

Blue Pitts Farm, Rochdale  
Dusk Bat Emergence Survey  
2023



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Client                      Mr Tom Riggall

Project Title              Blue Pitts Farm, Thornham Lane, Rochdale

Project Reference        RHE.3720.02

Project Leader           Simon Holden

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# Executive Summary

## Development Details

The client is proposing to demolish the existing building and create a new building at Blue Pitts Farm, Rochdale, hereafter referred to as the 'site'.

This report describes the ecological features of the site and its surroundings and assesses the potential impacts of the development on the ecological interest. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

## Outcomes

No evidence of roosting bats was recorded during the survey. The proposed development is unlikely to result in any impacts to bats or their roosts. No further survey work is required. It is recommended bat and bird boxes are erected as part of the development.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2023 by HNA Architects to carry out a Bat Emergence Survey at a building at Blue Pitts Farm, Thornham Lane, Rochdale, hereafter referred to as the 'site'. The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SD 89811 09126 (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site

- 1.1.2 The site is a disused residential property and small garden space within the farm complex of Blue Pitts farm. The site is located in an area of agricultural land dominated by pasture with a small number of residential, commercial and agricultural buildings located within the wider landscape.

### Description of Development

- 1.1.3 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the demolition of the existing building and the construction of a new building in its place.

### Relevant Planning History

- 1.1.4 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, Daytime Bat Survey and Bird Survey was undertaken by Rachel Hacking Ecology in March 2023. The building on site was considered to offer low potential to support a bat roost.

## 1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to carry out a bat emergence survey on the site.

## 1.3 Aims of the Survey

- 1.3.1 The aims of the survey were to establish the status of roosting bats and inform mitigation requirements.



## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Emergence & Re-entry Survey

- 2.1.1 One dusk emergence survey was undertaken in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (2016). For the survey, three surveyors and an infra-red camera monitored the building, to ensure complete coverage for any emerging bats. The emergence surveys began 15 minutes before dusk and continued for 90 minutes after dusk. The surveyors used an Anabat Scout and Echometer Touch 2 Pro bat detectors to record the echolocation calls of bats.

### 2.2 Assessment Criteria

- 2.2.1 Interpretation of survey findings and assessment of roosting potential was undertaken using professional judgement and criteria described in published guidance<sup>1,2</sup>.

### 2.3 Site Visit Information

#### Survey Details

- 2.3.1 The survey was undertaken on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023 by Joel Hacking (Senior Ecologist) Jasmin West (Junior Ecologist) and Jess Rogers (Assistant Ecologist). All surveyors are experienced and trained in nocturnal bat surveys. Joel has many years of professional experience undertaking similar surveys and holds a level 2 class survey licence (Reference 2016-24701-CLS-CLS).

#### Site Conditions

- 2.3.2 The weather at the time of the survey was dry and calm, with an average temperature of 13°C. The site conditions were appropriate for a full assessment to be undertaken.

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, J. (Ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists-good practice guidelines*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Survey Constraints

- 3.1.1 Field survey results are valid for a limited duration and no investigation can provide a complete description and characterisation of a site. The composition of habitats and species can change depending on environmental variables and the mobility of species, so the results of a study become less reliable over time. In some cases, surveys that are 3 years old may be acceptable for a project assuming that habitats have not significantly changed in the intervening period, but for protected species it is likely that survey data will need to be no more than 18 months old.

### 3.2 Surveyor Positions

- 3.2.1 Figure 2 shows the locations of the surveyors (yellow stars) and camera (red star) during the surveys.



Figure 2 showing the locations of the surveyors and camera during the survey

### 3.3 Survey Results

- 3.3.1 No bats were recorded emerging from the building during the survey. Low levels of bat activity were recorded during the survey, with Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* bats recorded foraging above and nearby to the site during the survey.



## 4. Assessment

### 4.1 Interpretation

- 4.1.1 The survey was undertaken during optimum weather conditions and seasonal timing. A high degree of confidence is placed on the results.

### 4.2 Potential Impacts

- 4.2.1 The proposed development is unlikely to result in any impacts to bats or their roosts and no further surveys are considered necessary.



## 5. Recommendations

- 5.1.1 Bats can roost in suitable features opportunistically and are not always identified during surveys. It is recommended that roof coverings are removed with due caution. Should a bat/bats be identified at any time, work should stop in that area and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted to attend site and advise how to proceed.
- 5.1.2 This report is considered to be valid for two years. After this, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted to assess its validity. An assessment update may be required.
- 5.1.3 Suitable bat roosting features should be incorporated within the new building to maintain roosting opportunities on the site. Two boxes suitable for crevice dwelling bats such as Common Pipistrelle, for example Segovia Pro Build-in WoodStone Bat Box, should be installed facing southeast to southwest on the new building. Bat boxes should be installed at eaves height but not directly above windows or doorways.



# Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

## National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) describes the Government's planning policy for England and how it should be applied. Within this framework, the requirements in relation to biodiversity are included within several policies. The two most relevant to individual planning decisions are Paragraphs 174 and 180, shown below:

- 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; etc...
  
- 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 reasons 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

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty on every public authority to have regard to conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the same Act requires that the Secretary of State must publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitats that are of 'Principal Importance' for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Secretary of State must take steps, as appear reasonably practicable, to further the conservation of those living organisms and habitats in any list published under this section. The list of species and habitats of principal importance currently includes 943 species and 56 habitats.

### Legislation

All bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit), which make it an offence to:

- Deliberately kill, injure or capture a bat;
- Deliberately disturb bats;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) contains further provisions making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- Obstruct access to any structure or place which any bat uses for shelter or protection; or
- Disturb any bat while occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

Proposed development works that are likely to disturb or destroy bats or their roosts will need to obtain a licence from the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (e.g., Natural England) prior to work commencing.



## Appendix 2: Survey Data

| Table 2. Results from the dusk emergence survey                           |          |                   |                 |              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Survey Type                                                               | Date     | Average Temp (°C) | Sunset/ Sunrise | Weather      |
| Emergence                                                                 | 20/07/23 | 13                | 21:24           | Dry and Calm |
| Results                                                                   |          |                   |                 |              |
| Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging at 21:36                             |          |                   |                 |              |
| Common Pipistrelle recorded foraging intermittently between 21:58 - 22:04 |          |                   |                 |              |
| Common pipistrelle recorded foraging intermittently between 22:07 – 22:45 |          |                   |                 |              |

