Penistone Library

Preliminary Roost Assessment

Report Ref. ER-7396-01

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Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

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Report duration	In accordance with CIEEM (2019), unless otherwise stated the findings of this report remain valid for a period of 18 months. After this period advice should be sought on the scope of any updating work required.

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Summary Statement

The buildings on-Site are assessed as providing negligible and no bat roost suitability. It is recommended that an endoscope inspection by a licensed ecologist be conducted on damaged fascia boards, prior to the reroofing works.

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological was commissioned by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council to carry out a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) at Penistone Library, Penistone (grid reference SE 24610 03040).
2. The application site, 'the Site', comprises a single building constructed in the 1960s as a purpose-built public library.
3. Proposals are to demolish the garage building at the eastern end of the complex, and potentially also the chimney, and to reroof the remaining sections.

Figure 1 The Site boundary (red line).

Method

4. A thorough daytime inspection of the site was made in January 2024 to look for evidence of bats and assess suitability for roosting. Evidence of bats may take the form of droppings, feeding remains, live bats, dead bats, stains on masonry or timber from the oils in bats' fur and claw marks made by bats regularly roosting in the same location.
5. Bat roosting potential of the building was classified according to the following criteria set out in Table 1, taken from the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines (2023).

Table 1 Bat Roosting Suitability of Buildings.

Suitability	Criteria
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).
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.
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 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).
Moderate	A structure with 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 (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).
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 and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.

Box 1 Bat roosts

Bats roost in buildings and trees in different locations depending upon time of year and environmental factors such as position of the sun, proximity to heat sources and feeding grounds. The following types are commonly referred to:

Transitional roosts

Bats frequently gather early in the season (March to April) before dispersing to summer roosts. Bats can be found in high numbers in these roosts for a very short period. Transitional roosts can also be found shortly before hibernation in August to October when bats (depending upon species) can gather in roosts not used earlier in the season.

Maternity roosts

These are among the most important roosts and are normally occupied from May to August. Depending on the species involved, some maternity roosts can contain a very significant proportion of the local population.

Summer (non-breeding) roosts

Small groups of non-breeding female and male bats can gather in these roosts or bats from a local population may choose to roost individually. There are normally a large number of suitable locations for summer non-breeding roosts and these may be routinely used or used only on an occasional basis. Irregularly used summer roosts can be very hard to find without unreasonable survey effort.

Mating roosts

Around September bats will gather in roost to mate; these are often in different locations than summer or breeding roosts.

Hibernation roosts

As bats in hibernation roosts are highly vulnerable to disturbance and bats can be present in large numbers these are considered to be among the most important bat roosts. Many species of bats roost in large and nationally important hibernation roosts associated with underground sites, many of which are well known and protected. However, the most common bat in the UK (the common pipistrelle) is largely unaccounted for in winter but thought to disperse and roost individually or in small groups in thermally stable cracks and crevices in thick walls or trees.

Box 2 *Legal background*

Bats are afforded full protection under The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) plus amendments, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Under these Acts it is an offence among others, to recklessly kill, injure or disturb bats. It is also an offence to destroy or obstruct a roost even if bats are not in occupancy at the time of the action.

There are no defences against contravention of the Habitats Regulations 2010 which means that it is important for detailed and well-designed bat surveys to be carried out, prior to carrying out activities that may impact upon bat roosts such as demolition of buildings or removal of trees.

Where bats are found within a potential development site, a license from Natural England may need to be secured if works that could otherwise contravene legislation are to be carried out. These licences are only issued where Natural England is satisfied that works are unavoidable and would not have a negative impact on the favourable conservation status of bats. A Natural England license requires that the potential development site has full planning permission and that bats were a material consideration of the planning permission.

Records

6. The local records provider, in this case South Yorkshire Bat Group (SYBG), was asked to provide all records from within a 1km radius of the Site.

7. Eighty records were returned, detailing common, soprano, and unidentified pipistrelles; noctule; Brandt's, Daubenton's, and whiskered bats; and unidentified myotid and vesper bat species. The closest record to the Site concerns Penistone Cinema, c. 240m north, where a single common pipistrelle was found in 1988.

8. Multiple roosts of common pipistrelle are known from the survey area, with the closest being at Shelley Close, c. 500m north, found in 1990.

National, regional, and local Status

9. The application Site lies within the natural range of 11 species of bat. These are summarised in Table 2 opposite, together with a note on each species' national status, relative abundance, and status within the 1km search area.

EPSM Licences

10. There are no European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licences returned within 1km of the Site.

Table 2 List of bat species known to occur in South Yorkshire, ordered in increasing level of significance to their national population.

Species	National Status	Within 1km radius	
		Recorded	Roosts known
Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	Common and increasing	Yes	Yes
Soprano pipistrelle *P. pygmaeus*	Common and stable	Yes	-
Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*	Common and increasing	Yes	-
Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*	Common and stable	-	-
Natterer's bat *M. nattereri*	Common and increasing	-	-
Whiskered bat *M. mystacinus*	Uncommon but stable	Yes	-
Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*	Uncommon but stable	Yes	-
Leisler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri*	Uncommon and trend unknown	-	-
Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*	Uncommon but stable	-	-
Brandt's bat *M. brandtii*	Uncommon but stable	Yes	-
Nathusius' pipistrelle *P. nathusii*	Uncommon but stable	Possibly	-

11.

Site Context

12. The Site is located in the centre of Penistone, a town on the fringe of the Pennines c. 10km southwest of Barnsley. Its surroundings are largely suburban, with housing on all sides and a section of allotment gardens to the immediate east.

13. The Site is largely disconnected from wildlife corridors in the local environment, the closest being the cycle path that follows the route of the defunct Woodhead line railway, running east-west c. 375m north.

14. Pit Dike stream constitutes the closest watercourse to the Site, running southwest-northeast through the countryside outside Penistone until being culverted c. 470m south of the Site. It continues to run northeast as Cubley Beck, and remains culverted for most of its length.

Figure 2 Site context.

Survey Results

16. The Site comprises a single main building separated externally into sections based on the levels of their roofs, plus a chimney stack and a garage extension on the eastern end.

Figure 3 Location of buildings on-Site.

Building A

17. Building A is the main body of the library, a single-storey building of brown brick construction, well-mortared, with no gaps in the masonry noted. The windows are set within uPVC frames which are well-sealed, offering no potential roost features (PRFs).

18. The building has a flat roof consisting of a concrete deck, a layer of cork insulation, and a double layer of bitumen felt, offering no roof void (and the associated PRF) which a timber-framed flat roof might support.

19. Part of the fascia boarding on the building's southern elevation was damaged at time of survey, likely by a recent storm, revealing an internal wall cavity. Due to the recency and severity of the damage, permitting draughts and water ingress, this cavity is unlikely to be used by bats, and forms a PRF of negligible roost suitability.

Figure 4 Typical view of Building A (rear), D (middle), and C (fore) (left); damaged fascia board on Building A (right).

Building B

20. Building B is a wing of Building A to the west, of identical construction, although the roof level is slightly lower.

21. The fascia board along the western north elevation of the building shows significant water damage, with the layers of laminated wood peeling apart in a fashion that imitates peeling tree bark. However, most of the resultant gaps are relatively shallow, and the board is secured to the building with wooden batons at top and bottom, preventing access by bats to the space between the board and the bricks.

22. This feature is therefore assigned negligible roost suitability.

Figure 5 Damaged fascia board on Building B.

Building C

23. Building C is again a wing of Building A of identical construction, with a lower roof level than both Buildings A and B. No PRFs were located, and so this building is assigned as offering no roost suitability.

Building D

24. Building D is a tall brick chimney stack, with a wooden water tank that the base of its northern face. No gaps in the masonry were noted on the chimney, and no external access hatches were seen. No gaps in the planks enclosing the water tank were noted.

25. Due to the absence of visible PRFs, this building is assigned no roost suitability.

Building E

26. Building E is a single-storey garage building of brown brick construction, attached to the eastern end of the library building, with a large metal roller shutter occupying most of the southern elevation. The masonry is in good condition, with no gaps noted; additionally, no gaps were noted between the roof edge and the brickwork. This building is therefore assessed as providing no roost suitability.

Figure 6 Building D (left); Building E (right).

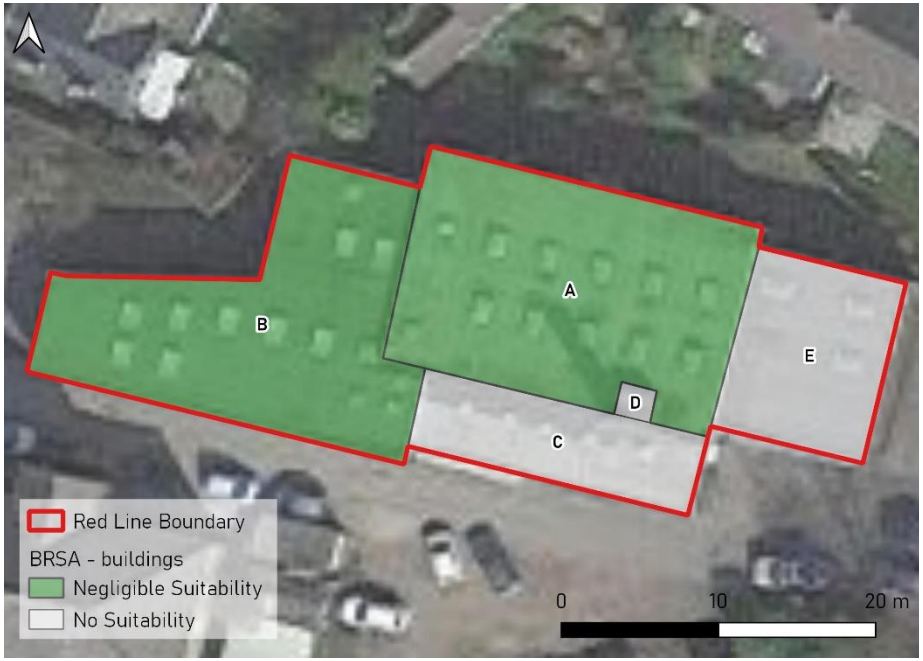
Summary

27. Based on the features present, the buildings are assessed as having negligible and no suitability for supporting roosts.

Table 3 Summary of roost potential of buildings.

Building	Key Features	Bat Roost Suitability
A	Damaged fascia board.	Negligible
B	Damaged fascia board.	Negligible
C	N/A.	None
D	N/A.	None
E	N/A.	None

Figure 7 Bat roost suitability of on-Site buildings.



Conclusions and Recommendations

28. No further survey work is recommended in support of this conclusion.

29. It is recommended that features of negligible suitability (i.e., any damaged fascia boards) should be subject to endoscope inspection by a licensed ecologist prior to replacement. This is in lieu of a dusk emergence survey, which would be disproportionate to the level of bat roost potential identified.

Standard precaution

30. Although no evidence of roosting has been found and likely absence of roosting has been concluded, it must be noted that bats frequently move between roost sites, can be very casual in their choice of roosting location and can turn up unexpectedly at any time.

31. On this basis the developer should always be mindful of bats as a potential constraint and have a protocol in place should any bats be seen or suspected during works: works should stop, a suitably licensed ecologist consulted, and their advice followed.

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