



Bat Roosting Assessment

**Highways House
Broadwater Road
Welwyn Garden City
Hertfordshire**

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On behalf of:

Barker Parry Town
Planning Limited
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Special Note

Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure this report accurately identifies potential ecological constraints to development or the likely presence or absence of species and the spatial and temporal use of the site by such species, it must only be viewed as a snap shot in time and should therefore not be viewed as definitive.

Because of external influencing factors such as weather, season, access etc. affecting survey results, no liability can be assumed for omissions or changes that may or may not occur after the production of this report. The author of this report must be consulted as to the current applicability of the results if there are any seasonal delays in the use of this report.

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1.0 Executive Summary

It is proposed to redevelop Highways House on Broadwater Road in Welwyn Garden City, through its demolition. A bat roosting assessment has been completed in October 2014, by Natural England licensed bat Ecologists, ELMAW Consulting.

The assessment concluded that Highways House was found to consist of a flat roof with glass and prefabricated steel structural building with no apparent damage or architectural features which could provide recesses or cavities which bats could utilise.

Consequently, a negligible bat roosting potential has been concluded and the potential presence of roosting bats at the time of demolition is unlikely. Therefore, no mitigation or compensatory measures are thought necessary at this stage and the redevelopment of the site can continue unconstrained by the presence of roosting bats.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 *Background & Terms of Reference*

2.1.1 Highways House is the former headquarters of Hertfordshire Highways and is located off Broadwater Road in Welwyn Garden City. It is now partially empty and no longer occupied by Hertfordshire Highways staff and it is occupied and currently used by a Church.

2.1.2 It is proposed to demolish the building on the site and redevelop and, as such, the proposals will be subject to local planning authority consent. To ensure that no protected species, in this case bats, are adversely affected by the redevelopment proposals, the current status of the site, in particularly the building, has been assessed for bat roosting potential.

2.1.3 Consequently, ELMAW Consulting, Consultant Ecologists and Wildlife Biologists have been commissioned to carry out a bat survey of the building and report their findings. The findings will be used to inform any mitigation for the protection of bats whilst the building works are being carried out, if required.

2.1.4 The site boundary within which this bat roosting assessment has been carried out has been provided by Woods Hardwick, in Drawing 17095/104 Highways House, Broadwater Road Welwyn. November 2013.

2.2 *Aims of Study*

2.2.1 To carry out a building inspection of Highways House and establish whether the building has any bat roosting potential or supports any indicative signs of bat roosting. Mitigation advice to facilitate the building's demolition would be provided should the building inspection reveal a probability of roosting bats or indicative signs of bat roosting.

3.0 Methodology & Technical Approach

3.1 Desk Study

- 3.1.1 To provide contextual background to this study and to inform the roosting probability assessment, a biological data search to locate all known records of bats within a two kilometre radius of the site, has been requested of the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC).

3.2 Survey

- 3.2.1 The bat roosting assessment was undertaken by Mr Keith Seaman, Principal Wildlife Biologist with ELMAW Consulting and Natural England bat surveyors licence holder (Licence Registration Number CLS01143).
- 3.2.2 The specified and adopted methodology for this assessment has been carried out in accordance with the guidelines published by Natural England and the Bat Conservation Trust (*Bat Workers' Manual 3rd Edition*, 2004, English Nature and *Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines*, 2nd Edition The Bat Conservation Trust, 2012).
- 3.2.3 Based on a set of 'roosting probability criteria', the building has been evaluated as to whether it has a negligible, very low, low, medium or high probability value for roosting. This set of criteria is subjective, but based on the experience of the surveyor. The appended chart details the criteria used for this assessment and has been used as a guide to influence and inform the survey results and what, if any, further detailed activity surveys are necessary.

3.3 Assessment & Mitigation

- 3.3.1 The assessment and valuation of the survey findings and any subsequent mitigation and compensatory strategy is based on advice and guidance published by The Bat Conservation Trust and

Natural England in Bat Surveys *Good Practice Guidelines 2012*, *Bat Workers' Manual 2004* and *Bat Mitigation Guidelines 2004*.

3.4 Habitats Regulations Three Stage Test

3.4.1 Since January 2010, local planning authorities are obligated to consider any predicted impact on a protected species such as bats, and whether an European Protected Species licence would be granted, assuming the Three Stage Test be met satisfactorily, thus allowing the granting of planning permission. The Habitats Regulations Three Stage Test is appended to this report.

3.4.2 If bats are found to be present, then an assessment of the 2010 Habitat Regulation's three stage test will be carried out. Local Planning Authorities have a statutory duty under Regulation 9 (5) of the Habitats Regulations 2010, to apply the following tests in respect of European protected species:

- 1) The activity must be for the purposes of 'preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment',*
- 2) There must be no satisfactory alternative,*
- 3) That the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range'.*

4.0 Results

4.1 Limitations

- 4.1.1 The bat roosting assessment is based on a walk-over building inspection for indicative signs of bat roosting and architectural features that may suggest bat roosting. No species specific surveys have been completed in this study.

4.2 Desk Study

- 4.2.1 The data search revealed a number of records of bats from the 2km radius data search area. There are seven records of brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) bats dated between 1985 and 1998, with no locations given. There are also 42 records of common pipistrelle (*pipistrellus pipistrellus*) dated between 1985 and 2009 with some records from Lemsford Springs Nature Reserve and the Attimore Hall areas.
- 4.2.2 There is a single record of soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) dated 2001, with no location given and 10 records of noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) bat dated between 1985 and 2000, with some records from the Lemsford Springs Nature Reserve area. There are also two records of Leisler's (*Nyctalus leisleri*) bat dated 1972 and 1987, a single record of a Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*) bat dated 2006 and nine records of Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*) bat dated between 1972 and 2006, with no locations given.
- 4.2.3 Finally there are three records of serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*) bat all dated 1985, with no locations given. In addition, there are eight records of unidentified bats.

4.3 Site Description



Plate 1 – Aerial photo showing indicative site boundary

GoogleEarthPro licence no. JCPM1QZUX6HR1KA

- 4.3.1 Highways House is located on the eastern side of Broadwater Road on the edge of the industrial estate, east of the town centre. As is typical of this area of Welwyn Garden City, numerous mature trees are found surrounding the site and a planted, but mature tree belt runs parallel with the site on its eastern boundary.
- 4.3.2 The site supports no semi-natural habitats, although a number of mature sycamore trees (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) are found growing along the eastern and southern boundary with the tree belt. Numerous amenity shrub beds are found around the edges of the car park and building.



Plates 2 & 3: Views of the grass verge and trees along the eastern and southern site boundaries.

4.4 Survey



Plates 4 & 5: Views of Highways House

- 4.4.1 One large building is found on site, which occupies approximately one third of the site at the southern end. The building is rectangular in shape and is two/three storeys in height. It is constructed of prefabricated steel with very large areas of glass. The roof is flat and there are no roof pitches, tiles or slates and no internal roof voids or attics.
- 4.4.2 The external architectural fabric was found to be in very good condition, sealed with no apparent breakages or damage. No obvious recesses or cavities were found which would be suitable to support roosting bats and consequently a negligible bat roosting potential value has been concluded.

5.0 Assessment

5.1 Discussion of Results

- 5.1.1 Highways House was found to be a very modern building of mainly glass and some prefabricated steel design. The building was found in good condition within no apparent bat roosting potential. Whilst located amongst a number of mature trees and a tree belt, the area is not likely to be highly valued to bats and the presence of roosting bats within Highways House is thought to be highly unlikely.

5.2 Potential Impacts

- 5.2.1 The demolition of Highways House is not predicted to impact upon bats at this time.

5.3 Mitigation/Compensation

- 5.3.1 It is not predicted that bats would be encountered in the redevelopment of the site and therefore not mitigation or compensatory measures are thought necessary.

5.4 Further Surveys

- 5.4.1 None recommended.

5.5 Requirements for Habitats Regulations (EPS) licence

- 5.5.1 As no bat roosts are predicted to be damaged or destroyed and no bats are to be disturbed, there is no necessity for an EPS licence to permit the redevelopment of the site.

5.6 Further Considerations

- 5.6.1 All species of bats to a greater or lesser degree use their places of shelter in a temporal and spatial way which may affect the status of a site or building at any given time. Roost sites which may appear temporarily vacated or abandoned, could be re-occupied at any

time in the future. Therefore, following the production of this report, should the development of the site/building be delayed for 12 months from the date of this survey, the site/building must be reassessed and resurveyed. This will ensure that, should the status of the site/building change in the intervening months, the presence of bats can be taken into account to ensure the development commences lawfully. Should the development require a derogation of the Habitats Regulations, an EPS development licence, the bat status of the current season of development will be required to support a licence application.

6.0 References

Bat Conservation Trust. (2007) *Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines*, Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Altringham, J.D. (2003). *British Bats*. HarperCollins Publishers. London.

English Nature. (2004), *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*, English Nature, Peterborough.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee. (2004), *Bat Workers' Manual*, JNCC, Peterborough.

7.0 Appendices

7.1 *Appendix 1 - Chart of bat roosting probability and value to bats*

Negligible probability value	No potential roosting features and/or bat habitat in close proximity to the site.
Very low probability value	Very low number of potential roosting features, with no indicative signs of usage, located in very poor bat habitat, with no discernable feeding, foraging or commuting habitat.
Low probability value	A low number of potential roosting features, but not likely to support an important roost such as a maternity or hibernacula. Location in poor or isolated bat foraging habitat such as a highly urbanized/industrial environment, not connected to linear commuting features, but with isolated lone trees or patches of scrub.
Moderate probability value	Several potential roosting features, and/or the presence of bat droppings. Habitat suitable for foraging and feeding bats, but may be limited in extent or connectivity to linear features such as lines of trees, scrub or linked back gardens.
High probability value	Numerous potential roosting features, and/or the presence of bat droppings, including scattered and accumulations. Buildings or structures typically used by roosting bats. Close proximity and/or connectivity of high quality bat feeding habitat such as woodland, open or running water, grazed pasture, rural hedgerows and marsh/wetlands. Close to known roosting or bat activity.

7.2 *Appendix 2 - General Bat Ecology*

- 7.2.1 A total of 18 species of bat are resident in the UK, however many have localised or scattered distributions, and only the pipistrelle is regarded as reasonably common and widespread, despite a 70% decline in population since the 1980's (JNCC, 2001).
- 7.2.2 All species of UK bats hibernate, usually in trees or underground roosts such as ice-houses or in caves, but sometimes in barns and houses between November and March. During mild winters many species become active and will forage and feed on warmer winter nights and may move between different hibernation roosts. Bats are generally 'active' between April and October, and during this period they return to traditional spring, summer, autumn roost sites. Bats use a number of different roosting places throughout the spring, summer and autumn months, with colonies separating and moving between a number of roost sites during their active season. Different species of bat use a variety of different structures for roosting including houses, old barns, cavities and crevices in mature trees, bridges, caves and icehouses.
- 7.2.3 In addition to suitable roosts, bats also require suitable foraging and feeding habitats, which would include rivers, lakes and ponds, woodlands and mature single trees. Linear habitat features such as hedgerows, rivers and tree-belts are also important as they provide connectivity of habitat for bats commuting between foraging areas and roosts.

7.3 *Appendix 3 - Legislation Relating to Bats*

7.3.1 All bats and their roosts in the UK are protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

7.3.2 In England the legislation makes it illegal to;

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat,
- Deliberately disturb a bat which is likely to impair their ability to survive, breed or reproduce, rear or nurture their young, hibernate, migrate or affect significantly their local distribution or abundance
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat
- Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead bat or any part of a bat

7.3.3 Bats' roosts (including resting places) are protected whether or not bats are present at the time. The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981(as amended) additionally makes it an offence to;

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat at a roost
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost

7.3.4 Finally, under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, a duty is placed on all public bodies to promote and enhance biodiversity in all its functions. There is a general biodiversity duty in the NERC Act (Section 40) which requires every public body in the exercising of its functions to 'have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. Section 41 draws up lists of

species of principal importance to which special attention must be given and a number of bats are included in this list.