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HURST'S YARD AND LAND TO THE REAR

OFF BANK STREET

CHEADLE

ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

AND SURVEY FOR PROTECTED SPECIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flora and habitat types

- The site consists of a group of buildings, some built in the 1800's, with various outbuildings as well as a former allotment.
- No plants listed in Schedule 8 of the *WCA 1981* were recorded on the site.
- The flora was typical of a long used allotment which had become unused for about six years. The vegetation consisted mostly of bramble and volunteer trees which have seeded into the area.
- The boundaries consisted of a mixture mostly of poor fencing of various types with some hedgerows generally of hawthorn with a short length of older hedgerow in the south-east corner.
- The ground sloped gently towards the south and the lower parts were wetter with some rushes having become established. There were no ponds in the area nor close by.

Fauna

- There were no bat roosts in any of the buildings and there were no trees within or immediately adjacent to the site which could have contained bat roosts.
- No badgers occupied the area and no sign was found that they foraged over the site.
- There were no barn owls associated with the buildings and no other specially sensitive bird species were known to have territories within the study area. Nest sites are protected when the birds are nesting, (mid February to end of August). Any site clearance should avoid this bird nesting season.
- The habitat on site was not suitable for reptiles and there was no suitable habitat for amphibians and no evidence was found by searching the site.
- None of the habitats on site were likely to support invertebrates of particular note.

HURST'S YARD , OFF BANK STREET, CHEADLE

ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND SURVEY FOR PROTECTED SPECIES

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 It is proposed to re-develop the roadside older buildings and demolish the collection of single storey more modern buildings used as workshops. Also, it is planned to provide housing on the former disused allotment site. Because of these proposals, a survey for protected species within area was essential so that if any were found, appropriate mitigation can be planned within the planning process.

1.2 There was a possibility bats might be present in the various buildings. All species of bat are protected under Section 9 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (Schedule 5) as amended by the *Environmental Protection Act 1990, The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* (CROW 2000) and *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.* Indeed, roosts are protected at all times irrespective of whether bats are present. Also, the Bonn Convention gives further weight to the importance of protecting bats and the Habitats and Species Directive lists four (of Britain's 16 resident species) on Annex II requiring *inter alia* setting up Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to aid their conservation. The provisions contained within the WCA 1981 and Habitats Directive are embodied in *The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994*. The *UKs Biodiversity: Action Plans* lists all British bat species, which serves to highlight the requirements to protect nursery and hibernation roosts (which may be in the same site, e.g. a built structure) as well as foraging habitat. Roosts in buildings may be used by bats in any season.

1.3 It is conceivable that other protected species could live in the buildings including the specially protected barn owl or live in or visit the allotment area and searches would be needed to discover whether any occurred.

2. AIMS

2.1 To survey all the buildings for signs that bats may roost and other animals including Schedule 1 birds could nest on site (eg barn owl).

2.2 To search for any other protected species in the buildings and assess the adjacent former allotment habitat for any protected or rare species.

2.3 To consider what surveys may be required at other seasons if evidence suggested such work was necessary.

2.4 If protected species were discovered, then to provide options for mitigation and potential need for licensing operations from Natural England.

3. METHODS AND CONSTRAINTS

3.1 The field survey involved two specialists in assessing sites for protected species and was conducted on 10 April 2008. It involved searching the study area for species of both plants and animals and to assess the habitat types. This included identifying plant species, looking for signs of animals such as footprints, droppings and burrows.

3.2 The survey was conducted in spring, a season when various species of animals have emerged from hibernation and some plants may not have started growing. Due regard to this possibility was considered throughout the survey.

3.3 The buildings were surveyed externally for access sites for bats. Also, the internal areas were searched in detail for bat roosts and signs of bat occupation. The inspection involved searching all areas for signs of use by animals including the presence of scratches on the structures, obvious signs of wear, staining by oils and dust rubbed off fur, droppings etc and any place where bats might gain entry. If droppings were found they could be distinguished from birds or other animals which also utilise holes for roost or nest sites in barns. The survey used high-resolution binoculars and high-powered hand-held lighting as well as access equipment such as ladders.

4. SITE DESCRIPTION

4.1 The survey area was distributed around Ordnance Survey grid reference: SK 007 431.

4.2 The survey site consisted of a group of interconnected Victorian buildings with a frontage onto Bank Street and a series of mostly ramshackle single storey sheds currently used for various industrial businesses. Beyond the yard around which the buildings were distributed was a series of about 24 former allotments which had been used for over 100 years. Since abandonment about six years ago, scrub had developed over much of the area although the boundaries of the plots remained evident. The area was a mixture of trees, scrub and exhibited its history with a variety of vegetables and fruit bushes.

5. STATUTORY WILDLIFE DESIGNATIONS

There are no statutory wildlife designations within or near the study site.

6. FLORA - HABITAT SUMMARY

The survey has allowed broad characterisation of the habitat types found within the study area. The following notes summarise the main habitat types. Plant names follow Stace 1991. **See Appendix 1 for species lists.**

6.1 Hedges and boundaries

There were a variety of boundaries to the former allotments. To the west, gardens of houses along Meadow Drive had some walls or timber fences and in the south, tall oriental privet hedges. Along the southern boundary there were mostly hedges again dominated by privet with metal fences but the south eastern corner exhibited a short length of relict hedgerow consisting of hawthorn, hazel, ash, blackthorn and ivy. This area was wet with sedges and rushes. The eastern boundary with the Catholic School comprised a planted hawthorn hedge with some elder which has seeded in and a single birch tree, probably planted (this latter was the seed source for volunteer birch which was invading the allotments).

6.2 Former Allotments

Since abandonment of the allotments the expected invasion of colonists has occurred, principally, bramble with creeping thistle and trees including birch, sallow, goat willow, ash and sycamore. As would be expected, there were some species of fruit trees and shrubs, especially raspberry, and various herbs. There were water tanks of various kinds but none contained any amphibians as all were well above the ground. In all, there was no species or habitat which contained any rare or protected species apart for seasonally nesting birds.

6.3 Adjacent areas

Essentially the redundant allotments and range of buildings fronting Bank street were land locked within urban development but including a school to the east. There was no direct link with any wildlife areas.

6.4 Conclusions

The flora was unremarkable but was typical of abandoned allotments and a yard which had seen no special development for very many years. The south east corner was clearly much wetter as there were rushes and sedges growing in the former allotments.

7. FAUNA

7.1. **Bats**: There were two types of potential roost within the garden, trees and the four buildings including the house.

7.1.1 Trees: The trees on site were a mixture of species but virtually all were only a few years old and too small to be of any significance for bats. None had any holes or loose bark which could give shelter to bats.

7.1.2 Buildings: The buildings (8No.) were closely examined for the presence of bat roosts which might be used at any season.

Building 1

This comprised two buildings that were joined and were built at different times. Both were three storeys high, the east building was higher and had a cellar. The roofing material was small clay tiles on battens. In some areas there was the original lime mortar 'torching' on the underside of the tiles. The higher building had the facia board tight to the brickwork. On the south facing gable, one of the bargeboards was missing. In the past, pigeons had been present, old nests and eggs were present as well as a large amount of droppings, most of which had been removed. No bat droppings were found in these buildings.

Conclusion: there was no sign of bats visiting or roosting in the building.

Building 2

This building joins Building 1 over the arch of the main entrance into the site. It was constructed similarly to the east side of Building 1 and also, contained a cellar. It appeared as if this building was built in three stages because of the different architectural features. The roof protruded beyond the south gable wall potentially giving access for bats, but no droppings were found on the wall. The rear section and part of the front had been retiled and sarking felt had been installed; some was hessian reinforced bitumastic and in other areas it was modern plastic. There was no evidence of bats entering this building.

Conclusion: there was no sign of bats visiting or roosting in the building.

Building 3

A three storey building of similar construction to Building 1. The roof had been retiled and plastic sarking had been installed under the tiles. Bats were not roosting in this building.

Conclusion: there was no sign of bats visiting or roosting in the building.

Building 4

This was originally a dwelling house which was currently used for the sale and servicing of garden machinery. The adjoining east building was a workshop and the south double garage was used as a store for machinery. Not used by roosting bats.

Conclusion: there was no sign of bats visiting or roosting in the building.

Building 5

There were two parts to this building, the north end housed a carpentry business and at the southern end a car repair business. Walls were constructed of brick with an asbestos sheeting roof. The carpentry workshop was higher and the roof sheeting was of a different profile. Not suitable for roosting bats.

Conclusion: there was no sign of bats visiting or roosting in the building.

Building 6

A single garage built with brick and asbestos which was used as an electricians store.

Conclusion: there was no sign of bats visiting or roosting in the building.

Building 7

Built of brick walls with asbestos sheeting roof which was used for servicing and repairing motor vehicles.

Conclusion: there was no sign of bats visiting or roosting in the building.

Building 8

A wooden building with a curved corrugated metal roof.

Conclusion: there was no sign of bats visiting or roosting in the building.

7.1.3 **Conclusions for bats**

There was no sign of any visits to any of the buildings or trees within the site by bats, either recent or historic. Also, there were no nesting or roosting birds using any of these buildings. Therefore, work on these buildings could start at any time without the need of any mitigation.

7.2 **Badger**: The badger, which is known to live in the area and can forage in allotments is protected by the *Protection of Badgers Act 1992,* (essentially this prevents actions causing cruelty as it is not rare or threatened with extinction). There were no signs that badgers include the study site as part of their feeding range. There were no setts either current or disused.

7.3 **Other non-protected mammals**: A search was made of the entire site, turning and lifting a large number of scattered materials (eg concrete slabs, timber, carpets, plastic sheeting, glass) with the aim of finding animals beneath or traces which could be identified. As a result, there were field voles, common brown rat, woodmouse, common shrew and hedgehog all found living within or around the site. These are all common and widespread species and were expected within such a habitat.

7.4 **Amphibians**: There was no standing water on the site (apart from water butts) and none was found nearby. Therefore, without a breeding site amphibians, included the protected great crested newts were not expected to be present on the site. No amphibians were located in the extensive searches beneath the various materials scattered across the area.

7.5 **Reptiles**: Reptiles are protected from being killed under the *Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981*. However, there was no habitat on the site which was suitable for reptiles and there was no sign either of basking animals (the weather and season was ideal for observing basking reptiles) or of any seeking the many refuges which were examined. The soil type was unsuitable for reptiles as it was too 'heavy' and too wet.

7.6 **Birds**: The site had much dense bramble cover which was suitable for bird nesting as well as sources of food including shrubs and trees with berries. A few bird species were seen or heard but because the survey took place in early April the migrant species had not yet arrived for the principal nesting season of May and June. However, this site, being within the urban centre of Cheadle, could not be expected to contain any specially protected Schedule 1 species. Despite this all birds are protected from being killed and nests of all species are protected when in use.

However, it is perfectly legal to remove nests outside of the breeding season. The following is a list of those species recorded within the study site. All were relatively common and widespread species and could be expected in such an area, although as indicated, nationally, two species (song thrush and starling) have declined significantly recently.

Table 1Bird Species List observed on 9 April 2008

	Common name	Scientific name	
3	Wood pigeon	Columba palumbus	breeding on site - hedgerow
3	Collared dove	Streptopelia decaocto	breeding on site - hedgerow
3	Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes	breeding on site
2	Dunnock	Prunella modularis	breeding on site
3	Robin	Erithacus rubecula	breeding on site
3	Blackbird	Turdus merula	breeding on site
1	Song thrush	Turdus philomelos	breeding on site
3	Blue tit	Parus caeruleus	feeding
3	Great tit	Parus major	feeding
3	Jackdaw	Corvus monedula	feeding
1	Starling	Sturnus vulgaris	feeding
3	Greenfinch	Carduelis chloris	feeding
3	Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis	feeding

Key: **1 Red - indicates the most threatened species.**
2 Amber - indicates species undergoing moderate decline.
3 Green - indicates widely breeding species in UK not presently showing any significant population change.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Any site clearance should be completed between the end of August and mid February to avoid the bird nesting season. All birds are protected while building and occupying nests (*Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981*).

8.2 If any clearance is needed to be completed at other times, a suitably qualified bird specialist should make observations to ensure no nesting birds are present or if they are, to make observations on when nesting has been completed.

8.3 No special licensing is required for wildlife reasons.

9. REFERENCES

HMSO 1981 *Wildlife & Countryside Act*
HMSO (1997) The Hedgerow Regulations SI 1160
Stace, C. 1991. *New Flora of the British Isles*. Cambridge University Press



Looking south across the former allotments with extensive brambles and thistles



old 'water butts' and scattered materials



Areas with long grass



Various huts and former 'gardening' objects



Buildings frontage on Bank Street



Rear of Bank Street buildings





Typical workshop buildings in Yard

APPENDIX 1

PLANT LISTS

Location: **Hurst's Yard, Bank Street, Cheadle, Staffordshire** Date: 9 April 2008

A = abundant, D = dominant, F = frequent, L = local/locally, O = occasional, R = rare

	Scientific name	Colloquial name		Frequency	
Grasses, sedges and rushes					
	Agrostis stolonifera	Creeping bent		F	
	Agrostis capillaris	Common bent		O	
	Anisantha sterilis	Barren brome	O		
	Arrhenatherum elatius	Oat grass		F	
	Dactylis glomerata	Cocksfoot		A	
	Deschampsia cespitosa	Tufted hair grass		O	
	Festuca rubra	Red fescue		O	
	Juncus effusus	Soft rush		F	
	Poa pratensis	Meadow grass		O	
Higher Plants					
	Aegopodium podagraria	Ground elder		O	1 large clone
**	*Allium porrum*	Leek		R	
*	*Anchusa azurea*	Garden anchusa		O	
**	*Armoracia rusticana*	Horse radish		*R*	
	Calystegia sepium	Bindweed		F	
	Cardamine flexuosa	Greater bittercress		O	
	Chamerion angustifolium	Rosebay willow herb		A	
	Cirsium arvense	Creeping thistle		A	
	Cirsium vulgare	Spear thistle		R	
	Convolvulus arvensis	Lesser bindweed		A	
	Conyza canadensis	Canadian fleabane		O	
	Epilobium montanum	Broad-leaved willow herb		A	
**	*Fragaria x ananassa*	Strawberry		O	
	Galium aparine	Goose grass		A	
	Geranium robertianum	Herb Robert		F	
*	*Hyacinthoides hispanica*	Spanish bluebell		O	
	Iris pseudacorus	Yellow flag		R	
	Kickxia elantine	Fluellen		O	
	Myosotis arvensis	Common forget-me-not	F		
*	*Narcissus* hybrid	Daffodil	O		
	Picris echioides	Bristly ox-tongue	O		
	Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort plantain		O	
	Plantago major	Great plantain		O	
	Potentilla sterilis	Barren strawberry		R	
*	*Primula* hybrid			O	
*	*Pulmonaria officinalis*	Lungwort		R	
	Ranunculus acris	Meadow buttercup	A+LD		
	Ranunculus ficaria	Lesser celandine		O	
	Ranunculus repens	Creeping buttercup		O	
**	*Rheum* x *hybridum*	Rhubarb	F		
	Rumex acetosa	Common sorrel		O	
	Rumex obtusifolius	Broad-leaved dock		A+LD	
**	*Salvia officinalis*	Sage	R		
	Senecio jacobaea	Ragwort	R		
	Sonchus asper	Prickly sowthistle	O		
	Stachys sylvatica	Wood woundwort		F	
	Symphytum officinale	Comfrey	O		
	Tanacetum parthenium	Feverfew		R	

	Taraxicum officinale	Dandelion		A +LD	
	Trifolium repens	White clover		R	
	Trifolium pratense	Red clover		R	
	Tussilago farfara Coltsfoot		F		
	Urtica dioica	Stinging nettle		A	
*	*Veronica persica*	Persian speedwell	O		

Trees and Shrubs

*	*Acer pseudoplantanus*	Sycamore		O	
	Betula pendula	Silver birch		F	
	Cornus sanguinea	Dogwood		R	
	Corylus avellana	Hazel		R	
*	*Cotoneaster* sp			R	
	Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn		LD	
*	*Forsythia* hybrid			O	
	Fraxinus excelsior	Ash		F	
	Hedera helix	Ivy		LD	
	Ilex aquifolium	Holly		R	
*	*Leycesteria formosa*	Himalayan honeysuckle		R	1 bush
*	*Ligustrum ovalifolium*	Garden privet		R	
*	*Malus domestica*	Cultivated apple		R	1 tree
	Prunus domestica	Wild plum		O	
*	*Prunus laurocerasus*	Laurel		R	
	Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn		O	
	Quercus robur	Oak		R	1 tree
	Ribes uva-crispa	Gooseberry		F	
	Ribes nigrum	Blackcurrant		F	
	Rosa sp	Dogrose	O	rootstocks of former cultivated rose hybrids	
	Rubus fruticosus agg	Bramble	A+LD		
	Rubus idaeus	Raspberry		F	
	Salix caprea	Goat willow		A	
	Salix cinerea	Common sallow		O	
	Salix fragilis	Crack willow		O	
*	*Salix x pendulina* Weeping crack-willow		R	1 tree	
	Sambucus nigra	Elder		F	
*	*Sorbus sp*	Hybrid whitebeam		O	
	Ulex europaeus	Gorse		R	1 bush

*** Species not native to Britain**
**** Garden food species**