Brooks Ecological
Grounded advice

Bat Suitability Assessment
Renshaw Street, Liverpool

Report reference: R-2516-01
March 2016

Report Title:	Bat Suitability Assessment Renshaw Street
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Summary Statement

The building has several potential access points, though the value of these for roosting is reduced due to the urban location of the building and the unsuitable internal spaces to which they lead. The building has been assessed as having *Negligible Suitability* for roosting bats.

Development is considered unlikely to impact upon on bats and no further survey is considered necessary in support of this conclusion.

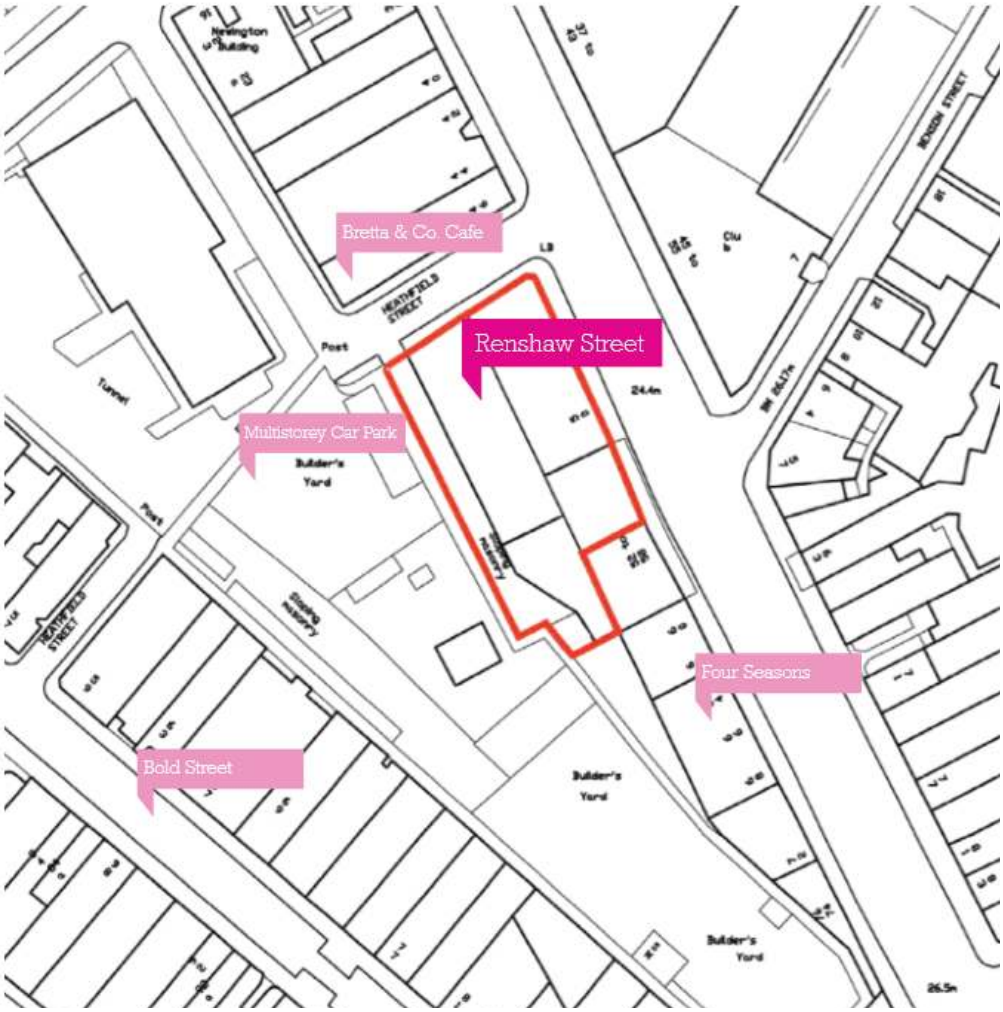
No other ecological constraints to development have been identified.

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by Knight Frank to carry out a Bat Roost Suitability Survey of 48 – 54 Renshaw Street, Liverpool, L1 2SJ (SJ 351 900).

2. The application site 'the Site' comprises commercial a property with office space above, in the centre of Liverpool.

Figure 1 Survey site boundary



3. The proposals are for the conversion of the building into a mixed use property with commercial space on the ground floor and residential space above. This falls within the footprint of the existing building, though extends up several additional floors through the existing roof, with works also affecting the exterior walls.

Figure 2 Proposals

Box 1 *Legal background*

Bats are afforded full protection under The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) plus amendments, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Under these Acts it is an offence among others, to recklessly kill, injure or disturb bats. It is also an offence to destroy or obstruct a roost even if bats are not in occupancy at the time of the action.

There are no defences against contravention of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 which means that it is important for detailed and well designed bat surveys to be carried out, prior to carrying out activities that may impact upon bat roosts such as demolition of buildings or removal of trees.

Where bats are found within a potential development site, a license from Natural England may need to be secured if works that could otherwise contravene legislation are to be carried out. These licences are only issued where Natural England is satisfied that works are unavoidable and would not have a negative impact on the favourable conservation status of bats. A Natural England license requires that the potential development site has full planning permission and that bats were a material consideration of the planning permission.

Box 2 *Bat roosts*

Bats roost in buildings and trees in different locations depending upon time of year and environmental factors such as position of the sun, proximity to heat sources and feeding grounds. The following types are commonly referred to:

Transitional roosts:

Bats frequently gather early in the season (March to April) before dispersing to summer roosts. Bats can be found in high numbers in these roosts for a very short period. Transitional roosts can also be found shortly before hibernation in August to October when bats (depending upon species) can gather in roosts not used earlier in the season.

Maternity roosts:

These are among the most important roosts and are normally occupied from May to August. Depending on the species involved, some maternity roosts can contain a very significant proportion of the local population.

Summer (non-breeding) roosts

Small groups of non-breeding female and male bats can gather in these roosts or bats from a local population may choose to roost individually. There are normally a large number of suitable locations for summer non-breeding roosts and these may be routinely used or used only on an occasional basis. Irregularly used summer roosts can be very hard to find without unreasonable survey effort.

Mating roosts

Around September bats will gather in roost to mate; these are often in different locations than summer or breeding roosts.

Hibernation roosts

As bats in hibernation roosts are highly vulnerable to disturbance and bats can be present in large numbers these are considered to be among the most important bat roosts. Many species of bats roost in large and nationally important hibernation roosts associated with underground sites, many of which are well known and protected. However, the most common bat in the UK (the common pipistrelle) is largely unaccounted for in winter but thought to disperse and roost individually or in small groups in thermally stable cracks and crevices in thick walls or trees.

Method

4. A thorough daytime inspection of the site was made in March 2016 in order to look for evidence of bats and assess suitability for roosting. Evidence of bats may take the form of droppings, feeding remains, live bats, dead bats, stains on masonry or timber from the oils in bats' fur and claw marks made by bats regularly roosting in the same location.

5. Bat roosting potential of the building was classified according to the following criteria set out in Table 2 drawn up in reference to the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines (2016).

Table 2 Bat Roosting Suitability of buildings

Suitability	Criteria
High	Buildings that have many areas suitable for roosting with a large number of potential access points. These are normally in sheltered locations, subject to low variation in temperature. Buildings with good potential could be used for a whole range of roosts including maternity roosts.
Moderate	Buildings with one or more features that could be attractive to bats and potentially support maternity roosts, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
Low	A structure with a low number of potential features which have the potential to support individual bats opportunistically, but lacking features capable of supporting maternity / hibernations roosts.
Negligible	Buildings which appear unsuitable for roosting bats due to clear lack of roosting spaces such as voids etc and/or absence of suitable access points.

Records

6. The local records provider (Biobank Merseyside) was asked to provide all records from within a 1km radius of the site. A total of 19 records were returned, two of which relate to roosts, seven to grounded bats, and two records of a bat 'in building', the remainder relate to general activity. Records are of common pipistrelle, brown long eared, indeterminate bat and pipistrelle species.

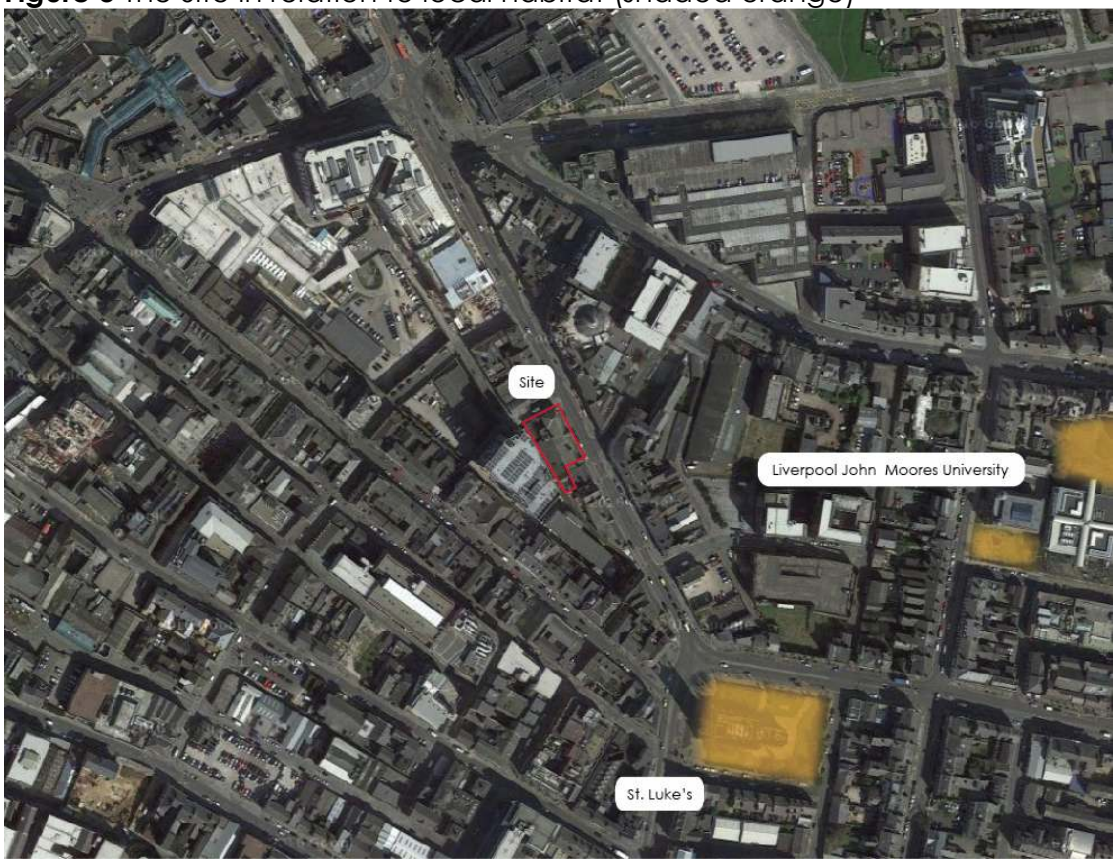
7. The nearest roost record is of single pipistrelle sp. at clayton square c. 400m north west dated 1992. Whilst the other roost record relates to a single brown long eared bat at Liverpool dental hospital c. 850m north east and dated 1991.

8. Records of general activity mainly relating to common pipistrelle are present but are indicative of low levels of bat activity, likely owing to a lack of suitable foraging habitat.

Survey Results

9. The Site is located in Liverpool City Centre within areas of dense, chiefly commercial, development. Some small isolated urban green spaces such as St. Lukes church gardens c. 200m to the south east, and landscaped areas of John Moores University further east provide some of the only, limited value habitat in the surrounding area. The Site is not linked to any areas of higher value habitat.

Figure 3 The Site in relation to local habitat (shaded orange)



10. The Site itself occupies several addresses along Renshaw Street, though comprises one main building which appears to date from the late 1800's or early 1900's. Several small extensions have been added to the rear of the property in more recent times.

Figure 4

General view of the property from Renshaw Street.

11. The walls are of a red brick construction and appear to lack a cavity. The front of the property has a stone capped parapet wall. The walls are in good condition, with mortar in place and intact. Occasional exceptions are noted to the rear of the property where some holes / cracks are found in damaged bricks however, given the well - lit urban nature of the Site and lack of wall cavity these are considered unlikely to be used for roosting.

12. The parapet walls to the front of the property along Renshaw Street reduce suitability for roosting in this area, whilst elsewhere around the eaves of the property the wooden fascia is well sealed to the wall tops.

13. Several slipped tiles just above the eaves to the rear of the property do allow access in this area however, the openness of the feature and visible water damage on the inside reduce the suitability for roosting.

Figure 5

Missing tiles above eaves.

14. To the rear of the main building the various extensions are comprised of single skin brick, concrete block or asbestos walls with simple metal or timber framed

asbestos or bitumen felt roofs, creating open internal spaces unsuited to roosting.

Figure 6

Extensions to the rear of the building.

15. There are some gaps between fascias and asbestos guards where they meet the walls, though these are shallow in nature and well-lit by an adjacent multi – storey car park, again reducing the suitability for roosting. Areas of bitumen felt roofing have several small lifted areas allowing water ingress in parts, these lifted areas are considered unsuitable for roosting.

16. The tiles of the main roof of the building are well sealed at the front of the property however to the back several are missing, or have slipped, creating large holes leading to significant water damage of the interior panelled roof. Similarly, though the ridges are well sealed in many places slipped tiles below may provide access in parts. Despite several access points to the roof the very damp interior makes it unsuitable for roosting and due to the severity of water damage this is likely to extend to adjacent areas such as the ridges.

Figure 7

Showing a large gap in the roof due to missing tiles and other slipped tiles to the rear.

Evaluation

17. The urban and well-lit location of the Site in central Liverpool, is isolated from areas of suitable habitat, greatly reducing the likelihood of bats roosting within the building. Though the building has been found to have several access points these lead to areas unsuitable for roosting such as the damp interior of the building, or open areas within the rear extensions. Elsewhere shallow crevices limited to the exterior are also considered unsuitable due to the well-lit exterior.

18. Given the above, the property is assessed as having *Negligible Suitability* for roosting, due to the general lack of suitable roosting areas.

19. Development is considered unlikely to impact upon bats and no further surveys are considered necessary in support of this conclusion.

20. No other ecological issues or constraints to development have been identified on Site.

Standard precaution

21. Even where surveys have been carried out which demonstrate absence of roosting, site workers should always be aware that bats can move into buildings previously found not to support them. On this basis work should proceed with care and if a bat is found during the development, works should stop immediately and Brooks Ecological be contacted to seek advice.

Enhancement

22. The UK government's guidance on nature conservation in relation to development (NPPF) makes it clear that opportunities should be sought through their planning system to use development as an opportunity to enhance sites for wildlife where possible.

23. The lack of habitat for bats in the area suggests that enhancement would be better targeted at species which are more likely to be found around the Site. The most meaning full enhancement therefore is best aimed at urban bird species and the development could be designed to include features to attract nesting birds. Species most likely to use new nest boxes should be targeted such as swift, starling or sparrow, boxes should be erected at the north and east elevations of the buildings in order to increase the likelihood of uptake. Nest boxes can be bespoke, and integrated within the design in order to minimise visual impacts on the finished construction. Alternatively, 'off the peg' nest boxes can also be integrated within the structure such as; the Ibstock swift nest brick (http://www.ibstock.com/eco-products/) or similar various integrated sparrow and starling boxes can be found at Bird Brick Houses (http://www.birdbrickhouses.co.uk/brick-nesting-boxes/integrated-bird-box/).

References

Bat Conservation Trust (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines

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

JNCC (2004) The Bat Workers Manual. 3rd Edition.

ODPM circular 06/05 (2005) Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/circularbiodiversity

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/contents/made