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04th December 2023

Mr Steve Holden,
Asset Management Service,
Lancashire County Council,
County Hall,
Fishergate,
Preston,
PR1 8XJ

Bat Building Inspection: County Hall, Fishergate, Preston, Lancashire PR1 8RL

Dear Steve,

I write to confirm that Simply Ecology Limited was commissioned by Lancashire County Council to undertake a Building Assessment for Bats at County Hall in Preston. I understand that this is required to inform proposals to remove the roof top dormer windows at the site (OS Grid Reference SD533292). See Plan 1 for Site location.

It is noted that Simply Ecology has previously undertaken Bat Building inspections of various aspects of County Hall at the Site in 2014, 2016 and 2022 and found no evidence of bat activity on these occasions.

The aims of this ecological assessment were:

- Identifying potential structures of the building that could be used by bats.
- Identifying if there was any evidence of bats around the building.
- Providing an assessment of the likely importance of the site for bats and their conservation.
- To enable the client to comply with legislation afforded to protected sites and species.

To achieve this, an appraisal of the building and any protected species on the site was undertaken on 1st December 2023. This submission presents the results of the survey at the site.

This letter details the findings of this survey and is to be used by the client as part of their submission for a planning application to remove the roof top dormers (approx. 160m²) at the site.

Methods

Bat Building Inspection

An inspection of the building on the site was specifically carried out to search for bats. The building survey was undertaken in accordance with the standard methods described in the 'Bat Worker's Manual' (JNCC 2004) and 'Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines' (BCT 2023). In accordance with best practice, the survey comprised the following elements:

- An inspection of the exterior of the building to look for obvious signs of bat activity (such as droppings) and assessing the potential for entry/exit into the property. Lighting was provided by a Shadowhawk 20,000 lumen LED torch and Black Diamond Men 325 lumen headlamp. Any cracks or inaccessible areas were inspected using a ProVision PV-636 endoscope and/or a DJI Mini 3 camera drone.
- An internal inspection of voids was also undertaken to determine whether bats were present, to look for signs of activity (such as discarded prey items and droppings) and to assess potential suitability for bat species. Lighting was provided by a 20,000 lumen LED torch and 325 lumen headlamp.

The following signs were searched for, as these would indicate bat presence:

- Staining around a hole, caused by natural oils in the bats' fur.
- Stains beneath a hole, caused by bat urine.
- Scratch marks around a hole, caused by bat claws.
- Bat droppings beneath a hole.
- Audible squeaking from within a hole, especially on hot days or at dusk.
- Insects (especially flies) around a hole.

An assessment of the surrounding habitat quality for bats was carried out by walking the area on foot and later from reference to OS maps aerial images (Bing Maps). These searches were used to identify important land use and habitat features known to be favoured by bats.

Where there was evidence bat presence found (e.g., droppings found below a cavity, bats heard inside a feature or observed flying to or from a feature) or actual bat presence, the feature was categorised as a confirmed roost.

Unless a bat roost was confirmed, once surveyed each structure was categorised into one of four categories, namely high, moderate, low or negligible suitability according to its potential to support roosting bats. These categories are determined in line with Bat Conservation Trust guidelines for assessing habitat and feature suitability (see Table 1).

Subsequent advice/action would depend on the findings of the building surveys. If potential was found, then subsequent bat activity surveys would be required in accordance with standard methods described in the 'Bat Worker's Manual' (JNCC 2004) and 'Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines' (Bat Conservation Trust 2023).

Constraints

The building survey was undertaken on 1st December 2023. The timing of the building inspection to search for signs of bats posed no constraints as building inspections can be undertaken at any time of year. An assessment of the building's potential to support bats can therefore be made according to evidence found, building condition, location and the experience of the surveyor.

Direct observation of the external features of the dormer windows was not possible at the time of inspection but the use of a drone mounted camera allowed the surveyor to draw a robust conclusion about the potential for the dormer windows and the adjacent roof to support roosting bats.

Personnel

The surveys were undertaken by Philip Wright MSc CIEEM. Philip is an Ecologist with Simply Ecology Limited obtained his first degree in Biology from the University of Bath and an MSc in Ecology and Conservation from Lancaster University. He is a member of the North Lancashire Bat Group and is in his seventh season of surveying. His wider experience includes conducting botanical surveying and habitat management work with the RSPB and with the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside.

The Site.

The site is located within inner city Preston surrounded by urban infrastructure including road and rail networks (see). There is negligible suitable foraging habitat located within the surrounding area.

The survey described in this report were commissioned to inform a proposal to remove the dormer windows which are in poor condition and leak and replace with pitched roofs. The current plans are to remove the dormers in Zone A along with the potential removal of dormers in Zone B (see).

The internal spaces here were found to have been previously used as office space but were no longer in use due to the restrictive physical layout and poor ergonomics of the space.

Building Survey Results.

Examination of the external aspects of the building found the roof to be pitched and hipped with slate tiles throughout. The dormer windows were on north (Zone A) and west (Zone B) facing pitches of the roof (see Plan 3) and were found to be flat roofed with roofing felt covering and ends that were timber clad.

The roof pitches around the dormers were found to be in generally satisfactory condition with no significant gaps under the ridge or the slate tiles (see Plate 1).

The roofing felts on the dormers were found to be intact (see Plate 2) with no Potential Roost Features (PRFs) and no potential access to the internal spaces for bats. Elsewhere, outside of the proposed works areas, the dormers had glazed roofs, but again these had no gaps or potential access to the internal spaces for bats.

Where the dormers were clad in timber, the cladding was intact with no gaps or holes suitable for roosting bats (see Plate 3).

There was no evidence of bat activity externally and the roof and the dormers were considered to have negligible to low potential for roosting bats.

Internally, the space was divided between office and storage space and corridors, bounded at each end of the roof by enclosed loft voids.

In the offices of Zone A, the ceiling of the dormers were found to be generally intact with no access to the internal space from outside (see Plate 4). In some areas, the dormers were in poor condition, and the previous ingress of water had resulted in areas of rot (see Plate 5) and water damage to the plaster board. Where the plasterboard had been removed, the exposed cavities were found to have no roosting potential and there was no evidence of bat activity.

In Zone B, the roof was partially boarded out and had a suspended ceiling preventing direct access to, or inspection of, the underside of the roof above these offices (see Plate 6 and Plate 7).

The windows within the dormers themselves were intact throughout and provided no access for bats from the outside (see Plate 8).

There was no evidence of bat activity on the walls or flat surfaces in these office spaces (see Plate 9).

At each end of the roof there were voids adjacent to the dormer windows; these had no underfelt and were open to the exposed roof tiles, timber joists and steel beams (see Plate 10). Here the roof tiles were torched. Gaps apparent in the lime mortar that offered potential access to these voids (see Plate 11). However, the walls and flat surfaces within these voids had no evidence of bat activity (see Plate 12 and Plate 13). It was not considered that there was any reasonably foreseeable likelihood of bat access to this area or into the adjoining working area where impacts could arise.

In summary, the building inspection found the dormer windows on the roof of County Hall to be in poor to satisfactory condition and were considered to have negligible suitability for roosting bats – the inspection of the dormers found that the felt covered flat roofs, the timber cladding and the windows themselves had no gaps or spaces that provided any roosting potential or access to the internal spaces around the dormers. There was no evidence of bat roosting in the form of droppings or prey items either externally or internally. The adjacent roof voids were found to have a low level of PRFs in the form of gaps in the lime mortar torching but there was no evidence of bat activity and it was not considered that there was any reasonably foreseeable likelihood of bat access to this area or into the adjoining working area where impacts could arise.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overview

In November 2023, Simply Ecology Limited was commissioned by Lancashire County Council to undertake a Building Assessment for bats at County Hall, Fishergate, Preston, Lancashire PR1 8RL. It is understood that the proposed works is to remove the existing dormer windows and add a single storey extension to the rear of this residential property.

Bats

A bat scoping survey of the building was undertaken at County Hall. The building was occupied and in use at the time of survey. The building was subject to a thorough external and internal survey. Whilst there were no Potential Roost Features across the dormers, the voids adjacent to the dormer windows had several Potential Roost Features that were considered to provide roosting opportunities with gaps in the lime mortar torching.

Despite the presence of some PRFs across the roof, a thorough external search of the building for signs of bat activity found no evidence of bats.

Given that there were PRFs, further consideration of the local area was necessary before determining whether any follow-on survey was needed. A desk study found only very scant records of the presence of bats on MAGIC, NBN, iSpot, iNaturalist and iRecord within 1km.

Also taken into account was the information obtained in the desk study, combined with Simply Ecology's experience of bat activity surveys within Preston and the negligible habitat features on or near the site that are likely to be used by foraging or commuting bats. It was the professional ecologist's opinion that:

- There was no reasonably foreseeable likelihood that bats were present in the areas of the building where the proposed works will take place and no bat roosts were present or will be impacted by the work.

Therefore:

- *It is advised* that all works can continue with no need for any supervision by the Appointed Ecologist. No Natural England licence is necessary in this instance as no impact upon any bat roost is predicted. This is due to the lack of any signs of current or historical use of the building by bats. **Reason:** This will deliver compliance with: Section 9 (1 & 4) of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Part 3 (43; 1 & 2) of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Section 15 (179 & 180) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

I trust that the findings and recommendations of the survey are clear to both the client and the Local Planning Authority. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

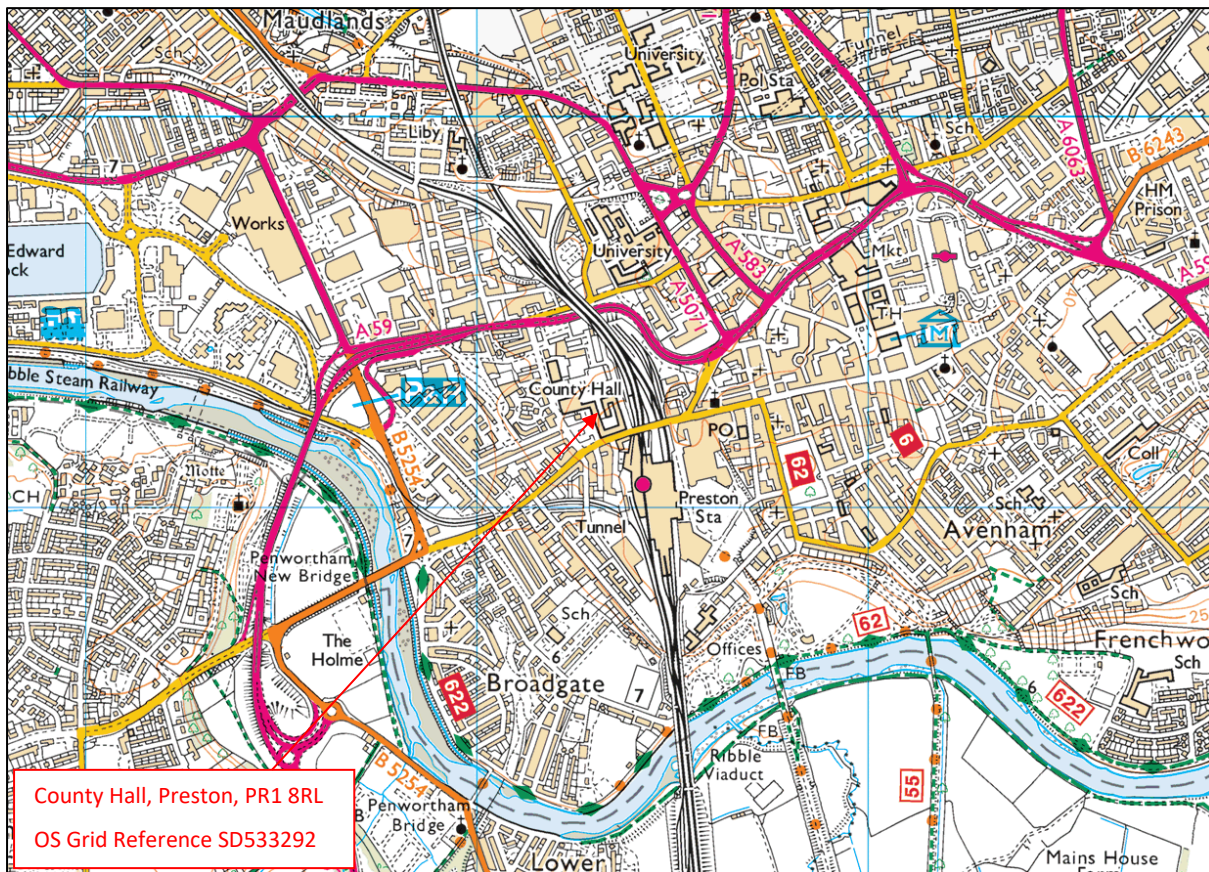
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Reynolds', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

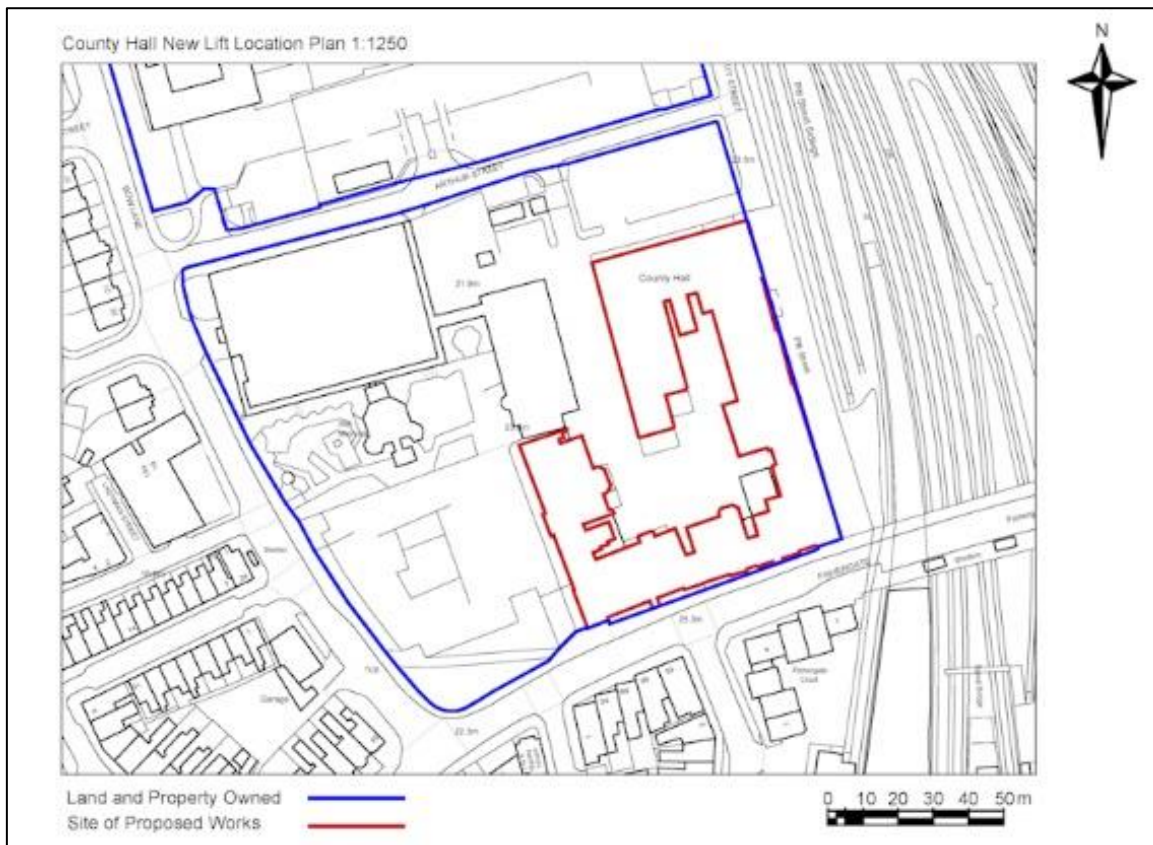
Jason Reynolds MSc MCIEEM

Lead Ecologist

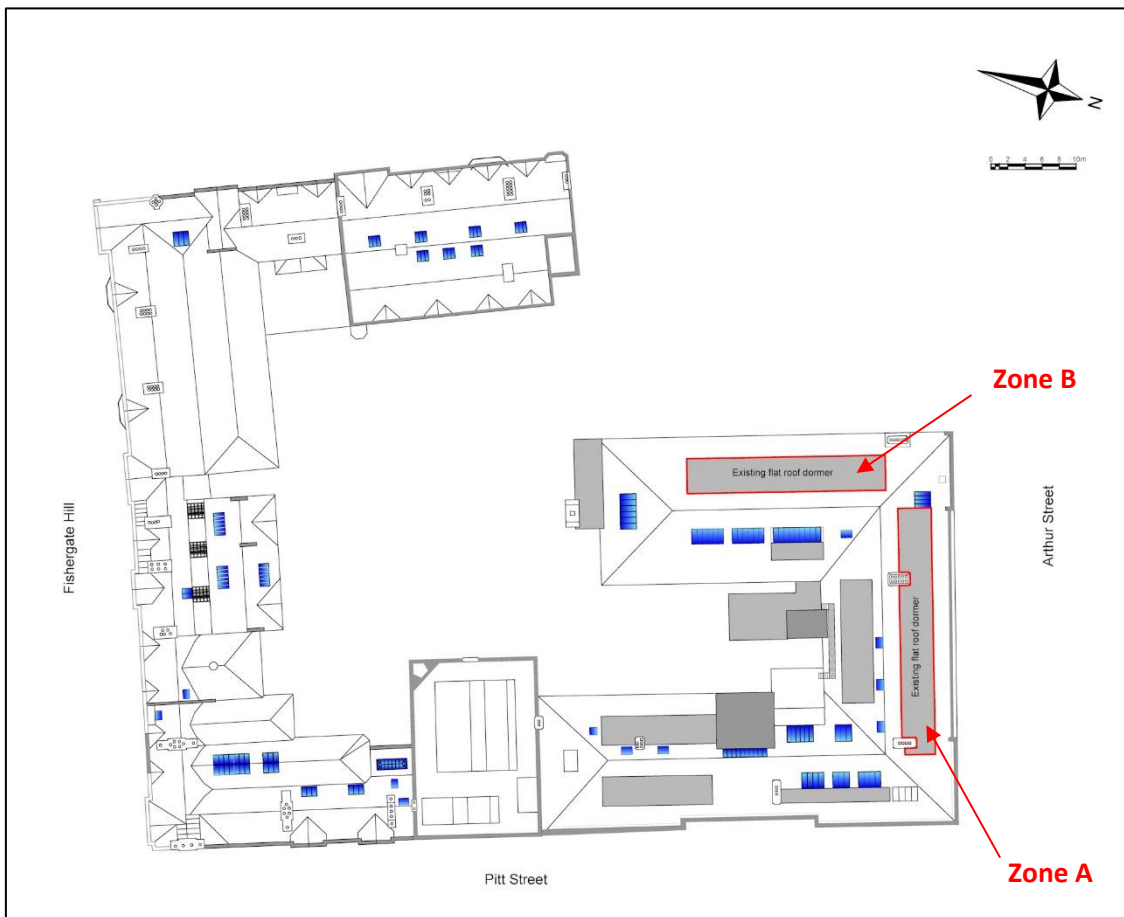
Plans and Photos



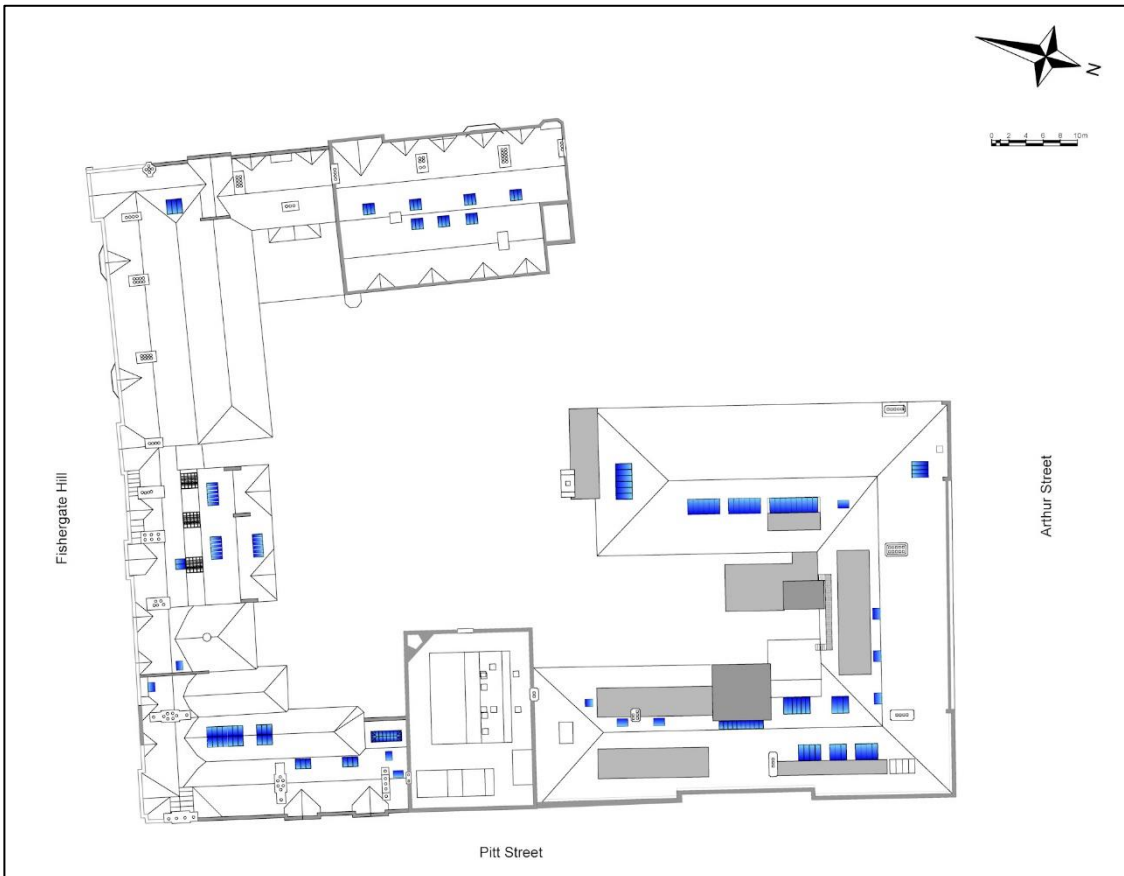
Plan 1: Site Location.



Plan 2: Site Plan.



Plan 3: Existing Roof Plan.



Plan 4: Proposed Roof Plan.



Plate 1: The ridges and roof pitches were intact with no PRFs.



Plate 2: The roofing felts were intact with no gaps suitable for bats.



Plate 3: The cladding of the dormers had no gaps and no potential for bats.



Plate 4: The offices in Zone A were open to the plaster board on the underside of the dormer roof.



Plate 5: Where the plaster boarding had been removed the water damage to the timbers was apparent – there were no bat roosting opportunities here.



Plate 6: The internal spaces in Zone B Site was open to the suspended ceiling.



Plate 7: The void above the suspended ceiling in Zone B was partially boarded preventing inspection of the underside of the roof.



Plate 8: The windows of the dormers were intact with no potential access from the outside for bats.

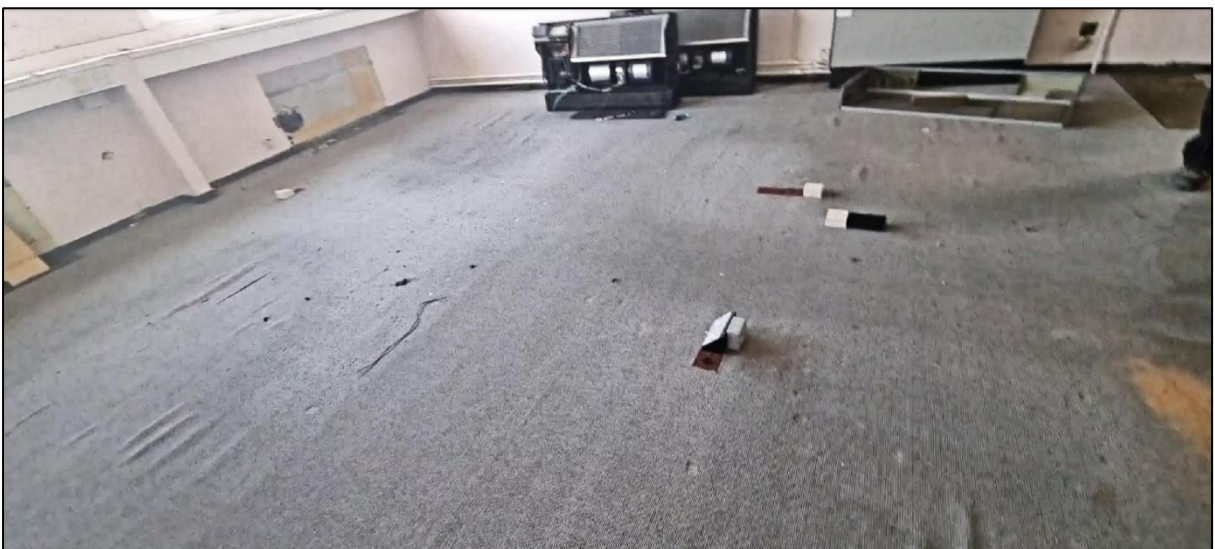


Plate 9: The surfaces in the spaces served by the dormer windows had no evidence of bat activity.



Plate 10: In the voids at the end of each roof, the voids were open to the tiles, the timbers and steel joists.



Plate 11: Where the mortar was missing there was potential access from outside the roof.



Plate 12: There were no gaps in the exposed brickwork of the adjacent roof voids and no roosting potential.



Plate 13: There was no evidence on the flat surfaces within the adjacent roof voids.

Table 1: Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites, using BCT Good Practice Guidelines (BCT 2023).

Potential Suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	Commuting and foraging habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels)	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats)
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats although an element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats although an element of uncertainty remains for bats with non-standard behaviour.
Low	A structure or a tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only limited potential (aligns with BS8596: 2015 Surveying for bats in trees and woodland (BSI, 2015).	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or 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 (e.g. temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels, levels of disturbance) and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established once 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 gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by a larger number of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions 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 broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourse and grazed parkland