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SSE Slough Bat Survey Report

SSE Slough Demolition and Decommissioning

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
1. Introduction	6
1.1 Introduction.....	6
1.2 Purpose	6
1.3 Site Description Location and Setting.....	6
1.4 Previous Surveys.....	6
1.5 Quality Assurance.....	7
2. Relevant Wildlife Legislation	8
2.1 Bats	8
2.2 Nesting Birds	8
3. Methodology	9
3.1 Introduction.....	9
3.2 Building Assessment for Roosting Bats	9
3.3 Bat Emergence and Re-Entry Surveys	10
4. Building Assessment Results	11
4.1 Introduction.....	11
4.2 Results.....	11
4.3 Constraints / Limitations to Survey	12
5. Building Dusk and Dawn Survey Results	13
5.1 Introduction.....	13
5.2 Survey Schedule, Timings and Conditions	13
5.3 Building Dusk and Dawn Surveys.....	13
5.4 Constraints / Limitations to Survey	13
6. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	15
6.1 Bats	15
6.2 Nesting Birds	15
7. Figures.....	16
Appendix A Photographs.....	19

Figures

Figure 1: Bat Roost Suitability Re-Assessment Results 2018 & Emergence / Re-entry Surveyor Locations	17
Figure 2: Previous Bat Roost Suitability Assessment Results 2012	18

Tables

Table 1: Criteria used to Describe Bat Roost Suitability	9
Table 2. Building Re-assessment for Roosting Bats Results.....	11
Table 3. Survey Timings and Weather Conditions during Bat Surveys.....	13
Table 4: Photographs	19

Executive Summary

AECOM Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'AECOM') was commissioned by SSE to carry out a bat roosting suitability survey and a bat dusk emergence survey at the existing Slough Heat and Power (SHP) site. The aim of the surveys was to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats, as per current best practice bat survey guidelines (Collins, 2016)¹.

This survey was to support upcoming demolition and removal of the redundant generating plant and building at the Site and the development of a multifuel combined heat and power (CHP) facility. Once presence or likely absence was determined, this informed any further requirement for mitigation for bats (including any requirement for a Natural England Mitigation Licence) to allow the demolition and decommissioning works to proceed.

An updated building assessment for roosting bats was carried out by a surveyor registered with the Natural England WML-18 (Level 2) bat survey class licence. Each of the buildings was given a roost suitability rating in line with the 'Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines Third Edition' (2016) with building locations shown in Figure 1.

Eight buildings were assessed as having low suitability to support roosting bats. All remaining buildings were assessed as having negligible suitability to support roosting bats.

The buildings assessed as low suitability were the subject of a dusk emergence or dawn re-entry survey across three separate surveys (dusk 17th May, dawn 18th May and dusk 22nd May).

No bats were recorded emerging from any of the structures during the survey. In addition there was no bat activity detected in the rest of the site while the survey was being carried out.

As no bats were recorded roosting during either of the surveys then no further mitigation for bats will be required as part of the demolition works. However, the demolition contractors should be made aware that the building has potential to support roosting bats via a toolbox talk prior to works commencing. AECOM can advise on the content of the toolbox talk, if requested.

In the unlikely event that a bat or signs of bats are found during demolition, works should cease immediately and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted for advice. If a planning application is made two years or more after the survey, it is advisable to review and update the survey.

There is potential for nesting birds to be present and building removal should be carried out outside the main bird nesting season of March to August inclusive or carried out under the supervision (i.e. a pre-soft strip and demolition nesting bird survey) of a suitably qualified ecologist.

If nesting birds are found, an exclusion zone (e.g. approximate 5m radius) may be required and the nest left in situ until no longer in use (i.e. the chicks have fledged).

¹ Collins, J. (editor) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition)*. Bat Conservation Trust: London

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

AECOM Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'AECOM') was commissioned by SSE to carry out a bat roosting suitability survey and a bat dusk emergence survey at the existing Slough Heat and Power (SHP) site.

This survey was to support upcoming demolition and removal of the redundant generating plant and building at the Site and the development of a multifuel combined heat and power (CHP) facility as granted by planning permission P/00987/024².

1.2 Purpose

The aim of the surveys was to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats, as per current best practice bat survey guidelines (Collins, 2016)³.

Once presence or likely absence was determined, this informed any further requirement for mitigation for bats (including any requirement for a Natural England Mitigation Licence) to allow the demolition and decommissioning works to proceed.

1.3 Site Description Location and Setting

The Site lies within the existing Slough Heat and Power (SHP) site within the Slough Trading Estate, 342 Edinburgh Avenue, Slough, SL1 4TU (Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference SU 953 814).

The SHP Site subject to the decommissioning and demolition works is located on the south side of Edinburgh Avenue, while the wider SHP site includes additional buildings due for retention and two natural draught cooling towers occupy an area immediately to the north of Edinburgh Avenue.

The SHP Site contains numerous industrial buildings with a variety of ages and structures, including boiler houses, turbine halls, fuel storage facilities, switchrooms, control rooms, offices and various other ancillary plant. The site is predominately surfaced with impermeable hardstanding.

Note that buildings are referenced within this document by using the same numbering system applied during the former 2012 bat surveys in order to maintain consistency between reports.

1.4 Previous Surveys

A bat inspection and assessment survey was previously carried out by FOA Ecology (on behalf of URS) in June 2012⁴. This survey included external and internal inspection of buildings due to be removed. Following the bat inspection survey, a total of ten buildings were determined to have a low suitability to support roosting bats. These were B10, B15, B16, B18, B19, B22, B23, B30, B52 and B53 which are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 and are further described in Section 4 (Building Assessment Results).

Following the assessment of these buildings are having suitability to support roosting bats, an emergence and return survey was undertaken on the site on 21st August and 22nd August 2012, in accordance with the BCTs guidelines⁵ applicable at the time. No bats were recorded during the emergence and return surveys.

The proposed works require resurvey for bats as five years have now lapsed since the previous bat inspection and emergence (and breeding bird) surveys carried out by URS in 2012.

² Slough Borough Council (2017). Planning Permission P/00987/024. Slough Heat & Power Station

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

⁴ URS (2012) *Slough Heat and Power Multifuel. Facility Bat Report*

⁵ Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), (2012) *Bat Surveys; Good Practice Guidelines. Second Edition*

1.5 Quality Assurance

All AECOM ecologists follow the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) code of professional conduct when undertaking ecological work and many are Full or Fellow Members. They are appropriately qualified and will conduct their work using all reasonable skill and care. Many senior AECOM ecologists are also Chartered Environmentalists or Ecologists. All staff members are committed to maintaining our certification to the international standards BS EN ISO 9001:2008 and 14001:2004 and BS OH SAS 18001:2007

2. Relevant Wildlife Legislation

A summary of the relevant legislation for both bats and nesting birds is provided below as both are relevant to the building decommissioning and demolition.

2.1 Bats

All UK native bat species and their roosts (whether bats are present or not) are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) and under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Taken together, under this legislation it is an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Damage/destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat (this is an offence whether the act is deliberate or not);
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat; or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure, which a bat uses for shelter or protection.

A bat roost is defined as “*any structure or place, which is used for shelter or protection*” or a “*breeding site or resting place*”⁶. As bats commonly use the same roosts at particular times of the year after periods of absence, the roost is protected whether or not bats are resident.

Given the above legislation, the potential presence of bats at a site represents a material consideration in the planning process. Even where planning permission is not required, there is still a legal responsibility placed on the developer to ensure that a Natural England licence is obtained to cover any works that have the potential to result in an offence under the above legislation.

Seven of the UK bat species are listed as species of principal importance within Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006): namely, the barbastelle bat (*Barbastella barbastellus*), Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*), noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*) and lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*).

2.2 Nesting Birds

All species of wild bird and their nests are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or capture any wild bird;
- Intentionally damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or eggs; and
- Possess, transport or sell any wild birds.
- Species listed under Schedule 1 are additionally protected against disturbance while nesting.

⁶ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. London: HMSO

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section describes the methodology used during each of the bat surveys. Two types of surveys were conducted:

- an external building assessment (a reassessment to that previously carried out in 2012), to provide an initial assessment of the buildings likelihood to support roosting bats; and
- building dusk emergence and dawn re-entry bat surveys on those buildings identified as having suitability for roosting bats.

3.2 Building Assessment for Roosting Bats

An updated building assessment was undertaken update the 2012 assessment of the buildings on site to support bat roosts.

During the external inspections the exterior walls and roofs of the buildings were viewed from ground level. Features of the buildings such as; window ledges, soffits, barge boards, holes in the window frames and windows, cracks between the frames and walls and voids in the roofs were included in the search. Signs of bats using the buildings as a roost were looked for and any evidence of bat activity, bat sounds, potential access points and potential roosting sites were noted.

These features were assessed to determine the likelihood of each building's suitability to support roosting bats. Each building was assessed according to the following roost suitability ratings in line with the "Bat Surveys Good Practice" Guidelines (2012) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Criteria used to Describe Bat Roost Suitability

Habitat Suitability / Level of Risk	Type of Roost		
	Summer or Transitional Roost used by Non-breeding Bats	Maternity Roost	Hibernation Roost
Confirmed	Presence of bats or evidence of bats. Confirmation of roost status may require further survey.		
High	Feature with multiple roosting opportunities for one or more species of bat. With good connectivity to high quality foraging habitat	Feature with multiple roosting opportunities for breeding bats (size, temperature). With proximity and connectivity to high quality foraging habitat.	Large site that offers cool stable conditions with multiple roosting opportunities. With proximity and connectivity to high quality foraging habitat
Moderate	Feature with some roosting opportunities. With connectivity to moderate or high quality foraging habitat.	Feature providing some roosting opportunities. With some connectivity and proximity to moderate or high quality foraging habitat.	Medium sized feature with some roosting opportunities. With some connectivity and proximity to moderate or high quality foraging habitat.
Low	Feature with a limited number of roosting opportunities. With poor connectivity to foraging habitat.	Feature with a limited number of roosting opportunities for breeding bats. With low proximity and connectivity to low or moderate quality foraging habitat.	Small sized feature or feature which may be subject to disturbance or environmental variations, with a limited number of roosting opportunities. With poor connectivity to foraging habitat.
Negligible	Feature with no or very limited roosting opportunities for bats or where the feature is isolated from foraging habitat.	Feature with no suitable roosting opportunities for breeding bats.	Feature with no suitable roosting opportunities for hibernating bats.

3.3 Bat Emergence and Re-Entry Surveys

3.3.1 Equipment

Bat surveys are conducted by recording bat species, numbers and activity using ultrasound bat detectors. Bat detectors convert the echolocations produced by bats (normally inaudible to the human ear) to audible sound. These detectors can also be connected to a recording device so that bat calls could be analysed sonographically at a later stage, through the use of specialised computer software such as Bat Sound®.

Surveys were carried out using a combination of visual surveying, use of bat detectors and the use of computer software.

Specialised equipment used during the surveys included;

- Bat Box Duet, Wildlife Acoustic Echo Meter Touch and Wildlife Acoustic SM2+ Bat detectors; and
- Edirol and Handy Zoom H2 digital recorders

3.3.2 Season and Timings

The surveys were undertaken in accordance with the guidance and methodology within the 'Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines' (2016). Dusk surveys commenced at least 15 – 30 minutes before sunset and continued for 1.5 – 2 hours after sunset, whilst dawn surveys commenced at 1.5 – 2 hours before sunrise and continued until sunrise. The surveys were undertaken in suitable weather conditions, in warm weather (above 10°C) with little wind or rain. This weather provides suitable conditions for bats to forage due to the presence of flying insects.

Three surveys were carried out in May 2018. The timing of these surveys falls within the core activity season May to August.

3.3.3 Survey Personnel

A team of two suitably experienced AECOM ecologists, led by a surveyor registered with the Natural England WML-18 (Level 2) bat survey class licence, undertook multiple dusk emergence and dawn re-entry surveys.

3.3.4 Methodology

A suite of dusk and dawn surveys, comprising of emergence and return to roost surveys, were completed on the buildings which were assessed as having suitability for roosting bats. These surveys were conducted by positioning surveyors around a building to watch features that roosting bats could inhabit. Visual observation of emerging/returning bats and timing of bat activity were used to indicate the likelihood of bats roosting within a given structure.

The time, location, number, species (where possible) and direction of flight were recorded for each bat pass (a discrete burst of bat echolocation heard or bat activity seen) encountered during the survey. The echolocation calls detected were recorded to a digital recorder to allow the use of analysis software (i.e. Kaleidoscope Pro 3.1.1) to verify bat calls where required.

The key objectives of these surveys were to determine the following:

- whether roosting bats were present in the buildings surveyed;
- overall levels of bat activity; and
- species of bats associated with the site.

4. Building Assessment Results

4.1 Introduction

The section shows the results of the building assessments for roosting bats across the Slough SSE site.

4.2 Results

The updated building assessment for roosting bats was carried out on the 28th of March 2018 by a surveyor registered with the Natural England WML-18 (Level 2) bat survey class licence. Each of the buildings was given a roost suitability rating in line with the 'Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines Third Edition' (2016).

The locations of these buildings are shown in Figure 1. Photographs of the buildings assessed as having a low suitability for roosting bats is shown in Appendix A

In summary the results were as follows:

- Eight buildings were assessed as having low suitability to support roosting bats; and
- All remaining buildings were assessed as having negligible suitability to support roosting bats.

As most of the buildings within the site were assessed as having negligible suitability (unchanged from the 2012 assessment), Table 2 only focuses on buildings as follows;

- those previously assessed as having low suitability for roosting bats in 2012
- those now re-assessed as having low suitability for roosting bats in 2018
- buildings not assessed in 2012 but now within or adjacent to the demolition boundary.

Table 2. Building Re-assessment for Roosting Bats Results

Building No./Location	2012 Assessment	Potential Roost Features	2018 Re-assessment	Potential Roost Features
B10	Low	Crevice between barge board and walls. Access into building. Missing mortar. Section of lifted felt.	Negligible	Minor crevices inspected with torch and endoscope with no evidence of bats. Given low habitat suitability (lack of habitat connectivity) and lack of any bat activity on 2012 survey it was assessed that this minor feature could be downgraded to negligible.
B12 & B13	N/A	N/A	Negligible	Large boiler and plant buildings constructed of metal panelling and with no voids, crevices or other features suitable for roosting bats
B15	Low	Raised barge boards and gaps. Missing brick/mortar. Old timber hole.	Low	Minor gap present under barge boards. Mortar and timber looked in good condition – could have been subject to previous repair works? Kept as low suitability due to extent of loose bargeboard
B16	Low	No mortar under the ridge. Pipework created hole into the roof space and there were crevices between timber at eave level and the brick wall.	Low	Lack of mortar and pipework connections still offering potential access into building. Also corrugated asbestos clad on sides of building could provide roosting opportunities
B18	Low	Slatted wooden areas. Open pipe.	Low	Weatherboarded pitched roof area present and may offer crevices under boards or access into roof void.
B19	Low	Gaps between barge boards. Missing	Low	Loose barge boards and corrugated

Building No. /Location	2012 Assessment	Potential Roost Features	2018 Re-assessment	Potential Roost Features
		mortar. Ends of corrugated roof are open and lifted sections of lead flashing.		asbestos roof still offering potential access points into building
B22	Low	Gap behind barge board. Pipe work holes into void. Long strips missing in the mortar.	Low	Mortar appears to be in good condition – may have been subject to previous repair work? Roof is made of painted metal panelling which appears to offer potential gaps in roof void.
B23	Low	Gaps in lead flashing.	Negligible	No obvious entry points into pitched roof of single storey building. Missing flashing could not be seen.
B26	Negligible	N/A	Low	Corrugated asbestos providing potential crevices suitable for roosting bats.
B30	Low	Occasional crevices in basement.	Negligible	Building now open and exposed to daylight and wind due to maintenance works and deteriorating condition of the external walls with large gaps. Combined with lack of habitat connectivity, the building was reassessed as negligible potential.
B37	N/A	N/A	Low	Not previously assessed in 2012 (and not due for demolition) but is adjacent to the demolition of B12 and B36 and has corrugated asbestos sheeting on eastern elevation providing potential crevices suitable for roosting.
B40 & B41	N/A	N/A	Negligible	Not previously assessed in 2012 and not due for demolition. Constructed of meal panelling and with no voids, crevices or other features suitable for roosting bats.
B52	Low	Hole into void (possible old chimney position).	Low	Hole in void still present.
B53	Low	Gap between brick and barge boards around all sides.	Negligible	Crevices inspected with torch and endoscope with no evidence of bats. Given low habitat suitability (lack of habitat connectivity) and lack of any bat activity on 2012 survey it was assessed that this minor feature could be downgraded to negligible.

4.3 Constraints / Limitations to Survey

The following constraints / limitations were applicable to the survey;

- Buildings were not internally inspected due to the permits and health and safety requirements in order to facilitate inspections. Due to the generally low suitability assessment of previous surveys and lack of change in building condition (aside from Building 30), this is not a significant constraint to the survey.
- None of these limitations either singly or in combination is significant enough to affect the baseline, impact assessment and resulting mitigation or enhancement referenced in this report.

5. Building Dusk and Dawn Survey Results

5.1 Introduction

This section displays the results of the bat surveys conducted at site. The survey schedule with accompanying timings and weather conditions are shown first followed by the results for the building dusk and dawn and the results of the bat activity surveys.

5.2 Survey Schedule, Timings and Conditions

The survey schedule including dates, weather conditions and buildings surveyed is shown in the table below. Surveyor location are shown in Figure 1

Table 3. Survey Timings and Weather Conditions during Bat Surveys

Survey	Date	Dusk/Dawn	Sunrise/Sunset	Start/End	Time 24hr	Air Temp (°C)	Wind Speed (Beaufort)	Cloud Cover	Recent Rain
Buildings 15 – 22 (East Side)	17/05/18	Dusk	20:50	Start	20:35	13	1	1	None
				End	22:20	10	1	1	None
Buildings 15- 22 (West Side)	18/05/18	Dawn	05:08	Start	03:40	7	0	0	None
				End	05:08	7	1	0	None
Buildings 26, 37 & 52	22/5/18	Dusk	20:45	Start	20:30	16	2	0	None
				End	22:30	13	0	0	None

5.3 Building Dusk and Dawn Surveys

No roosting bats were found in any of the buildings surveyed.

5.3.1 Dusk Survey 17th May 2018

No bats were recorded emerging from any of the structures during the survey. In addition there was no bat activity detected in the rest of the site while the survey was being carried out.

5.3.2 Dawn Survey 18th May 2018

No bats were recorded emerging from any of the structures during the survey. In addition there was no bat activity detected in the rest of the site while the survey was being carried out.

5.3.3 Dusk Survey 22nd May 2018

No bats were recorded emerging from any of the structures during the survey. In addition there was no bat activity detected in the rest of the site while the survey was being carried out.

5.4 Constraints / Limitations to Survey

The following constraints / limitations were applicable to the survey;

- Bats are highly mobile and their distribution transient; therefore an individual survey provides only a snapshot of the conditions at the time of the survey.
- The roost feature of Building 53 was able to be observed during the survey from a safe location, however, this feature is thought to present low suitability to support roosting bats and the lack of activity during survey indicates it is highly unlikely that it is utilised by roosting bats.

- Detection rates for bats vary according to species (e.g. species such as the brown long-eared bat *Plectous auritus*) are more difficult to detect due to their quiet echolocation

None of these limitations either singly or in combination is significant enough to affect the baseline, impact assessment and resulting mitigation or enhancement referenced in this report.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Bats

As no bats were recorded roosting during either of the surveys then no further mitigation for bats will be required as part of the demolition works. However, the demolition contractors should be made aware via a toolbox talk prior to works commencing that the building has potential to support roosting bats. AECOM can advise on the content of the toolbox talk, if requested.

In the unlikely event that a bat or signs of bats are found during demolition, works should cease immediately and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted for advice.

The survey work detailed in this report is current for 12 months. If a planning application is submitted or works are conducted outside of this time period, it is recommended that the bat surveys are updated accordingly to confirm the continued likely absence of bats. In this event, it is recommended that a suitably qualified ecologist is consulted for advice regarding the scope of future survey work.

6.2 Nesting Birds

There is potential for nesting birds to be present and building removal should be carried out outside the main bird nesting season of March to August inclusive where possible or carried out under the supervision (i.e. a pre-soft strip and demolition nesting bird survey) of a suitably qualified ecologist.

The potential presence of nesting birds should also be included in site induction toolbox talks to demolition contractors, note that this includes feral pigeons.

Measures which prevent birds from nesting could be assessed by an ecologist to determine their suitability (e.g. bird repellent paint and netting, ensuring no nesting birds are already present) as no conflict with roosting bats is expected. Falconry is not recommended due to the presence of peregrines within the Site.

If nesting birds are found, an exclusion zone (e.g. approximate 5m radius) may be required and the nest left in situ until no longer in use (i.e. the chicks have fledged).

7. Figures

Figure 1: Bat Roost Suitability Re-Assessment Results 2018 & Emergence / Re-entry Surveyor Locations

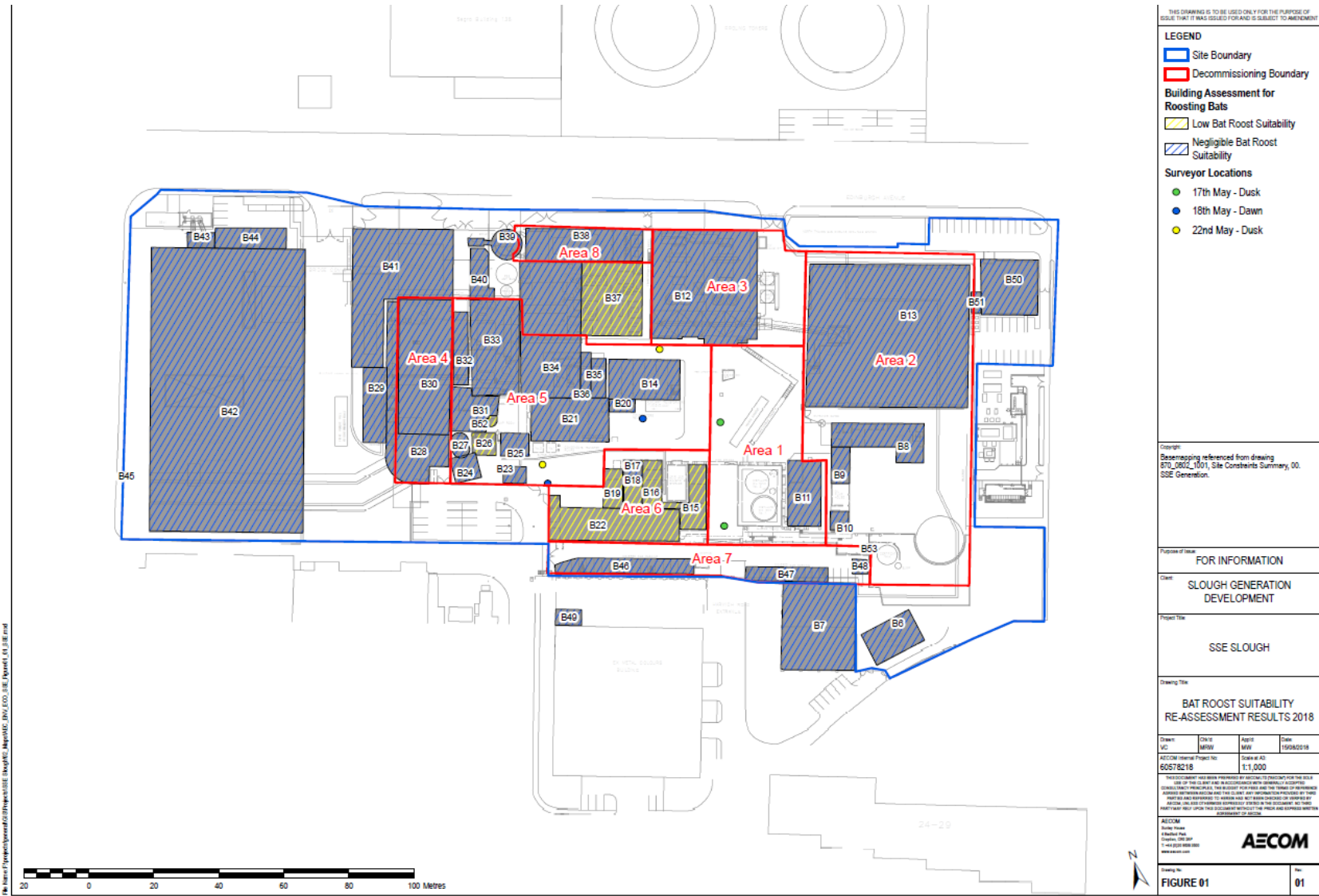


Figure 2: Previous Bat Roost Suitability Assessment Results 2012



Appendix A Photographs

Table 4: Photographs



Photograph 1: View of the large buildings within the Site showing metal panel construction and lack of potential roost features for bats.



Photograph 2: View of Boiler Building (B12) from Edinburgh Avenue



Photograph 3: Southern view of B13 showing general lack of suitability for bats.



Photograph 4: B26 with corrugated asbestos sheeting providing crevices (potentially suitable roost features).



Photograph 5: Building 18 showing wooden pitched roof section (obscured by piping) as an example potential roost feature within the Site.



Photograph 6: B10 with very minor gaps under bargeboard however inspected and assessed overall (considering inspection result, minor feature and lack of habitat connectivity) as being of negligible suitability for roosting bats



Photograph 7: Eastern elevation of B15. Bargeboard present along flat roof edge with lifted sections suitable for roosting bats –more extensive than B10.



Photograph 8: Western elevation of B22 showing general lack of roost features across building (no soffits, bargeboard, missing brick work etc).



Photograph 9: Building 30 undergoing works with multiple holes and exposed walls creating a draughty and unsuitable interior.



Photograph 10: B8 showing general lack of roost features – cladding tight and securely fitted.

