DAYTIME BAT & BIRD SURVEY AT HARE HILL MILL, LITTLEBOROUGH, OLDHAM

OCTOBER 2019



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2019 by Wiggett Group to undertake a daytime bat & bird survey at Hare Hill Mill in Littleborough. The site has full planning permission from Rochdale Council for the reconstruction of engine house to form one dwelling and demolition and reconstruction of part of mill building to form 4 dwellings and 2 apartments (Ref: 19/00046/FUL). A previous bat survey was carried out at this site in 2015 by Rachel Hacking Ecology Ltd. No evidence of bats was found in the buildings.

1.2 Condition 12 of the Planning Decision Notice requested an updated Bat and Bird Survey to conducted prior to demolition of the building. Condition 12 states: *"No demolition or dismantling of the mill building façade shall take place until a further bat and nesting bird survey and a comprehensive method statement, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. If bats and/or birds are present the submitted method statement shall set out how they would be safeguarded during the course of the demolition and conversion works and appropriate mitigation measures/enhancements incorporated as part of the development".* This report aims to discharge Condition 12.

1.3 Hare Hill Mill is located off Hare Hill Road in Littleborough, near Rochdale (O.S. grid reference: SD 93583 16577). The proposed development site currently comprises a two-storey former mill building, constructed from stone and brick, which is not occupied. The building is in a poor state of repair. Other buildings have been demolished due to fire damage and the site is under construction.

1.4 Biodiversity is a material consideration to the planning process and consideration must be given to protected species. The proposed works to the property will be intrusive and therefore consideration should be given to roosting bats and other protected and notable species, which could potentially utilise the property.

1.5 All bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 A daytime bat survey at the former Hare Hill Mill was undertaken to search for, and to assess the potential for, a bat roost within the property.

2.2 An external survey was carried out, which included, for example, looking for gaps between any soffit boards and walls, gaps between window frames and the walls, and looking for bat droppings on the walls and window ledges.

2.3 The property was also searched internally for evidence of a bat roost, which included looking for the following signs:

- live or dead bats
- bat droppings
- bat entry/exit points
- bat urine staining
- grease marks on any timbers
- feeding remains such as insect wings
- areas clear of cobwebs.

2.4 A pair of close-focussing binoculars, a high-powered torch and an endoscope were used to search for evidence of bats externally and internally.

2.5 In addition to the daytime bat survey, a nesting bird survey was carried out, which included a check for evidence of current nesting by birds, such as alarm calling and adults carrying feeding and nesting material.

Personnel and Timing

2.6 Joel Hacking (Senior Ecologist) carried out the daytime bat survey on the 22nd October 2019. Joel is an experienced ecologist, fully trained in protected species surveys and holds a Natural England Level 2 Class Survey Licence for bats (Licence Reference: 2016-24701-CLS-CLS). The weather on the day of the survey was warm and dry.

Survey constraints

2.7 Daytime bat and bird surveys can be conducted at any time of the year. The whole building could be surveyed internally and externally, therefore there were no constraints to the survey.

3.0 RESULTS

External Survey

3.1 The property at Hare Hill Mill is a large former warehouse and mill building. It is constructed from brick and stone and has a multi-pitched roof which is tiled and glazed.

3.2 The external brickwork on the upper section of the building is complete and intact, with no damaged bricks or recessed mortar for bats to exploit (see Photograph 1). The lower section of the brickwork is damaged where an attached building has been demolished (see Photograph 1). The damaged bricks were inspected with an endoscope, and no significant cavities could be found, and no evidence of bat usage could be located behind the damaged bricks. The wooden window frames are flush to the surrounding masonry, offering no potential access points for bats. The stone lintels are complete and without gaps or cracks. The windows are missing glass but have been netted or covered to prevent bird entry.



Photograph 1 showing the rear elevation and brickwork

3.3 The external stonework on the remainder of the building is complete and intact, offering no cracks or gaps between the stones (see Photograph 2 and the front cover of this report). The stone window lintels are in good condition, offering no gaps for bats to exploit.



Photograph 2 showing the side elevation and stonework

3.4 The roof of the building is pitched and tiled (see Photograph 3), with a large section of former warehouse building having a multi-pitched tiled and glazed roof (see Photograph 4). The roof tiles are in position and flush to one another, with no broken or slipped tiles. The ridge tiles are complete and fully mortared. The brick chimney stack is complete, and the lead flashing at the base of the chimney is flat and flush to the tiles and bricks.



Photograph 3 showing the fully-tiled section of the roof

3.5 The multi-pitched section of roofing is complete and intact, with all glazing panels in position and the roof is tiled on alternate pitches. The coping stones at the roof edges are complete and flush to one another, offering no suitable bat cavities (see Photograph 4).



Photograph 4 showing multi-pitched roofing of the former warehouse

3.6 No signs of current nesting by birds was found in the exterior features of the building.

Internal Survey

3.7 Internally, the building is unoccupied and open to the roof. The building has no separate roof void. The roof is glazed, making the upper floor well-lit (see Photograph 5). Sections of the roof are covered with wooden panels, which are complete, though showing signs of damp and rot (see Photograph 6).



Photograph 5 showing the interior roof structure of the building



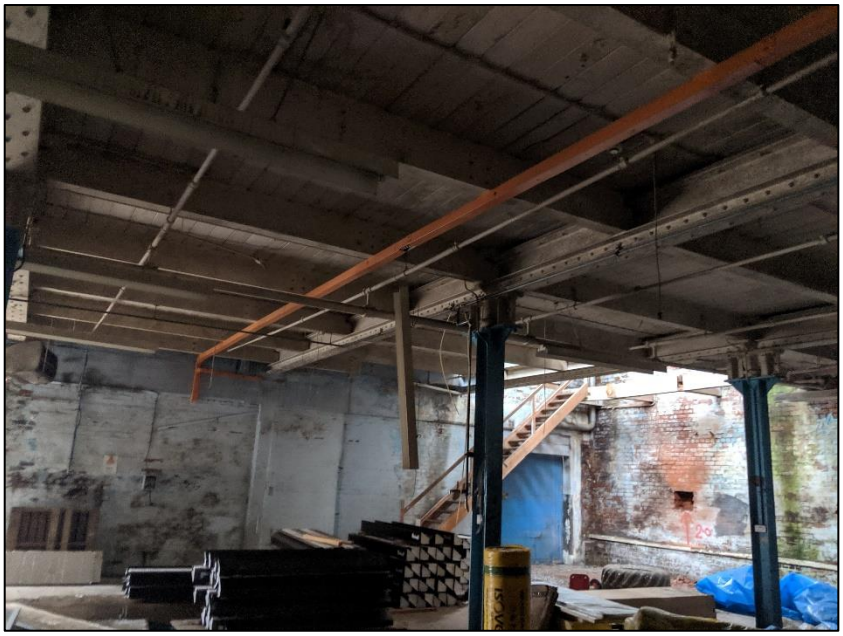
Photograph 6 showing the internal brickwork

3.8 The upper floor is open, cold and damp. The internal brickwork is complete, mortared and painted (see Photograph 7). Many of the internal walls are plaster-boarded and offer no suitable bat roosting habitat. No evidence of bats, such as bat droppings, was located on the upper floor of the building.



Photograph 7 showing the internal brickwork

3.9 The ground floor of the building is a large open space (see Photograph 8). The internal brickwork is complete, with only small sections of damaged bricks. The space is cold and damp. The ceiling joists and beams are complete and intact, offering no suitable gaps or crevices for bats to roost. No evidence of bat activity was found in the ground floor of the building.



Photograph 8 showing the interior of the ground floor

3.10 Several Feral Pigeons are present in the upper floor of the building. Access to the interior has been limited by the installation of netting and boarding on the window frames, though small numbers of birds are gaining access. No evidence of current nesting was present during the survey. No signs of nest-building behaviour or alarm-calling was heard during the survey.

Surrounding land

3.11 The building is enclosed by hardstanding, with the larger Hare Hill Mill site currently under construction. No evidence of protected species was found on the site.

4.0 SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS & METHOD STATEMENT

4.1 No evidence of bat activity was found at the building at the former Hare Hill Mill. The building is unoccupied and in a poor state of repair. Given the results of the survey, the property is considered to offer **negligible bat roost suitability**.

4.2 It is the opinion of the author of this report that the demolition and conversion can proceed without the need for further survey work (e.g. bat activity surveys) or bat mitigation due to the negligible potential of the building to support bats. However, if the work is delayed by longer than two years from the date of this survey, a further bat survey will be required to update the findings.

Working Method Statement

The building should be demolished with care. The development will proceed under ecological supervision where necessary, and the following method statement shall be adhered to by the site contractors:

- Works to the roof, walls and upper brick courses to be carried out using a soft strip methodology, with roof panels lifted by hand.

- If evidence of nesting by birds or bats is found during the demolition works, all work is to cease, and a suitably experienced ecologist be contacted for advice.

- To bring biodiversity enhancement to the site, it is recommended that two Schwegler 2F Bat Boxes (or similar) are erected onto buildings on the site.

REFERENCES

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

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