

LEOPOLD COURT ROCHDALE

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

December 2025



Report Control Sheet

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site Address	Leopold Court, Leopold Street, Rochdale, OL11 5HA
Grid Reference	SD88511316
Current Site Use	The site currently consists the Leopold Court Direct Access Hostel which provides temporary accommodation for homeless individuals. The site includes residential units, communal areas, and limited external grounds, consisting mainly of hardstanding, areas of introduced shrub, and woodland belts.
Designated Sites within Zone of Influence	The site falls within the Impact Risk Zone for Rochdale Canal SSSI. No consultation with Natural England is required.
Notable Habitat Features	The site is largely urban and modified, with notable habitats limited to woodland belts along the site boundary. The proposed works will extend to the building and external hardstanding areas, including the site's immediate grounds, but will not involve areas of vegetated habitat.
Notable Species Applicable to the Assessment	• Bats: potential roosting, foraging, and commuting habitat in buildings and trees • Breeding birds: potential nesting habitat in trees, shrubs, and roof structures • Hedgehog: likely to utilise and/or commute through the site
Mitigation Recommendations	• Minimise lighting impacts to avoid disturbance to bats • Conduct nesting bird checks prior to any building works during the breeding season
Recommended Further Surveys and Assessment	Emergence surveys for bats.
Recommended Ecological Enhancements	• To support local wildlife, install ecologist-approved bat and bird boxes on buildings or retained trees.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. SCOPE & PURPOSE

- 1.1.1. Collington Winter Environmental Ltd. (CWE) was commissioned by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at Leopold Court, Leopold Street, Rochdale, OL11 5HA (hereinafter referred to as the 'site' or 'application site'). This report has been prepared to inform a planning application for the reconfiguration and refurbishment of the building, including extensions to the property.
- 1.1.2. The author of this report is Olivia Leversedge BSc (Hons), Consultant Ecologist at CWE. Olivia is a Qualifying Member of CIEEM with experience in producing ecological reports to inform planning applications for a range of projects. The report was peer-reviewed by Katie Bird, MEnvSci ACIEEM, Associate Director at CWE. Katie has provided ecological advice and project management for numerous schemes across the UK, including residential, commercial, mineral extraction and large infrastructure projects.
- 1.1.3. This report has been prepared in accordance with professional guidelines for preliminary ecological appraisal (CIEEM, 2017).
- 1.1.4. The findings of this report represent the professional opinion of qualified ecologists and do not constitute professional legal advice. The client may wish to seek professional legal interpretation of the relevant wildlife legislation cited within this document.

1.2. LOCATION

- 1.2.1. Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the site location. The site is accessed via Leopold Street, located north of Bury Road in Rochdale, within the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The site lies within the urban residential area surrounding the town.



Figure 1.1 Site Location

1.3. OBJECTIVES

1.3.1. The objectives of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal are as follows:

- Identify the major habitats present
- Ascertain the presence or potential presence of any legally protected or notable species or habitats
- Identify any mitigation or further survey required and opportunities for strategic wildlife enhancements and long-term management.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1. DESK STUDY

2.1.1. An initial desk-based assessment of the site was undertaken to collate baseline data. The desk study included:

- Obtaining local records of notable species and locally designated sites within 1 km of the site from the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU), received on 13 October 2025;
- A review of Magic.gov.uk website for details of any designated sites, notable habitats and presence of European Protected Species Licences.
- A review of aerial and OS maps for habitat information, as well as determining locations of potential waterbodies to be considered in the assessment.
- Review of potential habitat links on and off site, to determine the potential zone of influence of the proposed development.

2.2. VEGETATION AND HABITAT ASSESSMENT

2.2.1. An Ecological Appraisal of the site was undertaken by Olivia Leversedge on 26 August 2025. Olivia is an Ecological Project Manager at Collington Winter Environmental and FISC Level 3 with professional training and experience in UK Habitat surveys. On the date of the survey, the weather was clear, with 1/8 oktas cloud cover, no precipitation, and temperatures reaching 24 °C.

2.2.2. The walkover survey was undertaken broadly in line with standard UK HAB Methodology, Version 2 (2023). The assessment is undertaken with consideration of methodology as per "Preliminary Ecological Appraisal" (CIEEM, 2018).

2.2.3. A UK HAB Plan has been produced and is presented in Appendix 7.1 of this report. Standard methodology has been used, though adjustments have been made based on judgement to demonstrate habitats in a clearer manner, or where standard guidance does not fit the conditions found on site.

2.3. FAUNA ASSESSMENT

2.3.1. A search for signs of protected and notable species of fauna was undertaken during the site walkover. This included both field signs of species, as well as potential for species to be present based on habitat availability. The protected species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on the site. This is based on the suitability of the habitat, known distribution of the species in the local area (provided by data searches) and any direct evidence within the survey area.

2.3.2. The searches broadly included the following:

- Habitat suitability and Preliminary Roost Assessment for bats;
- Suitability of habitats to support reptiles, and searches for incidental field signs;
- Searches for field signs of badger (*Meles meles*), including setts, mammal paths, snuffle holes, badger hair and latrines to indicate activity;
- Assessment of the suitability of habitats to support notable birds and recording any field sightings of birds during the walkover;
- Assessment of the sites ability to support notable invertebrates and flora;
- Searches for non-native invasive species.

2.4. BAT HABITAT SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

2.4.1. Initially, a review of publicly accessible online maps and habitat survey information from the site was undertaken to assess the suitability of habitats within the site and within the surrounding area to support and provide connectivity for foraging and commuting bats. The assessment was carried out in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines 4th edition (Collins, 2023) (ref. Figure 2.1).

Table 4.1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.

Potential suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	Potential flight-paths and foraging habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).
Negligible*	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions ^b and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats ^c).	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight-paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^b and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^b and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight-paths such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

Figure 2.1 Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats (BCT, 2023).

2.4.2. If negative impacts on bat activity is suspected, further surveys may be required. Negative impacts anticipated on bats flights paths and foraging habitats may include:

- Modification of light paths or foraging habitats either physically or through disturbance such as light spill/noise;
- Severance of flight paths (fragmentation); and/or
- Significant loss of foraging habitat.

2.5. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

2.5.1. The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken in accordance with the BCT Good Practice Guidelines (ref. Figure 2.1).

2.5.2. The PRA comprised a detailed internal and external inspection of the building to identify evidence of, or potential for, roosting bats. The survey involved recording Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) and potential ingress/egress points, such as gaps beneath lifted roof tiles, flashing and soffit boxes, as well as searching for direct evidence of bat activity, including urine staining, droppings, feeding remains and live or dead bats.

- 2.5.3. Both internal and external inspections were supported by the use of ladders, a high-powered torch and close-focusing binoculars to enable thorough coverage of all accessible features.

2.6. SURVEY LIMITATIONS

- 2.6.1. Access to loft spaces during the inspections was restricted, with five lofts accessed in total. Several loft spaces could not be inspected as they were located within occupied rooms or were locked, and keys were not available at the time of the survey. The areas not accessed included the loft space within the northeastern section of the building, which is the area anticipated to be affected by the proposed infilling works. However, all loft spaces that were accessed were found to be consistent in both structural form and general condition, and on this basis, it is considered reasonable to assume that the inaccessible lofts are of similar construction and condition, unless otherwise indicated by future investigations.
- 2.6.2. Loft inspections were undertaken from the respective hatch openings only. Full entry onto the loft floors was not attempted due to the presence of insulation covering the joists and obscuring the locations of supporting beams, making it unclear where it would have been safe to place weight. This approach was adopted to avoid any risk to personal safety or damage to finishes below. Observations were therefore limited to what could be safely and clearly viewed from the hatch positions.
- 2.6.3. At the time of writing, ecological records from the local records centre had not yet been received; however, these data have been requested and will be incorporated into the appraisal once obtained. This report is therefore based on field observations and publicly available information only. Should the forthcoming records indicate the presence of protected or notable species in proximity to the site, the conclusions and recommendations presented herein may be subject to revision.

2.7. PROPORTIONALITY

- 2.7.1. Collington Winter Environmental Ltd provide recommendations in line with the British Standard for Biodiversity (BS42020). Within BS42020, proportionality is encouraged for both ecologists and Local Authority Decision Makers and Consultees. Please refer to the below extract from Section 5.5 of BS42020.

“The work involved in preparing and implementing all ecological surveys, impact assessments and measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development. Consequently, the decision-maker should only request supporting information and conservation measures that are relevant, necessary and material to the application in question. Similarly, the decision-maker and their consultees should ensure that any comments and advice made over an application are also proportionate.”

NOTE 1 This approach is enshrined in Government planning guidance, for example, paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework for England [41].

NOTE 2 The desk studies and field surveys undertaken to provide a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) might in some cases be all that is necessary.”

3 SURVEY RESULTS

3.1. SITE CONTEXT

- 3.1.1. The site is located towards the centre of Rochdale, immediately north of Bury Road (B6222), and comprises supported residential accommodation with associated outdoor space. Habitats within the site include areas of amenity grassland, introduced shrubs, and narrow belts of woodland that enclose the perimeter. The site is bordered to the south and east by residential housing, while to the north it adjoins Rochdale Sports Club and, to the west, is partially adjacent to Rochdale St. Clements Football Club. Both neighbouring sports facilities comprise extensive areas of managed grassland, enclosed by belts of broadleaved woodland.
- 3.1.2. The surrounding landscape forms part of a mixed urban and semi-rural environment, characterised by a mosaic of residential development, public open spaces, and town infrastructure, transitioning westwards into more suburban and rural settings with agricultural land and substantial stretches of woodland. Approximately 230 m to the south, separated from the site by Bury Road and a small section of residential development, the River Roch and its associated riparian corridor form a linear ecological feature that connects the urban centre with surrounding areas of agricultural land, public greenspace, and recreational open space.
- 3.1.3. Collectively, these landscape habitat features contribute to a network of green infrastructure within a moderately urbanised landscape, maintaining local habitat connectivity and offering potential ecological value within the local landscape.

3.2. DESIGNATED SITES

- 3.2.1. Statutorily designated sites located within 5km from the site are outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Statutory Designated Sites within 5 km from the development site.

Site Name	Distance from site (km)	Orientation from the site	Designation	Citation / Description
Rochdale Canal	1.8	S	SSSI SAC	<i>"Rochdale Canal supports a significant population of floating water-plantain Luronium natans in a botanically diverse waterplant community which also holds a wide range of pondweeds <i>Potamogeton</i> spp. The canal has predominantly mesotrophic water. This population of <i>Luronium</i> is representative of the formerly more widespread canal populations of north-west England."</i>
Healey Dell	1.8	N	LNR	<i>"The River Spodden has carved its way through the woodlands through thousands of years, creating delightful scenery and spectacular waterfalls which once powered ancient corn, wool and cotton mills."</i>
Hopwood Woodlands	4.5	S	LNR	<i>"The reserve is made up of a number of smaller woodland areas around the grounds of Hopwood Hall. The woodland habitats vary and there are also a number of toads and birds."</i>

Key:

LNR – Local Nature Reserve

NNR – National Nature Reserve.

SAC – Special Area of Conservation

3.2.2. The site falls within the Impact Risk Zone of Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 1.75km south of the site at its nearest point. IRZs are used to assess planning applications for likely impacts on internationally protected sites and identify where activities or developments may pose a risk to the conservation value of those sites. The purpose of IRZs is to guide planning and development by highlighting areas where precautionary measures or further assessment may be required to prevent or mitigate potential harm to these important natural areas. In the case of Rochdale Canal SSSI, further consultation with Natural England is required where the planning proposal falls into one of several development categories, which include:

- Infrastructure
- Minerals, Oil & Gas: Planning applications for quarries (new proposals, ROMPs, extensions, variations to conditions, etc.); oil and gas exploration or extraction.
- Industrial or agricultural developments that could cause air pollution
- Combustion processes
- Waste
- Composting proposals
- Large infrastructure such as warehousing or industrial development with $\geq 1,000$ m² net additional gross internal floorspace.

3.2.3. GMEU identified one non-statutory site within a 1km radius of the site. This site is Meadowcroft Woods Site of Biological Importance (SBI), located approximately 830m southwest of the site.

3.3. PRIORITY HABITATS

3.3.1. A review of the Priority Habitat (PH) Inventory within a 1 km radius of the site identified several parcels of priority habitat in the surrounding area (Figure 3.1). The predominant habitat type recorded is deciduous woodland, occurring as scattered patches throughout the local landscape. A narrow belt of PH deciduous woodland also forms the eastern boundary of the site.



Figure 3.1 Priority Habitats within a 1km radius of the site (Magic.gov.uk, 2025)

3.4. HABITATS

- 3.4.1. Please refer to Appendix 7.1 of this report for the UK Habitat map of the site, which illustrates the habitats identified during the survey and their boundaries. Photographs of the site are presented in Appendix 7.2.

u1b5/6 BUILDINGS & OTHER DEVELOPED LAND

Secondary codes: 804 (car park), 818 (residential building)

- 3.4.2. The site contains the existing Leopold Court Direct Access Hostel building. Associated areas of hardstanding are also present, comprising car parking spaces and paved sections within the garden area.

w1g OTHER BROADLEAVED WOODLAND

Secondary codes: 819 (residential premises open space), 828 (vegetated garden)

- 3.4.3. Along the site boundary, there is a mix of native and non-native trees and shrubs forming a narrow woodland and shrub belt. This includes species such as sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), and dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), along with non-native and ornamental species such as *Cornus alba* and Himalayan giant bramble (*Rubus armeniacus*).

g4 MODIFIED GRASSLAND

Secondary codes: 106 (mown), 516 (active management), 819, 828

- 3.4.4. Managed amenity grassland is present across the site, typically maintained at a short sward height and characterised by common species typical of regularly mown lawns. Species recorded within these grasslands include cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), bent grass (*Agrostis* spp.), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), willowherb (*Epilobium* spp.), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), germander speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), and broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*).

u1 INTRODUCED SHRUB

Secondary codes: 819, 828, 845 (ground level planters), 847 (introduced shrub),

- 3.4.5. In the outside area, a variety of shrubs are present, appearing sporadically throughout but predominantly concentrated along the woodland belt at the boundary. Several species form hedges, including cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis japonica*), and Portuguese laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*). Other shrubs growing more freely include willow-leaved cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster cf. coriaceus*), ornamental roses (*Rosa* sp.), Titan (*Titan* sp.), fuchsia (*Fuchsia* sp.), Franchet's cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster franchetii*), spirea (*Spiraea* sp.), garden lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*), spindle (*Euonymus* sp.), ornamental ash shrub (*Fraxinus* sp.), orpine (*Sedum telephium*), weigela (*Weigela* sp.), cypress (*Cupressus* sp.), skimmia (*Skimmia* sp.), and New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax*). Additionally, several fruit trees have been planted in containers surrounding the building, accompanied by a variety of herbs and naturally colonised ruderal plants and grasses.

3.5. SPECIES

FLORA

- 3.5.1. No notable vascular plant species were recorded during the site survey. Vegetation comprised mainly non-native or common and widespread species considered ubiquitous at both local and national scales. The absence of notable or specialist flora indicates that the site holds limited botanical interest in its current condition.

INVERTEBRATES

- 3.5.2. The habitats present on-site are considered to be of limited value to notable invertebrate species. Further, the proposed works relate to the existing Leopold Court building, with all vegetated habitats retained. Consequently, no further assessment of invertebrate species is considered necessary.

GREAT CRESTED NEWT

- 3.5.3. GMEU returned one recorded of a great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) (GCN) in the data search. The record is from 2014 and is located approximately 100m southwest of the site within a residential property

to the south of Bury Road. The record suggests the finding of an individual GCN within a cellar.

- 3.5.4. A review on Magic Map identified no GCN Class Survey License Returns or European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for GCN within the site or within a 1km radius thereof.
- 3.5.5. A review of publicly available Ordnance Survey mapping identified a single pond within a 500m radius of the site, situated approximately 190m to the southeast. However, the pond is considered to be ecologically isolated from the site in respect of GCN, owing to the presence of substantial barriers to amphibian dispersal, including major road infrastructure and residential development. In particular, Bury Road is likely to significantly restrict or entirely prevent the movement of GCN between the pond and the site.
- 3.5.6. The site itself does not contain any aquatic features suitable to support GCN. As such, GCN can be reasonably discounted from further assessment.

REPTILES

- 3.5.7. Vegetated features within the site primarily comprise modified grassland and introduced shrub, with woodland forming a boundary feature. These habitats, particularly at the site boundaries, may offer suitable conditions for reptiles by providing varied vegetation cover and relatively undisturbed refuges. However, as the site is an occupied premise, reptile presence is considered unlikely due to their sensitivity to human activity. Although the site is well connected to larger habitats capable of supporting reptiles, the overall likelihood of their occurrence on-site is low. Boundary habitats with the highest potential reptile value will be retained and are not expected to be affected by the proposed works; therefore, reptiles are discounted from further assessment.

BATS

- 3.5.8. GMEU returned 60 records comprising at least six bat species within a 1km radius of the site. These records are summarised below in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Summary of bat records within a 1km radius of the site returned by GMEU.

Bat species	No. of records	Details
Bat species <i>Chiroptera</i> spp.	1	The record suggests a casualty of an unknown species found on Bury Road, approximately 220m from the site in 2008.
Pipistrelle bat <i>Pipistrellus</i> spp.	22	Records identify seven known bat roosting sites in the local area. The closest recorded roost is located approximately 520m northwest of the site, where at least three roosting bats were recorded in 2001. As no more recent records of roosting activity are available, this record is considered historic. The site maintains moderate connectivity to this location via surrounding habitats. The roost records also indicate a roost of 2000 individuals which were excluded from a residential property in 2001. This roosting location is located approximately 830m west of the site and associated with a nearby residential estate to the south of Bury Road.
Common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	33	The records identify two known roosting sites: - Associated with a culvert on the River Roch, approximately 1km northeast of the site. This record indicates a common pipistrelle day roost with a count of 10 individuals, recorded in 2014. The site is considered to have poor connectivity to this roosting location. - Located approximately 880m northwest of the site, this record indicates a common pipistrelle roost of around 10 individuals where the specific roost type has not been defined, recorded in 2010. The site maintains reasonable connectivity to this location, aided by the presence of the cemetery and surrounding green space, despite an intervening road.
Soprano pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	1	The records indicate a count of four soprano pipistrelles roosting in association with common pipistrelle and Daubenton's bats within a roost near the River Roch culvert, approximately 1 km northeast of the site.
Nathusius's pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	1	The record suggests a grounded male found in 2013 approximately 1km northeast of the site.

Daubenton's bat <i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	1	The record suggests a Daubenton's day roost with a count of eight individuals, recorded in 2014. This roost is associated with a common pipistrelle roost located in the culvert on the River Roch, approximately 1km northeast of the site.
Whiskered bat <i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	1	The record suggests a casualty of female whiskered bat found south Bury Road, approximately 150m from the site in 2003.

3.5.9. A review of Magic Map (DEFRA, 2025) located 14 European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats within a 5km radius of the site. These records are summarised below in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Granted EPSLs for bats within a 5km radius of the application site

Case reference of granted application	Species on the licence*	Distance from site (KM)	Licence Start Date	Licence End Date	Permitted activities under licence:				
					impact on a breeding site?	Impact on a breeding site	Impact on a breeding site	Impact on a breeding site	Impact on a breeding site
2015-7854-EPS-MIT	BLE C-PIP		20/03/2015	31/05/2021	N	N	N	N	Y
2015-8047-EPS-MIT	C-PIP DAUB S-PIP		24/03/2015	31/08/2020	N	N	N	N	Y
2016-19740-EPS-MIT-1	C-PIP		01/04/2016	31/03/2021	N	N	N	N	Y
2016-19740-EPS-MIT-2	C-PIP		20/06/2016	01/04/2021	N	N	N	N	Y
2016-20262-EPS-MIT	C-PIP		01/03/2016	28/02/2021	N	N	N	N	Y
EPSM2009-709	C-PIP		08/04/2009	31/12/2010	N			N	Y
EPSM2012-5119	C-PIP		13/11/2012	30/11/2013	N			N	Y
EPSM2011-2750	C-PIP;S-PIP		15/02/2011	31/07/2013	N			N	Y
EPSM2009-525	C-PIP;S-PIP		26/05/2009	31/08/2009	N			N	Y
2015-8632-EPS-MIT	C-PIP		27/03/2015	01/10/2020	N	N	N	N	Y
Species on the licence*		Species name					Latin		
C-PIP		Common pipistrelle					<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>		
S-PIP		Soprano pipistrelle					<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>		
WHISK		Whiskered bat					<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>		

HABITAT SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

3.5.10. Vegetated areas on the site, comprising amenity grassland, woodland, and introduced shrub, collectively offer potential foraging habitat for bats. In addition, nearby features with connectivity to the site, including a cemetery, large open green spaces, the River Roch corridor, and pockets of woodland further contribute to the availability of foraging resources within the local area. Collectively, these landscape features indicate that the site offers good potential for bat activity, providing both commuting routes and foraging opportunities across a well-connected habitat network. The site and surrounding habitats are therefore assessed as having moderate potential suitability to support commuting and foraging bat, in line with BCT guidance.

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

3.5.11. A Preliminary Roost Assessment of the Leopold Court building was undertaken to evaluate the suitability of the and potential for use by roosting bats.

3.5.12. Photographs of PRFs identified across the building are provided in Appendix 7.3.

EXTERNAL INSPECTIONS

3.5.13. Leopold Court comprises a two-storey building with single-storey projections situated on the southern, northwestern, and northeastern elevations. The property is a brick-built structure of late 20th-century origin, featuring a complex multi-hipped roof that spans both ground and first-floor levels.

3.5.14. The external walls are constructed from brick and are generally intact and well-maintained. However, vertical gaps were observed in the mortar above the single-storey lean-to roof on the northeastern elevation. These gaps may constitute potential crevice-type features or provide access to cavity wall spaces or loft voids.

3.5.15. The roof is finished with concrete double Roman interlocking tiles. These tiles overlap tightly, and provide minimal crevice-roosting potential. From ground level inspections, the roof covering appeared to be in reasonable condition throughout, with no missing tiles and very few displaced tiles visible, and only very small

areas of damage/deterioration noted, these being associated with the single-storey lean-to roof structure associated with the northeastern elevation.

- 3.5.16. Open ends of the imbrices on the ground-floor elevations create openings that could provide access to shallow voids beneath the tiles. These voids are likely to be too exposed to offer suitable roosting habitat for bats, although they may contain crevice-roosting opportunities associated with internal structural supports or provide access to internal roof voids, though this could not be confirmed during ground-level inspections. Protective mesh has been installed along the edges of the upper roof tiles, effectively preventing ingress and reducing the potential for roosting at higher level
- 3.5.17. Lead flashing is present at junctions where the ground-floor roof projections meet the main body of the building. Small gaps were noted along some sections of this flashing, which may provide minor crevice features with suitability for small or individual numbers of crevice-roosting bats.
- 3.5.18. The soffits and fascia boards are primarily timber and are generally sound and well-fitted across most elevations, with some minor areas of superficial damage noted. Two small holes were observed on the northwestern and southeastern single storey sections of the building respectively. While these defects could theoretically provide a point of ingress for bats, they are assessed as having low suitability due to the likely impact on this feature from ground floor external lighting.
- 3.5.19. A tower structure is present to the east of the main building, containing vents that may provide potential access points to internal spaces. The suitability of these vents for entry is influenced by both their design and the characteristics of the spaces to which they lead. Unsealed or louvered vents may allow access to the interior if the internal space provides suitable conditions, such as being undisturbed, dry, and enclosed. Conversely, vents fitted with mesh are less likely to serve as entry points. Due to the limitations of ground-level inspection, it was not possible to confirm whether the vents provide actual access points.
- 3.5.20. Louvre doors on the external of the building may similarly provide ingress/egress points. However, inspections identified that the internal spaces comprised spaces used for storage or containing building services machinery. The internal spaces was well-sealed internally with no evidence of roosting bats.
- 3.5.21. Windows and external doors are of modern uPVC construction and double-glazed. These are well-sealed and flush-fitting, providing no crevice features or cavities suitable for bat use.
- 3.5.22. In addition to the main building, a metal shipping container is present at the front of the property. This structure is considered to offer negligible suitability for bats due to its construction, which provides thermally unstable conditions. Furthermore, the container lacks structural features that could provide shelter or concealment, such as crevices or voids.

INTERNAL INSPECTIONS

- 3.5.23. The building exhibits a complex roof structure comprising multiple loft voids, accessed via a series of entry hatches. During the survey, six loft spaces were inspected, with their approximate locations illustrated in Figure 3.2. Several additional lofts could not be accessed due to their location within occupied rooms, the absence of keys, or health and safety constraints. In particular, lofts situated above the two main stairwells were not entered due to restricted access and potential fall hazards which prevented safe inspection. The lofts that were inspected share a consistent structural form, consisting of timber roof trusses, predominantly arranged in triangular or leaning frameworks, and lined with what appears to be bitumen-based felt.
- 3.5.24. The internal roof voids were of modern construction and remain intact throughout. Potential roosting opportunities may exist between the felt and roof lining where gaps or access points are present on the external roof. Each loft contained building service equipment, including insulated ventilation ducting, electrical cabling, and insulation wool, which together create warm, stable microclimates.
- 3.5.25. The loft spaces vary in size, with one inspected space being under 1m in height; however, the majority provide sufficient volume and shelter to offer potential roosting opportunities for void-dwelling bats. However, no bats or evidence of bat activity were recorded within any of the lofts during the inspection.



Figure 3.2. Loft spaces at Leopold Court inspected during the Preliminary Roost Assessment.

SUMMARY

- 3.5.26. The building is of relatively modern and well-maintained construction but includes some features that could provide opportunities for roosting bats, particularly crevice-dwelling species. Potential roosting locations are limited to localised gaps in mortar, small openings beneath roof tiles on the ground-floor elevations, and minor defects in flashing.
- 3.5.27. Despite the limited number of individual features, the building as a whole is considered to exhibit moderate potential suitability for roosting bats. According to the BCT guidelines, a structure with moderate potential has *one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions, and surrounding habitat, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (for example, maternity or hibernation roosts)*. This assessment reflects factors such as the structural complexity of the building, the presence of external elements that could provide roosting opportunities, the presence of loft voids and the existence of potential ingress points. The surrounding environment offers suitable foraging and commuting habitat that is well-connected to the building, further increasing its potential for use by roosting species. Taken together, these factors indicate that, while individual features may provide limited opportunities in isolation, the building as an integrated structure in its location is considered to present moderate potential for occupation by bats.
- 3.5.28. Due to the warm and occupied nature of the building, it is considered likely to provide opportunities for seasonal use throughout the year, excluding hibernation periods.

BIRDS

- 3.5.29. GMEU returned 611 records comprising 11 bird species within a 1km radius of the site. Several of these records relate to red-listed species known to utilise urban environments, including both built structures and garden-associated habitats, for nesting and breeding. Such species include house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*).
- 3.5.30. The site contains habitats capable of supporting breeding birds, including woodland belts, shrubs, and hedges. The building itself may provide opportunities for urban nesting birds, although no active nests were observed on its structure during the survey. Birds were seen using the trees and shrubs, but dense vegetation and limited visibility meant that any nesting activity could not be confirmed.

BADGER

- 3.5.31. GMEU records confirm the presence of badgers (*Meles meles*) within a 1 km radius of the site; however, the precise locations of these records are confidential.
- 3.5.32. No evidence of badger activity (such as setts, latrines, foraging signs, or snuffle holes) was recorded during the survey. The absence of field signs indicates that badgers are not actively using the site. However, it remains possible that badgers may commute through or forage within the site on an occasional basis.

HEDGEHOG

- 3.5.33. GMEU returned 17 records of European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) within a 1km radius of the site. The closest record is from 2018 and is located approximately 200m north of the site in the adjacent Sports Club grounds.
- 3.5.34. Hedgehogs are anticipated to utilise the site due to the presence of habitats offering both foraging resources and sheltering opportunities. These include garden areas, woodland, and shrubland, providing dense vegetation, leaf litter, and potential nesting or resting sites. The site is also embedded within a network of surrounding suitable habitats, which are likely to facilitate movement, dispersal, and connectivity within the wider landscape. The proposed works are confined to the existing building, and therefore no impacts on the availability or quality of hedgehog habitat are anticipated. As a result, no further assessment of this species is required in connection with the application.

SPECIES DISCOUNTED FROM ASSESSMENT

- 3.5.35. Hazel dormice are primarily distributed across southern England, with strongholds in counties such as Devon, Somerset, Sussex, and Kent. Records north of the Midlands are scarce, limited mainly to parts of the Lake District and isolated locations in Wales (Matthews et al., 2018). There are no known records of this species in the northern Greater Manchester area. Given the limited extent of woodland and scrub on site, the available habitat is considered to be of low suitability, and the presence of hazel dormice can be reasonably ruled out.
- 3.5.36. Otter (*Lutra lutra*), Beaver (*Castor fiber*), water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), and white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) have been discounted from assessment due to the absence of suitable aquatic habitats on or near the site. The nearest potentially suitable habitat is the River Roch, located approximately 230m to the south and separated from the site by anthropogenic barriers. Impacts arising from the proposed development will be limited to the site itself and will not affect these species or their habitats.
- 3.5.37. Red squirrels are restricted to small areas of northern England and have no known records within the north of Greater Manchester. Grey squirrels are abundant throughout the region and are known to outcompete red squirrels and increase mortality through the spread of squirrel pox (The Mammal Society, 2020). As such, red squirrels are discounted from the assessment.

4 EVALUATION

2.1. DESIGNATED SITES

- 4.1.1. The site falls within the Impact Risk Zone for Rochdale Canal SSSI, located approximately 1.75km south from the application site boundary at its nearest point. Due to the nature of the development, a consultation with Natural England is not required to facilitate development (ref. Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Natural England's Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest: advice for Leopold Court, Rochdale.

You do not need to consult Natural England on the proposed development at this location.

The Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI IRZs) indicate that at the location selected, the proposed development is unlikely to have a harmful effect on terrestrial Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites that they underpin.

Therefore, you do not need to consult Natural England on the likely impacts of development on terrestrial SSSIs and the SACs, SPAs or Ramsar sites that they underpin.

- 4.1.2. Impacts associated with the proposal will occur at a site level only, with no direct adverse effects on the habitats, species, or ecological connectivity of statutory and non-statutory sites identified within the wider landscape.

2.2. HABITATS

- 4.3.1. The only habitat that will be directly affected by the proposed works is a planted bedding area of approximately 10 m², containing herbs and naturally colonising plant species. No other vegetated habitats within the site boundary will be impacted, including the priority habitat of deciduous woodland located along the eastern boundary.

2.3. SPECIES

BATS

- 4.3.2. All bat species and their roosts are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Under this legislation, it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure, or capture bats, or to damage, destroy, or obstruct access to a bat roost. Roosts receive protection regardless of whether bats are present at the time of interference.
- 4.3.3. Desk study records indicate several bat species in the local area, including common and soprano pipistrelle, Nathusius's pipistrelle, Daubenton's bat, and whiskered bat. Multiple historic and small roosts are recorded within 1km of the site, with the closest confirmed day roosts ≥500 m away. Connectivity to these roosts is variable, generally moderate to poor, influenced by intervening roads and fragmentation as a result of the urban environment.
- 4.3.4. No bats or evidence thereof was recorded in the external or internal of the building during the Preliminary Roost Assessment. However, the building was assessed as having moderate bat roosting potential, with several suitable features associated with the roof structure and associated voids. As a consequence, further surveys are recommended to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats and to inform appropriate mitigation if required. Full details of the recommended survey work are provided in Section 5.
- 4.3.5. To minimise disturbance to bats during and post-construction, any additional external lighting should be minimised, particularly along site boundaries and retained vegetated edges. Any proposed lighting, and ideally any existing lighting should be retrofitted, to follow the guidance outlined in the Institute for Lighting Engineers document "Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lighting" (2005) and BCT's "Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night" (2023).
- 4.3.6. The following recommendations are to be considered within the scheme to minimise impacts of lighting on bats:
- Keep site lighting to minimum levels.
 - Luminaries should lack UV elements and preferably LED lighting with a warm white light should be used over cool white light (ideally <2700Kelvin).

- Lighting should feature peak wavelengths greater than 550nm.
- Light placement should be downward facing to prevent excess horizontal or vertical light spill.
- The use of integrated fittings such as cowls, shields, louvres and hoods, that effectively contain light spill from unintended areas.
- The use of hard landscaping features to block light and create dark corridors.
- Avoid illuminating habitats of value.
- Use of timed security lights should be set on motion-sensors and using short, 1-minute timers, to minimise light use.
- Column heights of lighting can be considered to minimise light spill.

BREEDING BIRDS

- 4.3.7. The site supports habitats known to be suitable for nesting birds, and consequently, nesting activity may occur within the site during the breeding season (March to September inclusive). All wild birds, their nests, and eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation, it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure, or take any wild bird, or to take, damage, or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.
- 4.3.8. No active nests were identified on the building during the survey. However, given the potential for occupation by breeding birds, it is recommended that any works to the building are conducted outside of the breeding season. Where this cannot be avoided, a pre-works nesting bird check should be carried out by an appropriately qualified ecologist no more than 48 hours prior to the commencement of works. If nesting activity is observed, the nest(s) should be left in situ until the young have fledged. In this instance, a suitable buffer will be determined and maintained by the appointed ecologist.
- 4.3.9. Vegetated boundary habitats are expected to be retained as part of the proposed works. However, any vegetation clearance, whether associated with the current proposal or any future activities, should also be avoided during the bird breeding season and carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures outlined above.

TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS

- 4.3.10. European hedgehog and badger may be present within the site due to the availability of suitable habitats and connectivity to surrounding areas of higher-quality habitat. Consequently, precautionary measures should be implemented during construction to reduce the risk of harm to these species and to maintain safe passage through the development area. Recommended measures include the erection of protective fencing around construction zones to prevent mammals from entering active work areas. Additionally, any excavations or open trenches should be covered overnight or fitted with escape ramps to allow hedgehogs, badgers, and other mammals to exit safely should they fall in.

5 FURTHER SURVEYS AND CONCLUSION

3.1. BAT EMERGENCE SURVEYS

- 5.1.1. The building was assessed as having moderate bat roosting potential based on the presence of suitable roosting features within the roof structure and associated loft voids. In accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016), further survey effort is required to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats.
- 5.1.2. In accordance with current guidance, it is recommended that two dusk emergence surveys are conducted during the active bat season (typically May to September, in suitable weather conditions, with at least one survey between May and August). The surveys should be spaced a minimum of three weeks apart to ensure adequate temporal coverage and should involve multiple surveyors positioned to observe all potential roost access points.
- 5.1.3. The results of these surveys will confirm whether bats are roosting within the building and, if present, identify roost locations, species, and levels of use. This information will inform the requirement for any mitigation or licensing that may be necessary prior to the commencement of works. If roosting bats are identified within the building, a mitigation license from Natural England is likely to be required before works can proceed. This licence can only be obtained after full planning permission has been granted and any relevant planning conditions discharged.

3.2. OTHER BIODIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

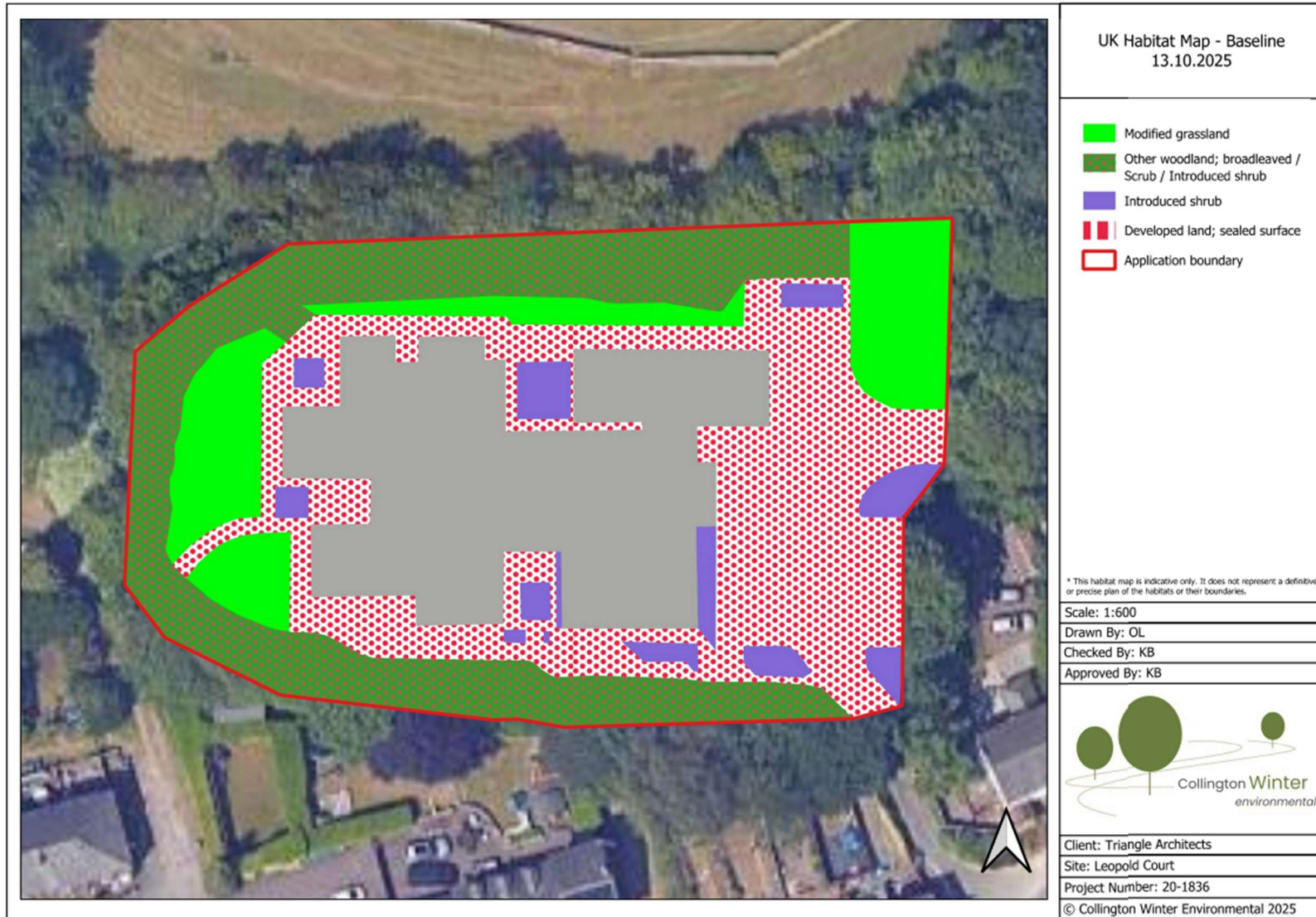
- 5.1.4. The structural characteristics of modern and retrofitted buildings typically reduce their suitability for use by bats and birds. To provide roosting and nesting opportunities, it is recommended that bat and bird boxes are installed on-site following development. These can be installed either to the building or to retained trees around the site perimeter, but should be positioned in locations that offer safe, accessible, and appropriate roosting or nesting opportunities. The exact placement of boxes should be determined by a suitably qualified ecologist.

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7 APPENDIX

7.1. UK HABITAT MAP



7.2. PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SITE

Leopold Court Hostel building: eastern aspects



Leopold Court Hostel building: western aspects



Western roof elevations



Northern roof elevations



Soffits on ground floor projections



Soffits on upper elevations



Woodland and shrub boundary habitats



Woodland and shrub boundary habitats



Modified grassland



Modified grassland



Bedding planter



Bedding planter containing fruit tree



Introduced shrub



Introduced shrub



Shipping container located to the front of the building



7.3. POTENTIAL ROOST FEATURES

Description	Photos
Example of gaps under lead flashing which may provide minor crevice features with suitability for small or individual numbers of crevice-roosting bats.	
Photo shows open ends of ground floor imbrices, creating shallow voids which may lead to crevice-roosting opportunities associated with structural supports or internal roof voids (not visible from ground level)	
Vertical gaps in mortar above single storey projection which may provide crevice-type features or provide access to cavity wall spaces or loft voids.	

Louvre vents on the tower structure which may provide access points to internal spaces. Suitability not able to be defined due to limitations of ground level inspection.



Defects on soffits. Considered to be of low suitability due to likely impact of external lighting on ground floor elevations.



Louvre doors may provide ingress/egress. However, internal spaces were found to comprise well-sealed spaces used for storage and/or building service machinery.



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