

25 June 2025

c/o Jordan Ferguson
City of Wolverhampton Council
Southgate Lodge, West Park
Park Road West
Wolverhampton
WV1 4PS

Dear Jordan,

Preliminary Roost Assessment – Smestow Valley Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

I am writing to provide you with a short, written report of my survey findings at the above site (relating to the following site features: Meccano Bridge, Tie Rod Footbridge, Jack Arch Footbridge and the disused railway platform at Cupcake Lane) on 11 June 2025. I am a licensed bat surveyor (Natural England licence: 2018-36982-CLS-CLS). I had the following equipment available to me during the survey: high-powered torch with red filter and flexible endoscope.

The site features are centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference as follows:

- Meccano Bridge: SO 88769 99393
- Tie Rod Footbridge: SJ 89466 00290
- Jack Arch Footbridge: SO 88811 99443
- Disused railway platform at Cupcake Lane: SO 89137 99871

Access to all site features was made available and no significant survey limitations were encountered. Weather conditions on the date of survey were warm (20°C) and dry.



I understand the proposals are to restore the disused railway platform at Cupcake Lane by removing select trees (retaining mature trees where possible) and clearing extensive damaging vegetation. No works are anticipated on the bridges but further information on suitability for bats was sought for information purposes.



Legislation:



Bats are a European Protected Species (EPS), and are listed in Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive 1992, which affords strict protection to bats and their roosts. Actions and activities that are prohibited are:



- deliberate capture, injury or killing of a bat;
- deliberate disturbance of a bat and in particular disturbance which is likely to; impair their ability:
 - to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or
 - to hibernate or migrate; or
 - to affect significantly the local distribution of abundance of the species to which they belong.
- damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place (even unoccupied); and
- possessing, controlling, transporting, selling or exchanging, or offering for sale or exchange, any bat or any part of a bat or anything derived from one.

Results:

Area / Feature	Observations	Photograph
Meccano Bridge	<p>A large metal framed bridge over the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. The bridge supports a footpath along the Smestow Valley LNR disused railway line.</p> <p>The structure supports no suitable roosting opportunities for bats (crevices or enclosed spaces). The surrounding habitat provides suitable commuting and foraging habitats (woodland, canal and adjacent Smestow Brook). Trees within the surrounding area may provide suitable roosting opportunities for bats in the surrounds of the bridge.</p>	 <p>Plate 1: Meccano Bridge. Photograph looking west.</p>
		 <p>Plate 2: Meccano Bridge (underside). Photograph looking west.</p>

Area / Feature	Observations	Photograph
Tie Rod Footbridge	<p>Tie Rod Footbridge north of Cupcake Lane is a concrete and metal structure spanning over Smestow Brook.</p> <p>The structure supports no suitable roosting opportunities for bats (crevices or enclosed spaces). The surrounding habitat provides suitable commuting and foraging habitats (woodland and Smestow Brook). Trees within the surrounding area may provide suitable roosting opportunities for bats in the surrounds of the bridge.</p>	 <p>Plate 3: Tie Rod Footbridge. Photograph looking north.</p>
		 <p>Plate 4: Tie Rod Footbridge (underside). Photograph looking north.</p>

Area / Feature	Observations	Photograph
Jack Arch Footbridge	<p>A metal and concrete structure spanning Smestow Brook, immediately north of the Meccano Bridge.</p> <p>The structure supports no suitable roosting opportunities for bats (crevices or enclosed spaces). The surrounding habitat provides suitable commuting and foraging habitats (woodland, Smestow Brook and adjacent canal). Trees within the surrounding area may provide suitable roosting opportunities for bats in the surrounds of the bridge.</p>	 <p>Plate 5: Jack Arch Footbridge. Photograph looking south-west.</p>
		 <p>Plate 6: Jack Arch Footbridge (underside). Photograph looking west.</p>

Area / Feature	Observations	Photograph
Disused railway platform at Cupcake Lane	<p>The disused railway platform at Cupcake Lane spans approximately 160m along the length of the old railway line. Immature and semi-mature trees are present on top of the platform, with species present including silver birch, oak, sycamore and hazel. Shrubs and other vegetation present include dogwood, ivy, elder, nettles, garlic mustard and laurel.</p> <p>The majority of the trees supported no potential roost features (PRFs) for bats. A few of the trees supported sparse ivy on the trunk, which could be utilised by opportunistic bats for roosting. Two trees towards the southern extent of the platform supported small rot holes potentially suitable for individual bats (PRF-I).</p>	 <p>Plate 7: Disused railway platform (northern extent). Photograph looking south.</p>
		 <p>Plate 8: Disused railway platform (southern extent). Photograph looking west.</p>

Foraging / Commuting Habitat Potential			
High quality semi-natural habitats	Within immediate vicinity (<250m)	Within wider landscape (<2km)	Comments
Broadleaved/mixed woodland	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	All site features exist within the LNR which is a mixture of woodland, watercourses and open grassland. There is no site lighting present along the entire stretch of the LNR.
Waterbodies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Tree lines/stands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Mature hedgerows	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
General Landscape Character	Suburban (mixed use)		

Conclusion:

Conclusion – Potential Suitability for Roosting Bats of Structures within the Development Site (see Collins 2023)	
Meccano Bridge	None - No habitat features 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).
Tie Rod Footbridge	None - No habitat features 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).
Jack Arch Footbridge	None - No habitat features 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).
Disused railway platform at Cupcake Lane	PRF-I trees. PRF is only suitable for individual bats of very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitat.

Conclusion – Foraging / Commuting Habitat Suitability for Bats (see Collins 2023)	
Conclusion:	High - Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to wider landscape, that is likely to be used regularly by commuting/foraging bats.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation, government guidance and best practice.

1. No further presence/ absence surveys are required to facilitate the restoration of the disused railway platform at Cupcake Lane.
2. As a precautionary approach, if any of the trees classified as PRF-I are to be removed, the felling of these trees should be completed in a precautionary manner in line with Collins, 2023;
 - Arborists will avoid crosscutting in proximity to cavities, hollow sections and other crevices suitable for roosting bats.
 - Sections containing cavities will be lowered to the ground and left overnight with the cavity opening clear to provide any bats with an opportunity to escape.
 - An experienced bat consultant will be available on site or on call, to provide advice and/or deal with any last-minute discoveries. Site arborists will be provided with the contact information of the ecological consultant and have the details to hand during site works.
 - If a roosting bat(s) is found during tree felling, tree works **must** cease immediately. The arborist must then contact the ecological consultant for further advice.
3. In line with Government policy on biodiversity, two bat boxes should be installed within the landownership of Smestow Valley LNR. The box should be installed on a suitable mature tree (e.g. Schwegler 2F Bat Box). The box should be installed at least 4m above ground-level, facing south or south-east. Further boxes could be installed to provide enhanced habitat within the LNR.
4. Should further information be required to understand the use of the LNR by bats, it is recommended that automated static bat detectors are left in suitable locations at a suitable time of year (ideally across three seasons (spring, summer and autumn) but can be limited to summer in order to gather species information). The bat calls can be analysed and a species assemblage of bats using the site and surrounding area can be determined. These automated static bat detector surveys can be supplemented with night-time bat walkover surveys as required and where health and safety permits. This

would aid in understanding the favoured foraging and commuting locations and other behaviours not necessarily recorded by the automated static detectors.

5. This report is considered valid for 12 months (CIEEM, 2019). Update surveys may be required to reassess the condition of the site (and its suitability for bats) should this period be exceeded.

I trust the above information is clear and satisfactory to requirements. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information or clarification.

Kind regards

Jenny Kearney
Associate Ecologist

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Full Q&E details of surveyors and checkers are available on request.