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Your ref:

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Dear Arjun Gill,

2-4 Kings Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 3AA- Roost Assessment.

Introduction

EHM Ltd has been commissioned to carry out a preliminary bat roost assessment at a property; 2-4 Kings Road in Reading RG1 3AA. This letter report will provide an assessment of the buildings on site potential to support a bat roost.

Site Description & Background

The site contains a large red brick building over 4 levels (photo 1). The building is currently being converted into residential flats and had formerly been granted permission to demolish the plant room at the top, but due to changes in the planning application a bat assessment was then requested.

The site is in a highly built up area near the centre of Reading (grid ref SU717733) and sits on the corner of Kings Road and High Street. The roof area is mostly flat, however there is a large circular plant room due for demolition, with a pitched tiled roof. For the most part the structure and tiles are in good, well-maintained condition. Internally the roof is lined with a thick layer of fibreglass, which is covered in a layer of plastic sheeting. This plant room is currently being used as storage and is in daily use during the construction works. Therefore it is highly disturbed by noise and light.



Photo 1: Exterior of the main building

The site is surrounded on all sides by commercial and residential properties. River Kennet 90m to the south and River Thames 670m to the north and Caversham Lakes 1.15km northeast.

Methodology

EHM undertook a site visit on the 26th October 2022. This was to carry out an inspection to search for and identify potential feeding perches, roosting opportunities and signs of bat use externally. The methodology for assessing bat roost potential followed that recommended by the Bat Conservation Trust¹.

All the buildings were inspected from the ground using a powerful torch and binoculars. The visual inspection focussed on searching for feeding remains and bat droppings on external walls. Crevices and other potential roost sites were investigated for smear/grease marks, lack of cobwebs, urine staining.

Limitations

The contents of this report are based on a single site visit. Though the survey and interpretations of the data were carried out by a competent ecologist there may be things that have been overlooked or missed.

Relevant legislation

All bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit), which make it an offence to:

- Deliberately kill, injure or capture a bat;
- Deliberately disturb bats;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) contains further provisions making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- Obstruct access to any structure or place which any bat uses for shelter or protection; or
- Disturb any bat while occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

Proposed development works that are likely to disturb or destroy bats or their roosts will need to obtain a licence from the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (e.g., Natural England) prior to work commencing.

Biodiversity is a material consideration, and Local Planning Authorities have a requirement to consider biodiversity and protected species when determining planning applications. Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) gives specific reference to minimising the impacts of development on biodiversity. Local and Neighbourhood plans also provide guidance towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including priority habitats and notable species

Building Inspection Results

An external and internal inspection was carried out searching for any potential crevices or gaps that might provide a roosting opportunity. This was an Oval shaped building with a section cut into it where the entrance door is for the plant room (Photo 2). The sides are covered in tiles, as is the pitched roof. The tiles were all in good condition and tight to each other except above the doorway where there was a single missing tile (Photo 3). This feature did not appear to provide a suitable roost feature and there was no evidence of bats.

¹ Collins, J. (ed) (2016). Bat Surveys for professional Ecologists; Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.



Photo 2: Exterior of the plant room on flat roof of main building



Photo 3: Possible feature above door investigated and found not to be a likely roost site



Photo 4: Interior of plant room

The interior of the plant room did not contain any evidence of bats. There were no potential entry points into the interior with dense insulation backing the exterior tiles (photo 4). Plastic sheeting was also located over the insulation.

The roof was tight and well maintained. The only gaps seen were under the top section of lead bent over the edge/fascia - several gaps were seen all around, however the space underneath is minimal and not considered likely to support a bat roost.

Conclusion

Following a through assesment of the building and plant room and given the location and limited roosting opportunity, this plant room is assessed as having **negligible** potential for bats.

Recommendations

As the building is not considered as having any potential to support a bat roost no additional surveys are recommended at this stage.

It should be noted that bat absence is very difficult to prove definitively due to their mobility and size, and single or small numbers of bats are able to roost in extremely small spaces, such as in gaps between panels. The development work should be undertaken with care, for example with roof tiles lifted rather than dragged.

If during development works a bat (or an accumulation of bat droppings) is discovered at any time, work is to temporarily cease whilst an experienced bat ecologist is contacted for guidance and assistance. This can be the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) helpline (0845 1300 228).

I trust everything in this report is to your satisfaction please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information.

Kindest regards,



James Webster MCIEEM BSC (Hons)
Director of Ecology
Ecology & Habitat Management Ltd
04/11/2022