



**QUEEN'S DRIVE CENTRE,
QUEEN'S DRIVE,
ROCHDALE**

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

**Prepared for
Rochdale Borough Council**

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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 for bats of a building at Queen's Drive in Rochdale during August 2023.
- 1.2 The proposal is to demolish the building.
- 1.3 The building is located at the Rochdale Hub, to the immediate south of the junction of the A664 and A627(M) on Queen's Drive. It is located within an urban area with both commercial and residential areas to the west, northeast and south east. To the immediate south and further south are woodland and open grassland areas in parkland. The OS grid reference for the building is SD 89273 11303.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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 2km 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 The Preliminary Roost Assessment was undertaken on the 16th of August 2023 by Max Robinson an experienced ecologist. Max holds Natural England bat survey licences (class 2).
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 A description of the building was made, and it was designated to one of the following categories according to its potential to support bats:
 - **Bat roost** – evidence of use by bats present. 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. Often a number of suitable features will be present. Further survey (usually a minimum of three evening emergence and/or dawn re-entry 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 sub-optimal roosting opportunity. Suitable roosting opportunity may be limited to a single or small number of features that can be searched for signs of use. Further survey (usually a minimum of two evening emergence and/or dawn re-entry 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 unlikely to be used for roosting or no features suitable for roosting. For low potential buildings, further

survey (usually a single evening emergence and/or dawn re-entry 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 often no further action would be required.

- 2.6 A detailed visual inspection of the exterior and interior of the building (where accessible) was undertaken. The inspection followed standard methodologies set out in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines*, Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2016).
- 2.7 Externally, a visual inspection undertaken from ground level of features such as gaps in the fabric of the building was made for evidence of bat use. 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.
- 2.8 The internal survey of the building 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.
- 2.9 The weather conditions during the inspection survey were as follows: sunny periods and calm, with temperature of 24°C.

Constraints

- 2.10 No constraints identified.

3. SURVEY FINDINGS & INTERPRETATION

Review of Existing Records

- 3.1 GMEU provided information on bats that have been recorded within 2km of the site.
- 3.2 Bats have been recorded on 138 occasions within the search area, with six species known to be present: noctule *Nyctalus noctula* brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, whiskered *Myotis mystacinus*, Daubenton's *M. daubentonii*, and common and soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and *P. pygmaeus*. Several records were identified as pipistrelle *Pipistrellus* species only.
- 3.3 Thirty-five of the records relate to roosts with the remainder as bats recorded foraging, flying or as casualties. Records are spread across the local area with the closest being approximately 500m to the northwest. The records date from between 1990 to 2022.
- 3.4 From the number of records returned and the number of species bats are fairly widespread in the local area.

Survey Findings

- 3.5 The building is modular, single storey built with a wood frame and infilled with insulated 'sandwich' panels, it is rectangular in plan view with an almost flat roof that has a very low gradient to it. The building is depicted in the Plates.
- 3.6 The building is a former medical centre that is now disused and awaiting permission for demolition. It is in a relatively poor state of repair with rockwool insulation material exposed externally in parts where the rendered wooden walls have been compromised. Many of the wood panels have begun to rot with water ingress. The roof has a very slow gradient to its pitch and is clad with bituminised felt that laps over the wall top and is fixed by a wooden batten that effectively seals the lapped edge of the felt. The lapped edge is fixed above the gutter line so further sealing any edge gaps that could be present. There many window openings along the walls are sealed with roller shutters. Occasional superficial gaps were present where wood panel joins have expanded with water ingress. Above the roller shutters there is a 'cover sheet' in place which has gaps present at each end, these are too open and exposed for use by bats but birds may use them for nesting and roosting purposes.
- 3.7 The interior is divided into many rooms that are well sealed and are interconnected via corridors. Occasional damp areas were noted where the panel joints had expanded and water ingress has occurred. The building had no obvious access gaps present to the inside.
- 3.8 No evidence of bats was found during the survey and no opportunities for roosting were recorded.

Interpretation of Survey Findings

- 3.9 The building holds negligible potential for roosting by bats.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 No evidence of bats was found associated with the building during the survey and the building was considered to have negligible potential to be used by bats. Thus, no further recommendation is made here regarding bat survey.
- 4.2 If bats or evidence of roosting bats (such as bat droppings¹) are found during works to the building, works would need to be suspended and a licensed bat ecologist would need to be contacted to resolve the situation and consulted as to the best method to proceed. A statutory licence from Natural England may need to be obtained and, as part of this, additional survey (which may be seasonally constrained) may need to be carried out, along with mitigation and compensation such as the provision of replacement roosting features.

¹ Bat droppings are small and black/brown in colour. They appear similar to mouse dropping except when crushed they crumble into dust (unless wet). Mouse droppings are soft and can have an odour when fresh, but become hard very quickly. Hands should be disinfected after touching droppings.

5. REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed). (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines*. 3rd Edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

PLATES

	North east gable end and and south east elevation
	southern elevation

	
Internal room	Internal corridor

APPENDIX I - LEGISLATION

The information below is intended only as guidance to the legislation relating to bats and 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 seventeen species of bat that breed 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.