



QA

Stadium Way, Reading – Bat Scoping Survey

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	December 2018	March 2019
Comments:		
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Signature:		
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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Greengage Environmental Ltd was commissioned by SHP Opportunity Fund General Partner Ltd to undertake a bat scoping survey at a site located off Stadium Way in Reading, Berkshire.
- 1.2 This report has been produced to accompany a planning application for the site. Proposals seek for demolition of the existing buildings and erection of a new warehouse building with associated landscaping, vehicle access and parking.
- 1.3 The bat scoping assessment aimed to identify the potential for roosting bats to be present within the existing buildings alongside an appraisal of any additional features and habitats at and surrounding the site that would support bat activity.
- 1.4 A detailed systematic daytime external and internal inspection observed no direct evidence of use by roosting bats. However, moderate potential for roosting bats across the four main industrial units was identified at the site, associated with gaps in brickwork, loose roofing membrane and rotten wooden fascia boards.
- 1.5 An endoscope survey of all potential roosting features was subsequently completed on 16th March 2019 which observed no direct evidence of roosting bats. Accordingly, bats are confirmed likely-absent from the building and no further surveys are deemed necessary.
- 1.6 A precautionary soft strip of all roofing materials, fascia boards and soffits should be undertaken under ecologist watching brief prior to full demolition.
- 1.7 The building was also confirmed to be of potential value to nesting birds such as house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and other crevice dwelling species within the holes in brickwork. Demolition should therefore be undertaken outside of breeding bird season (March – August inclusive) or following a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist who confirms absence.
- 1.8 Whilst formal mitigation measures for bats are not required, the following recommendations should be included within the scheme to ensure compliance with planning policy and best practice guidance:
 - Integrated bat and bird nest boxes in the new building;
 - Implementation of a bat-sensitive lighting strategy; and
 - Provision of wildlife-friendly landscaping.
- 1.9 There are no other ecological constraints to the development and the scheme is likely to result in net gains for biodiversity assuming the above recommendations are adhered to.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Greengage was commissioned by SHP Opportunity Fund General Partner Ltd to undertake a bat scoping survey at a site located of Stadium Way, Reading.
- 2.2 Proposals seek for demolition of the existing buildings and erection of a new warehouse building with associated landscaping, vehicle access and parking.
- 2.3 The survey aimed to establish the potential for roosting bats within the buildings and trees onsite, to inform additional survey requirements and identify appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions in light of the proposed development at site, ensuring legislative and planning policy compliance.
- 2.4 The recommendations and opinions expressed in this report are based on the combination of information stated and site observations.

AIMS OF SURVEY

- 2.5 The purpose of the survey was to further determine if there are any features or habitats on site that could potentially support roosting bats, and to determine whether these species are present in the buildings and/or trees at the site. The surveys therefore aimed to determine the following:
- Value of existing habitats and features for foraging and commuting bats;
 - Presence of bat roosts through external/internal inspections and bat endoscope survey.
- 2.6 By using existing data for the area to support the survey, it is possible to determine the presence/likely-absence of bats across the site and in the wider area. This information can then be used to determine the form and extent of any mitigation, compensation or enhancement that may be appropriate.

SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.7 The assessment site is approximately 0.43 ha and is approximately centred on National Grid Reference SU690742, OS Co-ordinates 469005, 174276.
- 2.8 The site is located in an established area of industrial, office and commercial uses and is within the defined Portman Road Core Employment Area and Flood Zone 2. The site occupies a prominent corner location at the junction of Stadium Way and Wigmore Lane and currently comprises four adjoining units within Stadium Way Industrial Estate.
- 2.9 The site straddles Stadium Way, with an area of hardstanding located to its northern side, previously used for vehicle parking. Further hardstanding is located forward of the units. To the western end of the site is located a Vodafone communications tower and plant. The units are currently individually leased, in use variously for car repair and

maintenance. The site is bounded to the north by the mainline railway embankment. Industrial buildings are located to the south, east and west of the site.

- 2.10 Open green space and more natural habitats around the site include a patchwork of fields and hedgerows to the north of the rail sidings and the River Thames approximately 0.55km north.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 Bat records from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) to 2km from the site were analysed to determine the records of bat species in the local area.
- 3.2 Alongside this a search of readily available data was made, including the MAGIC dataset and local Council websites.

SITE ASSESSMENT

Internal and External Inspections

- 3.3 A visual assessment of the buildings was carried out during the bat scoping survey to assess external evidence from the outside of the buildings. A systematic internal inspection was conducted in all accessible areas; a high-powered torch and binoculars were used to see areas that were otherwise inaccessible.
- 3.4 The structures were surveyed for bat signs, including the presence of droppings, urine staining, grease marks, and signs of food remnants such as moth and butterfly wings.
- 3.5 The potential access points, roost locations, foraging areas and commuting routes were identified.

Endoscope Survey

- 3.6 Following the visual assessment, an intrusive endoscope survey was completed of all potential roosting features by a licensed ecologist.
- 3.7 A vehicle-mounted aerial platform was used to access all parts of the building where bat roosting potential had been identified. The crevices were systematically inspected using an endoscope to probe into the holes, with the live footage visible during operation on a screen.

SURVEYOR COMPETENCIES

- 3.8 Naomi Foot, surveyed the site and prepared this report, has an undergraduate degree in Ecology and Conservation (BSc Hons), a Master's degree in Applied Ecology, is a Graduate member of CIEEM, and has over three years' experience working in ecological consulting.
- 3.9 Richard Law, who undertook the endoscope survey, is an experienced ecologist with over 15 years' experience within consultancy surveying bats and other protected species. Richard has held a Class 2 Natural England bat licence (2015-12576-CLS-CLS) for 6 years.

- 3.10 Mitch Cooke, who reviewed this report, has a degree in Ecology (Hons), an MSc in Environmental Assessment and Management, and is a full member of CIEEM with over 35 years' experience in ecological survey and assessment. Mitch has set up and developed ecological and environmental teams for nearly 20 years and has undertaken and managed numerous ecological surveys and assessments. He is the Director at Greengage and manages the team.
- 3.11 This report was reviewed and verified by Mitch Cooke who confirms in writing (see the QA sheet at the front of this report) that the report is in line with the following:
- Represents sound industry practice;
 - Reports and recommends correctly, truthfully and objectively;
 - Is appropriate given the local site conditions and scope of works proposed; and
 - Avoids invalid, biased and exaggerated statements.

Limitations

- 3.12 The assessment was undertaken at a suitable time of year and within ideal weather conditions for surveying buildings for bats.
- 3.13 There were no significant limitations to the internal inspection or endoscope survey; it was possible to access all relevant areas.

4.0 RESULTS

DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

4.1 There are local records for the following species within 2km of the assessment site as confirmed by the TVERC data search:

- Serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*);
- Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*);
- Leisler's (*Nyctalus leisleri*);
- Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*);
- Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*);
- Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*);
- Natterers (*Myotis nattereri*); and
- Brown long eared (*Plecotus auritus*).

4.2 The above species have all been recorded relatively recently, between 2013-2017.

4.3 A search of the MAGIC dataset found that the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is approximately 1.2km north of the site and there are four small Local Nature Reserves (LNR) within 2km of the site, including:

- McIlroy Park 1.15km west;
- Round Copse 1.1km west;
- Lousehill Copse 1.2km southwest; and
- Blundells Copse 1.6km southwest.

4.4 These sites along with other areas of open greenspace are likely to support bat populations in the wider landscape. The site is also within the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone of Sulham and Tidmarsh Woods and Meadows SSSI which is located 4.7km west.

4.5 Additionally, the search confirmed there are ten granted European Protected Species (EPS) Licence Applications for bats within this 2km radius, covering common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long eared bat roosts.

SITE ASSESSMENT

Internal and External Inspections

4.6 The habitats presented across the assessment site consist of the following Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Phase 1 Habitat categories:

- Building/Hard-standing (J3.6);

- Dense scrub (A2.1);
- Tall ruderal (C3.1); and
- Scattered trees (Broad-leaved) (A3.3).

4.7 No direct field signs were observed externally or internally during the inspection, with no droppings, stains, scratch marks or other evidence that may suggest presence of bats. However, some building features that may provide roosting opportunities for bats were observed. There are four main buildings onsite as referenced on Figure 1 Bat Scoping Plan and described in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Roosting bat value of buildings at Stadium Way

Building Ref. and existing use	Potential Roosting Features	Roosting bat value and survey requirements
1. Conway Autos	Gaps under roofing membrane on northern and southern elevations. No internal roof voids. See Fig 4.1	Moderate potential: Further endoscope survey confirming likely-absence
2. Eltronics	Gaps under roofing membrane on northern and southern elevations. No internal roof voids. See Fig 4.2	
3. Tomas Garage Ltd	Gaps under roofing membrane on northern and southern elevations. Hole in brickwork with possible access into wall cavity. No internal roof voids. See Fig 4.2	
4. MOT Centre	Small strip of rotten wooden fascia boarding on southern elevation of building. Hole in brickwork with possible access into wall cavity. No internal roof voids. See Figs 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5	

Figure 4.1 Loose overhanging roofing membrane Building 1



Figure 4.2 Loose overhanging roofing membrane Buildings 2 and 3



Figure 4.3 Large gaps under mounted wooden fascia boarding on Building 4 (not suitable for roosting)



Figure 4.4 Rotten wooden fascia board on Building 4



Figure 4.5 Hole in brickwork below fascia possibly leading to internal wall cavity on Building 4.



- 4.8 There were no large internal roof voids or cavities observed within any of the buildings. The potential roosting features provide small crevices that may be suitable for single or small groups of pipistrelles and other crevice-dwelling species in summer months.
- 4.9 There were no trees at or adjacent to the site that were found to provide roosting opportunities for bats. The vegetated rail embankment likely provides a green corridor for commuting bats and other species, however no specific survey is deemed necessary.
- 4.10 In accordance with the *Bat Conservation Trust: Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition*¹, for the reasons listed above, and given the legal protection afforded to bats, a bat emergence/re-entry survey comprising two visits of the four main industrial units was recommended in order to establish the presence or likely-absence of roosting bats at site.
- 4.11 However, through discussion with the Reading Borough Council (RBC) Ecology Consultants, it was agreed that an endoscope survey could be undertaken in the first instance (email correspondence from Giles Sutton to Naomi Foot dated 23 January – 1 February 2019 – see Appendix 2).

Endoscope Survey

- 4.12 The endoscope survey was undertaken on 16th March 2019. All previously identified and any additional potential roosting features were inspected for evidence of roosting bats.
- 4.13 There were five slits (15cm high by 5cm wide) at the front of the Conway Autos building which were inspected and no evidence found. The holes on the southern elevation of the units were found to extend into the main building office space and so were considered

unlikely to support roosting bats. The holes in the brickwork were confirmed to be small gaps where old drain piping had been removed. Photographs taken on the endoscope survey are provided at figures 4.6-4.9 below.

Figure 4.6 Hole in brickwork – old drain pipe



Figure 4.7 Hole in brickwork – old drain pipe



Figure 4.8 Hole in brickwork – missing mortar



Figure 4.9 Gaps under roofing material



- 4.14 No live bats or evidence of roosting was identified by the endoscope survey and roosting bats are confirmed as likely-absent from the building.

Nesting Bird Potential

- 4.15 The site surveys were undertaken during winter and no active nesting behaviour was observed. However, there is potential for nesting birds to be present during the breeding bird season, particularly within features such as the holes in brickwork. There are several

crevice-nesting species such as house sparrow and blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) which are regularly found nesting in buildings that are likely present in the area and could use the features onsite.

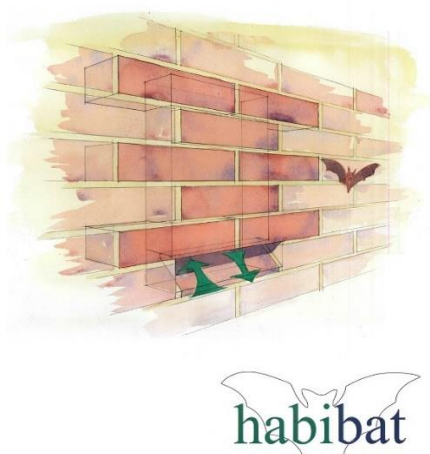
- 4.16 Demolition should therefore be undertaken outside of breeding bird season (March – August inclusive) or following a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist who confirms absence.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The external and internal inspections and endoscope survey identified no evidence of roosting bats. There were no limitations to the assessment and the surveyors could access all parts of the site and all potential roosting features for detailed inspection. Accordingly, roosting bats are confirmed as likely-absent and no further surveys are deemed necessary.
- 5.2 As a precautionary approach, it is recommended that demolition is preceded by a soft-strip of roofing materials, soffit and fascia boards to be overseen by an ecologist.
- 5.3 Whilst no formal mitigation measures are required, the following recommendations should be included within the scheme to ensure compliance with local planning policy and best practice guidance:
 - Integrated bat boxes in the new building – at least two ‘habibat’ bat boxes or similar should be incorporated into the new building (see Fig 5.1). Many bat species are known to use bat boxes, including *Pipistrellus* and *Nyctalus* species which have been recorded in the local area. The bat boxes should be integrated into the building fabric at 2-5m height, on south/west facing elevations.

Figure 5.1 Habibat bat boxes

HABIBAT ACCESS BOX
003



- Integrated bird boxes in the new building – at least two house sparrow terraces should be incorporated into the new building (see Fig 5.2). The boxes should be integrated into the building fabric at 2-5m height on north/east facing elevations.

Figure 5.2 House sparrow terrace (Schwegler 1SP)



- Implementation of a bat-sensitive lighting strategy designed in accordance with the *Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 08/18²*; and
- Provision of wildlife-friendly landscaping – to include fruit and berry producing trees and shrubs, and flowering plants of known benefit to pollinators such as those listed on the RHS Perfect for Pollinators Guide³.

5.4 Implementation of the recommendations above would ensure net gains in biodiversity value for the site and local area.

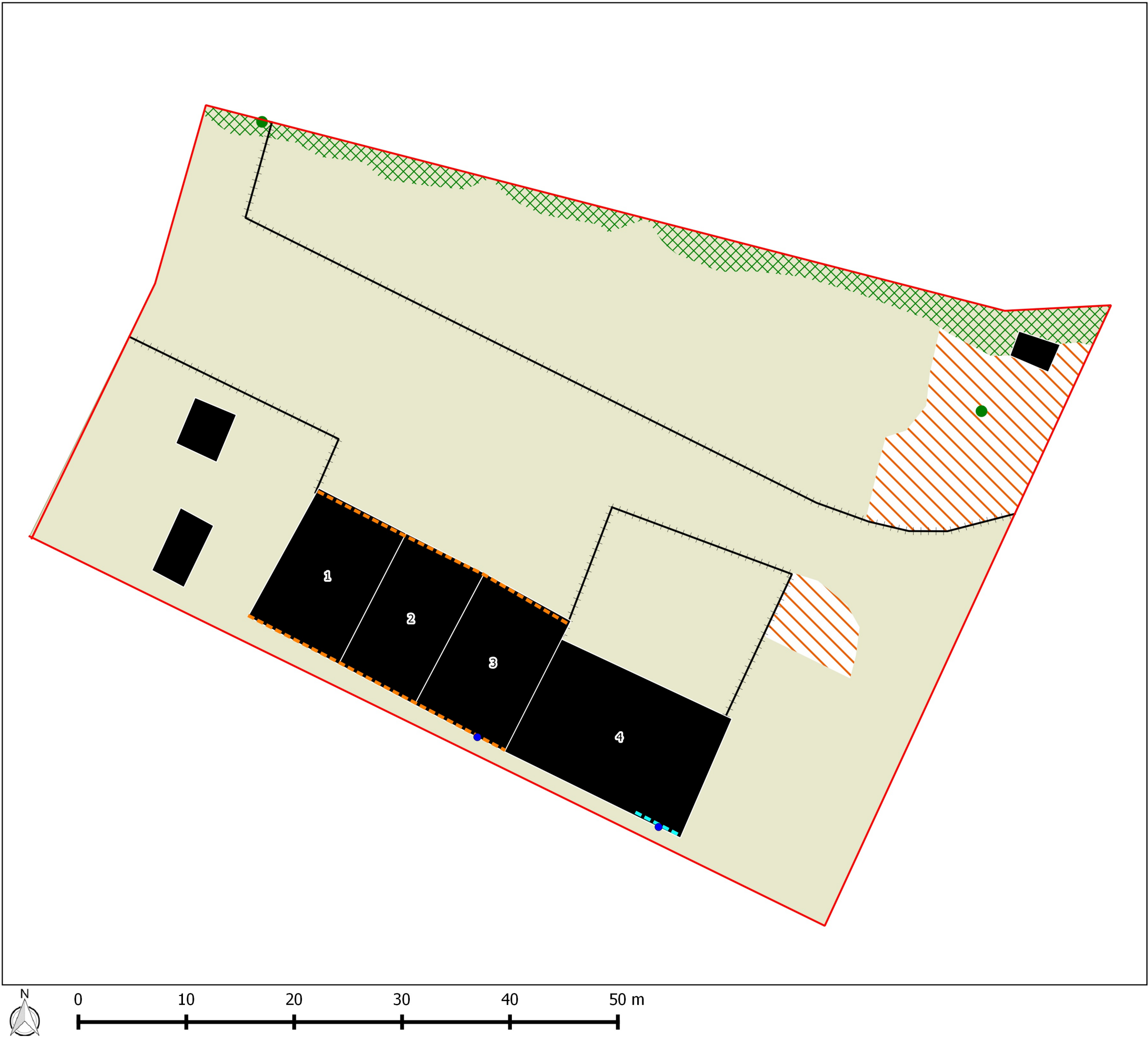
6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Greengage was commissioned by SHP Opportunity Fund General Partner Ltd to undertake a Bat Scoping Survey of a site located off Stadium Way in Reading.
- 6.2 An internal and external inspection and additional endoscope survey found no direct or indirect evidence of roosting bats. It was possible to access all parts of the site.
- 6.3 Accordingly, no additional surveys are deemed necessary and no formal mitigation measures are required. A soft-strip overseen by an ecologist is recommended as a precautionary approach.
- 6.4 Owing to the potential for crevice-nesting birds to be present, demolition should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season or following confirmation of absence by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- 6.5 No residual impacts upon protected species are anticipated assuming the recommendations within this report are adhered to.
- 6.6 Enhancement measures for bats and other taxa have been recommended to increase the biodiversity value of the site and local area. These enhancements include the provision of wildlife-friendly landscaping to and integrated bird and bat boxes.

FIGURE 1: BAT SCOPING PLAN

STADIUM WAY READING

- Application Site
- Building
- Hardstanding
- Tall Ruderal
- Dense Scrub
- Scattered Trees
- Fence
- Hole in Brickwork
- Rotten Fascia Board
- Gaps under Roofing Membrane



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Fig 1.0 Bat Scoping Plan

APPENDIX 1: LEGISLATION

BATS

All UK bats and their roosts are protected by law. Since the first legislation was introduced in 1981, which gave strong legal protection to all bat species and their roosts in England, Scotland and Wales, additional legislation and amendments have been implemented throughout the UK.

Six of the 18 British species of bat have Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) assigned to them, which highlights the importance of specific habitats to species, details of the threats they face and proposes measures to aid in the reduction of population declines.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (WCA)⁴ was the first legislation to provide protection for all bats and their roosts in England, Scotland and Wales (earlier legislation gave protection to horseshoe bats only.)

All eighteen British bat species are listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 and under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive⁵, 1992 as a European protected species. They are therefore fully protected under Section 9 of the 1981 Act and under Regulation 39 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017⁶, which transposes the Habitats Directive into UK law. Consequently, it is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats;
- Damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time);
- Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat; and
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

This legislation applies to all bat life stages.

The implications of the above in relation to the proposals are that where it is necessary during construction to remove trees, buildings or structures in which bats roost, it must first be determined that work is compulsory and if so, appropriate licenses must be obtained from Natural England. Additionally, although habitats that are important for bats are not legally protected, care should be taken when dealing with the modification or development of an area if aspects of it are deemed important to bats such as flight corridors and foraging areas. Guidance on nature conservation within planning is issued by the Government within the National Planning Policy Framework. This Framework document acts as guidance for local planning authorities on the content of their Local Plans but is also a material consideration in determining planning applications. As a result of the NPPF any species or habitats of principal importance found on the application site, in addition to statutorily protected species, are of material consideration.

NESTING BIRDS

Nesting birds, with certain exceptions, are protected from disturbance under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the CROW Act. Any clearance of dense vegetation or demolition of buildings with nesting bird potential should therefore be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season, taken to run conservatively from March to August (inclusive), unless an ecologist confirms the absence of active nests prior to clearance/demolition.

APPENDIX 2 RBC ECOLOGY CONSULTANTS - EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

From: rbc@gsecology.co.uk <rbc@gsecology.co.uk>
Sent: 01 February 2019 16:15
To: Naomi Foot <naomi.foot@greengage-env.com>
Subject: RE: Stadium Way Industrial Estate

Hi Naomi,

That approach sounds fine, although if the features are suitable and the presence of a bat roost cannot be ruled out, unless there are exceptional circumstances, we would not recommend that the further surveys be secured via a planning condition.

Kind regards,

Giles

Reading Borough Council Ecology Consultations

GS Ecology Ltd.

Email: RBC@gsecology.co.uk

W: www.gsecology.co.uk

Registered office: 119 Highgrove Street, Reading, Berks, RG1 5EJ Company Number: 7025591

From: Naomi Foot <naomi.foot@greengage-env.com>
Sent: 29 January 2019 17:11
To: rbc@gsecology.co.uk
Subject: RE: Stadium Way Industrial Estate

Hi Giles,

Many thanks for your response on this.

The potential roosting features are all accessible to survey with an endoscope using a MEWP and we will arrange for this to be undertaken prior to determination. If any bats or evidence of roosting is identified, we would then recommend additional emergence/re-entry surveys. If no such evidence is identified, we would deem likely-absence of roosting bats. Please can you confirm that you are happy with this approach?

Kind Regards,

Naomi Foot
Senior Consultant



For and on behalf of

Greengage

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Green Apple Award 2016: Winner
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From: rbc@gsecology.co.uk <rbc@gsecology.co.uk>
Sent: 25 January 2019 12:56
To: Naomi Foot <naomi.foot@greengage-env.com>
Subject: RE: Stadium Way Industrial Estate

Hi Naomi,

Are you able to inspect the features from a MEWP? If so that may negate the need for bat surveys. We wouldn't normally recommend a condition requiring further bat surveys [you would still need to survey the building prior to demolition] as it is contrary to planning policy.

Kind regards,

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Sent: 23 January 2019 13:25

To: RBC@gsecology.co.uk

Subject: Stadium Way Industrial Estate

Dear Giles,

I contacted RBC regarding the above development and was passed on your contact details – I hope this finds you well.

We have been appointed to provide ecology support on this project following pre-app advice (as attached). We completed an initial site inspection in December; the existing buildings are all open industrial units with no internal voids or hanging tiles. No direct evidence of roosting bats was identified, however there are some potential features suitable for crevice-dwelling species associated with loose roofing membrane, a rotten wooden fascia board and a gap into the brickwork. The site itself is subject to light and noise disturbance associated with the existing usage as car mechanics/ MOT centre. The results of our site inspection have so far been written into a Bat Scoping Survey report which recommends additional emergence/re-entry surveys to determine presence/likely-absence of roosting bats in line with BCT guidance and will be submitted to support the planning application.

The planning submission is currently targeted in the coming weeks which would likely put determination ahead of the bat survey season (May-September). The developer is happy to embed suitable mitigation (i.e. integrated bat boxes) into the proposals in lieu of additional survey findings. In this instance, would it be acceptable to condition the bat emergence/re-entry surveys?

Happy to talk over the phone if you would like to discuss further.

Kind Regards,

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From: rbc@gsecology.co.uk <rbc@gsecology.co.uk>
Sent: 25 January 2019 12:56
To: Naomi Foot <naomi.foot@greengage-env.com>
Subject: RE: Stadium Way Industrial Estate

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REFERENCES

¹ Bat Conservation Trust, (2015); Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines. Bat Conservation

² Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018) *Guidance Note 08/18, Bats and artificial lighting in the UK - Bats and the Built Environment Series*

³ Royal Horticultural Society Perfect for Pollinators list
<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/pdfs/plants-for-bees.pdf>

⁴ HM Government, (1981); Part I and Part II of Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended). HMSO

⁵ CEC (Council of the European Communities), (1992); Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

⁶ HM Government, (2010); The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Statutory Instrument 2010 no. 490 Wildlife Countryside. OPSI