



**Site Inspection (Bats) - Former Magistrates Court/Doctors Surgery, Catherine Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 7QT**

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This report outlines the findings of a site inspection for bats at the Former Magistrates Court/Doctors Surgery, Catherine Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 7QT (Nat Grid Ref. NX 97581 18030). No plans - 'as existing' nor 'as proposed' - have been provided. It is understood that the building has recently been purchased and that this survey and report will be used to inform proposals for the site and may in turn accompany a planning application for proposed works.

Works to built structures generally presents a risk that bats could be harmed and bat roosts destroyed. Bats / bat roosts are legally protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

The Copeland Borough Council planning application search facility (<https://www.copeland.gov.uk/planning/application-search>) does not allow planning applications to be searched using 'location', 'site name' nor 'post-code' and is therefore unfit for the purpose of verifying the planning history of the site, and any previous bat surveys of the site or adjacent properties could not be identified nor obtained.

Hesketh Ecology was commissioned in August 2021 to complete a bat survey designed to identify any potential for (or evidence of) bats and to advise as to any requirement for further survey effort.



**Figure 1:** Showing the front (south eastern elevation) of the Former Courts.

### ***Survey and Assessment***

A site inspection was conducted on 3rd September 2021. The weather at the time of the survey was mild and dry with the preceding weather also having been mild and dry for an extended period.

The Former Magistrates Court/Doctors Surgery is located on Catherine Street, in Whitehaven town centre. The site is therefore surrounded by urban development and streets which are illuminated at night. Catherine Street lies c.0.45km south east of the harbour and on the western edge of Castle Park / Crow Park. Castle Park lies to the south east of Catherine Street and contains a number of large mature trees and mown amenity grassland. Crow Park adjoins Castle Park and was planted in the 1930s on the steep slope between the town centre and Loop Road and today consists of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland which is managed by the Woodland Trust. Woodland and woodland edge habitat therefore lie to the south east of Catherine Street, but the court building itself - located on the northern side of Catherine Street - is remote from these habitat features and isolated by high powered street / security lighting at night.

The Former Courts building appears to have been erected in 1987 and is constructed of block, with a dressed sandstone facade on the ground floor frontage and rendered above. The building is primarily 'flat' roofed, but with pitched slate clad sections in the centre and at the extreme north eastern end. Gable wall tops are capped with coping stones and no exposed verges exist anywhere on the building. The external walls are in a good state of repair and do not offer any gaps or crevices which could be used by bats. All door and window openings are secure and no internal access for bats or birds is available. Internally some 'stripping out' has occurred. Ceilings throughout have been removed to expose the hot-roof decking above. The hot-roof has been installed with foil coated rigid insulation boards which are very tightly fitted. The pitched roof sections contain vaulted ceilings with no internal roof void above.

No evidence of bats was discovered anywhere within or around the building.

Gull droppings were found to be abundant across the site; the pitched roofs are heavily streaked with droppings and the carpark area to the rear of the building (including the interior of an open storage shed) are heavily soiled. The amount for droppings, along with the pattern of deposition, suggest that gulls have nested either on the building or on adjacent buildings. The presence of droppings within the open storage shed to the rear of the building strongly suggests the presence of pre-fledging juveniles in the rear yard.

The Former Magistrates Court/Doctors Surgery is considered to offer 'negligible' potential for roosting bats, but offers 'high' potential for use by breeding gulls (Larus sp.).



**Figure 2:** *Showing example of the rigid panel insulation.*

### ***Personnel***

The survey and assessment were undertaken by Sam Griffin BSc ACIEEM NE Bat Licence CL 18 Survey Level 2 (2021-52329-CLS-CLS). Sam is an experienced and competent ecologist, with 20 years experience of study, training & work in the field of wildlife conservation and ecology, working with protected and native species.



**Figure 3:** *Showing example of the vaulted ceilings.*



**Figure 4:** Showing example of gull droppings in rear yard.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **Bats**

There is considered to be 'negligible' potential for roosting bats to utilise the building and no further surveys are required.

*"If no suitable habitat for bats is found then further surveys are not likely to be necessary.....including evidence that an adequate assessment has been made by a suitably qualified ecologist and the conclusion is reasonable". (See Pg. 36 of Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London. ISBN - 13 978-1-872745-96-1).*

#### **Birds**

There is considered to be 'high' potential for *Larus* species gulls to nest on the roof of the building. No further surveys are required, but appropriate mitigation measures should be adopted to avoid harm to breeding birds contrary to The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

The following measures should be observed to minimise the risk of breeding birds being affected by any proposed works on site;

- No complete nor partial demolition of the building should commence during the bird breeding season (March - August inclusive).
- The building should be maintained in a secure state between the present time and any works commencing. Should any access for birds be created, there would be a high risk of pigeons occupying the internal areas.

Sam Griffin ACIEEM

