

Technical Note

Project: Land North of Moat Road, Headcorn

Planning Ref: 23/504471/OUT

Date: 7 August 2024

Bat Emergence Surveys: Building B4

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1.1 This Technical Note sets out the findings of bat emergence surveys of Building B4, undertaken in 2024 in respect of uncertainties regarding the implications of previous bat emergence surveys undertaken in August 2021.
- 1.1.2 Updated emergence surveys have been undertaken in May, June and July 2024. These surveys have followed current Bat Survey Guidelines (updated since the surveys undertaken in 2021).
- 1.1.3 The updated surveys have shown that, in accordance with the roost definitions in current bat survey guidance, the building does provide a bat roost in the form of a temporary feeding perch for small numbers of Pipistrelle bats. Bats were recorded temporarily perching on beams when flying or foraging within the structure.
- 1.1.4 According to the guidance, this type of bat roost is of *low conservation significance*. A development licence will not be required. Instead, it is recommended that demolition of the building is undertaken under the supervision of an ecologist who holds a Low Impact Class Licence for bats.
- 1.1.5 Mitigation and enhancement measures previously proposed in relation to bats will be provided with the completed development, delivering benefits for roosting and foraging bats alongside the proposals.

2 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Aspect Ecology is advising Catesby Strategic Land on ecological matters in respect of planning application reference: 23/504471/OUT, for an outline application (with all matters reserved except access) for the development of up to 120no. dwellings (Use Class C3) including demolition of existing buildings, means of access into the site from Moat Road (not internal roads), associated highway works, provision of public open space, emergency / pedestrian access to Millbank and associated infrastructure including surface water drainage (with related off site s278 highway works to Moat Road). A previous identical application 22/505616/OUT was made on the same site in 2022.
- 2.1.2 Bat survey work undertaken in 2021 concluded that it was likely that roosting bats were present in Building B4. This conclusion was based on information obtained from a single survey occasion. At that time, bats were observed flying within the main entrance to Building B4. It was possible that these bats may have been flying through the structure rather than roosting within the building, and hence a precautionary approach was taken, with the building being

assessed as likely to be at most a summer roost used by small numbers of Pipistrelle bats. It was concluded that Building B4 provides a summer day roost or feeding roost used by individual bats or low numbers of males and/or non-breeding females and was therefore categorised as being of *low conservation significance*.

- 2.1.3 This conclusion was questioned by the LPA, and because of this and the lapsed time since the time of this survey and the current outline application, updated bat emergence surveys of the building have been undertaken in 2024.

3 2024 Surveys

- 3.1.1 Prior to undertaking surveys, the interior of Building B4 was thoroughly examined for the presence of any evidence of roosting bats, or any features that might be used by roosting bats.
- 3.1.2 Building B4 is a timber framed construction with corrugated metal walls. It has a flat roof comprising a lattice of wooden beams with corrugated metal sheeting above. The building has two broad openings making up most of its west side. Internally the building comprises two connected halves. There is a single hole in the roof. Splits are present within the larger wooden beams and gaps between beams and there is some historic evidence of fire damage.
- 3.1.3 The most significant bat roosting features are splits within some of the larger wooden beams, and gaps between the beams. These were all thoroughly and closely examined. No evidence of historic bat roosting (e.g. bat droppings) was present.
- 3.1.4 In accordance with the current bat survey guidelines (updated since 2021), and based on the previous conclusion that the building was a bat roost, Building B4 was subjected to three dusk emergence surveys. These surveys set out to either confirm the building was a bat roost, and characterise it in accordance with the guidance, or determine that the building is not currently a bat roost.
- 3.1.5 Bat surveyors using Anabat Scout handheld detectors were deployed so as to be able to monitor all parts of the structure. Infrared cameras, assisted with infrared floodlights, were deployed so as to monitor all potential roost features within the building so as to identify any emerging bats.
- 3.1.6 All bat surveys were carried out during suitable weather conditions, as set out as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Conditions during bat emergence/re-entry surveys

| Date | Start & end times & time of sunset | Temperature (°C) | Rainfall | Wind (BF) | Cloud Cover (%) |
|--------------|---|------------------|--|-----------|-----------------|
| 20 May 2024 | Start time: 20:35 End time: 22:50 Sunset: 20:50 | 14 | None | 3 | 65% |
| 14 June 2024 | Start time: 20:59 End time: 22:44 Sunset: 21:14 | 12 | Light rain prior to survey start (ended 20:56) | 2/3 | 100% |
| 25 July 2024 | Start time: 20:41 End time: 22:56 Sunset: 20:56 | 19 | None | 2/3 | 95% |

BF0 = calm, BF12 = hurricane force

4 Survey Findings

4.1 Survey 1: 20 May 2024

- 4.1.1 No bats were recorded emerging from potential roost features.
- 4.1.2 Repeated feeding perch behaviour was recorded by Pipistrelle bats (possibly both Common and Soprano Pipistrelle). While no calls were recorded of these bats at the exact time of the noted incidences of feeding perch behaviour occurring, both species were recorded flying in and around the building, including behind the corrugated wall and the hole in the roof. IR camera footage shows bats occasionally perching momentarily on beams in the northern section of the building (shown within the yellow-circled area in Figure 1 below).



Figure 1 - Locations of bat perching behaviour

4.2 Survey 2: 14 June 2024

- 4.2.1 No bats were recorded emerging from potential roost features.
- 4.2.2 IR camera footage showed low numbers of Pipistrelle bats occasionally exploring or foraging around some of the beams within the southern section of the building (circled red in Figure 2 below). The particular species concerned were not able to be identified as no associated calls were recorded at those precise times, however it is most likely that these are both Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle as calls of both these species were recorded at times close to and around these observations.
- 4.2.3 Repeated feeding perch behaviour was again recorded in the northern section of the building by Pipistrelle bats (likely both Common and Soprano Pipistrelle).



Figure 2 - Beams around which bats were observed exploring/foraging

4.3 Survey 3: 25 July 2024

- 4.3.1 No bats were recorded emerging from potential roost features.
- 4.3.2 IR camera footage showed repeated foraging and circling within the building by Common Pipistrelle, with occasional foraging by *Myotis* species.
- 4.3.3 No perching behaviour was observed on this survey occasion.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1.1 Low numbers of Bats were shown by IR camera footage to fly and forage within the building. Pipistrelle bats were occasionally observed briefly perching on beams within the northern side of the structure when foraging within the building.
- 5.1.2 In accordance with the guidance, it is concluded that the building provides a bat roost in the form of a temporary feeding perch used by Pipistrelle bats (likely Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle) when they are foraging within the structure. Because of this, according to the guidance the roost is assessed as being of *low conservation significance*.
- 5.1.3 The development requires the demolition of Building B4, which will result in the loss of this roost. This loss is considered to be a low impact at the site level and is not anticipated to have any significant effect on local bat populations.
- 5.1.4 On this basis, rather than applying for a development licence in respect of bats, it is anticipated that removal of the building can be undertaken under the supervision of an ecologist who holds a Low Impact Class Licence for bats.

6 Mitigation and Enhancement

- 6.1.1 The proposals will include new roost sites for bats in the form of bat boxes on trees and new buildings. These will provide a net increase in roosting opportunities for bats at the site.

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- 6.1.2 In order to maintain the favourable conservation status of bats at the site, compensatory roosts in the form of bat boxes on trees and new buildings will be provided. These will provide more than adequate compensation for the loss of the roost, and ultimately would provide a net increase in roosting opportunities for bats at the site.
- 6.1.3 A total of 51 new bat boxes are proposed to be incorporated within the proposed development. These would be erected as high up as possible and sited in sheltered wind-free areas that are exposed to the sun for part of the day, facing a south-east, south or south-westerly direction. These would comprise 8 No. bat boxes on retained trees, 40 No. integrated bat boxes that would be incorporated into the new build, and 3 No. bat maternity bat boxes (larger boxes such as the Triple Chamber and Weinerberger designs), two on retained trees and one incorporated into a building sited close to the location of Building B4.
- 6.1.4 Further biodiversity enhancements included in the development proposals include the planting of new native trees and shrubs, which will improve the foraging/commuting habitat within the site.
- 6.1.5 Under the proposals a range of enhancements for biodiversity would be provided. These are partly recognised in the Ecological Appraisal. A range of enhancements for fauna, including bats, will be brought forward.
- 6.1.6 Accordingly, post development opportunities for roosting bats will be enhanced while landscape measures around the site will also provide enhanced foraging opportunities for bats.