

Princess Theatre, Hoyland

Bat Survey Report

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Prepared by:

Middleton Bell Ecology, School House, Green Moor, Sheffield, S35 7DQ

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1. Summary

- 1.1.1 A bat inspection of the former Princess Theatre, Hoyland, was commissioned by Architect John Early in support of a planning application for the conversion of part of the building to create three residential flats.
- 1.1.2 The large former theatre building was a three-storey brick structure with extensive roof voids. The building was located within Hoyland town centre and was surrounded by residential properties, gardens, allotments, parks and scattered trees. A small area of hardstanding was present adjacent to the building. The surrounding habitat was considered to provide below average suitability for foraging and commuting bats, although a range of bat species had previously been recorded within the wider area.
- 1.1.3 The inspection identified a number of features that could potentially be used by roosting bats. These included gaps beneath slipped slates, gaps behind fascia boards and bargeboards, openings within the masonry, gaps between coping stones and the ridge, and a louvred vent providing access into the roof void. No bats or evidence of bat use were recorded during the survey. However, recent roofing works and internal alterations were considered likely to have reduced the visibility of any historic evidence. Overall, the building was assessed as having low bat roost suitability.
- 1.1.4 No active bird nests were recorded during the survey. However, the building was considered suitable for use by nesting birds and nesting activity may occur during the bird breeding season.
- 1.1.5 A single nocturnal bat survey was recommended to determine whether bats were present or likely absent from the building and to inform any licensing, mitigation or compensation requirements. Subject to the outcome of the nocturnal survey, replacement bat roost features were likely to be required to compensate for the loss of existing features suitable for bats. These could include integrated bat boxes or the retention and creation of suitable access points behind fascia boards or similar features. Bat-safe roofing materials are also recommended.
- 1.1.6 In relation to nesting birds, works should be planned to avoid impacts on active nests. If nesting birds are found during construction works, the nests should be retained and appropriate ecological advice sought before works continue in the affected area.
- 1.1.7 This report would remain valid until the recommended nocturnal bat survey had been completed. If the project is delayed and the survey is not undertaken within the appropriate survey season, Middleton Bell Ecology should be contacted to determine whether updated survey work is required.

2. Introduction

- 2.1.1 A bat inspection of the former Princess Theatre in Hoyland was commissioned by Architect John Early on 28th May 2026. The survey was undertaken to support a planning application for the planned conversion of a large proportion of the roof void to create three residential flats.
- 2.1.2 The legislative context to the survey and assessment reported here is included in Appendix 1.

3. Habitat Assessment

- 3.1.1 The building was located in Hoyland town centre in South Yorkshire. The survey area comprised the building and a side and rear hard standing area (Figure 1).
- 3.1.2 Houses and gardens, allotments and parks with numerous trees were present in the local area (Plate 1).
- 3.1.3 The site and surrounding area was considered to comprise below average¹ habitat quality for foraging and commuting bats. The area was considered likely to have low levels of bat activity, with species present within the survey area likely to be limited to those able to tolerate relatively high levels of lighting.

Figure 1. The site location



¹ The average bat activity level referred to is taken from professional judgement for that area within which Middleton Bell Ecology usually operates comprising Yorkshire and the surrounding counties to the south and west.

Plate 1. The building (outlined red), and surrounding landscape viewed from the southeast



3.1.4 Table 1 summarises the habitats present within, and adjacent to the site.

Table 1. Location and habitat table

Name and address: Former Princess Theatre, West Street, Hoyland, S74 9DU			
OS Grid Ref.: SE3682800577		Elevation: 167 m	
Local Planning Authority: Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council			
Features on site and adjacent to site			
Feature	On site	Adjacent	Comments
Buildings	✓	✓	
River bordered by trees			Small watercourse c. 345m southeast.
Standing water			Two ponds / reservoirs c. 570 m southeast.
Bridges tunnels and culverts			None.
Trees		✓	Numerous trees within the gardens and parks nearby.
Woodland			None.
Grassland		✓	Amenity grassland present in nearby gardens.

3.2 Aims

3.2.1 The survey was conducted to help determine the:

- Presence/absence of roosting bats within the building.
- Potential roosting areas and roost access/egress points.
- Level of bat roost suitability associated with the building.
- Current or historic use of the building by nesting birds.
- Further survey work or mitigation requirements.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data Consultation

- 4.1.1 A desk study was undertaken with South Yorkshire Bat Group to request bat records for locations within 2 km of the site.
- 4.1.2 A search of the Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was undertaken to identify historic European Protected Species (EPS) licences obtained for locations within 2 km of the site.

4.2 Field Survey

Internal and External Visual Inspection

- 4.2.1 An inspection of the building was undertaken on 1st June 2026 by Greg Slack (MCIEEM; Class licence WML-A34-Level 4, 2025-84759-CL20-BAT).
- 4.2.2 The following activities were carried out during the initial inspection:
- An examination of all parts of the building to record structural features and condition, and features that may be suitable for use by roosting bats. Particular attention was paid to any holes, crevices or gaps in walls, lintels, windows, and windowsills, gaps/holes in cladding and soffits and to the possibility of finding droppings stuck to walls, floors or other surfaces, or insect remains below features.
 - Any signs indicative of a bat roost presence including live or dead bats, droppings, feeding remains, scratch marks and staining were recorded.
 - An assessment of the bat roost suitability of the building (negligible, low, moderate, high or confirmed roost).
- 4.2.3 The following equipment was used or on hand during the inspection:
- a high powered torch;
 - binoculars;
 - ladders;
 - an endoscope;
 - a camera; and
 - an ultralight drone (DJI Mini 4 Pro).

4.3 Survey Limitations

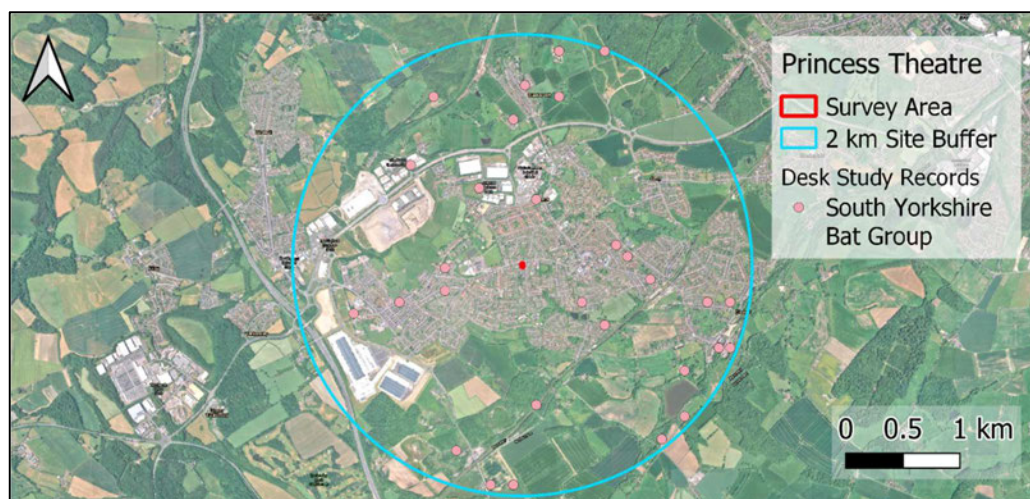
- 4.3.1 No significant limitations were encountered during the survey.

5. Results

5.1 Data Consultation

- 5.1.1 South Yorkshire Bat Group provided 55 bat records for the surrounding 2 km. The species included in the records comprised: common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*; soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*; brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*; Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*; noctule *Nyctalus noctula*; and Leisler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri*.
- 5.1.2 The records were distributed across fringes of Hoyland and the more rural locations in the wider area (Figure 2). The closest record was a common pipistrelle in flight located c. 590 m southeast of the site. The record dated from June 2017.

Figure 2. Distribution of bat records in the vicinity of the site



- 5.1.3 No bat EPS mitigation licences had been issued within 2 km of the site.

5.2 Field Survey

Internal and External Visual Inspection

Building description

- 5.2.1 The former Princess Theatre comprised a large three-storey brick-built building with a stepped dual-pitched roof and a lean-to single storey section on the front elevation (Plate 2). The roof was predominantly covered with Welsh slate although the rear section which was slightly higher was covered with interlocking concrete tiles (having been reroofed in 2025).

Plate 2. The building viewed from the northeast



- 5.2.2 Coping stones were present on the front gable, with verge capping present on the rear and stepped sections of the roof. Plastic guttering was supported by fascia boards. Bargeboards were present beneath the verge capping on the rear elevation.
- 5.2.3 The roof was supported by a combination of king post trusses, modern W-trusses, purlins, rafters and battens (Plate 3). The reroofed southern section was lined with a breathable roofing membrane. The older sections of the roof had been partially lined internally with plastic sheeting below the rafters and purlins in the winter of 2025/2026 to reduce water ingress. Where exposed sections were still visible traditional torching was visible beneath the slates.

Plate 3. The interior of the roof void viewed from the northern end of the building



Plate 4. The interior of the reroofed southern section of the building



5.2.4 A square timber louvred vent was present on the southern gable, providing ventilation to a series of metal pipes within the building. Internally, a large gap was present between the vent and the associated pipework (Plate 5).



Plate 5. The louvred vent at the southern end of the building



External inspection

- 5.2.5 The potential bat roost features present comprised gaps below slipped slates, behind fascias and barge boards, gaps in the masonry, and between coping stones and the ridge. The potential roost features are shown in Table 2, and their approximate locations shown on Figure 3.

Table 2. Potential Roost Features Recorded

PRF	Example Photo	Description
A		Gap in the masonry.
B		Louvred vent.





PRF	Example Photo	Description
C		Gap behind barge board.
D		Gap between ridge and coping stones (viewed from inside the roof void).
E	No photo available.	Gap behind fascia.
F		Gap between coping stones.
G		Slipped/missing slate.

Figure 3. Potential roost feature locations



Internal inspection

5.2.6 No bats or signs of bats were present within the interior of the building. The recent reroofing at the southern end of the building and the installation of the plastic sheeting below the rafters and purlins at the northern end were considered likely to have been actions which reduced the chance of historic signs of bats being visible.

Nesting birds

5.2.7 Although no bird nests were present within the building at the time of the survey, the building was considered suitable to be used by nesting birds.

6. Assessment

6.1 Summary and Evaluation of Findings

6.1.1 Although bat access locations were present within the building, the recent work to the roof and roof void, together with the town centre location reduced the suitability of the building to support roosting bats.

6.1.2 The habitat around the building was considered to be below average for use by foraging and commuting bats. Overall it was considered that the bat roost suitability of the building was low.

6.2 Further Survey, and Recommendations

Further Survey

6.2.1 In line with good practice survey guidance (Collins, 2023) it is recommended that one nocturnal survey is completed to identify the presence or likely absence of roosting bats within the building. The survey must be undertaken between May and August.

Bat Roost Features

6.2.2 The extent of any replacement bat roost features required should be determined on completion of the nocturnal survey. However, it is likely that at least one replacement bat roost feature would be recommended to compensate for the loss of the potential bat roost features identified. The replacement bat roost features could comprise an

integrated bat box, or gap provided behind fascias and barge boards allowing bats access to the wall top.

Roofing Membranes

- 6.2.3 Many breathable roofing and cladding membranes are not safe for bats if they come into contact with them. If bats are recorded in the area around the building during the nocturnal survey, it is recommended that any roofing membrane used is one of the products identified as safer for use in areas with roosting bats. Further information on the issue of bats and roofing membranes is included in Appendix 2.

Nesting Birds

- 6.2.4 The presence of nesting birds within the building is feasible and it should be noted that active nests are legally protected (Appendix 1). If an active birds' nest is present during the work, it must be retained and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted to advise on a suitable stand-off buffer for the various works proposed.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1.1 The building was considered to have low suitability to support roosting bats.
- 7.1.2 It is recommended that a nocturnal survey is undertaken to identify whether bats are present or likely absent and to further inform mitigation and licensing requirements.
- 7.1.3 Irrespective of the results of the nocturnal surveys, mitigation and enhancement measures are recommended.
- 7.1.4 The recommendations included in this report are considered valid until the nocturnal survey is complete.

8. References

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines. The Bat Conservation Trust.

Appendix 1. Legislation and Policy Guidance

Bats

Bats receive protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

It is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture (or take), injure or kill a bat.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats whilst they are occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection or obstruct access to any such place.
- Damage or destroy the breeding or resting place (roost) of a bat.
- Possess a bat (live or dead), or any part of a bat.
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.
- Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats (dead or alive), or parts of bats.

The Convention on Biological Diversity, signed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, requires member states to develop national strategies and to undertake a range of actions aimed at maintaining or restoring biodiversity. The UK Biodiversity Strategy was produced in response to the Convention.

In England & Wales, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, 2006 imposes a duty on all public bodies, including local authorities and statutory bodies, in exercising their functions, “to have due regard, as far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”. It notes that “conserving biodiversity includes restoring or enhancing a population or habitat”. Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*, Bechstein’s bat *Myotis bechsteinii*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula* and soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* are included as priority species within Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. At a more local level there are Local Biodiversity Action Plans for smaller geographical areas which may cover a greater or lesser range of bat species.

Where it is proposed to carry out works which will have an adverse impact on roosting bats a European Protected Species (EPS) licence must first be obtained from Natural England. This requirement applies even if no bats are expected to be present when the work is carried out.

Birds

All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000), which makes it illegal (subject to exceptions) to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird.
- Take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or eggs of any wild bird.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework for England was revised in 2024. This document states that plans should ‘promote the conservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity’.

Appendix 2. Roofing and Cladding Membranes

Standard roof membranes can cause the death of significant numbers of bats. Traditional bitumen coated roofing felt is recommended where roosting bats are expected to be present.

The problem

Standard non-bitumen coated membranes (including almost all breathable membranes) used below roof slates and tiles present a significant problem for bats. Over time, strands are pulled away from the surface of these materials as bats crawl over them. These fuzzy strands are very strong and can tangle and trap bats, sometimes causing the death of bats over multiple years².

One example we have encountered comprised a pipistrelle roost which formed in a building extension constructed in 2009. Over the course of just 13 years the roofing felt degraded to the extent that it trapped and killed more than 10 bats. Fortunately, the problem in this roost was identified and remedial work was undertaken to replace the roofing membrane in 2022.

Plate A2.1. Four dead pipistrelles tangled in breathable roofing membrane



Although a new roof might be considered to lack potential bat access points, that is often not the case. Roofs covered with stone slates almost always have gaps large enough to be accessed by bats, this is often also the case where imitation stone slates are used. On older buildings the uneven roof timbers and/or building design also often results in gaps on wall tops and between slates. Even on new builds it is often possible for bats to access potential roosts via features such as dry verge capping. Some bats can access a space no wider than a biro pen, therefore it is not surprising that they can find their way into most buildings.

Safe roofing membranes (and membranes behind cladding)

From a bat perspective, the best membrane option for areas where roosts are expected comprises traditional hessian-backed Type 1F bituminous felt. This product has been widely and safely used as a secondary weather barrier since approximately the 1950s/1960s. Wooden sarking has also been used for many decades and if appropriately treated, is safe for

² Wearing S. Essah E., Gunnell K. & Bonser R. (2013) Double jeopardy: the potential for problems when bats interact with breathable roofing membranes in the United Kingdom. Architecture and Environment

use in bat roosts. Wooden sarking also has the benefit of providing additional insulation and is usually breathable.

At the time of writing (and to our knowledge) three products have passed the 'snagging propensity' test; and are approved by Natural England for use in bat roosts. This test attempts to replicate the wear and tear which results from bats crawling over the membrane. The approved products are: TLX BatSafe^{3,4}, SIGA Majcoat 350, and Partel Exoperm Duro 300 Fuse. Although they have passed this test, it is unclear how these membranes will degrade in the medium and long term, particularly in larger bat roosts. Therefore we do not recommend that they are used for roosts with multiple bats, and particularly for large (maternity roosts). An additional product, SIGA Majcoat 200 SOB Diffusion, passed the test for its upper surface only. This product should not be used in known bat roosts or locations where bat mitigation is to be installed. Although none of these products are considered to be as safe as traditional Type 1F bituminous felt, they may provide an option for roofs where future bat use cannot be ruled out, and a breathable solution is required.

Additional considerations

In recent years a fairly substantial proportion of the lofts we have surveyed which had existing breathable felt, were found to have been damaged by wasps (Plate A2.2). The wasps appear to have chewed holes in the felt and formed nests. This doesn't appear to be a problem associated with traditional bitumen coated roofing felt. Any holes within roofing felt are likely to significantly reduce its functionality as a secondary weather barrier. Where bats or birds come into contact with breathable roofing membranes, they can also damage it causing it to leak, they can also significantly reduce the breathability of the felt in that location.

Plate A2.2. Damage to a breathable roofing membrane adjacent to a wasp nest



Traditional bituminous Type 1F roofing felt is a non-breathable product and therefore ventilation is required. Sufficient ventilation can usually be achieved, even in buildings with vaulted ceilings, however, some consideration during the design stage is required. Products to increase the ventilation within roofs where bituminous Type 1F felt has already been installed are also available.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bats-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence#full-publication-update-history:~:text=Use%20of%20safe%20roofing%20membranes>

⁴ TLX BatSafe requires all joints and cut edges to be taped in order to prevent the fraying of bare edges.