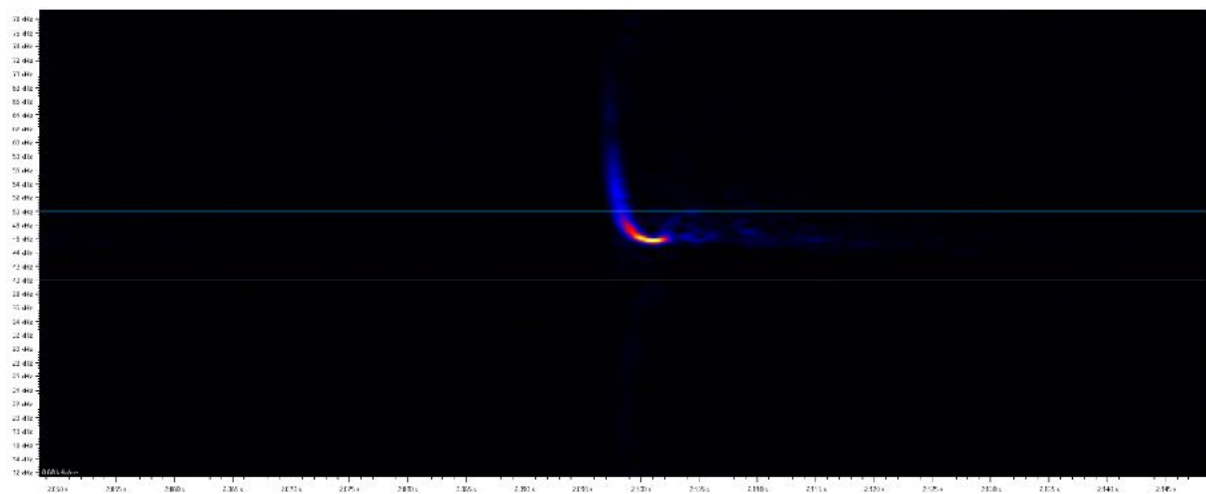
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8. Appendix 1 - Sonograms



Common pipistrelle.

