Arc Ecology

21 High Street, Cheadle - Protected Species Appraisal

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INTRODUCTION

Arc Ecology were commissioned to undertake a Protected Species Appraisal of an outbuilding at 21 High Street, Cheadle, Staffordshire to attempt to determine the presence/absence of any such species within the building prior to a planning application being submitted for demolition of the building.

Given the habitats present within the site, particular emphasis was given to the potential for the site to support roosting bats and nesting birds.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site lies off High Street, Cheadle at OSGR SK 008 433 and consists of the outbuilding attached to an empty dwelling property and the area of hard-standing where it is situated.

The building is of brick construction and is predominantly clad with asbestos sheeting. The roof is mainly corrugate asbestos with an area of corrugate plastic covering. Internally there is no roof void and a suspended ceiling is present throughout (see Photographs 1 and 2).

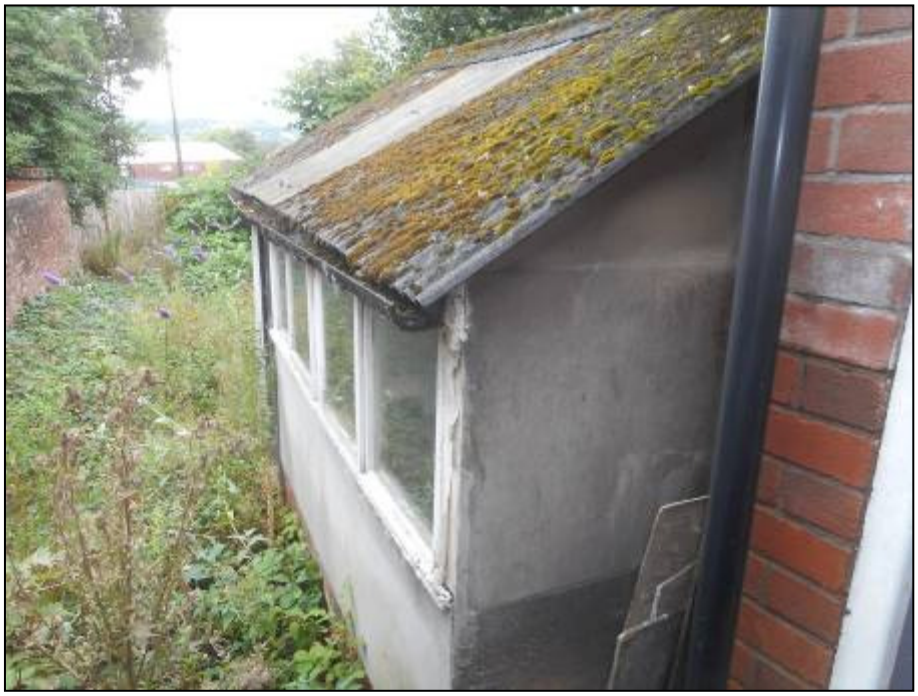
The area of hard-standing surrounding the outbuilding consists of concrete and slate chips with early succession vegetation including creeping thistle ((*Cirsius vulgare*), rosebay willow-herb (*Chamerion angustifolium*), cleavers (*Gallium aparine*), nettle (*Urtica daioca*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and buddleia (*Buddleia davidii*) (see Photograph 3).

Where the site adjoins the neighbouring property in the south-western side of the hard-standing area, there is a stand of the injurious weed Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). The plant is also present in the adjoining property (see Photographs 3 and 4).

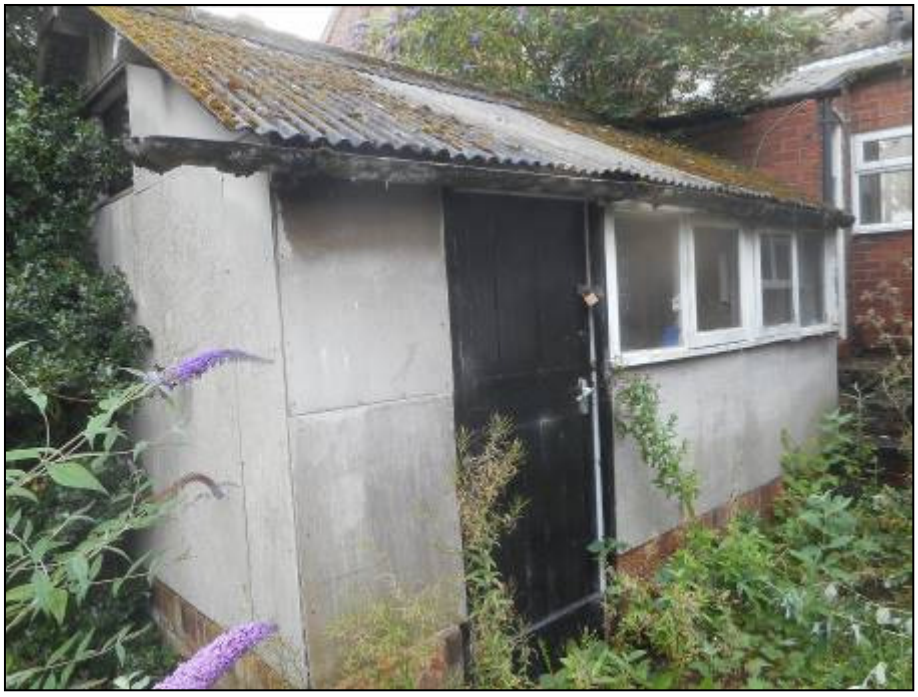
Habitats in the immediate vicinity of the site consist of built environment in all directions.

Habitats in the wider area consist of further built environment with pastoral fields beyond this to the north and south.

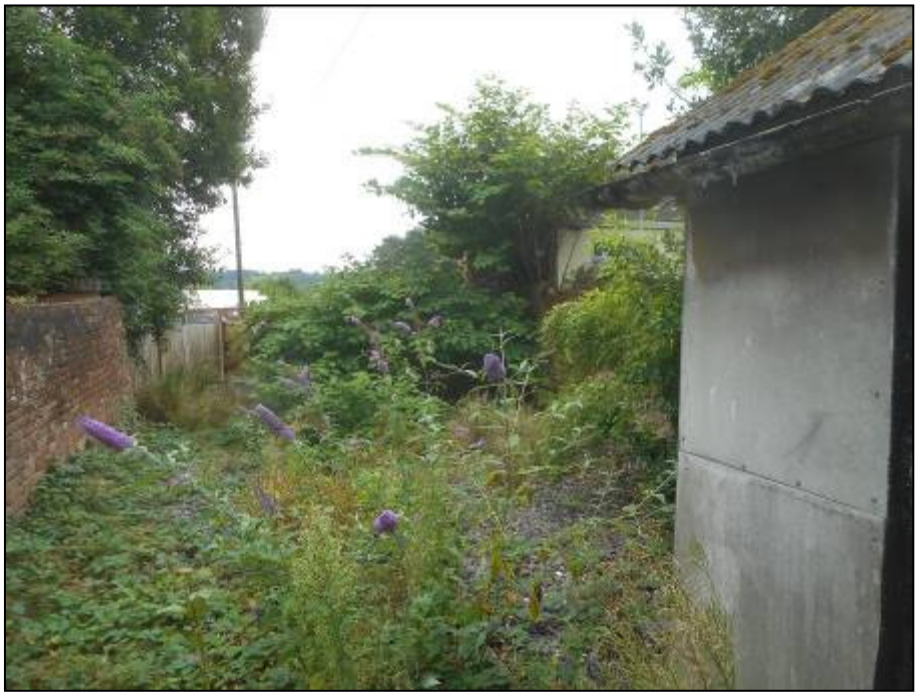
Photograph 1 - View of building from north-east



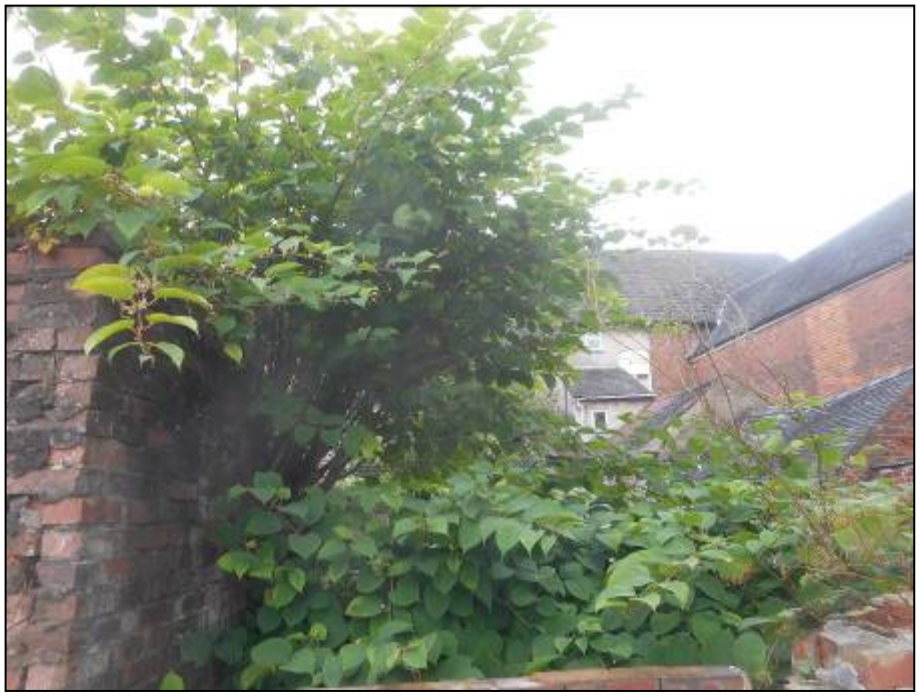
Photograph 2 - View of building from south-east



Photograph 3 - Building and area of hard-standing surrounding it



Photograph 4 - Stands of Japanese knotweed within site and adjoining property



METHODOLOGY

BATS

An appraisal of the building for presence/absence of bats was undertaken on the 22nd August 2016 by a suitably qualified ecologist and current holder of a Level II Class Licence to survey for bats.

An internal and external inspection of the buildings was carried out to attempt to prove presence/absence of the use of the buildings by roosting bats. Any evidence of the presence of bats, such as droppings; staining or scratch marks on brickwork and woodwork or the presence of the animals themselves was recorded. The appraisal was augmented by the use of ladders, a strong torch (Cluson 'Clulite' CB2), a Stagg Electronics 'Batbox Duet' heterodyne bat detector and a Provision 100 endoscope where required.

The survey was carried out in accordance with current guidelines given by Mitchell-Jones (2004) and the Bat Conservation Trust (2012).

NESTING BIRDS

The appraisal for nesting birds was undertaken following guidelines given in Bibby *et al.* (2000) and consisted of inspection of the buildings for evidence of current or historic nesting.

OTHER PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

The site was also assessed for its potential to support other protected and notable flora and fauna species and invasive plant species.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The proposed development of the site (as currently understood) is demolition of the outbuilding.

CONSTRAINTS

There were no constraints to the survey and all areas of the site were accessible.

SURVEY RESULTS

BATS

There was no evidence of the presence of bats found either externally or internally on the building during the survey. It is considered that the building has minimal potential to support roosting bats, and its construction makes it a generally unsuitable roosting place for bats.

NESTING BIRDS

There was no current or historic evidence of the presence of nesting birds found either externally or internally on the building during the survey, and no features suitable to provide access or nesting areas for birds were present on the building.

However, there is a holly bush immediately on the south-western corner of the building on the adjoining property that could potentially provide suitable habitat for nesting birds.

OTHER PROTECTED AND NOTABLE FLORA AND FAUNA SPECIES

There was no evidence of the presence of any other protected or notable flora and fauna species noted during the survey and there are no habitats present within the site considered suitable to support such species.

There were stands of Japanese knotweed present both within the site and also in the adjoining property.

The total size of the stands was estimated to be 5m x 5m ($25m^2$).

CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BATS

Bats and their habitats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000), and by the Habitats Regulations 1994 (as amended 2007). In summary, these make it an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct any place used by bats for breeding and shelter, disturb a bat, or kill, injure or take any bat.

In addition, seven bat species are on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and are listed as Species of Principal Importance under the provisions of the NERC Act 2006. The National Planning Policy Network document 'ODPM Circular 06/2005' gives guidance on the treatment of Species of Principal Importance and states that local authorities should ensure that they are protected from the adverse effects of development, where appropriate, by using planning conditions or obligations.

No evidence of the current or historic presence of bats was found on or within the building and due to its construction and the habitats surrounding it, the building is considered to be unsuitable for roosting bats.

Due to lack of evidence found, bats are not considered to pose a constraint to the proposed works and no further survey for bats with regard to this building is considered necessary.

The risk of any bats being present during any work on this building is considered to be negligible.

However, bats are highly mobile species and can inhabit buildings at any time. Due to this, contractors should be made aware of the fact, albeit slight, that bats may be present if work is undertaken during the active season for bats. In the unlikely event that a bat is found, particularly during work on the roof of the building, all work should cease and an appropriately licensed ecologist and/or Natural England should be contacted as it is possible that a European Protected Species licence would be required for work to continue.

NESTING BIRDS

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. In addition to this, for some rarer species (listed on Schedule 1 of the Act), it is an offence to disturb them while they are nest building or at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

A number of bird species are also listed as Species of Principal Importance under the provisions of the NERC Act 2006. The National Planning Policy Network document 'ODPM Circular 06/2005' gives guidance on the treatment of Species of Principal Importance and states that local authorities should ensure that they are protected from the adverse effects of development, where appropriate, by using planning conditions or obligations.

There was no current or historic evidence of the presence of nesting birds in the building, but there was a holly shrub immediately adjacent to the building that could potentially be used by nesting birds in subsequent seasons.

Due to this, if possible, any work on the building should avoid the nesting season for birds (February to September inclusive).

If this is not possible, then an appropriately experienced ecologist should conduct an investigation of the building to determine whether it is in use by nesting birds immediately prior to work commencing. If nesting birds are found to be present at this time, all work likely to cause disturbance should cease until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use.

INVASIVE FLORA SPECIES

Japanese knotweed is listed in Schedule 9 (Part II) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to plant or cause this introduced invasive plant to grow in the wild, effectively making it illegal to spread the plant during development operations. The plant has an extensive root system that can penetrate concrete, tarmac and masonry structures. It can regenerate from fragments of less than 1g and hence needs to be treated comprehensively to prevent potential future problems to development areas. Control measures can include chemical treatment, cutting or complete removal of all root and shoot material.

Material containing Japanese knotweed is classified as controlled waste and there are strict guidelines relating to its disposal. Guidance for the treatment of this species is given by the Environment Agency (2013).

All treatment for this species should be undertaken by a company specialising in removal of Japanese knotweed, and all works in the area should be avoided until such time as the treatment is completed to avoid spreading of plant material.

SUMMARY

- A protected species appraisal was carried out on a building at 21 High Street, Cheadle by Arc Ecology on the 22nd August 2016.
- No evidence of the presence of bats was found either externally or internally on the building and there was no indication that bats have used the building historically. No further survey for bats with regard to these buildings is considered to be necessary.
- However, bats can inhabit buildings at any time. As a precaution contractors should be made aware of the possibility, albeit slight, that bats may be present during work on the buildings.
- In the unlikely event that a bat is found during work on the building, all work should cease and an appropriately licensed ecologist and/or Natural England should be contacted as again, a European Protected Species licence may be required for work to continue
- There was no evidence of the current or historic presence of nesting birds either externally or internally on the building, and no features were present for such species.
- However, there was a nearby shrub that could potentially be used by nesting birds. Due to this, work on the building should ideally avoid the nesting season for birds (February to September inclusive).
- If this is not possible, then the site should be checked by an appropriately experienced ecologist immediately prior to work commencing to determine whether nesting birds are present.
- If nesting birds are found to be present at this time, all work likely to cause disturbance should cease until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use.
- Stands of Japanese knotweed were found within the site and within the adjoining property. Advice should be taken from a company specialising in the treatment of this species on how best to remove it and works in the area should be delayed until treatment of the plant is complete.

REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust (2012).

Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edition). Bat Conservation Trust, London.

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Bird Census Techniques (2nd Edition). Academic Press, London.

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