



Preliminary Roost Assessment and Ecological Walkover
Rose Kiln Court, Reading

Reference:80-535-R1-1
Date: June 2021



PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT AND ECOLOGICAL WALKOVER

Rose Kiln Court
Reading

Prepared for:
Strenpop Ltd

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site Address	Rose Kiln Court, Rose Kiln Lane, Reading, RG2 0BY
Coordinates	E 471315, N 172360
Site Area	Approximately 0.4 ha
Current Site Use and Adjacent Site Use	The site included a disused office building, with associated hardstanding carpark, introduced shrub planting beds and treeline to the north. The A33 was located adjacent to the east of the site, with the River Kennet beyond this, approximately 85 m east of the site. Holy Brook was located approximately 5 m north of the site, with residential housing extending further north. Rose Kiln Lane defined the western site boundary, with commercial developments present beyond.
Proposed Development	The proposed scheme includes the conversion of the office building into residential apartments, with some proposed thinning of trees, that overhang the site, present on the southern embankment of Holy Brook.
Results	✿ All buildings on-site were found to have negligible bat roosting potential. ✿ Two trees on-site (T29 and T30), were found to have low bat roosting potential. ✿ 18 trees adjacent to the north of the site, located on the southern embankment of Holy Brook were found to have moderate bat roosting potential. ✿ Holy Brook was found to provide a commuting and foraging resource for local bats. ✿ The introduced shrub, scattered trees and treeline on-site was found to provide potential nesting habitat for passerine bird species. ✿ Holy Brook approximately 5 m north of the site was found to provide suitable habitat for otter. ✿ Small leaved cotoneaster and entire-leaved cotoneaster were identified on-site.



**Conclusions and
Recommendations**

- ✿ If T29 or T30 requires removal to facilitate development, the trees should be soft felled under ecological supervision.
- ✿ If moderate bat potential trees require felling, two nocturnal bat surveys would be required on the tree between May and September, with at least one of the surveys between May and August. If bats are identified roosting within the tree, a final additional nocturnal survey would be required to inform a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL).
- ✿ If any of the moderate bat roosting potential trees require thinning, a Method Statement must be produced outlining the proposed works on the tree and the mitigation in place to protect roosting bats.
- ✿ A Lighting Plan that considers the habitats of highest importance, such as Holy Brook, should be considered such that the opportunity to retain as dark areas during and post development is given weight, alongside reference to natural surveillance for occupiers.
- ✿ If any vegetation requires removal, it should be removed outside of the breeding bird season (March to September inclusive). If this is not possible, a nesting bird check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist up to 24 hrs before works commence. If a nest, or nest in construction, is located, then a stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged.
- ✿ As thinning/felling of trees is proposed on the southern embankment of Holy Brook, an Otter Survey has been recommended. This survey has been undertaken and ensures that the development does not impact otters.
- ✿ Invasive plant species (small leaved cotoneaster and entire-leaved cotoneaster) should be removed prior to the development, following the most current guidance set out by the Environment Agency by a qualified contractor.
- ✿ Pollution control measures detailed within the report should be adhered to in an aim to protect Holy Brook.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

E3P has been instructed by Strenprop to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment at Rose Kiln Court, Reading, hereafter referred to as “the site”. A walkover was also undertaken to assess the site for any additional protected species constraints.

This report has been produced by Olivia McKechnie BSc (Hons) who holds a Class 1 Natural England bat licence and a qualifying CIEEM membership. Olivia has experience undertaking protected species surveys, Preliminary Ecological Appraisals and ecological mitigation for a wide variety of projects across the UK.

1.2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Detailed proposals include the conversion of the office building into residential apartments, with some proposed thinning of trees, that overhang the site, present on the southern embankment of Holy Brook.

1.3. SITE LOCATION

The site is located in Coley, Reading. The A33 defines the eastern boundary of the site, with the River Kennet located beyond this approximately 85 m east of the site. Holy Brook is situated approximately 5m north of the site, with residential housing extending north beyond the watercourse. The site is accessed via Rose Kiln Lane, located adjacent to the west of the site. Please refer to Figure 1.1. for the approximate site location.

FIGURE 1.1 APPROXIMATE SITE LOCATION



1.4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Preliminary Roost Assessment are as follows:

- ✧ Determine if bats currently, or could potentially, utilise the building or trees for roosting.
- ✧ Determine whether further surveys (e.g. nocturnal bat surveys) and/or further mitigation is necessary for development to proceed.

The objectives of the Ecological Walkover are as follows:

- ✧ Identify the major habitats present.
- ✧ Ascertain the presence or potential presence of any legally protected species and habitats.
- ✧ Recommend any further surveys or mitigation that may be required.

The survey findings are detailed in this report, as well as any recommendations.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. DESK STUDY

The following sources of information and ecological records were consulted:

-  MAGIC – A government web-based interactive mapping system, demonstrating European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) and Natural England Licences which have been previously granted within England (accessed June 2021).
-  Information and species records from Berks and South Bucks Bat Group (consulted June 2021).

A search via MAGIC was undertaken in June 2021 to identify EPSL within 1 km of the site boundary. This search area is considered suitable for the size of the development and the surrounding habitat.

2.2. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on the 04th June 2021 by Olivia Mckechnie who holds a Natural England Bat Licence (2020-44631-CLS-CLS). The weather was overcast with light precipitation.

The survey involved undertaking a systematic search of the trees and buildings, searching for signs of bats, or spaces where bats would be able to access. The methodology followed that described in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, 3rd Edition* (Collins, 2016).

The trees and buildings were categorised for their bat roosting potential as described in Table 2.1 in accordance with Collins (2016).

TABLE 2.1 BAT ROOSTING POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION OF TREES AND BUILDINGS

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
NEGLECTIBLE	A tree or building with no roosting features present or of an age/species that would not support roosting bats.
LOW	A tree or building with one or more potential roost site. However, the potential roost sites do not provide suitability for large numbers of bats (i.e. for maternity or hibernation) and would only be used on an occasional basis.
MODERATE	A tree or building with one or more potential roosting feature which could support a larger number of bats for longer periods, but is of a suitability meaning that it would be unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
HIGH	A tree or building with several potential roosting features which would be able to support large number of bats on a regular basis and for longer periods of time. The tree or buildings would have suitability to support maternity or hibernation roosts.

The survey was undertaken utilising suitable binoculars and ladders to access all areas where safe to do so.



2.3. ECOLOGICAL WALKOVER

A site walkover was undertaken by Olivia Mckechnie on 4 June 2021 to assess the site for any protected or notable species.

The walkover survey was undertaken to the standard methodology as detailed by the JNCC Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (2010). The assessment follows the methodology as per "Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal" (CIEEM, 2017).

Searches were made for uncommon, rare and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and species which are indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019).

Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on the revised (April 2010) Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) including but not limited to Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

2.4. LIMITATIONS

Access to all areas within 30 m of the site was not possible due to residential properties located north of the site, beyond Holy Brook, the A33 present to the east and commercial development to the west. However, due to the urban nature of the site, this is not considered to be a major constraint.



3. RESULTS

3.1. LOCAL BAT GROUP RECORDS

Based on information from Berks and South Bucks Bat Group, species present within the local area include; whiskered/brandt's (*Myotis mystacinus/brandtii*) brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), barbastelle (*Barbastelle barbastellus*), nathusius' pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*) and natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*).

3.2. MAGIC REVIEW

Two Bat European Protected Species Licences were located within the 1 km search area. The closest licence was located approximately 525 m north west of the site boundary, effective between 2017 – 2022 for the damage and destruction of a common pipistrelle non-breeding roost. The second licence was located approximately 935 m north east of the site, active between 2016 – 2021 for the damage and destruction of a common pipistrelle non-breeding roost.

3.3. SITE CONTEXT

The site comprised a disused office building with associated hardstanding car park and introduced shrub planting beds. A treeline defined the northern boundary of the site, with Holy Brook located approximately 5 m north of the site boundary. The site is anticipated to provide limited value for local wildlife which is restricted to the treeline to the north of the site, which may offer nesting and roosting opportunities for passerine birds and bats.

Holy Brook, located beyond the treeline to the north of the site, is anticipated to act as a wildlife corridor for local commuting fauna, whilst also providing links to valuable habitat including deciduous woodland and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, located approximately 280 m south west of the site. The watercourse is also anticipated to offer potential foraging opportunities for a range of species, such as bats and otter (*Lutra lutra*).

The River Kennet is located approximately 85 m east of the site, anticipated to provide commuting and foraging resources for a range of wildlife. The river is connected to the site via Holy Brook.

No water bodies were identified within the site or within 250 m of the site.

3.4. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

Building 1 (B1) comprised a two-storey brick office building with a pitched tiled roof. The brickwork and roof tiles were found to be in good condition, with metal window and door frames that were well sealed.



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PLATE 1 SHOWING B1



Wooden boarding was present under the eaves, which was found to be in good condition with no crevices present.

PLATE 2 SHOWING WOODEN BOARDING



Stone features were present at the entranceways, found to be in good condition with no crevices present.



PLATE 3 SHOWING STONE ENTRANCEWAYS



Internally, B1 was in good condition, with plastered walls and hung ceilings. No roof voids or basements were present within B1.

PLATE 4 SHOWING B1 INTERNALLY



Five structures used to hold plant, Building 2 to Building 6 (B2 to B6) were also present in the northwestern corner of the site.

B2 and B4 comprised single-storey brick structures with mono-pitched metal roofs.

PLATE 5 SHOWING B2



PLATE 6 SHOWING B4



B3 comprises a single storey metal structure with a flat roof.

PLATE 7 SHOWING B3



B5 comprises a small brick structure.

PLATE 8 SHOWING B5



B6 comprises a single storey metal structure.

PLATE 9 SHOWING B6



All on-site buildings and structures (B1-B6) were found to have Negligible bat roosting potential, as no Potential Roosting Features were identified within the structures.

The on-site trees were assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats (Collins, 2016). Two common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) trees on the northern site boundary, T30 and T29, were found to have Low bat roosting potential due to dense ivy coverage on their main stem. Tree reference number are taken from Tree Constraints Report (E3P, 2020) (report reference: 80-535-R2-1).



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PLATE 10 SHOWING T30



PLATE 11 SHOWING T29



A number of off-site trees located on the southern bank of Holly Brook approximately 5 m north of the site, that overhung the site, were also assessed for their bat roosting potential. 18 mature crack willow (*Salix fragilis*) trees (T31, T32, T33, T35, T36, T37, T39, T40, T41, T42, T43, T44, T45, T46, T47, T48, T49 and T50) were assessed as having moderate bat roosting potential on a precautionary basis due to their age and species and the dense ivy coverage on their main stems.



PLATE 12 SHOWING TREES ON HOLY BROOK EMBANKMENT



3.5. ECOLOGICAL WALKOVER

The habitats on-site comprised hardstanding, introduced shrub, scattered trees and a treeline. The habitats are described below.

A concrete hardstanding car park was present to the south of B1. The hardstanding was colonised at its edges by willowherb species (*Epilobium sp. (annual)*), herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), smooth sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale agg.*), butterfly bush saplings (*Buddleja davidii*), bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*), groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), wall lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*), vetch species (*Lathyrus sp.*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*) and common poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*).

PLATE 13 SHOWING HARDSTANDING CAR PARK



A paved hardstanding path led from the car park in the west, around the northern aspect of B1, terminating a paved smoking area in the east of the site.



PLATE 14 SHOWING HARDSTANDING PAVING



Sections of introduced shrub were present at the borders of the site within planting beds. Species present included coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*), cheery laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), red barked dogwood (*Cornus alba L.*), old fashioned weigela (*Weigela florida*), red leaved rose (*Rosa glauca*), cypress species (*Chamaecyparis/Cupressocyparis sp.*), gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), with an understory colonised by cleavers (*Galium aparine*), dandelion, bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*), wall lettuce, willowherb species, herb Robert, greater periwinkle (*Vinca major*), wall barley (*Hordeum murinum*), common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), read dead-nettle (*Lamium purpureum*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), butterfly bush saplings, bindweed species (*Calystegia sp.*), poppy, vetch species and scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*).

PLATE 15 SHOWING INTRODUCED SHRUB



Small leaved cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster microphyllus*) was present at the entrance to the site and entire-leaved cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster integrifolius*) was present at the entrance to B1.



PLATE 16 SHOWING COTONEASTER



Scattered trees were present within the introduced shrub planting beds at the peripheries of the site. The trees were found to be immature and comprised species including ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*) lime species (*Tilia sp.*), cabbage palm (*Cordyline australis*), tree cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster cornubia*) wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), English oak (*Quercus robur*) and common alder.

PLATE 17 SHOWING SCATTERED TREES



A treeline, Treeline 1 (TL1) was present on the northern boundary of the site. The trees were mature and species included sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), crack willow, hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), tree cotoneaster, common alder and ash. Ground flora included common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), wall lettuce, daisy, groundsel, meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*), common mouse ear, willowherb species, bristly ox tongue, cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), poppy, dandelion, ragwort, cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*) cleavers, ivy and petty spurge (*Euphorbia peplus*).



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PLATE 18 SHOWING TL1



4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. BATS

All on-site buildings were assessed as having Negligible bat roosting potential. As such, no further surveys or mitigation with regards to bats is required on the buildings for the redevelopment to proceed.

Two on-site trees (T29 and T30) were determined to have Low bat roosting potential. If these trees require removal to facilitate development, the trees should be soft felled under ecological supervision. The trees should be cut into sections, lowered down to the ground, and left overnight to allow any bats to escape, prior to chipping. The cutting should be carried out to avoid the area of roosting potential.

A total of 18 mature crack willow trees located on the southern bank of Holy Brook, just outside the northern boundary of the site, were assessed as having Moderate bat roosting potential on a precautionary basis due to the age and species of tree and the dense ivy coverage on their main stems.

Development proposals include the thinning/felling of a number of trees on the southern bank of Holy Brook, that overhang the site. If the trees with Moderate bat potential require felling, two nocturnal bat surveys are required on the tree between May and September, with at least one of the surveys between May and August. The surveys would be valid for two years to inform a planning application. If bats are identified roosting within the tree, a final additional nocturnal survey would be required to inform a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL). An ESPL would require up to date surveys from the survey season prior to the application submission.

If any of the Moderate bat roosting potential trees require thinning, a Method Statement must be produced outlining the proposed works on the tree and the mitigation in place to protect roosting bats, namely:

-  The presence of ecological supervision during the works to the Moderate potential trees.
-  The provision of a toolbox talk to all contractors working on-site regarding the potential presence of bats and their legal protection.
-  No works will be undertaken to the main stem of the bat potential trees, with only branches that hold Negligible bat roosting potential affected by the works.
-  No illumination of the bat potential trees or brook during the works.

The treeline and Holy Brook present on the northern site boundary are anticipated to act as valuable foraging resources for bats, due to the attraction of invertebrate prey and may also attract species associated with freshwater habitats such as Daubenton's, that specialise in feeding over water and are known to be present in the surrounding area. Holy Brook and the treeline are also anticipated to act as a commuting corridor for bats.

Development proposals include the retention of these commuting and foraging features, with only some thinning of trees on the southern bank of Holy Brook proposed.

It is recommended that the proposed Lighting Plan considers the habitats of highest importance. It is recommended that any security lighting during construction is appropriately placed to avoid being directed at Holy Brook, the treeline or any retained vegetation such as the scattered trees on-site, and that these are kept as dark areas during and post development.

Post-development, the opportunity for a Lighting Plan that considers the habitats of highest importance should be given weight, alongside reference to natural surveillance for occupiers.

To reduce the potential lighting impacts for bats, the following recommendations are advised for the lighting strategy:



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- ✿ Lighting should be pre-fixed on any proposed buildings, to ensure impacts on sensitive areas are diminished.
- ✿ Warm white tones are preferable to blue toned lights (3000k).
- ✿ LED lights are preferable as they produce minimal UV.
- ✿ To avoid light spill skyward, ensure lights face downward.
- ✿ Make use of vegetation to block light spill into dark areas.

Lighting should follow the protocols outlined in the Institute for Lighting Engineers document “Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lighting” (2005) and BCT’s “Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK” (2018) to minimise disturbance and sky-glow off-site.

Planting within the site should be of native fruiting/flowering species in order to enhance the site for foraging bats post-completion, as detailed in Section 4.6. Bat boxes could be installed throughout the site post-construction to enhance the site for the species group.

4.2. NESTING BIRDS

The site was assessed as having value for passerine species within the scattered trees, treeline and introduced shrub.

It is recommended that should any vegetation require removal within the breeding bird season (March–September inclusive), that a suitably qualified ecologist inspect the area no more than 24 hours prior to the removal. Should any nests, or nests in construction be located, a suitable stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged. The ecologist will advise on suitable stand-off and provide a toolbox talk to all site contractors regarding their working limits and legal implications.

Post-development, bird boxes could be installed throughout the development to enhance the site’s value for the species group.

4.3. OTTER

Holy Brook located approximately 5 m north of the site was assessed as providing suitable habitat for otter. Development proposals include the thinning/felling of some of the trees located on the southern bank of Holy Brook, that overhang the site. As such, to ensure the development does not impact otter, it has been recommended that an Otter Survey of Holy Brook is completed, to identify any potential otter holt locations and assess the potential presence of otter within the watercourse. The brook will be surveyed where it flows adjacent to the site and 500 m up and downstream of the site. Any field signs of the species should be mapped and any potential otter holts or resting places should be identified. Otter Surveys can be conducted at any time of year.

If potential otter holts or resting places had been identified during the survey, further survey effort in the form of camera traps would be recommended to confirm the absence/presence of the species on the features of interest. This survey has been undertaken and ensures that the development does not impact otters.



PLATE 19 SHOWING HOLY BROOK



4.4. INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

Small-leaved cotoneaster and entire-leaved cotoneaster were identified during the site walkover. As such, it is recommended, prior to the development, that these species should be eradicated following the most current guidance set out by the Environment Agency by a qualified contractor.

4.5. HOLLY BROOK

To protect Holy Brook during the construction phase, an 8 m buffer zone is recommended to be maintained adjacent to the watercourse, in which no works should be permitted. This would be excluding the works to thin/fell some of the trees on the southern embankment of the brook which overhang the site. Best practice protection measures as detailed within PPG5 Pollution Prevention Guidelines (2007) should be put in place to protect the watercourse. The following control measures are recommended during any groundworks and during the construction phase to ensure there are no impacts on the watercourses and water table or any wildlife utilising it:

- ✿ All operational plant should be kept well maintained and should not enter/be stored within the buffer zone.
- ✿ Turning off plant when not in use.
- ✿ Dampening of the operational areas should be regularly undertaken during dry weather conditions to avoid dust. Dust management should be extended to cover the plant and all operational areas and should be complied with throughout the period of development.
- ✿ Measures to prevent pollutants from entering ground and surface water is standard construction practice through the use of a bunded fuel storage and refuelling area at a discrete distance from any watercourses. These measures should be underwritten by spill management equipment being kept on-site and capable of being effectively utilised by trained operatives to contain any accidental spillage within any part of the operational area.
- ✿ A toolbox talk should be completed by a qualified ecologist to ensure contractors are aware of Holy Brook and its ecological importance.



- ✿ During night hours, no lighting should be located towards Holy Brook to ensure no wildlife are deterred from using it.
- ✿ A 'Site Tidy' protocol should be put in place on-site. All litter should be appropriately controlled, whilst on-site materials should be adequately stored over-night.
- ✿ All excavations should be battened at a 45-degree angle to allow escape should animals become trapped, or a mammal ladder created within open excavations.

4.6. PLANTING RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the landscape planting comprises native species and species known to be of value for the attraction of wildlife. This will include fruiting and flowering species. Species deemed suitable for this development could include berry-bearing native species such as:

- ✿ Hawthorn.
- ✿ Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*).
- ✿ Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*).
- ✿ Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*).
- ✿ Spindle (*Euonymus europaea*).
- ✿ Dog rose (*Rosa canina*).
- ✿ Guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*).
- ✿ Elder (*Sambucus nigra*).

All planting should be from a trusted pest-free source and, where possible, be of local provenance.

Any trees or shrubs within the site or boundary, to be retained, should be appropriately protected during the construction phase. Temporary protective demarcation fencing should be used to protect the trees and shrubs. The fencing should extend outside the canopy of the retained trees and must remain in position until all plots have been developed to ensure protection is provided throughout the construction phase.

The fencing should be in accordance with BS 5837:2012 *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction: Recommendations*.



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END OF REPORT

