

**Building on St John's Street
Reading
Berkshire**

Preliminary Bat Roost and Nesting Bird Assessment

Ref: R2478/a

February 2020



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Azam to carry out a preliminary bat roost assessment of commercial building on St John's Street, Reading (situated to the rear of 102-104 Queen's Road) (refer to site location plan in **Appendix 3**).

1.1.2 The survey was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Reading Borough Council seeking consent to construct new residential buildings on the plot (refer to proposed 3D plans in **Appendix 4**).

1.2 Legislative Background – Bats

1.2.1 All British bat species are fully protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitat Regulations'). In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:

- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat;
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of bats to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating bats, to hibernate or migrate; or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species;
- Deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

1.2.2 The government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations. A licence can be issued if the following three tests have been met:

- **Regulation 55(9)(a)** - there is "no satisfactory alternative" to the derogation, and;
- **Regulation 55(9)(b)** - the derogation "will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range" and;

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- **Regulation 55(2)(e)** - the derogation is for the purposes of “preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment”.

- 1.2.3** Local authorities have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3e) of the Habitat Regulations to have regard to requirements of the Habitats Directive in the exercise of their functions. The Council must therefore consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by applications where survey findings show that European Protected Species licensing is necessary before granting planning permission.
- 1.2.4** European Protected Species mitigation licence applications can be submitted once all necessary planning consents have been granted and Natural England aim to issue a licence decision within 30 working days.
- 1.2.5** Licensable projects affecting small numbers of seven commonly occurring bat species may fall under the remit of the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (WML-CL21). The Class Licence permits ‘Registered Consultants’ or accredited agents appointed by them to carry out licensable operations on site on behalf of clients following the registration of sites with Natural England at least 15 working days before the work is due to start.
- 1.2.6** Survey data supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or the registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (WML-CL21) must be up to date i.e. have been conducted within the current or most recent optimal survey season i.e. May to August. Therefore, if surveys show bats are present and licensable work is delayed until during or after the next survey season, updated surveys will be required to support an application or site registration.

1.3 Legislative Background – Nesting Birds

- 1.3.1** All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The Act makes it an offence to kill, injure or take a wild bird or to damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird whilst in use or being built.
- 1.3.2** Less common bird species of conservation concern, such as the barn owl and kingfisher, are listed on Schedule 1 of the Act, which makes it an offence to disturb the birds whilst nesting also.

1.4 Site Location and Context

- 1.4.1** The building is situated on the western side of St John's Street close to the junction with Queen's Road in Reading, Berkshire (OS grid reference SU 72309 73244).
- 1.4.2** The building is set in an urban area close to the centre of Reading. The immediate surroundings are built up with commercial and residential buildings on either side of St John's Street and commercial and residential buildings on Queen's Road to the north. In the wider area, there is little open or green space within a 500m radius; however, the Kennet & Avon Canal – which provides potential foraging habitat for bats – is situated just over 100m to the north.

2 SURVEY METHOD

2.1 Bat Survey

2.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the building was undertaken by an ecologist registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 on February 5th 2020.

2.1.2 The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars, and a high power (1 million candle power) torch and looked for any signs of occupation by bats, and for features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines (Collins 2016; Mitchell-Jones 2004; Mitchell-Jones & McLeish 2004).

2.1.3 The following may indicate the presence of a bat roost within a building:

- Droppings (these can be found externally, especially in sheltered areas such as window sills, underneath roost entrances or internally within a roof space);
- Piles of insect remains e.g. moth wings (these may be indicative of regular feeding sites used by species such as brown long eared bat);
- Staining at roost entrances or within the roost (urine and oil from fur can leave stains on timbers when bats are gathered for long periods);
- Bats (live or dead).

2.1.4 Commercial properties may offer potential roosting sites in a number of locations, favoured locations include:

- Under roof coverings, especially when loose or missing tiles are present or sections of mortar are missing;
- At the eaves – gaining access via gaps between the soffits and wall;
- At the gable ends – access is typically gained at the roof apex via gaps in the soffits or under roof tiles;
- Within an enclosed roof space - long eared bats (*Plecotus* sp.) for example, will often cluster at the ridge beam.

2.2 Nesting Bird Survey

- 2.2.1** The building's interior was inspected for evidence of the presence of nesting birds on February 5th 2020. The inspection looked for evidence of birds comprising: birds, nesting material, droppings and feathers.

2.3 Survey Constraints

- 2.3.1** Full access was available to the interior of the property and therefore there were no significant constraints to the survey; however, due to the building's proximity to neighbouring gardens it was not possible to inspect the building's exterior or the roofs from the western side.

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 Building Inspection

3.1.1 Photographs of the site are presented in **Appendix 1** and a plan of the external and internal survey findings with associated target notes is shown in **Appendix 2**. The survey findings from the exterior and interior of the building are described as follows:

3.2 External Survey

3.2.1 The commercial building was of solid brick wall construction with sections with slate and corrugated sheet pitched roofs (**Photographs 1 & 2**). The slates covering the main roof at the northern end were all in situ and tightly fitted where visible (**Target note 1; Photograph 1**). There were gaps in the slates around a flue pipe on the front elevation (**Target note 3**). The corrugated sheets on the lower level roof were in place where visible also (**Photograph 2**). The mortar between the slates and brickwork of the main slate roof was intact (**Target note 4; Photograph 3**). Gaps were visible between the bricks and corrugated sheets at the building's southern end (**Target note 5; Photograph 5**). The barge boards at the roof line of the two roofs fronting St John's Street had gaps between them and the brickwork (**Target note 2; Photograph 6**). No evidence of bats or nesting birds was visible to the exterior of the building during the survey.

3.3 Internal Survey

3.3.1 The building's first floor was served by a staircase and was open to the underside of the slate and corrugated sheet roofs with no enclosed roof voids throughout. The floor throughout the rooms on the first floor comprised of timber floorboards that were damp and in poor condition (**Target note 12**). The corrugated sheet metal roof on the building's eastern side had a large gap at the ridge open to the exterior (**Target note 11; Photographs 7 & 8**). The adjoining sloping roof to the west was formed from corrugated Perspex sheet (**Target note 7; Photograph 9**). There was a large opening to the outside in the building's south western corner (**Target note 6; Photograph 15**). The slate roofs at the northern end of the building were lined with timber sarking boards, which overall were intact; however, there were gaps where daylight was visible (**Target note 13; Photographs 10 & 13**). Gaps were visible also around a flue pipe on the eastern side of the roof (**Target note 3; Photograph 12**). The southern gable wall of the

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main slate roofed section on the eastern side had a circular opening to the exterior (**Target note 10; Photograph 11**). The eaves in all sections of the building were open to the barge boards at the roof line (**Target note 9**). A large water tank on a raised platform was situated within the room at the north western corner and there was an open space beneath (**Target note 8; Photograph 14**).

- 3.3.2** The building's ground floor comprised a large mostly open storage area with some smaller, enclosed rooms also (**Photograph 16**). The roof comprised plasterboard, which was sealed tightly to the painted walls.
- 3.3.3** No bats or evidence of the presence of bats or nesting birds was visible within the building during the survey.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Bat and Nesting Bird Potential

- 4.1.1** The buildings were of simple construction with solid brick walls and roofs open to the underside of the slate and corrugated sheet roofs and eaves. The buildings were in poor condition with several opportunities for bats and birds to enter the interior, but no evidence of their presence was visible, and as such, taking into account the urban setting also, it is considered highly unlikely that the building supports bats or nesting birds.

4.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

- 4.2.1** The survey shows that the proposals are highly unlikely to have an impact on bats and as such a European Protected Species mitigation licence will not be required for the work to go ahead lawfully. There is a low risk that bats could be found in the future and therefore care should be taken to soft strip roof coverings and barge boards prior to mechanical demolition or construction work beginning. In the unlikely event that bats and/or evidence of roosting bats are found, work must stop immediately and a licensed ecologist must be called to site to provide further advice. At this point, work must only continue once further written advice has been received, and if necessary, an EPS mitigation licence or confirmation of the site's registration under the bat Mitigation Class Licence (if applicable) has been obtained.
- 4.2.2** The survey shows that the proposals are unlikely to affect nesting birds but it is possible that birds could make use of the building in the future. As a precaution, demolition work should either avoid the peak bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) or take place following an inspection to check for nesting birds.

5 REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

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

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. & McLeish, A. P. (2004). *Bat Workers' Manual (3rd Edition)*. JNCC, Peterborough.

Richardson, P. (2000). *Distribution Atlas of Bats in Britain and Ireland 1980 – 1999*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



1. The building viewed from St John's Street to the east looking west.



2. The building viewed from St John's Street to the east looking south west showing lower level corrugated sheet covered roof.



3. The intact mortar at the northern gable of the slate roofed part of the building fronting St John's Street.



4. The southern gable end of the lower level, corrugated sheet roofed section of the building.



5. Gaps in the mortar between the sheet roof and brickwork.



6. Gaps between the barge board and brickwork on the front (eastern) elevation of the slate roofed part of the building fronting St John's Street.



7. The corrugated sheet roof on the eastern side of the building.



8. Gaps in the corrugated sheeting at the ridge.



9. Corrugated sheet roof on the western side of the building.



10. The timber sarking lining the slate roof on the building's eastern side.



11. An opening to the exterior in the southern gable wall of the slate covered roof.



12. Daylight around a flue pipe close to eaves in the slate roof on the eastern side of the building.



13. Daylight visible through the sarking boards in the slate roof on the eastern side of the building.



14. The raised water tank and room beneath on the western side of the building.

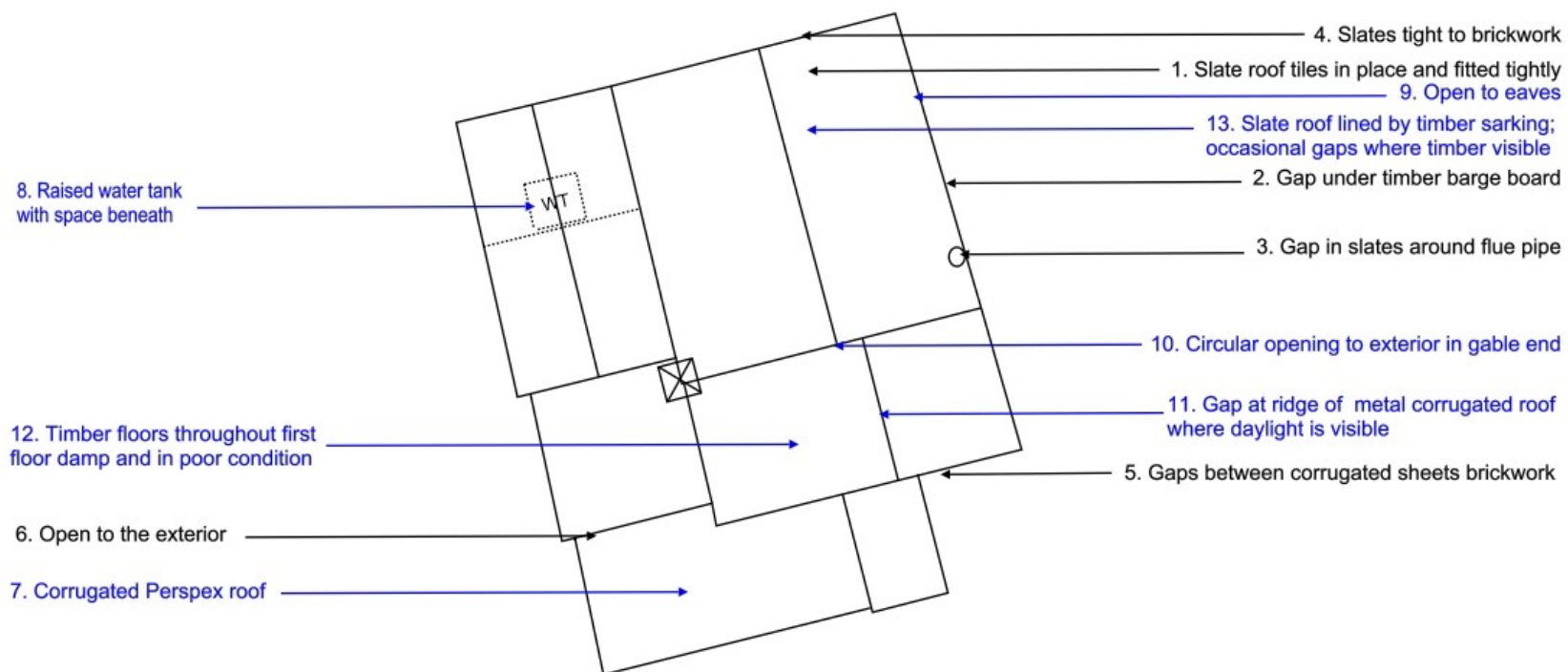


15. An opening to the exterior at the building's south western corner.



16. The storage space on the building's ground floor.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



Chimney



Water Tank



Flue



External Target note

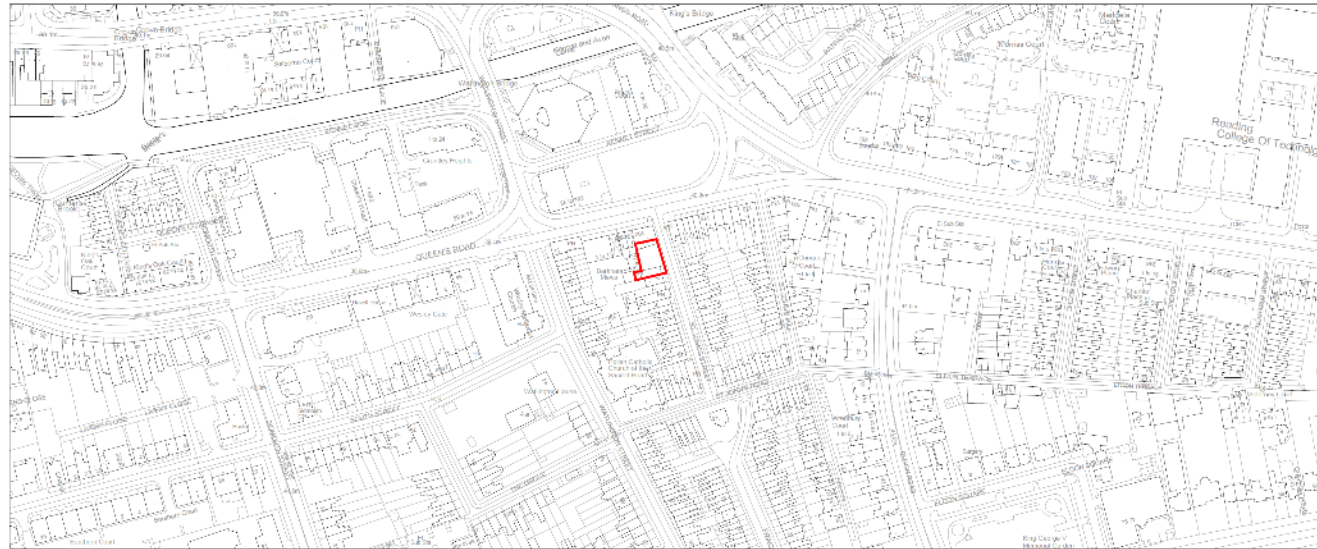


Internal Target note

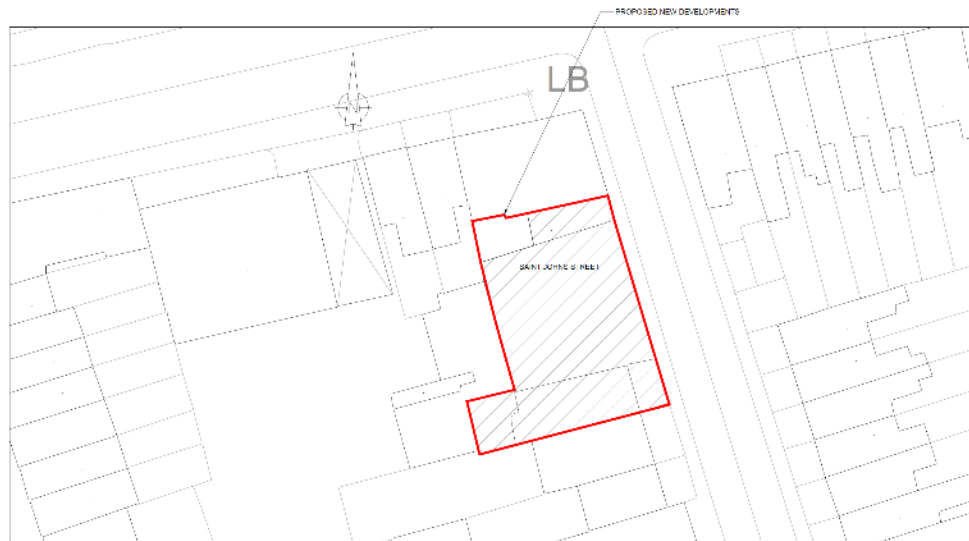
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JW	Feb 2020	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

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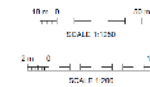
APPENDIX 3 – SITE LOCATION PLAN



LOCATION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
SCALE 1:1200



LOCATION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
SCALE 1:200



A	F0318-6	E	A	MDL C-115-479-N	
RPN	DATE	DRN	CHKD	APPR	DESCRIPTION
DRAWING STATUS					

For Approval



CLIENT	Mr Azam	
PROJECT	102 Queens Road Reading	
TITLE	Location Plan	
DRAWN JA	DATE March 18	SCALE AS SHOWN @ A
DRG NO	A-1000	REV A
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APPENDIX 4 – PROPOSED 3D PLANS



Proposed Front View



Proposed Front View



Proposed Front View

REV	DATE	DRN	CHD/APPD	DESCRIPTION	
A	29/07/19	GS	DA	JA	ISSUED FOR PLANNING

For Approval

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CLIENT			Mr Azam		
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TITLE			3D VISUALISATIONS		
DRAWN	DATE	SCALE	DWG NO	REV	
GS	July 2019	@ A1	A-1050	A	
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