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## Preliminary Building Assessment – Bats



# West Cumberland Infirmary Buildings 3, 4 & 5

Prepared for North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust

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## **Quality Assurance**

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S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd will submit any records of protected species to the appropriate biological records centre on an annual basis.



## Contents

1.	E	Executive Summary	4
	1.1	Survey summary	4
	1.2	Recommendations	4
2.	h	ntroduction	5
	2.1	Project background	5
	2.2	Project brief	5
3.	Ν	Methodology	6
	3.1	Desk Study	6
	3.2	Preliminary Building Assessment	6
	3.3	Surveyors	6
	3.4	Limitations	6
4.	R	Results	7
	4.1	Desk Study	7
	4.2	Preliminary Building Assessment	7
	В	Building 3	7
	В	Building 4	8
	В	Building 5	9
5.	D	Discussion & relevant legislation	10
	5.1	Preliminary Building Assessment Summary	10
	5.2	Appropriate legislation	10
6.	Ρ	Potential Ecological Issues, Impact Assessment & Recommendations	11
	6.1	Bats	11
	6.2	Birds	11
	6.3	Impact Assessment & Recommendations	11
7.	C	Conclusion	12
8.	R	References	13



## 1. Executive Summary

#### 1.1 Survey summary

S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd were contacted by CCL Solutions on behalf of North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust. The Trust are in the process of restructuring West Cumberland Hospital, current plans include the demolitions of three buildings (buildings 3, 4 and 5) and the construction of a new waste compound.

S.A.P. Ecology and Environmental Ltd were commissioned to undertake a preliminary building assessment of buildings 3, 4 and 5, to assess their suitability to support roosting bats.

A desk study was carried out which did not highlight any records of bats within 1km of buildings 3, 4 and 5.

The preliminary building assessment of buildings 3, 4 and 5 was carried out on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019. Buildings 3 and 5 recorded a number of potential access/egress features including gaps in roof boarding, gaps in soffit boxes and gaps at wallheads. Building 4 recorded one feature, which was inspected, and no evidence of roosting bats was found.

Prior to any works being carried out, a presence/likely absence survey for bats should be undertaken on buildings 3 and 5 to determine if bats are currently using any of the features to roost. These surveys should be carried out during the bat activity season, May – September, inclusive and take the form of either a dusk emergence, or dawn return to roost survey.

If bats are confirmed to be using buildings 3 or 5, the information gathered will be used to produce a species protection plan and to design appropriate mitigation and compensation measures. A European Protected Species Licence will then need to be attained from Natural England.

The recommended further survey on buildings 3 and 5 should ensure that the development is compliant with legislation and planning policy relating to bats.

#### 1.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are in line with good practice guidelines:

- Building 3: Low level of suitability to support roosting bats. One presence/likely absence survey should be carried out to confirm if any of the features highlighted during the preliminary inspection are being used by bats. This survey should take the form of one dusk emergence or one dawn return to roost survey and be undertaken during the months of May September, inclusive;
- Building 4: Negligible level of suitability to support roosting bats. No further survey is required.
- Building 5: Low level of suitability to support roosting bats. One presence/likely absence survey should be carried out to confirm if any of the features highlighted during the preliminary inspection are being used by bats. This survey should take the form of one dusk emergence or one dawn return to roost survey and be undertaken during the months of May September, inclusive;
- If works are to be carried out during the breeding bird season, a breeding bird check should be undertaken on the external of the buildings (no more than two days prior to works).



## 2. Introduction

#### 2.1 Project background

S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd were contacted by CCL Solutions, on behalf of North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust (hereafter referred to as 'the Trust'). The Trust propose to carry out a number of phased building demolitions at the West Cumberland Infirmary in Whitehaven. S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd were commissioned to undertake bat preliminary building assessments on seven buildings located at West Cumberland infirmary, to assess their suitability to support roosting bats. This report relates to three of the buildings, buildings 3, 4 and 5.

As part of the future development, buildings 3, 4 and 5 will be demolished, and a new waste compound will be constructed in its place. Demolition of these buildings is planned for September/October 2019. As the proposed waste compound will result in a change in the landscape an ecological assessment was also commissioned (SAP report ref: CCL102/001/001).

The West Cumberland Infirmary is located in Hensingham, Whitehaven, directly off Homewood Road. Building 3 is located at gird reference NX 98854 15866, building 4 is located at grid reference NX 98827 15853 and building 5 is located at grid reference NX 98812 15887. The buildings are situated in an urban environment, with several residential properties in the immediate vicinity. The surrounding area is comprised of amenity grassland, with small areas of broadleaved woodlands. A tributary of the River Keekle is located 1.25km east of buildings 3, 4 and 5. The main River Keekle is located 1.75km east. Bellhouse Gill is located approximately 660 metres south. Four small ponds are located within 1.5km.

#### 2.2 Project brief

S.A.P Ecology & Environmental Ltd were commissioned in August 2019, to carry out a preliminary building assessment of buildings 3, 4 and 5 for bats. The brief was to:

- Conduct a preliminary building assessment of buildings 3, 4 and 5. The survey would include a thorough external, and where possible internal inspection of the buildings;
- To record all potential access and egress locations along with any evidence of roosting bats, or bats themselves;
- Assign each building an appropriate level of suitability to support roosting bats;
- Produce a detailed report of the preliminary building assessment of buildings 3, 4 and 5, outlining relevant methodologies, results and any legal and planning policy issues and our recommendations for how these may be overcome;
- ₩ The report is to be supported by appropriate digitised mapping.



## 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Desk Study

Biological records were purchased for all protected species and species of conservation concern within 1km of buildings 3, 4 and 5. In addition the NBN Atlas (2017) and the S.A.P Ecology protected species database were checked for known roosts. These were then compared with the Cumbria Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

#### 3.2 Preliminary Building Assessment

The Preliminary Building Assessment (PBA) was undertaken during daytime hours of Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019. The assessment comprised of an external building inspection of buildings 3, 4 and 5 to assess each buildings suitability to support roosting bats. The surveys were carried out with the aid of high-powered binoculars, a high-powered torch and an endoscope (Rigid CA100) to ensure that all accessible features could be adequately assessed.

All surveys were conducted in line with the BCT Good Practice Guidelines, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Collins, 2016).

#### External Inspection

A thorough external inspection was carried out on building 3, 4 and 5 to look for any signs of past or current use by roosting bats. As evidence of bats is not always easy to find on the external of a building, due to adverse and changing weather conditions, the inspection also recorded areas which may have the potential to support roosting bats. Specific attention was given to:

- Any gaps in brickwork and stonework and their internal structure;
- ✓ Windowsills and panes and the floor underneath;
- ✓ Walls and lifted paintwork;
- Gaps at the wallheads;
- Saps in soffit boxes;
- Saps under felt roof.

Any areas which offered bat roosting potential were recorded and mapped to ensure adequate coverage for any required activity surveys.

#### 3.3 Surveyors

The preliminary building assessment was undertaken on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019 by Stephen Parkin, NE bat licence number 2016-23679-CLS-CLS and Shannon Clifford, Assistant Ecologist.

#### 3.4 Limitations

The survey was undertaken at the correct time of year for this type of survey.

Access could not be gained into the internal of either buildings 3, 4 and 5, however this is not considered to be a significant limitation as none of the buildings contained an internal roof space.



### 4. Results

#### 4.1 Desk Study

The desk study highlighted no records of any UK bat species within 1km of buildings 3, 4 or 5. The surrounding habitat is suitable to support a number of UK bat species for both roosting and foraging purposes.

#### 4.2 Preliminary Building Assessment

#### Building 3

#### External

Building 3 is a two-storey building of brick and render construction, with soffit boxes and a flat felt roof. Several features that provide bat roosting opportunities were recorded. These comprised of gaps at the wallhead (plate 2), gaps in roof boarding (plate 3) and gaps in soffit boxes (plate 4).



Plate 1: Building 3.



Plate 3: Gap in roof boarding.



Plate 2: Gap at wallhead.



Plate 4: Gap in soffit box.

Building 3 has been assigned a low level of suitability to support roosting bats. Internal access could not be gained therefore only an external inspection was carried out.



## Building 4

#### External

Building 4 is a two-storey building of brick and render construction, with soffit boxes and a flat felt roof (plate 1). A single feature was recorded comprising a hole in a wooden ceiling which could offer a potential roosting opportunity for bats (plate 2). This feature was inspected at the time of survey and there was no evidence to suggest it is used by bats.



Plate 5: Building 4.



Plate 6: Gap in wooden ceiling

Building 4 has been assigned a negligible level of suitability to support roosting bats. Internal access could not be gained therefore only an external inspection was carried out.



#### Building 5 *External*

Building 5 is a two-storey building comprised of brick and render construction with soffit boxes and a flat felt roof (plates 3 & 4).

Several features that provide bat roosting opportunities were recorded. These comprised of gaps in soffit boxes and gaps at the wallhead (plates 5 & 6).



Plate 7: Building 5 (S. aspect).



Plate 8 Building 5 (E. aspect).



Plate 9: Gaps along wallhead.

One bird nest was recorded during the external inspection.



Plate 10: Gaps in soffit boxes.



## 5. Discussion & relevant legislation

#### 5.1 Preliminary Building Assessment Summary

The surrounding area is comprised of amenity grassland and small areas of broadleaved woodlands. A number of watercourses and waterbodies are located within 1.5km of the buildings. The presence of watercourses, woodlands and grassland in the surrounding area provides good roosting and foraging habitat for a number of UK bat species.

Building 3 recorded multiple features suitable for use by bats. However, it is not considered that these features could support a large roost or roost of specific conservation concern. When considered in conjunction with the surrounding environment, building 3 recorded a low level of suitability to support roosting bats.

Building 4 recorded a 'negligible' level of suitability to support roosting bats. Only one single potential roosting feature could be found on the building. As the feature could be fully inspected and no evidence was found of past or existing use by bats, it is deemed unlikely that a bat would use this area to roost. As a result, no further survey is required for building 4.

Building 5 recorded multiple gaps within the buildings structure, at a height and aspect that is favourable for bat use. The physical condition of these features, however, does not suggest that they could support a large roost or roost of specific conservation concern. When considered in conjunction with the surrounding environment, building 5 recorded a low level of suitability to support roosting bats.

#### 5.2 Appropriate legislation

#### Bats

All bat species in the UK are protected from killing, injury and roost disturbance by both national and international law, in the form of the Wildlife and Countryside act (1981) as amended. In England, bats are also protected under The Conservation (Natural Habitats &) (Amendment) Regulations 2007. The legislation that is in place makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Intentionally disturb a bat which will likely:
  - Impair its ability to survive, breed, reproduce or rear its young;
  - Impair its ability to hibernate or migrate, or;
  - o Affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat roost;
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost;
- Damage or destroy a resting place or breeding site;
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange any life or dead bat or part of.

Bats tend to re-use the same roosts year after year and therefore a roost is protected whether bats are present or not.

#### Birds

All birds, their nests and their eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Care should be taken that no harm comes to any nest, eggs or nesting birds.



## 6. Potential Ecological Issues, Impact Assessment & Recommendations

#### 6.1 Bats

Buildings 3 and 5 have been assigned a low level of suitability to support roosting bats.

#### 6.2 Birds

One bird nest was recorded on the external of building 5. Regardless of species, all birds, their nests and their eggs are protected from damage or destruction under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

#### 6.3 Impact Assessment & Recommendations

Considering the results of the preliminary building assessment, the proposed demolition of building 4 will not have a negative impact on bats due to the lack of suitable roosting features and therefore no further survey is required. However, the demolition of buildings 3 and 5 could have a negative impact on bats due to the features present.

Further survey is required to ascertain as to whether any of the features recorded are indeed being used by bats to roost. It is recommended that a minimum of one activity survey should be carried out, during the 2019 bat activity season (May - September inclusive), on buildings 3 and 5. Following this further survey, an accurate assessment can be made as to what the impact will be on roosting bats.

Depending upon the results of the further survey, a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) may need to be attained from Natural England for works to continue in a legal manner. The further survey will help to provide a full rounded assessment of buildings 3 and 5 and will support and inform a licence application and species protection plan, if necessary.

If demolition works are to be carried out during the breeding bird season, a breeding bird check should be undertaken on the external of all buildings. If breeding birds are found, works will need to be postponed until birds have fledged.

The proposed demolition and construction of the waste compound is not expected to have any impact on the surrounding environment and therefore it is not considered that these proposals will have any effect on commuting or foraging bats.



## 7. Conclusion

Building 4 has a negligible level of bat roosting suitability and therefore no further survey is required.

Recommendations have been made for a further bat survey of buildings 3 and 5, which will help to provide an accurate assessment of any potential impact. Subject to the recommendations for further survey being followed, and any post survey mitigation licence being attained (if required) the development should be compliant with relevant legislation and planning policy regarding bats in buildings 3 and 5.

If works are to be carried out during the breeding bird season, a breeding bird check should be undertaken on the external of the building before demolition is carried out.



#### 8. References

Collins, J (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004) Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004) Bat Workers Manual (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Joint Nature Conservancy Committee, Peterborough.

NBN Atlas Partnership. 2017. *NBN Atlas*. [ONLINE] Available at: <u>https://nbnatlas.org/</u> [Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> August 2019].

SAP Ecology & Environmental Ltd (2019). Bat roost database, SAP Ecology & Environmental Ltd, Eaglesfield.

SAP Ecology & Environmental Ltd (2019). *Ecological Assessment of the proposed Waste Compound, West Cumberland Infirmary.* 





7.5

0

7.5

15

22.5

30 m



Figure 2: External survey results

## Legend

- **Building 3** Roof edge ----- Roof overhang
  - **Building 4**
- Building 5
- Roof edge
- ----- Balcony

#### **Building 3 features**

- Gap at wallhead  $\bigstar$
- Gap in roof boarding Gap in soffit box  $\bigcirc$
- ${\color{black} \bigtriangleup}$

#### **Building 4 features**

Gap in wooden ceiling  $\diamond$ 

#### **Building 5 features**

- $\bigstar$ Gap at wallhead
- Gap in soffit box **▲** \*
- Birds nest
- Date: 24/09/2019

Scale: 1:290

Client: North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust

Site Grid Reference: NX 98837 15865

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