

Bat Survey of Garage Block at 32-34 Eastern Avenue, Reading

Client SA Associates
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Non-technical Summary

Background

In January 2019, Crossman Associates was commissioned by SA Associates to undertake a bat and bird scoping survey of a modern 3 bay garage block adjacent to 32 – 34 Eastern Avenue, Reading, Berkshire.

Development proposals include the demolition of the garage block, which would be replaced with a residential dwelling.

Methodology

The scoping survey was undertaken by Fairbrass Knowles, a fully licensed bat worker and experienced ecologist. The building and tree were inspected for any evidence of bat / bird presence, such as droppings, food remains, staining or actual bats / birds.

Results

The garage is located within a densely urban location and comprises a small site adjacent to the western edge of Eastern Avenue and consists of a square-shaped area of hard-standing with a simple modern pre-fabricated 3 bay garage block with a mono pitch roof. The building remains in a usable state and is constructed in such a way, using modern materials, that result in a lack of abiotic roosting features for bats and therefore has **Negligible Suitability** for roosting bats.

Recommendations

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

- A precautionary approach to development in relation to bats and birds
- New soft landscaping should include plant species that have value to wildlife
- Incorporate integral sparrow nest boxes within the walls of the new dwelling

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1. Background

- 1.1. In January 2019, Crossman Associates was commissioned by S A Associates to undertake a bat and bird scoping survey of a modern garage block located adjacent to 32 – 34 Eastern Avenue, Reading, Berkshire (Ordnance Survey grid reference SU 7323 7305).
- 1.2. Figure 1 provides a site location map.
- 1.3. Development proposals involve the demolition of the garage block and the redevelopment of the site to provide a residential dwelling.
- 1.4. 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

- 1.5. The site consists of a small prefabricated concrete single storey three bay garage block with a small area of hard-standing at the front (east side), which is currently used as a parking area. The garage block is located adjacent to the western carriageway of Eastern Avenue; a main thoroughfare centrally located within the town of Reading.
- 1.6. Immediate surroundings are composed of dense areas taken up largely by residential dwellings served by a network of roads.
- 1.7. The wider landscape is largely a continuation of a densely urban landscape, with frequent green open spaces, the closest being a cemetery that contains well

established areas of vegetation, and lies approximately 200 m from the site. A large lake located within the grounds of The University of Reading provides the closest significant watercourse and lies approximately 600 m to the south of the site.

Legislation

Bats

- 1.8. 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 Regulations, 2010. 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.

Birds

- 1.9. All species of birds are partially protected under the wildlife and countryside act (1981) as Amended which makes it an offence to damage or destroy a nest when 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. The building was methodically inspected for any evidence of roosting bats, including actual bats, droppings, urine staining and evidence of feeding activity such as discarded insect wings and cases.
- 2.4. The building and tree 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 / tree and whether these voids provide adequate protection and shelter for roosting bats. If the building / tree 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. Building 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

- 2.5. 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. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains sections of relevance to nature conservation that include:

- Paragraph 174: To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
 - a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity⁵⁶; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation;
 - b) and promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- Paragraph 175: 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 incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Field Survey

Bat scoping survey

- 3.3. Survey work was undertaken by Fairbrass Knowles, an experienced ecologist and fully licensed bat worker (licence number 12392 cls-cls) and took place on 22 January 2019.

- 3.4. The condition of the garage is described in the table below and photographs can be found within Appendix II.
- 3.5. A table within Appendix III set out the criteria for the way a building is assessed for its potential to support roosting bats.

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
Modern three bay concrete garage block	Overview	Detached modern three bay garage block. Supporting walls and the walls that divide the bays are formed from individual concrete panels that are bolted together. All the walls remain sound and lack any significant cracks, holes or subsidence. The only openings consist of three individual garage doors located on the eastern elevation and are of the steel up and over-type garage door; all fit tightly within their respective reveals with no evidence of any significant gaps. The roof is a simple mono pitch design formed from simple timber beams clad with sheets of corrugated cement / asbestos fibre panels; all of which remain present and well fitted in place. Overall the building remains well-sealed and the buildings construction using single skin and uniform materials results in a lack of complexities and therefore provides no significant abiotic bat roosting suitability	Confirmed roost ☐ High Suitability ☐ Moderate Suitability ☐ Low Suitability ☐ Negligible Suitability ☒

Birds

- 3.6. During the survey no birds, bird nests or any other bird related evidence was found in association with the garage block.

Evaluation

Bats

- 3.7. During the scoping survey no droppings, staining, feeding remains or actual bats were observed.
- 3.8. The garage block is a small and modern building constructed from modern and uniform materials to a design that includes single skin concrete walls and single skin corrugated roof. In addition, the garage is located within an urban and disturbed environment which provides bats with sub-optimal foraging and commuting opportunities. The building has **Negligible Suitability** for roosting bats.

Birds

- 3.9. A small amount of vegetation in the form of young naturalised sycamore trees *Acer pseudoplatanus* and a few ornamental trees, shrubs and ivy are present growing tight up against the garage blocks western elevation, which also forms the sites boundary. The vegetation provides a small area of suitable cover nesting opportunities for common urban birds.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. The recommendations in the paragraphs below should be followed 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. Under the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.

4.3. Species recommendations

Bats

- 4.4. Due to the lack of evidence of bats and the negligible suitability of the building to support bats, it is not considered necessary or beneficial to undertake any further survey work.
- 4.5. Bats are transient in nature and can sometimes utilise buildings on an occasional or temporary basis. It is therefore recommended that works to the building are undertaken using a precautionary approach with all tiles and roof panels being removed cautiously by hand. In the unlikely event that a bat is found, works should stop immediately and further advice must be sought from Crossman Associates or Natural England. (telephone number 0300 0603900).

Birds

- 4.6. Boundary trees, shrubs and ivy present along the western boundary provide nesting opportunities for commoner species of bird associated with an urban environment. Where possible this vegetation should be retained however if removal is necessary then vegetation removal should avoid the bird nesting season

- (March to September). If this is not possible then a thorough search should be carried out prior to vegetation removal to help ensure no birds are nesting or have dependant young. If birds are found to be nesting or rearing young, then works must be delayed until all young have left the nest.
- 4.7. Compensation for the loss of bird nesting habitat should include the incorporation of artificial sparrow nesting boxes within the walls of the proposed dwelling (s). Habibat sparrow terraces are recommended, as they are discreet and long lasting. A pair of theses installed on the building exterior would offer sparrows a permanent and long lasting nesting site. Sparrows have recently undergone a steep decline in the UK.
- 4.8. Habibat sparrow boxes are available directly from the company at www.habibat.co.uk Telephone number 01642 724626.
- 4.9. An information sheet on integrally fitted bird nest boxes can be found under Appendix III; information sheets.

Landscape recommendations

- 4.10. New landscape planting should include species of plant that have value to wildlife. An information sheet is included in Appendix III which includes a range of tree, shrub, and herb species and that could be incorporated; these are recommended for encouraging bats but will also attract a wide range of other species.

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. This report represents a preliminary assessment only. Recommendations and conclusions are subject to change should further findings significantly differ from those collected from the survey efforts to date.
- 5.3. 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

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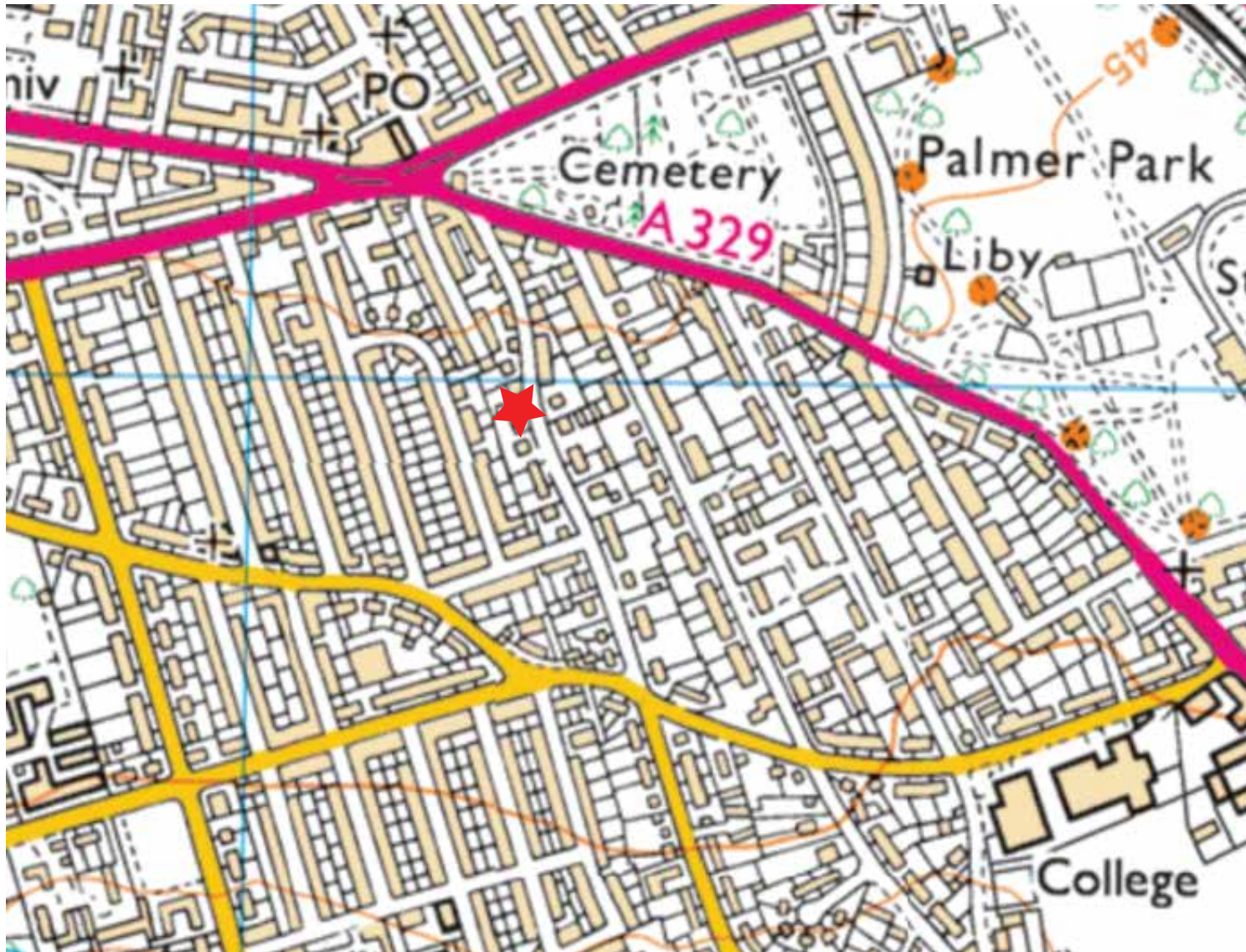
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Website at www.magic.gov.uk

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

TSO (2012) *National Planning Policy Framework*. TSO

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

Appendix I – Site Figures



Site Location

Client SA Associates

Title Site Location map

Site Garage block at 32 / 34 Eastern Avenue

Figure 1

Date 25 January 2019

Scale Indicative



Appendix II– Site Photographs

Photographs 1- 3



Photograph 1:

Front; eastern elevation



Photograph 2:

Side; northern elevation; the southern elevation is near identical



Photograph 3:

Rear; western elevation; showing boundary trees and shrubs.

Photographs 4 - 5



Photograph 4:

Roof; which is composed of corrugated asbestos / cement fibre roof sheets



Photograph 5:

Interior garage bay; the other two are near identical



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



Habibat house
sparrow nest box



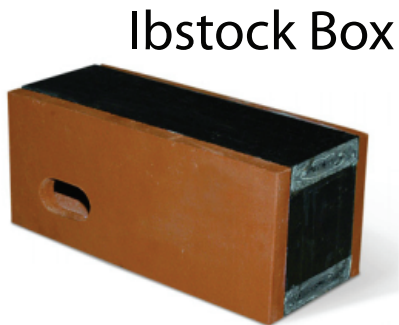
Ecosurv Box

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

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 house martin box model 9 b double is a suitable box for house martins and can be used to encourage the uptake of 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.



Ibstock Box



Schwegler model 9b

Bat Friendly Planting

ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPING N° 001

Plants of known benefit to UK bat species:

Border Flowers

Corncockle *Agrostemma githago*
Cornflower *Centaurea cyanus*
Corn poppy *Papaver rhoeas*
English bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*
Knapweed *Centurea niger*
Night-scented catchfly *Silene noctiflora* *
Ox-eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*
Primrose *Prima rosa*
Red campion *Selene diotica*
Scabious species *Scabiosa Sp.*
St Johns wort *Hypericum perforatum*
Sweet rocket *Hesperis matronalis* *
Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*

Herbs

Angelica *Angelica archangelica*
Bergamot *Citrus bergamia*
Borage *Borago officinalis* *
Chives *Allium schoenoprasum*
English marigolds *Calendula officinalis* *
Fennel *Foeniculum vulgare*
Feverfew *Tanacetum parthenium*
Hyssop *Hyssopus officinalis*
Lavenders *Lavandula Sp.*
Lemon balm *Melissa officinalis* *
Marjoram *Origanum majoram* *
Rosemary *Rosmarinus officinalis*
Sweet Cicely *Myrris odorata*
Thyme *Thymus vulgaris*

Trees

Elder *Sambucus niger*
English oak *Quercus niger*
Hawthorn *Crataegus Sp.*
Hazel *Corylus avellana*
Pussy willow *Salix caprea*
Rowan *Sorbus Sp.*
Silver birch *Betula pendula*
Common alder *Alnus glutinosa*

Shrubs and Climbers

Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* *
Buddleia *Buddleia buddleia*
Dog rose *Rosa canina* *
Gorse *Ulex europaeus*
Guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*
Honeysuckle *Lonicera Sp.* *
Ivy *Hedera helix*
Jasmine *Jasminum* *

Aquatic plants

Bog bean *Menyanthus trifoliata*
Bugle *Ajuga Reptans*
Creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*
Flag iris *Iris pseudacorus*
Hemp agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*
Lady's smock *Cardamine pratensis*
Marsh mallow *Althaea officinalis*
Marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*
Purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*
Water mint *Mentha aquatica* *

Landscaping Planting for Bats

As very active mammals bats need to eat up to 3000 midges, mosquitoes and other insects a night. Incorporating night-scented plants within your site will especially help encourage bat prey insect species. Using structural plants such as trees and large shrubs can also improve a soft landscaped area by introducing dark and sheltered areas.

* Night-scented


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