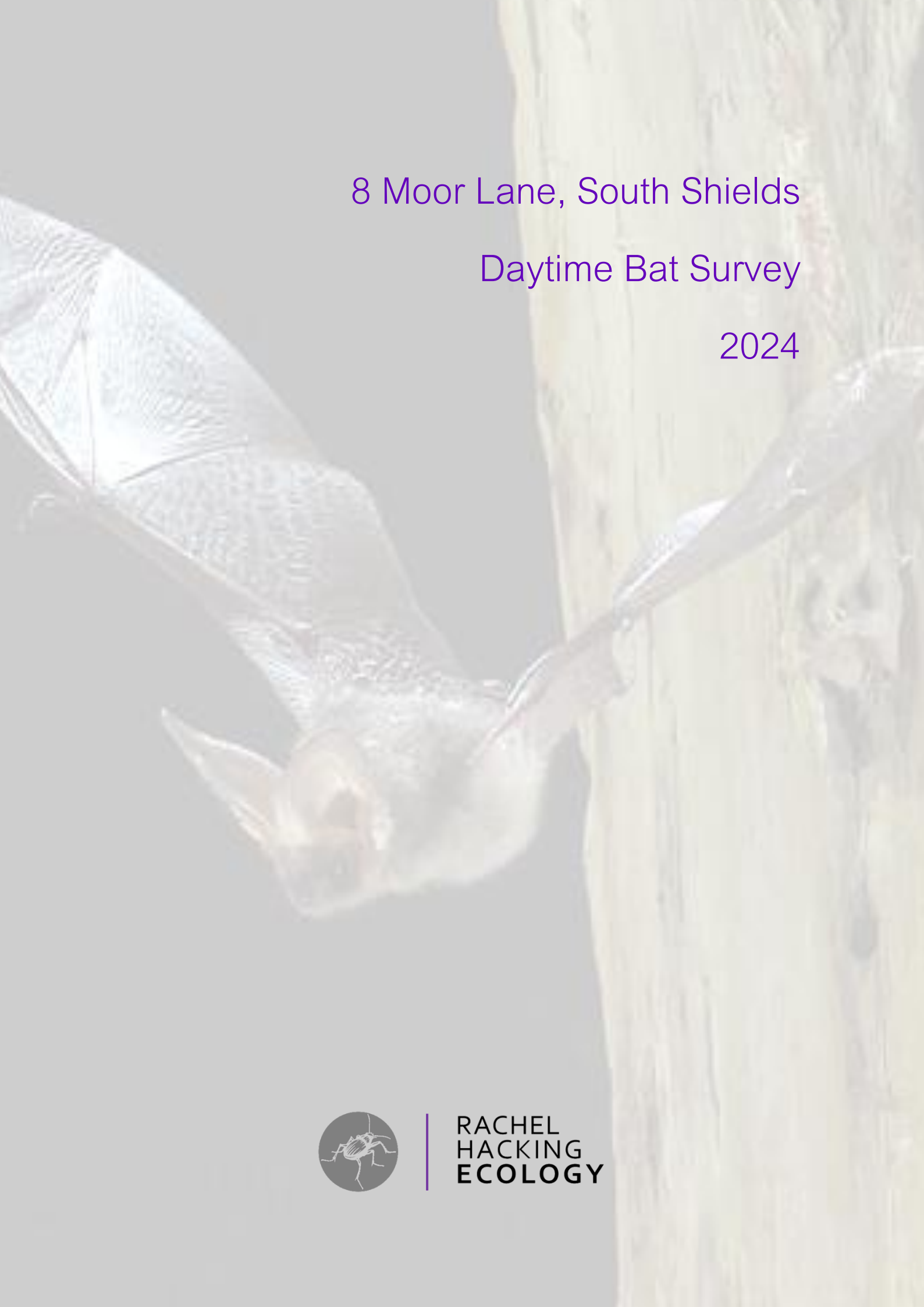


8 Moor Lane, South Shields

Daytime Bat Survey

2024

RACHEL
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ECOLOGY

Client	SRJ Energy Limited
Project Title	8 Moor Lane, South Shields
Project Reference	RHE.4236.01
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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing commercial development at 8 Moor Lane, South Shields, hereafter referred to as the 'site'.

This report describes the potential for roosting bats at the site and assesses the potential impacts of the development on them. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Ecological Interest

Section1 (the shop) has low potential to support roosting bats. Section 3 (the flat) has moderate potential to support roosting bats. Other sections have negligible potential to support roosting bats. Evidence of previous use by nesting birds was recorded and birds are likely to nest on site again.

Outcomes

The proposed development could result in impacts to bats and their roosts, should these be present. Further surveys are required to establish the status of roosting bats and inform mitigation requirements. Should demolition of section 2 or 3 occur during nesting bird season, a nesting bird check should be undertaken.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2024 by SRJ Energy Limited to carry out a Daytime Bat Survey at 8 Moor Lane, South Shields, hereafter referred to as the 'site'. The site currently comprises a commercial premises, a storeroom and an attached flat. The site is located at O.S. grid reference: NZ 37589 64918 (see Figure 1).

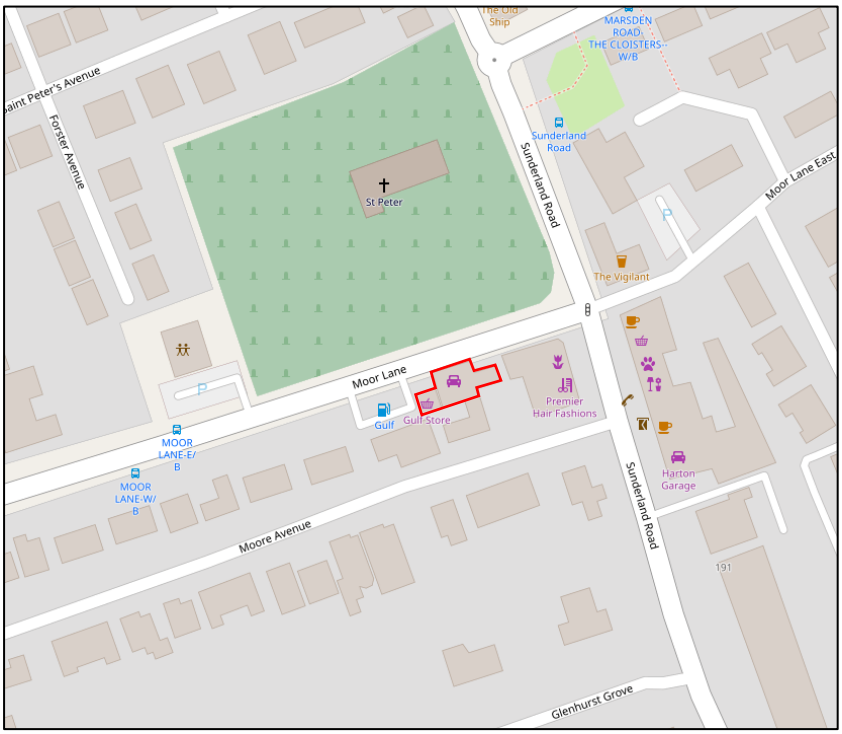


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site courtesy of ©OpenStreetMap Contributors

Description of Development

1.1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the levelling of the site and the construction of a new commercial premises.

Relevant Planning History

1.1.3 No previous surveys have been undertaken at the site.

1.2 Scope of Work

1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to undertake an external and internal assessment of any buildings on the site affected by the development proposals

1.3 Aims of the Survey

1.3.1 The aims of the survey were to:

- Assess the potential of the site to support roosting bats;
- Identify the requirement for any further detailed surveys.

2. Methods

2.1 Daytime Bat Survey

2.1.1 The exterior of the buildings was surveyed from the ground using binoculars, a high-powered torch, a drone and an endoscope. Features offering potential access to roosting bats were recorded. Such features may include suitable gaps in roof coverings, gaps behind external cladding/facia and gaps in masonry.

2.1.2 Evidence indicating the presence of roosting bats was also searched for. This may include bat droppings on walls, windows or on the ground below roost entrances or staining from fur oil around roost entry points.

2.1.3 The interior of the buildings was surveyed to identify any evidence indicating use by roosting bats. Such evidence may include bat droppings, feeding remains, urine splashes, live or dead bats and staining from fur oil on timbers.

2.2 Assessment Criteria

2.2.1 Interpretation of survey findings and assessment of roosting potential was undertaken using professional judgement and criteria described in published guidance[1,2].

2.3 Site Visit Information

Survey Details

2.3.1 The survey was undertaken by Matthew Bottomley (Ecologist) and Austin Rigby (Junior Ecologist) on 5th June 2024. Matthew has one years' professional experience of undertaking similar surveys and is accredited under the level 2 class survey licence of Simon Holden (Reference 2019-42937-CLS-CLS).

Site Conditions

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

[1] Collins, J. (Ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists-good practice guidelines. 4th edn.* The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

[2] Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.

3. Results

3.1 Survey Constraints

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

3.1.2 Loft voids were not accessible in two sections of the building at the time of survey. This was taken into account during the interpretation of results.

3.2 Habitat Appraisal

3.2.1 The site is in a suburban residential area of South Shields, with housing present on all sides of the property except to the north, where a churchyard is adjacent across Moor Lane. Rough grassland and mature trees and treelines are present, offering suitable bat foraging and commuting habitat.

3.3 External Survey

Building Layout

3.3.1 The site is divided into four distinct sections, as shown below in Figure 2.

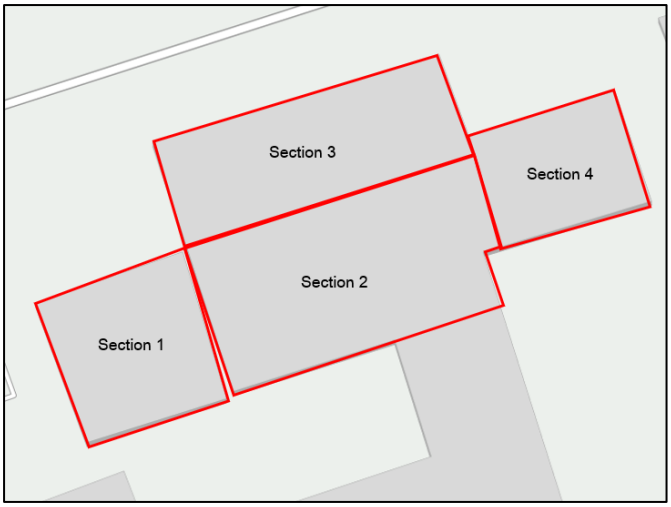


Figure 2 showing building sections

Section 1

3.3.2 This section of the building is brick-built, with a hipped roof covered with concrete tiles, and is currently in use as a commercial premises (see Photograph 1).



Photograph 1 showing exterior of section 1 from western elevation

3.3.3 The front of the shop is clad with plastic signage, which covers any brickwork (see Photograph 2). On other elevations of the section, masonry is in good condition, with no gaps or cracks present. The windows and doorways are glass, and well-sealed to the surrounding brickwork.



Photograph 2 showing the roof of section 1

3.3.4 The roof is largely well-sealed, with roof edges well mortared and ridge tiles well sealed to the surrounding tiles. Two slipped tiles were observed from above, as identified in Photograph 2.

Section 2

3.3.5 This portion of the building is only partially visible from outside the property (see Photograph 3). The section is brick-built, with a corrugated sheet roof. Some small gaps are present at the base of the shutters no PRFs were recorded.



Photograph 3 showing portion of section 2

3.3.6 The roof appears to be largely well-sealed, with just a small gap present between separate pieces of corrugated sheeting (see Photograph 4). The brickwork at the gable ends of the section is in good condition, with no gaps or cracks present.



Photograph 4 showing the roof of section 2

Section 3

3.3.7 This section of the building is a two-storey derelict flat, is adjacent to the roadside and is considerably older than the rest of the sections (see Photograph 5). The section is brick built and has been rendered at the ground floor level. Two of the windows are broken, one of which has been covered with netting, preventing access. The other window allows access to the first floor of the flat.



Photograph 5 showing section 3 from the northern elevation

3.3.8 A single storey porch exists on the western elevation of the building, with the roof consisting of both slate tiles and roofing felt. Slipped tiles, and gaps beneath the felting are present (see Photograph 6). Two doors exist on this elevation, which are well-sealed to the surrounding brickwork. The masonry is damaged in places along this elevation, with gaps and cracks present. The extent of these gaps is unclear, with a potential cavity present behind the wall.



Photograph 6 showing single storey porch

3.3.9 The roof of the main building is in poor condition; the tiles are slipped in places, and several tiles are missing, offering potential opportunities for use by roosting bats (see Figure 3).



Figure 3 showing whole roof (panel 1), missing tiles (panel 2), gaps beneath flashing (panel 3), missing ridge tiles (panel 4) and missing roof tiles (panel 4).

3.3.10 Missing ridge tiles are also present along the length of the roof. Gaps are present beneath some of the flashing connecting the chimneys to the surrounding tiles (see Figure 3).

Section 4

3.3.11 The final section of the building is a single storey, flat roof section to the rear of the building. The section is directly adjacent to section 2 and 3 and is also brick-built (see Photograph 7). The masonry is in good condition, free from gaps and cracks. The front of the building is covered by roller shutters, which are well sealed to the surrounding brickwork.



Photograph 7 showing section 4 of the building from the northern elevation

3.3.12 The roof of the building is flat, and well-sealed and provides no opportunities for roosting bats (see Photograph 8).



Photograph 8 showing flat roof of section 4

Other Buildings

3.3.13 The petrol station canopy to the west of the buildings will also be removed as part of proposals. A small, pitched roof exists above the canopy, all of which is well sealed, providing no opportunities for roosting bats.



Photograph 9 showing petrol station canopy

3.4 Internal Survey

Section 1

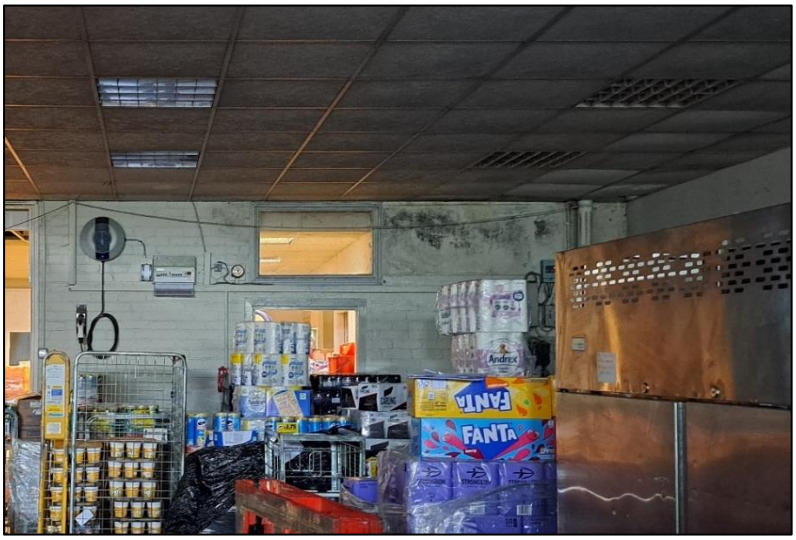
3.4.1 The internal space of this section is in use as a petrol station shop. The ground floor space is well-sealed and well finished, with no evidence of roosting bats present. A false ceiling is present within the shop, above which an enclosed space is present. The space cannot be accessed.



Photograph 10 showing space above section 1

Section 2

3.4.2 This section of the building is in use as a storage space for the shop, and is well used and well lit. The walls are largely free from gaps and cracks.



Photograph 12 showing the store room

3.4.3 Gaps do exist around the doorway of the storeroom, leading to the shop. The gaps allow access to a wall cavity (see Photograph 13). The area is in regular use, and is very well lit by external lighting, and is unlikely to be utilised by roosting bats. No evidence of roosting bats was found in and around the gaps or cavity.



Photograph 13 showing gaps around doorway

3.4.4 The space also has a false ceiling, above which can be accessed to reveal a void below the corrugated roof (see Photograph 14). No internal lining is present, and the beams consist of metal, and are free from gaps and cracks. The space is well lit from gaps identified along the length of the eaves, as well as windows and lighting from below.



Photograph 14 showing space below roof in section 2

3.4.5 The gaps could potentially provide access for bats, but no potential roosting features are present. The space is unlikely to be a desirable location for bats to roost or forage. There is some evidence nesting birds have used the space.

Section 3

The ground floor of the flat has been incorporated into section 2 due to access and is well sealed and full of shop stock. It is unlikely to be utilised by roosting bats. The second floor of the flat has been regularly used by nesting Feral Pigeon, with thick guano present on the floor of every room. An open window on the northern elevation has previously allowed access (see Photograph 15). The window has now been netted, preventing any access to the space. A Pigeon was observed roosting on the exterior.



Photograph 15 showing window and roosting Pigeon

3.4.6 No other potential access points are present at this elevation. No potential roosting features for bats exist within the space.

3.4.7 The roof void could not be accessed, as no hatch was present.

Section 4

3.4.8 This section of the building is an extension of the storeroom to the rear of the building. A former office, bathroom and meeting room are in use as further storage space for the shop. The same access points from section 2 would allow access to this space. No additional access points are present on this section, and the internal space is well-sealed, well-lit and in good condition.



Photograph 16 showing internal space of section 4.

3.4.9 No potential roosting features, or evidence of roosting bats were present. No roof void is present.

4. Assessment

4.1 Interpretation of Results

4.1.1 Sections 2 and 4 (the storerooms) do have potential access points, but are unlikely to be utilised by roosting bats, due to the heavy use of the space, external lighting and lack of suitable roosting features. No evidence of roosting bats was found within either section. Section 2 and 4 are assessed as having negligible roosting potential for bats.

4.1.2 Section 1 (the shop) has a small quantity of potential roosting features, and a lack of access into the internal roof space. The characteristics of the building suggest it is more likely to be utilised by small numbers of roosting bats, if at all, and as such is assessed as having low roosting potential for bats.

4.1.3 Section 3 (the flat) has numerous potential roosting features and a lack of access to the roof void. Whilst no direct evidence of roosting bats was found, the internal space could not be fully assessed, and it is possible that the building could potentially be utilised by a number of roosting bats. Section 3 is assessed as offering moderate roosting potential.

4.1.4 The petrol station canopy is well-sealed, and given the nature of the building offers negligible potential to be utilised by roosting bats.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

5.1.1 Demolition of Section 1 and 3 could result in impacts to bats and their roosts, should these be present at the time of works.

5.1.2 Two dusk emergence surveys should be undertaken on Section 3 (flat) in accordance with current guidelines to establish the status of roosting bats and inform mitigation requirements. This will require three surveyors and IR/thermal cameras to provide visual coverage of the building.

5.1.3 A single dusk emergence survey should be undertaken on Section 1 (shop) in accordance with current guidelines to establish the status of roosting bats and inform mitigation requirements. This will require one surveyor and IR/thermal cameras to provide visual coverage of the whole building. The survey should be undertaken between May and August.

5.2 Mitigation Measures

5.2.1 As birds could potentially nest in Section 2 and 3 of the buildings, any demolition work of these sections should be timed to avoid the nesting season (March to August). If this is not possible, a check for active nests should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 48 hours prior to works. Should any active nests be identified, these must be protected by a suitable buffer until nesting has finished.

Potential Enhancements

5.2.2 In accordance with NPPF (2023) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), development should seek to include measures to benefit wildlife. Bat boxes could be installed in the fabric of the new building to provide roosting opportunities. Details of the types of boxes and their locations should be confirmed by a suitably qualified ecologist in accordance with the results from the dusk emergence surveys.

General Precautions

5.2.3 This report is considered to be valid for two years. After this, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted to assess its validity. An assessment update may be required.

Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023) describes the Government's planning policy for England and how it should be applied. Within this framework, the requirements in relation to biodiversity are included within several policies. The two most relevant to individual planning decisions are Paragraphs 180 and 180, shown below:

- 180. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
    a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
    b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
    c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
    d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
    e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
    f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 186. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
    a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
    b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments),

should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Legislation

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix 2: Proposal Plans

