

Great Houghton Village Hall, Rotherham Road



Bat Roost Suitability Assessment

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

13/11/2023

ER-7154-01



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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

Great Houghton Village Hall has been assessed as providing features with moderate bat roost suitability.

In line with guidance, two nocturnal surveys are recommended to ascertain the status of roosting. These should be carried out during the active bat survey season (May-August, with September providing suboptimal conditions).

Several bird nests were noted within exposed soffits. Standard precautions in relation to nesting birds applies.

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological was commissioned by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council to carry out a bat roost suitability assessment at Great Houghton Village Hall, Rotherham Road, Barnsley (grid reference SE43360635).
2. The application site, 'the Site', comprises the entirety of the Village Hall building.
3. Proposals are for re-roofing works across the property, the building of a single storey extension and internal refurbishment works.

Figure 1 The Site boundary (red line).



Method

4. A thorough daytime inspection of the site was made in October 2023 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
<i>None</i>	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).
<i>Negligible</i>	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.
<i>Low</i>	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).
<i>Moderate</i>	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).
<i>High</i>	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. Seven records have been returned for the search area, including one detailing a pipistrelle species roost of 50-100 bats, recorded along Crabtree Drive c.950m northwest of the Site in 2005.

National, regional, and local Status

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

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 <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Common and increasing	Yes	Possibly
Soprano pipistrelle <i>P. pygmaeus</i>	Common and stable	Possibly	Possibly
Daubenton's bat <i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	Common and increasing	-	-
Brown long-eared bat <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Common and stable	-	-
Natterer's bat <i>M. nattereri</i>	Common and increasing	-	-
Whiskered bat <i>M. mystacinus</i>	Uncommon but stable	-	-
Noctule <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	Uncommon but stable	-	-
Brandt's bat <i>M. brandtii</i>	Uncommon but stable	-	-
Leisler's bat <i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	Uncommon and trend unknown	-	-
Nathusius' pipistrelle <i>P. nathusii</i>	Uncommon but stable	Possibly	Possibly
Serotine <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	Uncommon but stable	-	-

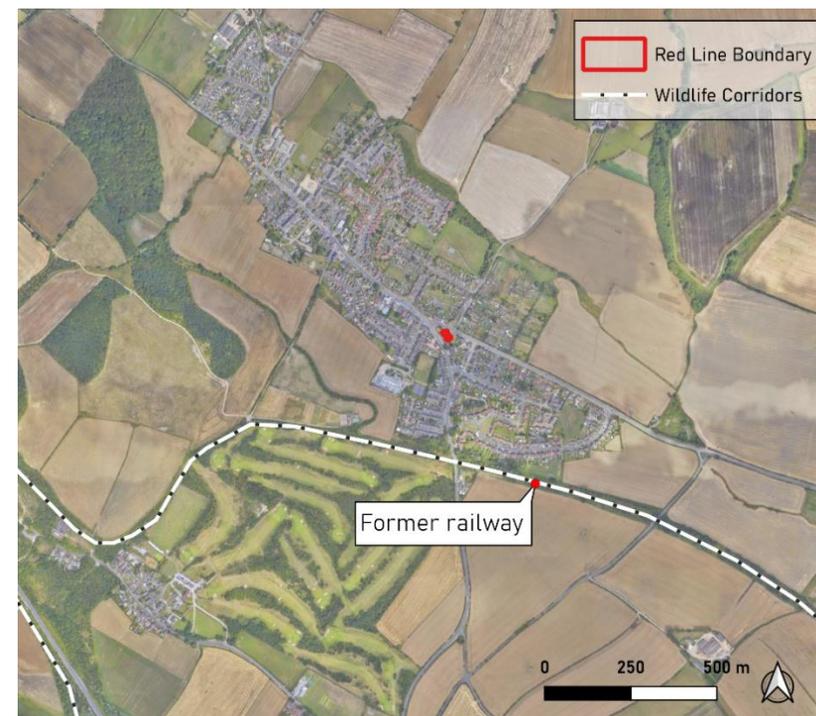
EPSM Licences

9. A search was made for granted EPSM (European Protected Species Mitigation) licences within 1km of the Site. None were found.

Site Context

10. The Site is located at the centre of Great Houghton, a village c.8km east of Barnsley.
11. It is bound by residential development and busy roads. Beyond the village limits, development gives way to arable land, punctuated by woodland pockets and Sandhill Golf Course c.360m to the south.
12. A former railway line, now footpath, runs along the golf courses northern boundary and constitutes the most notable linear feature within the local landscape, separated from the Site by the aforementioned development.

Figure 2 Wildlife corridors in relation to Site.



Survey Results

13. The Site consists of the single storey Village Hall building with a series of pitched roofs. The property is split into two distinct interconnected wings of similar design, with a flat-roofed extension to the east.

Figure 3 View of the southeast (left) and northwest elevations (right).



14. A number of slipped and damaged clay tiles are noted across the steeply pitched roofs, presenting gaps suitable for roosting by small numbers of crevice dwelling species, such as pipistrelle. Angular ridge tiles are set in place with mortar, which appears weathered and damaged in several locations, with subsequent gaps potentially allowing bats ingress to any voids present along the ridgeline.

Figure 4 Showing typical view of pitched roof lifted/damaged roof and ridge tiles.



15. Verges are a mix of sealed and exposed, with mortar along sealed verges damaged in multiple locations. Resultant gaps are numerous, and present potential roost features (PRFs) for crevice dwellers.
16. Directly beneath the verge, a wooden fascia rests atop a wooden soffit. Soffits appear well-sealed across the gables, with a small section of lifted fascia noted to the southwest.

Figure 5 Showing gaps along exposed verge (left) and lifted wooden fascia (right).



17. Multiple gaps to the wooden soffit are evident beneath the eaves of the property. Subsequent PRFs could allow access to the wall tops and any cavities beyond, being able to support larger roosts.
18. The roofs of the two wings are linked by a short section of lead flashing. This is partly lifted and presents a PRF suitable for individual/small numbers of bats.

Figure 6 Showing gap to soffit (left) and lifted flashing (right).



- 19. Access to the base of the flat-roofed extension was limited by palisade fencing. Soffits here appear largely rotten, though no gaps suitable for roosting were noted from vantage points.
- 20. Roofing felt is well-sealed throughout by metal capping, with no points of ingress noted.



Figure 7 Typical view of flat-roofed extension.

- 23. Several bird nests were noted within areas of exposed soffit. These appeared inactive at the time of survey. Active birds nests are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).



Figure 9 Showing birds nest within rotted soffit.

- 21. Walls are of redbrick construction with a pebble dashed upper half and faux Tudor timber detailing across west facing gables. All appear to be in fine condition with no associated PRFs.
- 22. Wooden doors and uPVC windows sit flush within their fixtures, also exhibiting no roosting features.

Figure 8 Showing typical condition of walls, windows and doorways.



Conclusions & Recommendations

24. Based on the following features, Great Houghton Village Hall has been assessed as providing moderate bat roost suitability:
- Lifted/damaged roof and ridge tiles
 - Gaps along exposed verge
 - Lifted fascia
 - Gaps to soffit
 - Lifted lead flashing
25. In line with best practice guidelines (Bat Conservation Trust, 2023), further survey should be carried out to establish if potential roost features are being used by bats. This should take the form of two nocturnal surveys (dusk emergence or dawn re-entry).
26. Surveys should be undertaken during the active bat survey season, which runs from May to August inclusive, with September providing sub-optimal conditions.

Standard precaution

27. 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.
28. 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.

Nesting Birds

29. Several likely inactive bird nests were noted across the property. As such, standard precaution in relation to nesting birds would apply.
30. To prevent the proposed works impacting on nesting birds, any re-roofing works should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March-August inclusive).
31. Works required during the breeding bird season should be preceded by a nesting bird check by a suitably experienced Ecologist, to ensure the law is not contravened through the destruction of active nests.
32. Through thoughtful design, nesting boxes could be incorporated into the refurbished property.

References

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