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Non-licensed Working Method Statement for bats at Hinckley and District Hospital, Mount Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire, LE10 1AG

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Christchurch

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Non-technical summary

Introduction

CGO Ecology Ltd (CGO) was instructed by WT Partnership (the Client) to develop a Non-licensed Working Method Statement (NLWMS) for bats for works at Hinckley and District Hospital Mount Rd, Hinckley LE10 1AG (centred on grid ref SP 42941 93759). Proposals currently include demolition of some buildings and the construction of a new facility. The Local Planning Authority is Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. This document is based on the findings of bat activity surveys undertaken by CGO in 2023.

Methodology

Works will be governed by this document and subject to on-site tool-box-talks, the presence of a suitably experienced and qualified ecologist(s) for certain activities, and timing and activity restrictions associated with seasonal constraints and artificial lighting.

Mitigation and enhancement recommendations

Works will be subject to measures detailed in this document with enhancement measures fully nuanced and incorporated at the detailed design stage. Works will be governed by general best practice methods in addition to the specific methods detailed. Novel structures and lighting should be bat-sensitive and designed in accordance with both ILP and BCT guidance.

Bats can roost at any time and novel roosts can develop each season; therefore, this report and its conclusions remain valid only if works are undertaken prior to May 2024. After this, further surveys and/or recommendations may be required.

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1. Introduction

CGO Ecology Ltd (CGO) was instructed by WT Partnership (the Client) to develop a non-licensed Working Method Statement (NLWMS) in relation to bats for works at Hinckley and District Hospital, Mount Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire, LE10 1AG (centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference SP 42941 93759). This follows an updated Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) and nocturnal activity surveys undertaken by CGO in 2023 (Hawthorn, 2023). A previous PRA was undertaken by Geosphere Environmental Ltd (Hood, 2019). Proposals currently include the demolition or removal of certain buildings for enabling works and the construction of a new structure on current amenity grassland. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) is Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council.

Works covered by this document include the removal and soft strip of features with bat potential such as (but not limited to) roof tiles, cladding, soffits, and barge boards.



Figure 1 – Site plan and boundaries (provided by Client).

Bats are the only true flying mammals. UK species are exclusively insectivorous and have complex social behaviours, ethology, and ecology, governed largely by seasonal changes. These seasonal changes include the core maternity period (May to end of August), periods of activity (September), swarming (October to November) torpor (often called hibernating - between November and February/March), and early season activity (March/April).

All species of UK bat and their roosts are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended) and the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). Bats roost in a variety of features, both natural and anthropogenic. Commuting to/from these roosts to favourable feeding grounds is governed by habitat characteristics, and interwoven life-stage factors (particularly for females nursing young). Bats use ultrasonic calls to detect insect prey in the air and on surfaces.

The standard industry guidance is published by the Bat Conservation Trust: *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)* (Collins, 2023). These updated guidelines were released in September 2023, and replaced the 3rd edition released in 2016.

Similarly, updated bat guidance has been issued recently by the lighting industry (ILP, 2023), superseding the 2018 version.

2. Methodology

2.1. General Methods

In the event of a bat or bat roost being discovered at any stage, works will pause, and Natural England be consulted.

An Ecological Permit to Work (EPTW – see Appendix) will be issued for tasks requiring the presence of the ecologists. The EPTW will include reiteration of the tasks at hand and be accepted as understanding of the ecological constraints.

All works should be governed by best practice construction measures to limit the spread of dust, waste, and noise. The impacts of these and other construction by-products on ecological receptors, such as (but not limited to) retained vegetation or retained buildings, should be minimised through a Precautionary Methods of Works (PMW).

Works detailed in the document are subject to the presence of a suitably experienced and qualified ecologist unless otherwise agreed with said ecologist.

Equipment storage and lay-down areas and the placement of fences should be done in agreement with the ecologist. These should be contained on hard standing and, as far as practicable, in areas away from the habitats suitable for protected species.

Water waste and run off should be managed to eliminate the impact on surrounding ecological receptors.

Any new Artificial Lighting at Night (ALAN) should be governed by current guidance (ILP, 2023) and works should aim to remove lighting issues by way of restricting nighttime working unless absolutely necessary. If security lighting is required, the extent and location must be agreed with the ecologists.

It is imperative that any potential areas of ingress to bats (or other protected species) must be covered overnight (unless otherwise agreed with the ecologists) and remain covered for any extended periods of time if works are not being undertaken at that situ. This includes ground excavations for ground-dwelling species.

Works must also avoid the bird nesting season. Works during the active season of March to August (inclusive, weather and temperature dependent) require a nesting bird check by the ecologist to confirm the absence of nesting birds. This check would be valid for no more than 48 hours prior to work commencing. If an active nest is discovered, works in that area must be halted, and a stand-off of at least 10m in radius be taped off until any chicks have fledged. For high-impact activities or for certain species a wider stand-off may be needed.

If any other protected species or ecological constraints are encountered during the works, the ecologists should be consulted while work pauses. If not on site, the ecologist can advise by phone and/or email.

2.2. Timings

Works concerning potential bat features will be programmed for outside of the bat maternity season; the appropriate time is therefore considered to be between October and mid-April (inclusive, weather and temperature dependent).

These works will only commence during times of suitable weather conditions. This will avoid cold snaps, high winds, rain, excessive heat etc.

If works pertinent to bats have not begun prior to May 2024, two options are available. Firstly, additional activity surveys may be required prior to commencing works to confirm the level of activity on site and to update this document. Alternatively, if planning is granted but works are not programmed until after May 2024, activities pertinent to bats such as stripping potential bat roosting features (tiles, soffits, barge boards etc) can be undertaken prior to mid-April 2024, with remedial actions, such as using strong weather resistant construction grade polythene to re-cover the roof area and safeguard as much as possible against bat ingress. The latter option requires periodic monitoring by the ecologists of the status of the prevention measures to ensure they are sound, and therefore free of bats, particularly immediately before the remaining works occur.

The duration of the validity of any searches undertaken by the ecologists will depend on multiple factors specific to each scenario. Searches may require repeating if specific works are not undertaken within the allotted time.

2.3. Order of Works

Where feasible, the program should include installation of mitigation and enhancement measures prior to the commencement of works (See section 2.8 below).

The temporary (demountable) building to the west of the site should be removed first, followed by the staged removal of the other buildings.

2.4. Toolbox Talk

A Toolbox Talk (TBT) will be given by the ecologist to all involved in the pertinent practical works. This will be based on the content of this report and a copy will be signed by all to confirm understanding.

The TBT will be given immediately prior to the commencement of works and will be repeated for any new operatives arriving during the pertinent works. The TBT will highlight a safe working practice, methods, and information applicable to avoiding injury/death of bats and minimising any possible disturbance. Nesting birds, and any other ecological receptors deemed appropriate, will also be highlighted within the TBT.

The EPTW will then be issued.

A hard copy of the TBT will be available in welfare cabins.

2.5. Pre-Works Search

The ecologist will conduct a visual search prior to the commencement of works, this will be of the structures to be demolished or removed that day with a focus on the roofing area to be removed. Where possible, this will include searching for droppings of bats that might indicate a recent entry between the roofing materials. An endoscope will be used to search within any gaps present.

2.6. Material Removal

Works will primarily be by hand and undertaken in a linear and congruent manner exposing sections prior to moving on. No isolated pockets of material should be removed unless agreed with the ecologist. The licenced ecologist will watch the careful removal of all materials with the potential harbour bats. If more than one gang is present, an additional suitably experienced and qualified ecologist will be required (one ecologist per gang).

The demountable building, if being demolished prior to removal, will be checked by the ecologists and the roof area will be removed in sections. This can be done using plant machinery at the ecologist's discretion but still follow a linear and congruent pattern of removal.

Works to the other buildings with tiled roofs will be undertaken by hand, initially from a scaffold to avoid the compression of the roof tiles onto the roof lining. Removal will be again undertaken in a linear and congruent pattern. Once an area of tiles has been cleared and agreed as such by the ecologist; this roof area can then be stepped upon if required.

The roof tiles will be slowly and carefully lifted by hand to avoid injury to, or the crushing of, a bat if found within the roof materials.

The tiles will be turned to expose the under-surface of the tile (or other material) to inspect for any bat that might be clinging to the tile. Tiles will be stored off the roof to avoid compression of tiles on other areas of the roof. This process will be repeated with the soffits and barge boards.

Buildings with cladding to be removed will follow the similar technique of removing the cladding by hand and rotating for the ecologist to visually check for bat presence.

Any lead flashing or surrounds will be carefully peeled back and turned upwards to check beneath for inspection by the ecologist before removal.

Once the tiles and other materials have been removed, the roofing felt can be cut to enable works, if required.

Upon completion of the above stages, the remaining demolition can occur. The presence of an ecologist for this stage will be agreed dependent on the findings during the roof removal.

2.7. Contingencies

Asbestos presence may limit the accessible loft areas. The ecologist will be advised by the client on the health and safety requirements at each stage.

In the unlikely event that a bat is found, its location will immediately be covered with builders' plastic or if able, the replacement of the materials just removed. Natural England will immediately be consulted on a licence requirement and next course of action. Should it be safer to move the exposed bat, it will be placed in a soft cloth bag and the licenced ecologist will place the bat carefully within a suitable bat box.

Batboxes kept on site for this eventuality will comprise 1 general bat box (such as a Schwegler 2F or a Harlech Woodstone) and 1 hibernation bat box (such as a Vivara Pro multichambered bat box or a 1FW Schwegler Bat Hibernation Box). These can then remain on site following works as enhancements.

2.8. Enhancements

A detailed list of enhancements is beyond the scope of this document, and should be issued separately. However, it is recommended to use the above-mentioned bat boxes, and to consider in the landscape masterplan the strategic use of night flowering plants and pollinator attracting trees. The aim would be to preserve bat commuting potential at the western extent of the site (behind the current demountable building), and to increase foraging habitat.

3. References

Collins, J. (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. 3rd Edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Collins, J. (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. 4th Edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Hawthorn, D. (2023) *Updated Bat Preliminary Roost Assessment and associated nocturnal surveys for Hinckley and District Hospital, Mount Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire, LE10 1AG*. CGO Ecology Ltd, Christchurch.

Hood, G. (2019) *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Hinckley & District Hospital 3866, EC, AR/PEA/GH, KL/04-07-19/V*. Geosphere Environmental Ltd, Brightwell.

ILP (2023) *Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night. Guidance Note 08/23*. London & Institution of Lighting Professionals, Rugby.

Appendix

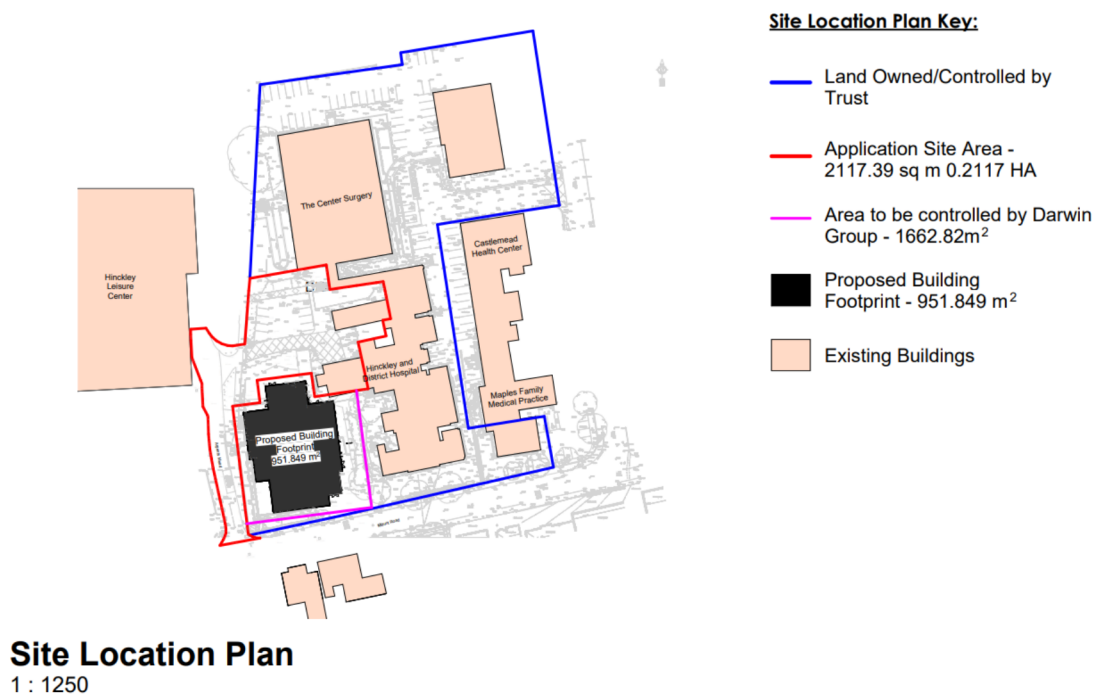
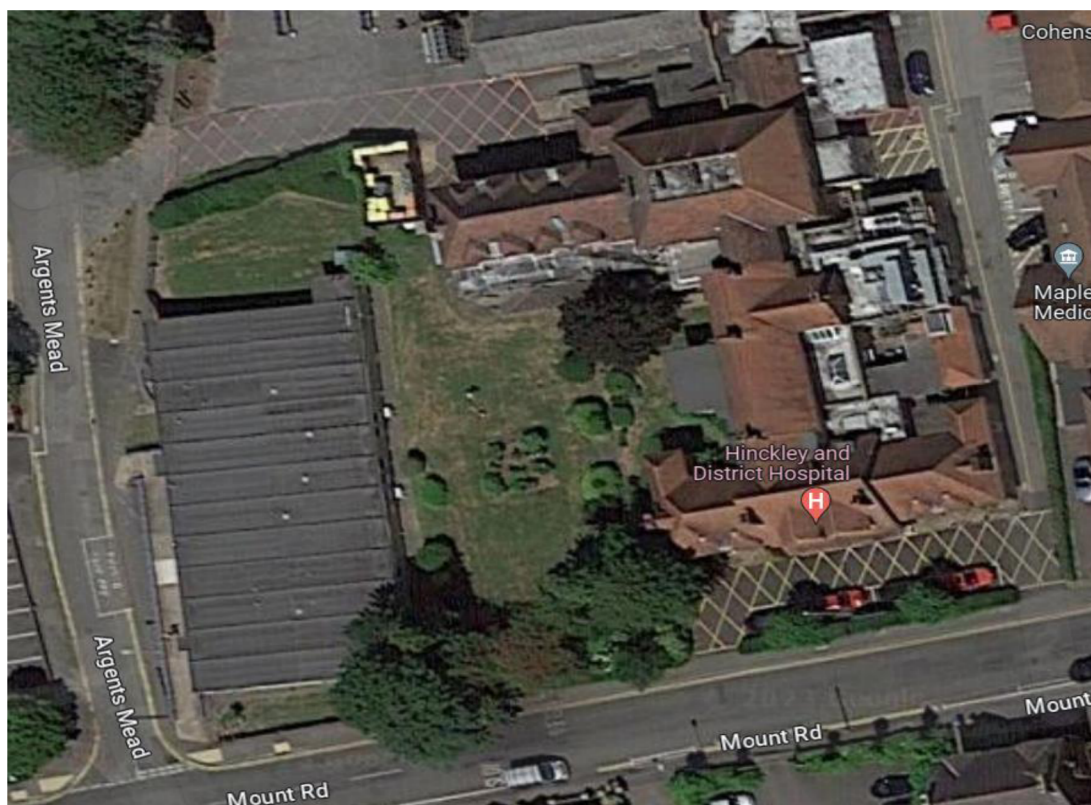


Figure 2 – Site location plan as provided by Client (created by Darwin Construction).

EPTW REFERENCE:

TASK:	PLANNED START:	
	PLANNED END:	
LOCATION:	START Location:	
	END Location:	
PLAN/DRAWING REF. (ATTACH TO PERMIT):		



TASK MAY PROCEED WITH NO ADDITIONAL MEASURES BEING IMPLEMENTED	☐	SEE SECTION 5
TASK REQUIRES ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED	☐	SEE SECTION 3 & 4

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:							
PROTECTED SPECIES	☐	INNS	☐	LAND / WATER	☐	BIOSECURITY	☐
ARCHAEOLOGY	☐	ACCESS	☐	WASTE	☐	NEIGHBOURS	☐
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS REQUIRED:							
1) 2) 3) 4)							
WATCHING BRIEF REQUIRED:							

ECOLOGIST	☐	ECOW	☐	
ARCHAEOLOGIST	☐	OTHER:		

PERMIT EXPIRES:	
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<i>I CONFIRM THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL MEASURES LISTED ABOVE ARE APPROPRIATE.</i> NAME: SIGNATURE: DATE:	<i>I CONFIRM THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL MEASURES LISTED ABOVE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED.</i> NAME: SIGNATURE: DATE: / /
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<i>I CONFIRM THAT THE TASK IS COMPLETE:</i>		
NAME:	SIGNATURE:	DATE: / /

[illegible]