
Ainsdale Hope Learning Centre

Bat Survey Report

Compiled by Ecology Services Ltd.

on behalf of

Sefton Council

December 2023



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Contents	Page No.
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Planning Policy and Legislation	3
3.0 Methodology	4
4.0 Results and Evaluation	6
5.0 Impacts and Recommendations	8
6.0 Conclusion	9
7.0 References	9

Tables

Table 1: Ecological Desktop Studies

Table 2: Desktop Study Bat Species Results

Table 3: Overview of Presence / Absence Surveys

Figures

Figure 1: Site Location Plan

Figure 2: Presence / Absence Survey Results and Surveyor Location Plan – Visit 1

Figure 3: Presence / Absence Survey Results and Surveyor Location Plan – Visit 2

Appendices

Appendix 1: Planning Policy and Legislation

Appendix 2: Guidelines for Assessing Habitat Suitability for Bats

Appendix 3: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: Ainsdale Hope Centre, Sandringham Road, Southport (Kingdom Ecology, 2022)

Appendix 4: Darkest point of Presence / Absence Surveys

Appendix 5: Raw Survey Data

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Ecology Services Limited was commissioned by Sefton Council in March 2023 to undertake presence and absence surveys of a building at Ainsdale Hope Centre, Sandringham Road, Southport, PR8 2PJ, hereinafter referred to as 'the site'. The building is located by National Grid Reference (NGR) 331260, 412950. The location of the site is shown on Figure 1.
- 1.2 Recommendations made following the Preliminary Roost Assessment undertaken along with a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal by Kingdom Ecology in January 2022, include the requirement for further survey work in relation to bats to be carried out. This includes presence/ absence surveys. Following the PEA, Development Management Advice from Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS Ref. SF22-025) dated 17.02.2023 states within Part 1 under point 9 *'emergence and / or re-entry bat surveys of the detached house building will be required prior to determination of any future planning application'*. The results of these surveys are provided in this report.

Site Description

- 1.3 The site is situated approximately 0.5km north of Ainsdale village and was previously the location of Ainsdale Hope High School which closed in 2009. The wider site consists of the Learning Centre buildings with associated parking and landscape, and approximately 7.5ha of unmanaged, semi-natural grassland habitat which was previously used as sport pitches.
- 1.4 The site is located immediately adjacent to internationally, nationally and locally important nature conservation sites to the north and west designated for their important sand dune and coastal habitats and associated flora and fauna. To the south of the site lies residential development and to the north and east, golf courses. A large residential property and its grounds also lie adjacent to the north of the site.

Proposals

- 1.5 The site is allocated for residential development in the Sefton Local Plan (Sefton Council, 2017) with the requirement that an 'Ecological Improvement Area' is developed on the site alongside the housing allocation, the extent of which is to be determined following the completion of future evidence (i.e., ecological surveys).

Background and Survey Objectives

- 1.6 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) undertaken by Kingdom Ecology in January 2022 found one building on site (Building 2) to have moderate potential to support roosting bats. All other buildings on site were considered to be of negligible suitability for roosting bats. The results can be found within Appendix 3 – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: Ainsdale Hope Centre, Sandringham Road, Southport (Kingdom Ecology, 2022).
- 1.7 Following the PRA survey, presence/ likely absence surveys were recommended in the form of dusk emergence surveys to enable robust data to be collected to determine the presence/ likely absence of roosting bats. The presence/ likely absence surveys included all buildings that contain bat roost potential and have the potential to be affected by the proposals.
- 1.8 The purpose of this report is to state the survey methodology, present the results of the surveys, evaluate the findings, assess the impacts of the proposals and make recommendations concerning the protection of bat species that may be present at this site.

2.0 Planning Policy and Legislation

- 2.1 This section provides a brief overview of planning policy and legislation relevant to bats in the England. Further information is provided in Appendix 1.

Planning Policy

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) places a clear responsibility on Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural and local environment. LPAs should promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species (e.g., Species of Principal importance, Local Biodiversity Action Plan species); and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity. In accordance with the NPPF, local planning policy and guidance, development proposals should provide integrated improvement for biodiversity at the site and seek to maintain and enhance opportunities for bats. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Circular 06/2005 provides administrative guidance on the application of the law in relation to planning and nature conservation.
- 2.3 Protected species within England, such as bats, are a 'material consideration' in the determination of a planning application. Therefore, an LPA is unlikely to determine an application until all relevant information relating to protected species or habitats is submitted to fully inform the application. Relevant information includes adequate surveys and, where required, mitigation strategies, which will need to be submitted to inform a planning application.
- 2.4 The local planning authority (LPA) has a duty to ensure that protected and priority species (e.g., Species of Principal Importance, Biodiversity Action Plan species) are fully considered in a planning decision. Therefore, up to date survey information and, where required, mitigation strategies adequate to assess the impacts of the proposals and to demonstrate that opportunities for species using the site can be maintained, must be provided in support of a planning application.

Legislation

- 2.5 All bats and their roosts receive strict protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)¹. In brief, this legislation makes it an offence to: kill, injure or capture a bat; to destroy, damage or obstruct access to a bat roost; or to disturb a bat occupying a roost. A Local Authority is a 'competent authority' within the context of Regulation 7 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) when dealing with planning applications where a European Protected Species (EPS) (all bat species) may be affected. Therefore, planning decisions should only be made when European Protected Species and their habitats are fully taken into account.,
- 2.6 Where proposed works are likely to contravene the legislation protecting bats, a Natural England licence must be applied for, and approved, before works can proceed.
- 2.7 Section 40 of the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended) places a statutory duty on public authorities, in exercising their functions, to

¹ The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 continue the same provision for European protected species, licensing requirements and protected areas after Brexit.

conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. Species of Principal Importance for the conservation or enhancement of biodiversity in England, identified by the Secretary of State in consultation with Natural England, are listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act. The Local Planning Authority and government bodies (e.g., Natural England) will expect the overall design of the development to have regard for the conservation and enhancement of populations of these species. Seven bat species are listed as 'Species of Principal Importance' under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended):

- Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*)
- Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)
- Lesser horseshoe (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)
- Greater horseshoe (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*)
- Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*)
- Bechstein's (*Myotis bechsteinii*)
- Brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*)

3.0 Methodology

Desktop Study

- 3.1 Ecological data and records searches were undertaken by contacting the sources listed in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Ecological Desktop Study Sources

Source of information	Information supplied
North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan (NM BAP)	Identification of LBAP species known to occur in the region.
Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended)	Review of Species of Principal Importance known to occur in the region.
Multi Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website	Statutory protected sites designated for their bat interest within 2km of the site. Records of bat roosts relating to Natural England EPS licences within 2km of the site.
Lancashire Environmental Record Network (LERN) Local Record Centre	To identify locally protected sites or species of interest within 2km of the site
Merseyside Biobank (MB) Local Record Centre	To identify locally protected sites or species of interest within 2km of the site

- 3.2 The data search with MB was undertaken on the 11th August 2022.
- 3.3 The data search with LERN was undertaken on the 23rd November 2023. Information provided by Lancashire Environment Record Network has been collated from many sources. LERN is grateful for the assistance given by the organizations and individual naturalists who live and work in, and visit Lancashire.
- 3.4 The aim of the desktop study was to assist the bat survey report by providing background information on the likely habitats and bat species that occur within the local area.

Presence / Absence Surveys

- 3.5 Presence / absence surveys of Building 2 were carried out in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines', which recommends timings and minimum number of survey visits for presence / absence surveys to give confidence in a negative result for structures (and trees although unlikely to

give confidence in a negative result). These are determined by the level of potential assigned to each individual building, structure or tree. See Appendix 2 for the full table.

3.6 The presence / absence surveys required two surveyors on any one survey to enable all previously identified bat roosting features to be covered. Surveyors noted any visual observations of bat activity and were aided by the use of the following equipment; Batbox Duet, a heterodyne and frequency division bat detector, and a Magenta Bat4, heterodyne bat detector, used in conjunction with AnaBat Express (Full Spectrum Upgrade) and Wildlife Acoustic EchoMeter Touch 2 Pro detectors used in conjunction with Samsung SM-P610 Tab S6 Lite tablets, which were set to record so that data could be analysed if required. Canon XA-40 infrared cameras were also used along with infrared LED lights.

3.7 A total of two presence / absence surveys were undertaken at the site at an optimal time of year over the active season of bats. These were conducted on 22nd May 2023 and 20th June 2023 and consisted of two dusk emergence surveys.

Personnel

3.8 The presence / absence surveys were conducted by experienced ecologists who have regularly been involved with presence / absence surveys including; Mrs. Z. Foster BSc (Hons) who holds a Bat Class Licence Level 2 (Registration number 2015-17219-CLS-CLS), Mr. M. Barnes BSc (Hons), Mr. C. Smith MSc and Mr. M. Smith BSc.

Timing

3.9 The presence / absence surveys were undertaken on the 22nd May 2023 and the 20th June 2023 during the peak activity season of bats and when maternity colonies are in occupation.

Weather Conditions

3.10 Weather during the surveys were generally good conditions, with no rainfall, low wind and moderate temperatures not dropping below 13 Celsius.

Roost Status

3.11 If evidence of a bat roost is recorded during the surveys, the status of the roost is evaluated based on its function. This requires sufficient survey effort to determine the species and numbers of roosting bats present, the time of year that the roost is used and characteristics of the roost itself. The Bat Conservation Trust's 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines' details types of bat roosts which may be defined in several ways, as below:

- Day roost – where individual bats or small groups of males, rest or shelter in the day.
- Night roost – where bats rest or shelter in the night but are rarely found during the day.
- Feeding roost – where individual or few bat/s rest or feed during the night.
- Transitional/occasional roost – used for short periods of time by few or occasionally small groups of bats on waking or prior to the hibernation period.
- Swarming site – large numbers of males and females gather during late summer to autumn.
- Mating sites – where mating takes place from late summer and through winter.
- Maternity roost – where females give birth and raise their young.
- Hibernation roost - where bats may be found during winter. To have a constant cool temperature with high humidity.
- Satellite roost – an alternative roost used by individual to small numbers of breeding females over the breeding season. Usually close to main nursery colony.

- 3.12 Roost selection is often closely correlated with presence of suitable foraging habitat within a reasonable commuting distance from the roost. Different roost sites are used throughout the active season which is most dependent upon roost microclimate and abundance of invertebrate prey nearby. Weather conditions can also affect the ability of bats to successfully forage. All British bats are insectivorous.

Limitations

- 3.13 During the presence and absence surveys, surveyors had visibility issues due to distance and positionings and were not able to fully observe the building. Locations were adjusted throughout the survey and footage from the cameras has been reviewed and analysed, however the angle of the cameras could not be positioned to capture all of the building's potential roosting features. These constraints have been taken into account within the results.

4.0 Results and Evaluation

Desktop Study

- 4.1 The desktop study found several species of bats and bat roosts within 2km of site as seen in Table 2.

National Status

- 4.2 There are 18 species of bat that are native to the United Kingdom. The latest Review of the Conservation Status of British Mammals (2018) has shown that where change could be assessed with reasonable confidence there have been increases in the geographical range and population status of two species of UK bat (greater and lesser horseshoe bat) and decrease in the geographical range of one species (grey long-eared bat).
- 4.3 Increases in population were also identified in the following species: Bechstein's, Daubenton's, Natterers, serotine and brown long-eared although it is noted that the reliability of the results is poor.
- 4.4 Population data was not available for; Alcaethoe, whiskered, Brandt's, Leisler's, noctule, Barbastelle and Nathusius pipistrelle.
- 4.5 Population estimates were given for common and soprano pipistrelle however could not be reliably compared to the results from Harris et al. (1995) as the two species had not been identified as separate species at the time of the survey. Pipistrellus spp. remain the commonest species of bat in the UK despite their decline.
- 4.6 Serotine and barbastelle are considered vulnerable and Leisler's and Nathusius' pipistrelle, near threatened in Britain and England in the Red List for Britain's Terrestrial Mammals (Mathews and Harrower, 2020).

Regional Status

- 4.7 The north west of England appears to be a stronghold for Whiskered and Brandt's, both of which are reasonably rare in southern England.

Local Status

- 4.8 The North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan (NM BAP) and Lancashire Environmental Record Centre (LERN) both list eight bat species as part of their combined species action plan.

Designated Sites

- 4.9 The desk study found no protected sites within 2km of the development site which are designated on the basis of their interest for bats which could be adversely affected by the proposed works.

Records Data Search

- 4.10 One record of granted European Protected Species License for bats was identified approximately 0.6km southwest of site: Case Ref. 2017-28306-EPS-MIT for destruction of a resting place in relation to common pipistrelle, dated 01.04.2017 – 31.12.2018.
- 4.11 The data searches identified the following bat species within 2km of the development site within the last 20 years:

Table 2: Desktop Study Bat Species Results

Common name	Scientific name	Most recent date of record(s)	Distance from site (km)	Legally protected	NERC S41	NM LBAP
Bats (all species)	<i>Chiroptera</i>	2015	1.5km E	EPS, WCA5		✓
Brown long-eared bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	2020	1.7km S	EPS, WCA5	✓	✓
Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	2020	0.5km NW	EPS, WCA5		✓
Daubenton's bat	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	2019	1km W	EPS, WCA5		✓
Nathusius's pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	2020	1km SW	EPS, WCA5		✓
Noctule	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	2018	0.8km S	EPS, WCA5	✓	✓

Presence / Absence Survey Results

- 4.12 An overview of dates, times and the results of the surveys are provided below.

Table 3: Overview of Presence / Absence Surveys

Date of surveys & survey type	Start & end times and time of Sunset	Structure reference/ location	Equipment used	Weather Conditions
Dusk 22.05.23	Start time: 21:03 End time: 22:47 Sunset: 21:17	Building 2	Batbox Duets used in conjunction with EchoMeter Touch 2 Pro detectors and recording devices plus two Canon XA-40 infrared cameras & lights.	Start Temp: 14.8°C Sunset Temp: 13.7°C Finish Temp: 13.0°C Precipitation: Dry Wind: Light air (BS1*) Cloud Cover: 60-80%
Comments (to include # of surveyors used for each visit): Two surveyors and two cameras were required to cover all suitable potential roosting features identified, covering the whole building.				
Dusk 20.06.23	Start time: 21:30 End time: 23:15 Sunset: 21:45	Building 2	Batbox Duet and a Magenta Bat4 used in conjunction with an AnaBat Express (full spectrum upgrade) & EchoMeter Touch 2 Pro detector and recording devices plus three Canon XA-40 infrared cameras & lights.	Start Temp: 20.8°C Sunset Temp: 17.9°C Finish Temp: 14.1°C Precipitation: Dry Wind: None (BS0*) Cloud Cover: 5%
Comments (to include # of surveyors used for each visit): Two surveyors and three cameras were required to cover all suitable potential roosting features identified, covering the whole building.				

* BS - Beaufort Scale

Presence / Absence Survey No.1

- 4.13 A potential emergence by a common pipistrelle bat was observed by surveyors from the southern part of the roof (#1) at 21:50; however, no camera footage recorded this area so the exact location could not be confirmed.
- 4.14 Brief passes and foraging individuals were recorded during the survey around the surveyed building, towards the neutral grassland in the north, Ainsdale Hope Centre and along the tree line near residential buildings. Species comprised entirely common pipistrelle and a *Myotis* sp. bat.

Presence / Absence Survey No.2

- 4.15 A single common pipistrelle was observed emerging from the same location as visit 1 from the south part of the roof (#1) at 22:18, however camera footage did not record this area so the exact location cannot be confirmed. Camera 1 was adjusted part way through the survey to observe the roof after the probable emergence, as shown in Figure 2.
- 4.16 Bat activity was observed all around the surveyed building and included brief passing and foraging activity by common pipistrelle and occasional noctule passes.

Summary and Evaluation

- 4.17 In line with the guidance Building 2 (moderate potential) at Ainsdale Hope Centre, Southport, was subject to two presence / absence surveys to determine if the potential roosting features were being used by bats.
- 4.18 Bat roosting activity was observed at Building 2 during the presence / absence surveys and therefore there are implications in regards to the proposed development and roosting bats. During the surveys completed, relatively low numbers of common pipistrelle were recorded with noctule bats and *Myotis* sp. also recorded.
- 4.19 The presence/ absence surveys were conducted during the optimal survey period for bats and were undertaken by suitably experience surveyors in line with the BCT Guidance (Collins, 2016).

5.0 Impacts and Recommendations

- 5.1 Bat activity surveys of Building 2 at Ainsdale Hope Centre, Southport, have **confirmed** a bat roost used by common pipistrelle species and will require one further roost characterisation survey during the optimal period (May to August inclusively) in accordance with BCT Guidelines (Collins, 2023). As roosting bats have been confirmed within Building 2, in the absence of suitable mitigation / compensation measures under the appropriate Natural England licence, if works are undertaken that impact a bat roost either directly or indirectly, then this would result in an offence being committed under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Activity 1981 (as amended).
- 5.2 Full details of the proposals will be required to allow a full review of the effect of the proposals upon the bat species found to be using the site. The review shall include ways in which impacts may be reduced and / or determine how suitable mitigation or compensation can be incorporated within the design to reduce adverse impacts upon bat species found at the site.
- 5.3 If the works require planning approval, the Local Planning Authority will require the results of the activity and roost characterisation surveys plus a suitable mitigation and enhancement

scheme that demonstrates the continued favourable conservation status of bats found at the site in support of any Planning Application, in line with current Planning Policy.

- 5.4 Work at the site will be delayed until such a time that a Natural England Licence is applied for and granted to legally permit work to commence which would affect bats or their roosts.
- 5.5 A Natural England Licence can only be applied for once planning consent is gained. There may be delays in obtaining a Natural England Licence and time constraints as to when the mitigation can be undertaken.
- 5.6 A Section 106 agreement or similar legally binding covenant should be in place attached to any planning permission. Adequate roost provision should be agreed to ensure the favourable conservation status of bat species at the site.
- 5.7 As bats are mobile creatures and can form new roosts at any time if works are not started within one year of the surveys, i.e., June 2024, then it may be necessary to repeat certain surveys.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 To conclude, this report details the findings of the and presence / absence surveys that have been undertaken at this site. All completed surveys have been undertaken by suitably experienced surveyors at the appropriate time of year and in line with current guidance.
- 6.2 Bat activity surveys confirmed Building 2 to support roosting common pipistrelle bats, therefore one further roost characterisation survey and will be required in 2024 during the optimal period (May – August) in accordance with BCT Guidelines (Collins, 2023). Bat species recorded during the bat activity surveys included common pipistrelle, noctule and *Myotis* sp..
- 6.3 A European Protected Species Licence accompanied by an appropriate mitigation and enhancement strategy will need to be granted by Natural England to derogate from the legal protection afforded bats.

7.0 References

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Figure 1:
Site Location Plan

Figure 2:
Presence / Absence Survey Results and Surveyor Location Plan – Visit 1

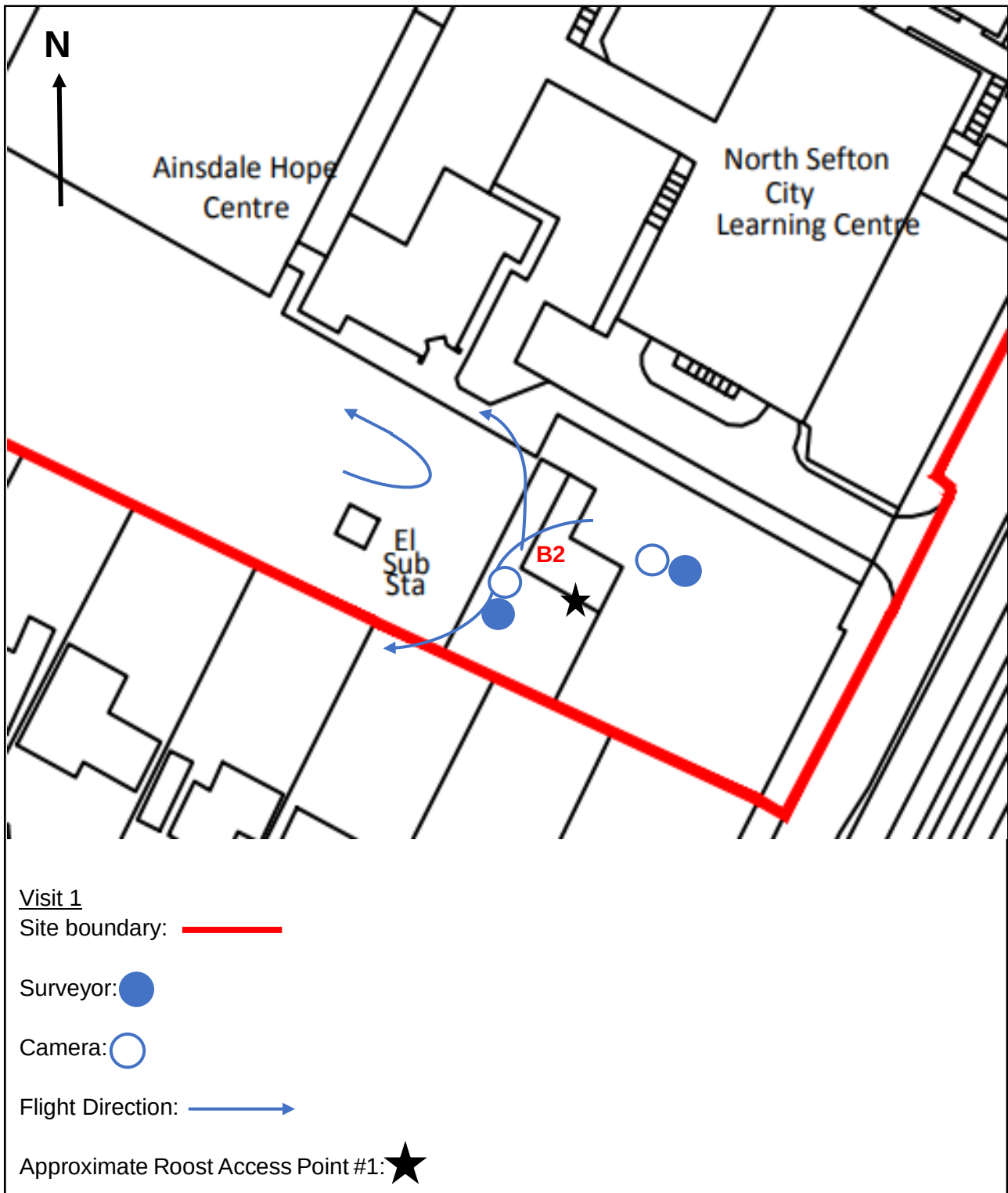


Figure 3:
Presence / Absence Survey Results and Surveyor Location Plan – Visit 2



Appendix 1: **Planning Policy and Legislation**

Disclaimer: Appendix 1 is a guide to legislation and procedure relating to biodiversity in England. It is general guidance and it does not give specific advice in relation to any site, species or project. It represents Ecology Services Ltd interpretation of legislation and procedure as at March 2019. Readers should note that legislation and procedure changes continually and is interpreted on a case-specific basis. Nothing in Appendix 1 should be construed as an offer of advice or legal opinion.

Planning Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) places a clear responsibility on Local Planning Authorities (LPA) to contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural and local environment. LPAs should promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species (e.g., Species of Principal importance, Biodiversity Action Plan species); and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Circular 06/2005 provides administrative guidance on the application of the law in relation to planning and nature conservation.

A Local Planning Authority (LPA) has a duty to ensure that protected species and habitats within the UK are a 'material consideration' in the determination of a planning application. Therefore, an LPA is unlikely to determine an application until all relevant information relating to protected species or habitats is submitted to fully inform the application. Relevant information includes adequate surveys and, where required, mitigation strategies, which will need to be submitted in support of a planning application.

Statutory Protection Afforded Bats

The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), also known as the Habitats Regulations, lists all UK bat species on Schedule 2 which places an obligation to implement strict protection for these species. This legislation makes it an offence to:

- deliberately kill, injure or capture a wild bat;
- deliberately disturb* a bat;
- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat.

*Disturbance, as defined by the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), is that which is likely to:

- impair their ability –
 - to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
 - in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate.
- affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 continue the same provision for European protected species, licensing requirements and protected areas after Brexit.

All UK bats and their roosts are afforded further protection through their inclusion on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it an offence to:

- intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection;

- intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place which a bat uses for shelter or protection.

Regulation 12 the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) requires the appropriate authority in England and Wales to designate as Special Areas of Conservation such sites as the authority considers to be of national importance which contribute significantly to the maintenance, or restoration at favourable conservation status in the natural range of the species listed in Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive. Four bat species (greater horseshoe, lesser horseshoe, Bechstein's and barbastelle) are listed under Annex II.

When dealing with planning applications where a European Protected Species (EPS) (all UK bats) may be affected, a Local Authority is a 'competent authority' within the meaning of regulation 7 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The local authority must therefore exercise their functions under the provisions made within the 2017 Regulations (as amended), and planning decisions should only be made when European Protected Species and their habitats are fully taken into account.

Licensing of Works Affecting Roosting Bats

Where a bat roost is likely to be affected by development then a licence to derogate from the legal protection would be required. Licence applications are processed and issued by Natural England and can only be applied for once planning permission (if required) has been granted.

Natural England may grant a licence for the purposes specified in paragraph 55 of the Regulations. The purposes are:

- 55(2)(e) preserving public health or safety or other imperative reason of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequence of primary importance for the environment.
- 55(2)(f) preventing the spread of disease.

Natural England must not grant a licence under paragraph 55 unless it is satisfied that:

- 55(9)(a) there is no satisfactory alternative; and
- 55(9)(b) the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable status in their natural range.

In December 2016, Natural England introduced four policies for European Protected Species (EPS) licensing. The policies were revised in January 2022. The policies seek to achieve better outcomes for EPS and reduce unnecessary costs, delays and uncertainty that were inherent in the current system. In brief, the four policies are:

- **Policy 1.** Reduce mitigation measures for impacts on EPS
- **Policy 2.** Location of compensation habitats
- **Policy 3.** Let EPS use temporary habitats
- **Policy 4.** Alternative sources of evidence to reduce standard survey requirements

Policy 1 allows compensation for EPS impacts to be delivered without the need to relocate or exclude populations where: exclusion or relocation measures are not necessary to maintain the conservation status of the local population; the avoid-mitigate-compensate hierarchy is followed; and compensation provides greater benefits to the local population than would exclusion and/or relocation. This policy can be used to reduce mitigation measures, such as exclusion or relocation of EPS, by increasing compensation. This policy allows killing of EPS and destruction of their habitat without needing to exclude or relocate individual animals.

Policy 2 allows for the provision of off-site compensation measures where the licensing tests are met, the avoid-mitigate-compensate hierarchy is followed, there are good reasons for maximising development on the site of EPS impacts and where an off-site solution provides greater benefit to the local population than an on-site solution.

Policy 3 relates to developments, such as mineral extraction, which temporarily create habitat which is likely to attract EPS and enables works to proceed without the exclusion of EPS where the conservation status of the local population would not be detrimentally affected. On completion of development, such sites must contribute to the conservation status of the local population as much as or more than the land use which preceded development. The measures to achieve this should be set out in a management plan and secured by a legal agreement.

Under **Policy 4** Natural England may accept a lower than standard survey effort where: the costs or delays associated with carrying out standard survey requirements would be disproportionate to the additional certainty that it would bring; the ecological impacts of development can be predicted with sufficient certainty; and mitigation or compensation will ensure that the licensed activity does not detrimentally affect the conservation status of the local population of any EPS.

Natural Environmental and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

Section 40 of the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended) places a statutory duty on public authorities, in exercising their functions, to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. Species of Principal Importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, as identified by the Secretary of State in consultation with Natural England, are listed Section 41 of the NERC Act. The Local Planning Authority and government bodies (e.g. Natural England) will expect the overall design of the development to have regard for the conservation of these species. Seven bat species are listed as Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act (refer to Section 2).

Appendix 2:

Guidelines for Assessing Habitat Suitability for Bats

Table 4.1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement (Taken from the Bat Conservation Trust Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 2016).

Suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats	Commuting & foraging habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions¹ 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 or hibernation²). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roosting features but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential³.	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as gappy hedgerow or un-vegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitats. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) of a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ¹ and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back to gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland and water.
High	A structure or tree 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 ¹ and surrounding habitat.	Continuous, high quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broad-leaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.
¹For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance. ²Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten <i>et al.</i>, 2015). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK but ecologists should be aware of the potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in large buildings in highly urbanised environments. ³This system of categorisation aligns with BS8596:2015 Surveying for bats in trees and woodland (BSI, 2015).		

Appendix 3:

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: Ainsdale Hope Centre, Sandringham Road, Southport
(Kingdom Ecology, 2022)

Appendix 4:
Darkest point of Presence / Absence Surveys



Camera 3 (C3) field of view of Building 2 at the darkest point of the survey, looking at the west gable



Camera 4 (C4) field of view of Building 2 at the darkest point of the survey, looking at the east elevation



Camera 1 (C1) field of view of Building 2 at the beginning of the survey and part way through the survey once adjusted

Appendix 5: Raw Survey Data

Building 2						
Date of survey & survey type	Start & end times	Species & numbers	Roost type	Roost Location	Access points (include # of them)	Dimension of existing roosts or location
22.05.23 Dusk	Start: 21:03 End: 22:47	Possible emergence by 1 common pipistrelle at 21:50	Day roost	Southern elevation	#1 – Roof	Exact dimensions unknown
20.06.23 Dusk	Start: 21:30 End: 23:15	1 common pipistrelle emerged at 22:18	Day roost	Southern elevation	#1 – Roof	Exact dimensions unknown
Notes/observations: Bat species identified include common pipistrelle, noctule and <i>Myotis</i> sp.						