



ROAVR | GROUP

Project: 24_PRA_08_28
Site: Hexton Manor, Hexton, Herts, SG5 3JH
Client: James Gran



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Project Number:	24_PRA_08_28
Report Type:	Preliminary Roost Assessment Report [PRA] Daytime Bat Walkover (DBW)
Site Address:	Hexton Manor, Hexton, Herts, SG5 3JH

Role:	Name:	Position:	Date:
Surveyor	Max Shaw	Ecological Consultant	13/8/2024
Author	Max Shaw	Ecological Consultant	10/09/2024
Author	Gwennan Butler	Ecological Consultant	8/8/2024

Revision History		
Date:	Version number:	Summary of changes:
10/09/2024	1.0	First Draft
10/09/2024	1.0	First Issue

Summary:

ROAVR Group were appointed by James Grant to undertake a preliminary roost assessment survey and report at Hexton Manor.

It is proposed to redevelop the site with the demolition of an existing outbuilding situated to the south of the manor house and to replace it with a large garage. North Hertfordshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority have requested a PRA to support any planning application.

Before visiting the site, a desk study was undertaken in order to determine records of local designated sites, habitats and bat species within a 2km of the proposed development. Data was sourced via the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (DEFRA MAGIC) on the 8th August 2024, at this stage, and due to the size of the proposed development a further Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC) search was not deemed necessary.

A site survey was carried out by Max Shaw on the 13th August 2024 under the guidance provided within Bat Conservation Trust's 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Best Practice Guidelines' (Collins, 2023). Max has 2-years continuous experience carrying out preliminary roost assessments and nocturnal bat activity surveys under supervision from a licensed ecologist.

Hexton Manor, Herts, SG5 3JH is a three storey detached property most likely of 1850's origin. The building being surveyed, the outbuilding, is situated to the south of the main building. The building is surrounded by grassland, woodland and water features.

An internal and external examination discovered no known potential roosting features. No known evidence of bats was seen within the void space. The building was assessed as holding negligible suitability for roosting bats.

Located close to the Spring Head (less than 50m to the east of the site) and bordered by Hexton manor estate which consists of grassland and woodland, there is the high potential for foraging bats to sporadically and opportunistically utilise the property through the adjacent linking gardens . No EPSM licences have been granted within 2km of the site for bats.

No further survey effort is recommended as per the guidance located within Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition) Collins, J. (Ed.) 2023.

With the assumption that the existing conditions on-site remain unchanged. The results of this report are likely to remain valid for 12-month in line with the guidance published by CIEEM and the Bat Conservation Trust.

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Table of Contents:

1	Introduction
2	Methodology
3	Desktop Study
4	Site Survey
5	Evaluation and Assessment
6	Biodiversity Net Gain
7	Conclusions
8	References
9	Report Limitations

Appendix 1: Site Location and Assessment Boundary

Appendix 2: Site Photographic Plates & Target Notes

Appendix 3: Site Habitat Map

Acknowledgements:

Data referred to within this report has been sourced from Natural England Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (DEFRA MAGIC) database and NBN Atlas.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 ROAVR Group were commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Bat Roost and daytime bat walkover survey Hexton Manor, Hexton, Herts.
- 1.2 The survey was comprised of a desktop study, which was undertaken in August 2024 and a site survey, which was carried out by Max Shaw on the 13th of August 2024.
- 1.3 The methodology and results are outlined within the report. Where applicable, recommendations for suitable mitigation and ecological enhancements are provided.
- 1.4 The report is to be submitted to support a planning application to renovate the site. Full details of the proposed development are available in the planning portal.
- 1.5 The information and recommendations within this report have been prepared and provided in accordance with CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct.

SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.6 The survey site covers an area of approximately 2,740.1 sqm and is centred on grid reference 'TL10813047'.
- 1.7 The site is situated in the North Hertfordshire District Council control area. The site is located 320m to the southeast of Hexton Cricket Club.
- 1.8 The site is a detached single storey outbuilding, used for storage and heating equipment house located in a estate surrounded by grassland, woodland and a river.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 1.9 The site is to be redeveloped with the demolition of an existing outbuilding situated to the south of the manor house and to be replaced with a large garage as shown on 2024-32-305 - Existing Side Elevations Floor Plan and Site Plan.pdf provided to me for inspection in August 2024.

POLICY AND LEGISLATION

- 1.10 All UK bat species and their roosts are strictly protected under European and UK legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (CHSR), and the Wildlife and Countryside Act, (1981) (WCA). Furthermore, Annexe II of the Habitats Directive lists four UK bat species, providing them further protection. Under the National Planning Framework, bats and their roots must be considered during development.

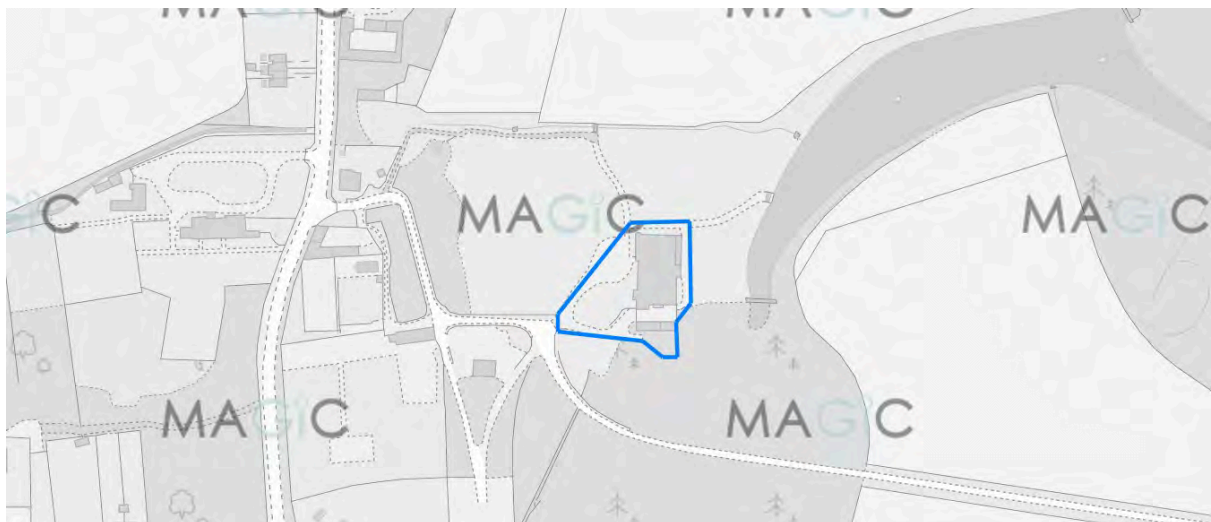
SCOPE OF WORKS

1.11 The aims of this assessment were to:

- Assess the presence/potential for roosting bats within the existing building;
- Identify potential access/egress points for bat species;
- Assess potential habitat usage for foraging/commuting bats on-site;
- Determine whether further Bat Surveys may be necessary;
- Provide recommendations for suitable mitigation and ecological enhancement (if required).



Taken from Google Maps (2024).



Taken from DEFRA MAGIC (2024).

Figure 1 - Site Location Plan and Assessment Boundary.

2 Methodology

DESKTOP STUDY

- 2.1 Site-specific information in relation to land designations, bat species and protected habitats within a 2km zone of influence (Zol) was sourced from DEFRA MAGIC.
- 2.2 In order to ensure that ecological data searches were up to date, species data was screened and all data records pre-2012 were omitted from the results.
- 2.3 Results of the desktop study should be considered to be indicative only.

PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

- 2.4 A Preliminary Roost (PRA) assessment was undertaken by Max Shaw on the 13th August 2024 . The PRA was undertaken in line with the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition) Collins, J. (Ed.) 2023.
- 2.5 The survey included an active search for evidence of roosting bats such as droppings, feeding remains, oil staining, bat fur and/or scratch marks. The survey also assessed the building for suitable Potential Roosting Features (PRF).
- 2.6 The survey was conducted from the ground and from the air using a GPS enabled DJI Mavic Mini 3 Pro drone operated by a CAA approved operator.

SPECIES POTENTIAL

- 2.7 The potential for roosting bats within building B1 and foraging/commuting bats within the existing habitats was assigned a rank as per Table 2.7.1. An assessment was carried out using data collected during both the desktop study and site survey.

Table 2.7.1: Criteria used to assess the likelihood of occurrence (site's suitability) for bats, from Bat Conservation Trust's 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Best Practice Guidelines' (Collins, 2023) (Table 4.1.)

Potential suitability	Description	
	Roosting bats	Potential flight-paths and foraging habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e a complete absence of crevices / suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available for foraging bats).
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats but isolated (i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat). Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats for foraging such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only - with respect to roost type only).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used for bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitats. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation sites.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

Table 2.7.2: Potential roosting features (PRFs) in trees listed in Bat Conservation Trust's 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Best Practice Guidelines' (Collins, 2023) Table 6.6.

Table 2.7.2. PRF types that can be exploited by bats and how they form (adapted from Bat Roosts in Trees, BTHK, 2018) reproduced from Table 6.6. (Collins, 2023.)		
PRFs formed by disease and decay	PRFs formed by damage	PRFs formed by association
• Woodpecker holes • Squirrel holes • Knot holes • Pruning cuts • Tear outs • Wounds • Cankers • Compression forks • Butt rots	• Lightning strikes • Hazard beams • Subsidence • Cracks • Shearing cracks • Transverse snaps • Welds • Lifting bark • Desiccation • Fissures • Frost cracks	• Fluting • Ivy

Table 2.7.3. Guidelines for assessing the suitability of trees on proposed development sites for bats, to be applied using professional judgement.reproduced from Table 6.6. (Collins, 2023.)

Suitability	Description
NONE	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present

ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS AND MITIGATION

- 2.8 An evaluation of the potential impacts to roosting and foraging/commuting bats caused by the proposed development was made with reference to the the 'Bat Mitigation Guidelines' (Mitchell-Jones, 2004) and CIEEM's 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM, 2018).

LIMITATIONS

- 2.9 With the assumption that the existing conditions on-site remain unchanged. The results of this report are likely to remain valid for 12-month sinline with the guidance published by CIEEM and the Bat Conservation Trust.

3 Desktop Study

BAT ECOLOGY AND LEGISLATION

- 3.1 Several bat species have been recorded within 2km of the site including Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*). In order to obtain this information, a record search was undertaken on the 8th August 2024.
- 3.2 All species of bats in the UK are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981, which prohibits the intentional or reckless disturbance, harm, or destruction of bats and their habitats. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 implements the EU Habitats Directive in the UK, providing even more stringent protections. This means it is an offence to deliberately capture, kill, or disturb bats, or to damage, destroy, or obstruct access to their roosts.
- 3.3 Specific licences may be granted for certain activities that might otherwise be considered offences under these regulations, such as building developments or research projects, but these are typically accompanied by requirements for mitigation and compensation measures to protect the bat populations. It is essential to maintain compliance with these legislations to conserve the bat populations.
- 3.4 All bat species are also a Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority species. The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 provides advice on the design of development proposals and reference should be made to 'Natural and Historic Environment' and its policies 'Policy SP12: Green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity' and 'Policy SP13: Historic environment'.

SITE DESIGNATIONS

3.5 There are five designated sites within the 2km of the proposed development (Table 3.5.1).

Table 3.5.1: Statutory and non-statutory designated sites recorded within a 2km radius of the survey site.

Site Name	Grid Reference	Area (ha)	Approx. Closest Distance from Site (km)	Notes.
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England) Chilterns	SU860194 26	83830	0 km	The Chilterns contain an important diversity of habitats ranging from chalk grassland and to the country's most extensive areas of beech woodland, with the stretches protected under EU legislation as Special Areas of Conservation. The landscape contains many prehistoric traces including the great dyke of Grim's Ditch and the ancient Ridgeway and Icknield Way. Daubenton's bat (<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>) is specifically mentioned in relation to the AONB.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England) Barton Hills SSSI	TL089297	47.86	1.3 km	The site contains hills covered in unimproved chalk grassland which support a wide variety of grasses and flowering plants. There is also a small ancient beech wood and developing scrubland within this site. There is no specific mention of bat species within the citation.
National Nature Reserves (England) Barton Hills NNR	N/A - Not stated	44.18	1.7 km	The site is made up of two main habitats; lowland chalk grassland, and beech woodland. There is no specific mention of bat species within this citation.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England) Deacon Hill SSSI	TL121295	35.36	1.3 km	The site is a remnant of chalk downland. It has characteristic species-rich, calcareous grassland flora. Many of the plants found here are uncommon in the county. There is no specific mention of bat species within the citation.
SSSI Impact Risk Zones	N/A	N/A	0 km	Consultation with Natural England is not required as the proposal does not fall within Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.
Green Belt (England)	N/A	4214.2	0 km	The site falls within the London Area Greenbelt.

*Data from DEFRA MAGIC.

LOCAL HABITAT

- 3.6 Some of the site is located within a priority habitat of deciduous woodland. B1 is a detached outbuilding unit accessed off the private driveway of Hexton Manor. There is a large area of grassland and woodland to the east of the built footprint. A garden area of close mown modified grassland is located to the north and west of B1.

HISTORICAL SPECIES RECORDS

- 3.7 Records for bats are present within 2km of the site, including records for Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*); Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*); Natterer's Bat (*Myotis nattereri*) and Brown Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*). These records were obtained through a search of NBN Atlas on the 8th August 2024.

4 Site Survey

- 4.1 The site survey was undertaken by Max Shaw on the 13th August 2024. The survey was undertaken during sunny conditions with an air temperature of 17°C and light winds from the east with no precipitation.

ON-SITE ROOSTING POTENTIAL

All methodology follows the current guidance from the Bat Conservation Trust (Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition) Collins, J. (Ed.) 2023) unless otherwise specified.

The survey was undertaken via a ground-based daytime inspection with the assistance of close focus binoculars and a DJI Mavic Mini Pro drone operated by a CAA approved operator (operator ID - GBR-OP-63WQD93CFL2F). The surrounding habitats were assessed in relation to their connectivity and foraging resource value.

The survey focused on identifying a range of characteristic signs which can indicate current/recent use of a potential roost site by bats in addition to a detailed focus on potential features which could be utilised by bats as survey effort should not focus on field signs alone. A more detailed external inspection was then undertaken using a drone to allow examination of the roof for potential roosting features that cannot be viewed from the ground.

An internal inspection of the roof void limited to only safely accessible areas was conducted to identify any field signs of bats including: droppings, grease marks, urine stains, feeding remains and bats (living or dead).

In terms of limitations of this survey, there was no loft void within the single storey building.

Building B1:

Hexton Manor, Hexton, Herts, SG5 3JH, is a detached single storey outbuilding situated to the south of Hexton Manor. The surrounding area is predominantly rural with good foraging opportunities to all cardinal points. These opportunities include woodland and grassland to the south and east of the site, as well as Spring Head located less than 50m to the north east of the site which offers good foraging opportunities for bats.

The building being renovated is a single storey storage unit, made of breeze block with white render and felt roofing with no soffits and fascias, and plastic guttering to the southern side of the property.

The western facing side of the building has 6 small openings. However, these were not suitable for use by bats.

An external examination found no potential roosting features.

The unit is not suitable for use by bat species.

There was no known evidence of bats found during the internal inspection, including: staining, feed remains, droppings or bats (living or dead).

There was no void space in the unit.

Field Results:

External	Feature of value to bats	Notes
External Stonework	None.	NA
Window/Door Frames	None.	Six small openings in the western side of the unit, they are not suitable for use by bats.
Eaves Coverings	None.	NA
Roof Coverings	None.	NA
Internal	Feature of value to bats	Notes
Membrane Coverings	None.	No void space present.
Roof Void Floor Covering	None.	No void space present.
Protruding Daylight	High levels of protruding daylight.	Daylight entering the unit from the western wall.
Evidence From Bats	None.	No evidence of bats found.
Restrictions	No void space.	No void space present.

FORAGING & CONNECTIVITY

Although the building is somewhat isolated in a rural area, the surrounding landscape does provide extensive foraging and commuting habitats including grassland, woodland and aquatic habitats to the north, south, east and west of the site. Hexton Manor Estate provides pockets of tree cover, scrub and grassland that could be utilised for foraging in calm weather conditions.

Bats are commonly found in both broad-leaved and coniferous woodlands, which serve as excellent foraging sites such (as as those found to the west of the site). Local tree cover offers an abundance of insect prey and provides cover, reducing the chances of predation. Woodland edges, particularly those adjacent to open habitats such as the grassland found within the Estate are crucial commuting routes.

Hedgerows, lines of trees, and other linear features are used by many bat species as commuting routes between roosting and foraging sites. They provide navigational aids and offer protection from predators. Ancient and species-rich hedgerows may also serve as good foraging areas.

Rivers, ponds, lakes, and wetlands attract a large quantity of insects, making them attractive foraging sites for bats. Water bodies are also commonly used as commuting routes, with some species like the Daubenton's bat, specifically adapted to forage over water surfaces.

Grasslands, especially those adjacent to other habitats such as woodlands or hedgerows, are important for certain bat species. They provide a rich source of insect prey.

Although urban areas are generally less suitable due to light pollution and habitat fragmentation, many bat species have adapted to urban life. Parks, gardens, and green corridors can provide important foraging sites and commuting routes.

Traditional farmland can provide a mosaic of habitats, including hedgerows, ponds, and grazed fields, which can be suitable for foraging and commuting.

Different bat species have different preferences and tolerances for these habitats, and so a mix of these features can support a diverse bat community. Conservation efforts often aim to maintain and enhance these landscape features to promote bat populations.

Hexton Manor is situated 240m to the northeast of Hexton and located in Hexton Estate which is a private property surrounded by grassland and woodland. The wider landscape consists of a mixture of arable and grazing farmland and broadleaved woodland.

5 Evaluation and Assessment

- 5.1 Results from the desktop study and site survey were evaluated to assess bat species potential (as per Table 2.7.1). An evaluation of potential ecological constraints (in relation to bats) to the proposed development and recommendations for appropriate mitigation strategies are provided in Table 5.1.1
- 5.2 No known evidence of bats was observed during the internal inspection of Hexton Manor, Hexton, Herts, SG5 3JH. The external inspection noted no potential roosting features. The site has good connectivity to good foraging habitat to the east and north at Spring Head.
- 5.3 No potential roosting features and high levels of disturbance were observed during the site survey . Therefore, based on this information and the guidance outlined by the Bat Conservation Trust, the building has been assessed as having negligible suitability for roosting bats.
- 5.4 No further survey effort is required.
- 5.5 Construction works should be limited to daylight hours (excl. dawn and dusk) in order to prevent disturbance to nighttime foraging activity. Post-construction, the use of artificial lighting should be limited where possible. Motion sensors on outside lighting will prevent prolonged disturbance. It is recommended that outside lighting be set on short-timers (1 minute) and that the sensitivity is set to large moving objects only.

Table 5.1.1: Potential ecological constraints (in relation to bats) to the proposed development and appropriate mitigation strategies.

Bats (Chiroptera)	Presence/Potential	Further Comments	Potential Impacts	Recommendations for Mitigation
Roosting Bats	Negligible.	The PRA determined that Building B1 had negligible potential for roosting bats.	None.	None required.
Bats (Chiroptera)	Presence/Potential	Further Comments	Potential Impacts	Recommendations for Mitigation
Foraging/Commuting Bats	High.	The site is considered to be part of a mosaic of suitable foraging/commuting habitats. The woodland, grassland and river to the north, east and south of the site and the wider Riparian corridor have excellent foraging potential.	The proposed development may result in the loss of suitable foraging/commuting habitats if suitable mitigation strategies are not put in place.	Care must be taken to ensure that flight paths are not obstructed. Construction works should be limited to daylight hours in order to prevent disturbance to nighttime foraging activity. The use of artificial lighting should be limited where possible. Motion sensors on outside lighting will prevent prolonged disturbance. It is recommended that outside lighting be set on short-timers (1 minute) and that the sensitivity is set to large moving objects only.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The property at Hexton Manor is to be redeveloped with the demolition of an existing outbuilding situated to the south of the manor house and to replace it with a large garage. These alterations will require works to the roof of the building.
- 7.2 A local record search using NBN Atlas and DEFRA Magic on the 8th August 2024 highlighted that a number of bat species are present within the local landscape.
- 7.3 The features present at the property are not suitable for crevice dwelling bats species which are present in the local area. As such the property has been classified as having negligible suitability for bats.
- 7.4 No further survey effort is required.

8 References

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9 Report Limitations

- 9.1 ROAVR Group has prepared this Report for the sole use of the above named Client/Agent in accordance with our terms of business, under which our services were performed. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this Report or any other services provided by us.
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Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

Max Shaw
Ecological Consultant

Max Shaw



Prepared by: Max Shaw BSc QCIEEM
Checked by: Matt Harmsworth BSc

Appendix 1: Site Location and Assessment Boundary



Figure A1.1: An extract from DEFRA showing the site location.

Appendix 2: Additional Site Photographic Plates & Target Notes

Detail	Photograph
<i>Image 1 - Main building of Hexton Manor.</i>	
<i>Image 2 - western elevation of B1 (outbuilding).</i>	

Image 3 - Northern elevation of B1.



Image 4 - Roof and equipment to the south of B1.



Image 5 - Lack of soffits and fascias.



Image 6 - Interior of west portion of B1.



Image 7 - Interior of central portion of B1.



Image 8 - Interior of eastern/central portion of B1.

