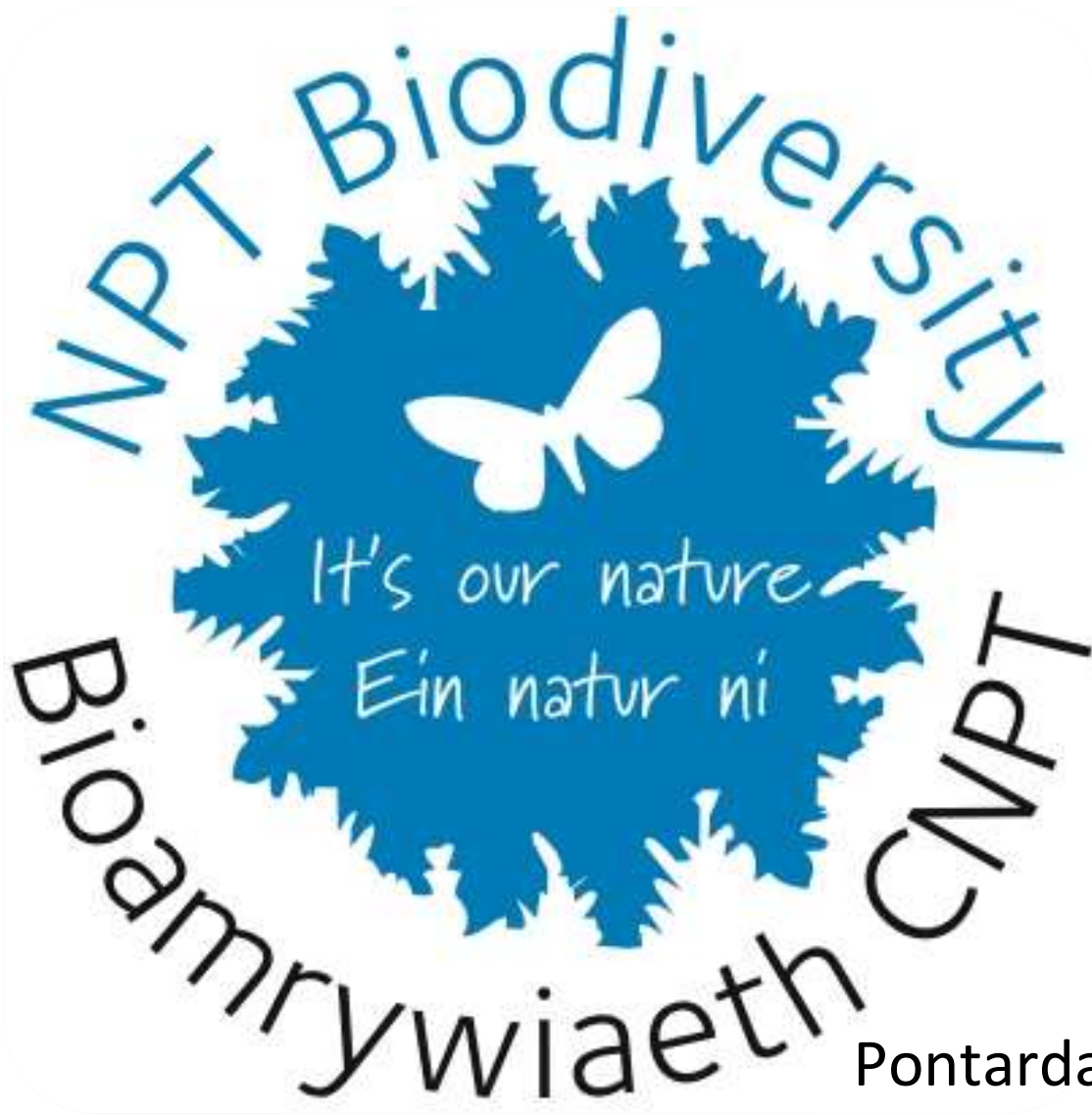




Pontardawe Swimming
Pool
Bat Survey Report
Date: September 2024

by

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DECLARATION

The information, advice and opinions which we have prepared and provided is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the CIEEM's Code of Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Price'.

Megan Price

Ecologist (Planning & Consultancy)

The following report is considered a reasonable and true representation of the ecological situation on the site assessed. The report is however just a snapshot assessment therefore the authors are unable to guarantee that all biodiversity interest has been identified. In addition, if works are not undertaken, a programmed re-assessment will be required. The survey information is considered applicable for two years from the date of the survey.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pontardawe Swimming Pool has been closed to the public due to safety concerns and is due to be demolished.

A bat survey was commissioned due to its low potential to support roosting bats and location adjacent to a park which has moderate potential to support foraging and commuting bats.

Two dusk emergence surveys were carried out on the 27th June 2024 and the 9th September 2024. No bats were recorded roosting in the structure. There was a constant low level of Common and Soprano Pipistrelle foraging activity throughout the surveys. Noctule bats were also picked up commuting across the site.

There will be no constraint to the proposed demolition of the structure from bats. However, due to the transitional nature of bats, it is recommended that the demolition is carried out during winter and a toolbox talk is provided to the contractor. If bats are found at any stage during the demolition, works will stop and NRW contacted.

3 bat boxes will be installed on land owned by NPTC, either on the site of the swimming pool, or adjacent in King George V Park to provide a biodiversity enhancement.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SITE LOCATION

At the time of writing, Pontardawe Swimming Pool is proposed for demolition due to health and safety concerns. The Pool has been shut to the public.

The site Location is shown on the aerial photograph below (Fig 1). Grid reference for the centre of the building is SS272205, 204251.



Figure 1 Pontardawe Swimming Pool Location

The building is located in the middle of Pontardawe in an urban setting. Adjacent to the building is King George V Park and the other sides of the building are surrounded by residential houses and gardens.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

At the time of writing, the swimming pool is going to be demolished and there are no set plans for what will happen to the site once the building is demolished.

1.3 LEGISLATION AND POLICY

1.3.1 ENVIRONMENT (WALES) ACT 2016

Under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Environment Act), NPTC has a statutory duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of its functions.

Section 7 (S7) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 lists habitats and species that the Welsh Government consider are of key significance to sustain and improve biodiversity in Wales.

1.3.2 LDP POLICY EN6

This policy states:

Policy EN 6

Important Biodiversity and Geodiversity Sites Development proposals that would affect Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites (RIGS), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs), sites meeting SINC criteria or sites supporting Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) or S42 habitats or species will only be permitted where:

1. They conserve and where possible enhance the natural heritage importance of the site; or
2. The development could not reasonably be located elsewhere, and the benefits of the development outweigh the natural heritage importance of the site.

Mitigation and/or compensation measures will need to be agreed where adverse effects are unavoidable.

NPTCBC usually requires that the area of replacement mitigation/compensation, for any habitat loss, is to be provided at a 2:1 ratio; however, a smaller area can be sufficient, provided it can be demonstrated that the mitigation habitat is of higher quality than what was previously present, and that it can be preserved and managed in perpetuity.

1.4 SCOPE OF SURVEY

The survey comprised a walkthrough of the proposed development site by an NPTC Ecologist to determine any ecological constraints to the development. The objectives of the survey were to obtain sufficient data to:

- Identify any protected habitat and species present/likely to be present that may pose potential constraints to redevelopment of the site e.g. birds, reptiles, or mammals in and around the surrounding area;
- Assess whether the proposed development would be likely to have an impact upon those species;
- Identify potential bat activity levels and use of buildings on site e.g. roosting within the buildings identified and/or foraging in and around the surrounding area;
- Assess whether the proposed redevelopment of the buildings on site would be likely to have an impact upon those species, if present;
- Recommend a mitigation strategy (where possible) for those habitats/species present that pose a constraint to the redevelopment of the site; and
- Identify any opportunities for enhancement of the ecological value of the site.

1 BASELINE SURVEY RESULTS

1.1 BATS

1.1.1 LEGISLATION

In the U.K. all bat species and their roosts are legally protected, by both domestic and international legislation (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) & Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended)).

It is an offence to:

- deliberately take, injure or kill a wild bat
- intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats
- damage or destroy a place used by bats for breeding or roosting (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time)
- possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat of a species found in the wild in the UK (dead or alive) or any part of a bat
- intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

1.1.2 PRELIMINARY SURVEY METHOD

An external building assessment was undertaken which assessed the suitability of the building to support roosting bats.

Externally the building was surveyed, with the aid of binoculars where necessary, for evidence of access points and droppings, grease marks and urine staining. The buildings were examined in order to identify features that are favoured by bats as roosting sites, including pitched roofs with a void/loft, behind fascia boards and soffits, in and through gaps around windows and hanging tiles or weatherboarding. Any potential access points are recorded, along with any external physical evidence of use by roosting bats, such as urine staining and/or droppings around access points, on windows and on window ledges.

An assessment of the potential of the building to support nesting birds was carried out at the same time.

1.1.3 SURVEY RESULTS

Given the use of the structure an internal inspection of roost voids was not carried out due to access being limited due to suspended ceilings not being safe to crawl on and the basement is also not safe due to the pool failures.

When looking at the structure it appears to be divided up into three parts. Two parts are metal clad flat roof with the middle section being slightly lower and constructed of brick with a flat roof lined with felt. PVC fascias/soffits are present on the NW elevation of this section however they are tight with minimal access points. The SE elevation does not have the PVC soffits and there is a slight gap which has low roosting potential.

The metal cladding does have an overlap at roof level; however this is assessed as having negligible/low potential due to the fluctuating temperatures which are present in metal sheet buildings.

There is a lot of artificial lighting on the site on the NW and S aspects as well as light spill from the urban environment. The North and East aspects of the site are a lot dark due to the adjacent park not being lit up and there is a perfect commuting corridor down the SE aspect of the site.

 Overview of north-western elevations showing the three distinct sections of the building.	 SW elevation showing brick construction
 South elevation showing metal structure.	 Overview of NW elevation showing artificial lighting at night

Table 1. Photos highlighting construction of Pontardawe Swimming Pool

1.1.4 ACTIVITY SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The surveys were conducted in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines (Collins J. 2023). The building was assessed as having low to moderate potential to support roosting bats. Two emergence surveys were carried out in 2024.

The first dusk emergence survey was undertaken on the 27th of June 2024 (by Marie Fowler, Megan Price, Laura Palmer and Josella Hunt) in weather conditions conducive to bat activity i.e. little or no rain and temperatures in excess of 10° C. The emergence survey began approximately 15 minutes before sunset and continued for approximately 2 hours after sunset. The four surveyors were positioned strategically around the building so to have a clear view of the building.

The second dusk emergence survey was undertaken on the 9th September 2024 (by Marie Fowler and Megan Price) in weather conditions conducive to bat activity i.e. little or no rain and temperatures in excess of 10° C. The emergence survey began approximately 15 minutes before sunset and continued for approximately 2 hours after sunset. 6 Guide TK612 Thermal Imaging Cameras were positioned to cover all aspects of the structure. The recorded footage was analysed in the office to ensure that no emergences occurred that the surveyors on site missed. The two surveyors were each responsible for 3 cameras and patrolled up down opposite elevations periodically to ensure all the cameras were still recording.

Each surveyor was equipped with an Anabat Scout Full Spectrum Bat Detector which records the calls to be later analysed.

1.1.5 LIMITATIONS

There were no limitations to the survey as it was carried out at the correct time of year in conducive weather conditions.

Recording NVAs were not used for the emergence survey in June due to them not being in stock at the supplier. However, the survey was repeated in September with full coverage of the buildings with thermal cameras, so it is not felt that the lack of recorded footage in the first survey was a constraint to the overall results.

1.1.6 ACTIVITY SURVEY RESULTS

27th June 2024

Moderate levels of bat activity were recorded on site during the emergence survey. No bats emerged from the structure.

Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) bats were observed foraging along the dark corridor to the NE of the site with the occasional pass across the car park.

Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) bats were observed at the start of the survey commuting across the site.

9th September 2024

No bats were observed emerging from the building during the survey and the same moderate level of bat activity was recorded at the site as the previous survey with Common pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Noctule bats all recorded during the survey.

See Appendix 4 for the location of the thermal imaging cameras. No bats were observed emerging from the building upon review of the footage.



Figure 2 - Example of thermal camera position and view of structure

1.1.7 CORE SUSTENANCE ZONES

It is not anticipated that these works will have any impact on the core sustenance zones of the local bat populations in Pontardawe due to it being such a small footprint, the works being to a building that doesn't support bat roosts, and it not affecting any significant areas of vegetation that would support important foraging resources.

1.1.8 BIRDS

Legislation: Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) affords general protection to all species of wild birds whilst nesting.

No birds were observed nesting in the structure. Barn owl and Tawny owls were heard calling in King George V Park during the September survey.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MITIGATION

2.1 SITE WORKS METHOD

Works are planned to demolish the Swimming pool during winter of 2024.

A toolbox talk will be given to the demolition contractor prior to works starting on site and a qualified ecologist will be on call during the demolition process.

If any bats are found during the demolition works will stop and advice sought from NRW.

2.2 ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT

In line with the general principles set out in SPG: Biodiversity and Geodiversity (May 2018) and the Environment Act, the applicant is required to demonstrate how biodiversity enhancement is to be achieved.

3 bat boxes will be installed on trees on the site or adjacent King George V Park. Type and location of the bat boxes will be agreed with the project ecologist and will be installed prior to demolition of the building starting.

3 REFERENCES

- Anon.** HMSO, London. All legislative references. www.legislation.gov.uk
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- Collins, J. (ed.) (2023)** Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee.** (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey. A technique for environmental Audit.
- Wales Biodiversity Partnership.** Environment (Wales) Act 2016: Section 7 List of Species of Principal Importance for Conservation of Biological Diversity in Wales.
- Wales Biodiversity Partnership.** Environment (Wales) Act 2016: Section 7 List of Habitats of Principal Importance for Conservation of Biological Diversity in Wales.
- Wales Biodiversity Partnership.** (2008). Wildlife Sites Guidance Wales. A guide to develop local wildlife systems in Wales.

9TH September 2024 Emergence Survey – Thermal Camera Positions.

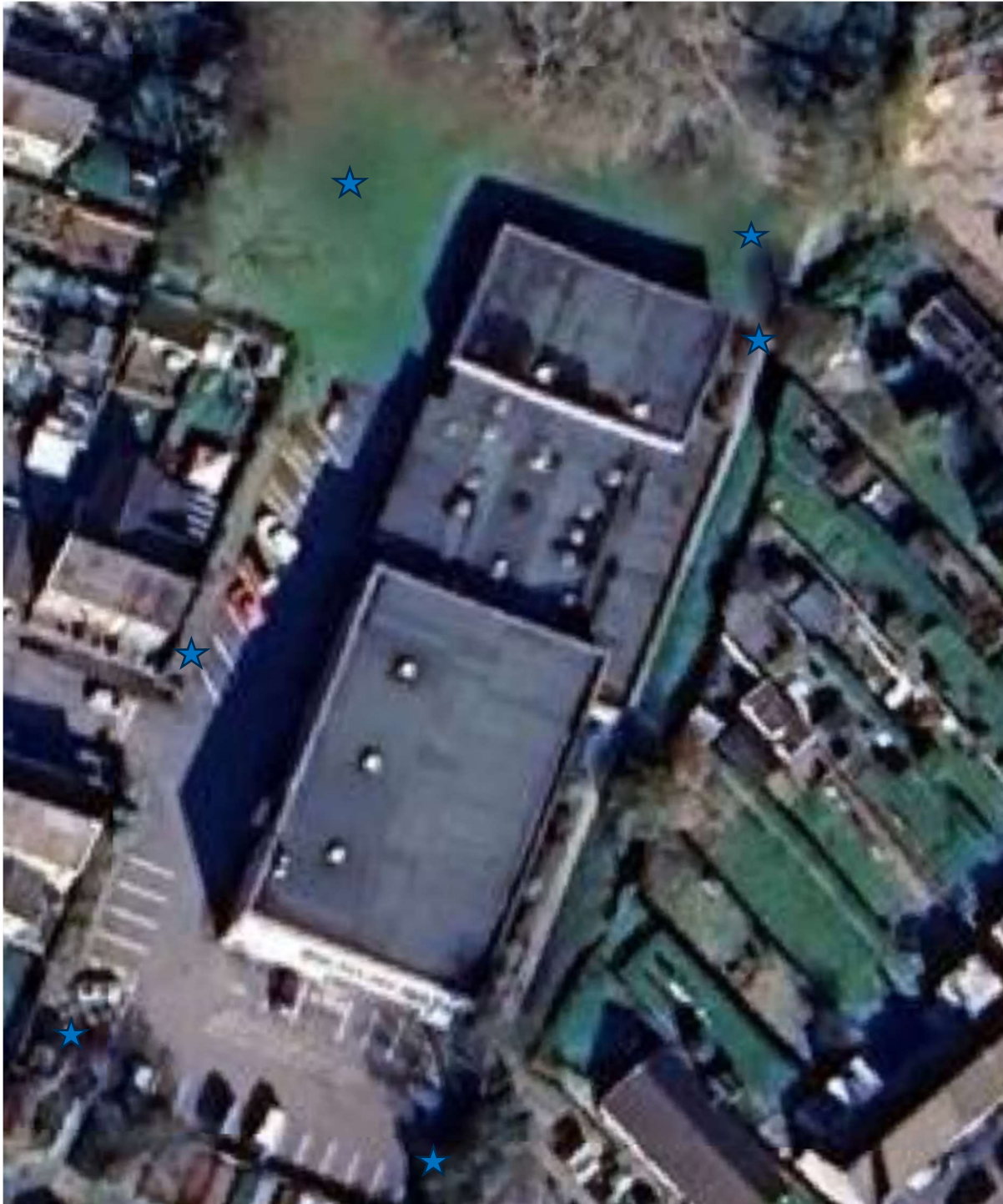


Figure 3 - Location of thermal cameras

★ Thermal Camera position