Bat Scoping Survey: 11 Cockney Hill, Reading

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NATURAL SOLUTIONS

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Non-technical Summary

Background

In November 2022, Crossman Associates was commissioned to undertake a bat survey of 11 Cockney Hill, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4HF. Development proposals include an extension.

Methods

The scoping survey was undertaken by Miguel Canovas, an experienced ecologist and bat worker. The building was inspected both externally and internally for any evidence of bat / bird presence, such as droppings, food remains, staining or actual bats / birds.

Results

The dwelling is located within a residential area. Overall, the dwelling remains in good condition and provides no features suitable for roosting bats or nesting birds. The garden is small and maintained.

The dwelling has **negligible** suitability for roosting bats.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the following be undertaken as part of the development:

- A precautionary approach to development with regard to bats.
- Install a house sparrow nest terrace.
- Exterior lighting planned sensitive to nocturnal wildlife.

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1. Background

1.1. In November 2022, Crossman Associates was commissioned to undertake a bat survey of 11 Cockney Hill, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4HF. Development proposals include an extension. (Site Ordnance Survey grid reference SU 67649 72683).

1.2. Figure 1 under Appendix II provides a site location map.

1.3. The objectives of the survey were to:

- Make an assessment of the likely presence or absence of bats
- Identify any legislative or planning policy constraints relevant to the site
- Determine the need for further surveys, compensation or mitigation

Site Description

1.4. The site comprises a two-story detached house which is located in a residential area of Tilehurst, Reading. The property has a well-maintained garden of lawns and shrubs.

1.5. The property is adjoined on all sides by similar detached properties with well-maintained gardens

1.6. The environs are predominately residential with a mix of medium/large properties. The wider landscape includes a golf course and woodlands.

Legislation

1.7. In the UK all species of bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2017. Under this legislation it is a strict liability offence to injure or destroy a bat or to disturb damage or destroy the resting place of a bat. Under this legislation the UK is obliged to fully take into account bats within the planning process and the level of bat activity on-site must be fully assessed prior to the assessment the planning application.

1.8. In Britain all wild birds are granted legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended). This legislation protects the birds, their eggs and nests whilst being built or in use.

2. Methodology

Desktop Study

Data search

2.1. The MAGIC website was accessed to gain information on any statutory site designations within 4 km of the site that are designated for bats.

National Planning Policy

2.2. National Planning Policy has been reviewed for policies that relate to nature conservation relevant to the site.

Field Survey

Bat scoping survey

2.3. A bat scoping survey was carried out on the 14 November 2022 by Miguel Canovas CEnv, an experienced ecologist and licenced bat worker.

2.4. The building was methodically inspected internally and externally for any evidence of roosting bats, including actual bats, droppings, urine staining and evidence of feeding activity such as discarded insect wings and cases.

2.5. The building was also assessed for its suitability to support roosting bats by considering several factors including whether bats can access internal and external voids within the building and whether these voids provide adequate protection and shelter for roosting bats. If the building is not confirmed as a roost, it is assessed from High to Negligible Suitability as follows;

- **High Suitability** – many roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be old, large and rural
- **Moderate Suitability** – some roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be old, rural with some recent maintenance
- **Low Suitability** – few roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be modern, urban and well maintained
- **Negligible Suitability** – insignificant roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be small, modern, urban and very well maintained.

Birds

2.6. The building was also inspected for the presence of birds including house sparrow *Passer domesticus.* The building was checked for field signs including nesting material, accumulations of droppings and/or pellets.

3. Results

Desktop Study

Data Search

3.1. The MAGIC website informed that there are no statutory sites within 4 km of the site designated for bats.

Planning Policy

3.2. National policy guidance is provided by National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the Government' planning policies for England and how they should be applied to planning applications;

<u>Conserving and enhancing the natural environment</u>

Planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Habitats and Biodiversity

3.3. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Field Survey

Bat scoping survey

3.4. The external and internal conditions of the buildings are described in the table below and photographs can be found in Appendix II.

3.5. A table within Appendix III; information sheets set out the criteria for the way a building is assessed for its potential to support roosting bats.

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
11 Cockney Hill, Reading	Overview	Two-storey detached house. The property, is in good condition and is currently occupied. No bats or evidence of bats were found inside or outside of the property.	Negligible Suitability ☒
	Exterior	The brick rendered walls are in good condition; no gaps or cracks were observed. The windows and doors are all well-sealed. There is a small outbuilding next to the western elevation of the building, which remains in good condition. A small garden, which is managed, occupies the rear of the property.	
	Interior	Areas of living accommodation are composed of well-sealed rooms with plaster and painted walls and ceilings. The roof void is insulated, composed of exposed timbers and wooden boards with modern lining, and approximately 2.5 m high. No gaps were observed and no light ingress.	
	Roof	The tiles are concrete type and are tightly fitting with no gaps or holes.	

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
		All roof verges remain well-sealed, areas of soffit and where lead flashing is used to seal roof abutments remain tightly-fitted in place. The chimneys brick work is in good condition and the flash work which seals the chimneys to the roof remains well fit in place.	

Birds

3.6. No birds or bird nesting activity was recorded in any aspect of the dwelling.

3.7. The mature shrubs and trees are likely to provide foraging and nesting opportunities for common garden birds.

Evaluation

3.8. The property is located within a residential area, however, lies near to a golf course and woodland, so surrounding habitats are likely to function as a commuting and foraging resource for bats.

3.9. The property itself provides a limited foraging resource for common urban species, such as common pipistrelle.

3.10. During the scoping survey, no droppings, staining, feeding remains or actual bats were observed. The building is in good condition and is well-maintained. All verges and soffits are in good condition and fit tightly. All tiles and ridges are sealed. The property is constructed from modern and uniform material and lacks any significant abiotic roosting opportunities.

3.11. The property has **negligible suitability** for roosting bats.

4. Recommendations

4.1. The recommendations in the paragraphs below are provided to help ensure that wildlife and important ecological features are protected during the course of works. Recommendations also set out mitigation measures to minimise harm where this cannot be avoided and provide compensation measures to allow the proposals to meet current legislative and planning policy objectives.

4.2. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) states that a public authority must 'in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity; Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'.

4.3. The NPPF (2021) states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

Species recommendations

Bats

4.4. Due to the lack of evidence of roosting bats within any aspect of the building on site, it is not considered necessary or beneficial to undertake any further survey work.

4.5. Due to the transitory nature of bats, there remains a very small possibility that bats could be encountered during the works; therefore, all works must proceed under a precautionary approach. Tiles and roof panels will be removed in a vertical rather than horizontal sliding motion. Soffits and masonry will be dismantled using

a 'soft' approach taking care with cavity walls where present. All site workers will be vigilant at all times and in the very unlikely event that a bat is found, then works must stop immediately and advice should be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

Lighting

4.6. The site lies near to grasslands and woodlands, these habitats are likely to support a few species of bat; typical species that would be likely to be present include common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle, therefore any exterior lighting that is to be employed should be of the modern LED-type and should take into account the presence of bats and avoid over illumination of the garden, trees and adjacent properties. This can be achieved by using directional lights and or cowls.

Biodiversity Enhancements

Birds

4.7. During the construction phase of the extension, there is an opportunity to incorporate inexpensive ecological enhancements that aim to increase the biodiversity of the site.

4.8. New nesting opportunities will be provided for the local bird population with a particular emphasis on house sparrows (which have suffered significant decline) and it is recommended that a sparrow nest box is installed within the development.

4.9. Sparrow nest boxes are ideally fitted below eaves. Suitable models include the Vivara Woodstone Sparrow Nest Box, which is suitable for integral and surface mounting. This model is strong, durable, long lasting and available in brown or stone colour. Models can be found on vivira.co.uk.

5. Limitations

5.1. This report records wildlife found during the survey and anecdotal evidence of sightings. It does not record any plants or animals that may appear at other times of the year and were therefore not evident at the time of visit.

5.2. The advice contained in this report relate primarily to factual survey results and general guidance only. On all legal matters you are advised to take legal advice.

6. References

Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) *Bats and Lighting in the UK* BCT

HMSO (1981) *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and subsequent amendments).* HMSO

HMSO (1995) *Biodiversity.* The UK Steering Group Report

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) *Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Reptiles and Amphibians* (2004) JNCC

Mitchell-Jones, A.J (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* English Nature

Mitchell-Jones, A.J, & McLeish A.P. (2012) *The Bat Worker's Manual* (4th Edition)

Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) Website at www.magic.gov.uk

Stace, C. (1997) *New Flora of the British Isles 2nd Edition.* Cambridge University Press

TSO (2021) *National Planning Policy Framework.* TSO

TSO (2006) *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act* TSO

Appendix I – Site Figures

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● Site location

Client	Swish Solutions Ltd
Title	Location plan
Site	11 Cockney Hill, Reading
Figure	1
Date	16/11/2022
Scale	xxx

Appendix II – Site Photographs

Photographs 1- 3

Photograph 1:

Front - southern elevation

Photograph 2:

Western elevation

Photograph 3:

Eastern elevation

Photographs 4 - 6

Photograph 4:

Back - northern elevation

Photograph 5:

Roof void

Photograph 6:

Garden

Appendix III– Information Sheets

Bat Habitat Suitably Criteria

Bat Roosting Suitability	Criteria	Survey requirement to prove likely absence
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.	No further survey work required
Low	A building, structure or tree with one or more potential roosting sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically; however, these possible roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used by large numbers of bats and are unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation roosts.	One activity survey
Medium	A building, structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to the size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habit, but is unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.	Two activity surveys
High	A building, 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 habitat.	Three activity surveys

Survey requirements are taken from Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (2016), which is the recognised industry standard guidance used by local planning authorities and other statutory consultees.

Information sheet Artificial bird nesting boxes for Buildings: Swifts, house martins and house sparrows

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Habibat house sparrow nest box

Vivara woodstone sparrow nest box; suitable for both integral fitment or surface mounting

Ibstock Swift boxes are also suitable for house sparrows. Can be customised to suit any exterior finish.Site boxes under eaves, away from windows and direct sunlight.

Ibstock Box

Sparrow boxes should be grouped together and be at least 2 m of the ground. The boxes can be also be sited on gable walls. At least 3 per averaged size house.

Swifts boxes should be at least 5 m above the ground with an clear un-obstructed flight path.

Schwegler model 9b

Schwegler house martin box model 9 b double is a suitable box for house martins and can be used to encourage the uptakeof a building by this species. The boxes can be attached to the exterior walls in a sheltered position; ideally beneath the eaves. At least two sets should be placed on an averaged size house.