



Preliminary Roost Assessment

Greyfriars Church, Reading.

October 2017



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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.2 In October 2017, MPEcology were commissioned by JBKS Architects to undertake an initial bat survey at Greyfriars Church in Reading (National Grid Reference SU71197359).
- 1.1.3 The wider site comprises a complex of buildings of varying ages. The church was originally built as a Franciscan Friary and parts date from 1311. However, after dissolution of the monasteries in 1538 the church underwent various changes of use and fell into disrepair until only a few walls remained. In 1863, the church was restored and since then the site has gained a memorial hall (1900s), a vicarage now used as a day nursery (1860s), an entrance foyer (1970s) and the Greyfriars Centre which provides a sports hall, café, bookshop and meeting rooms (1980s). A more recent addition to the complex was the purchase of two formerly residential properties fronting Sackville Street.
- 1.1.4 In order to rationalise the space and make it more useable by worshippers and the local community, the intention exists to make an application to Reading County Council to redevelop parts of the site. The proposals involve phased redevelopment of buildings to the west of the church and memorial hall.

1.2 Purpose of this document

- 1.2.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment of potential bat interest associated with the site.

Figure 1. Site location



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2 Legislative background

2.1 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)

- 2.1.2 As European Protected Species (EPS), bats are afforded a high level of protection. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) make it an offence to kill, injure or disturb an EPS or to destroy any place used for rest or shelter.
- 2.1.3 Development works that adversely affect a bat roost can only be permitted under a licence from Natural England (NE). Licences in respect of European Protected Species for this type of development can be granted for “...*the purpose of preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.*”
- 2.1.4 Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) licences can only be issued for a development if NE is satisfied that:
-) There is no satisfactory alternative to the specified works, and;
 -) The authorised action will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

3 Methodology

3.4 Desk study

- 3.4.2 A search for existing bat records was not commissioned. An internet-based search was undertaken and Geographical Information System (GIS) resources of Natural England used to identify designated sites.

3.5 Daytime inspection

- 3.5.2 The Greyfriars Church building complex was subject to a daytime inspection on the 18th October 2017. During the visit the buildings were searched by an experienced, licensed bat worker in order to locate evidence of current or past bat roosts, in the form of bats, droppings, staining, feeding signs, and/or remains of bats.

3.6 Surveyor

- 3.6.2 The surveyor and author of this report was Matthew Pickard (BSc., MSc.), an ecologist with over 15 years environmental consultancy experience, a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv), full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and a licensed bat surveyor.

3.7 Survey limitations

- 3.7.2 Seasonal timing was not considered to be a constraint to initial assessment of the site although the timing would have constrained potential emergence / roost return surveys if these had been required.

4 Results

4.1 Desk study

- 4.1.2 No statutory designated sites were identified in close proximity to Greyfriars Church. The nearest designated site being Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 6.5km to the east. The SSSI is noted for its botanical interest, specifically large colonies of Loddon Lily (*Leucojum aestivum*).
- 4.1.3 A small number of Local Wildlife Sites were identified, all associated with the the River Thames or Kennet floodplains or tributaries, the nearest located immediately east of Cow Lane approximately 600m from Greyfriars.
- 4.1.4 Of the seventeen species of bat resident in the UK, eight have potential to occur in buildings associated with Reading. The bat species most likely to occur are: brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*); serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*); common pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*); soprano pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*); Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*); Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*); Brandt's bat (*Myotis brandti*); and whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*). However, buildings close to semi-natural foraging habitat would be expected to be more likely to support bats (when suitable features exist) than those centred in a built environment.

Figure 2. Location and setting of Greyfriars Church



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4.2 Daytime inspection

- 4.2.2 No signs of bats were found during the daytime inspection. Internal inspection of structures was only possible for the two properties fronting Sackville Street. All other structures lacked accessible roof voids or were considered sufficiently remote from the proposed works to warrant detailed survey (former Vicarage).
- 4.2.3 In terms of external features associated with site buildings, very few were considered to offer potential for crevice dwelling bat species. Of the limited number of features identified almost all were associated with buildings unaffected by proposals.
- 4.2.4 A number of landscape trees including London Plane (*Platanus x hispanica*), Lime (*Tilia x europaea*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) were also noted from the southern boundary of the site. None of the trees support any holes, cracks or crevices with potential for roosting bats.
- 4.2.5 Appendix 1 presents the findings of the daytime inspection.

5 Assessment

5.1 Daytime inspection

- 5.1.2 No evidence to suggest roosting bats was found during the survey and none of the buildings (or adjacent landscape trees) associated with the proposed construction zone were considered likely to support bats.
- 5.1.3 Buildings adjacent to the works, including the Memorial Hall and Greyfriars Church itself, support features that have moderate potential for bats. However, in terms of environmental setting, the urban character of the site and lack of natural linear features (such as watercourses and tree lines) provides sub-optimal habitat for bats. Emergence or roost return surveys would help clarify the status of these buildings as roosts but late seasonal timing means these could not take place until spring 2018 at the earliest.
- 5.1.4 On balance, the presence of roosting bats is considered unlikely. However, even if the Memorial Hall or church were used by bats it is unlikely that the proposals would lead to disturbance. The proposals involve no direct effects on either building and lighting levels are likely to be similar to those that currently exist.
- 5.1.5 Survey results suggest protected species do not form a constraint to development of the site and the requirement for further surveys appears unwarranted. In the unlikely event that evidence of roosting bats is found during future development works, construction activity should cease and further ecological advice sought.

6 References

Collins, J. (ed) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn)*. Bat Conservation Trust, London. ISBN-13 978-1-872745-96-1

7 Appendices

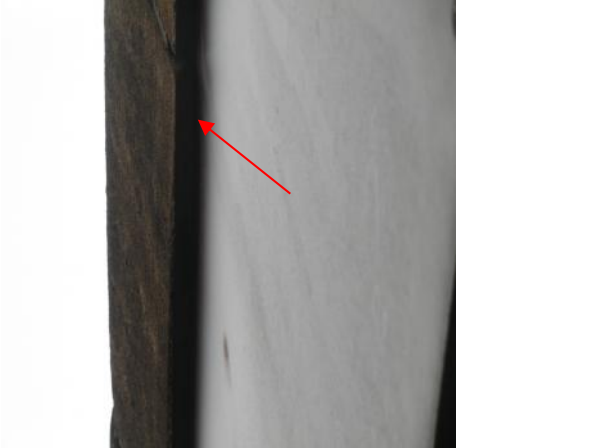
Results of daytime inspection



A – Greyfriars Centre



A modern brick-built structure constructed in the 1980s. Roof pitches are finished with closely interlocking concrete tiles.

	1 – Coping brick layer appears to have lifted from the wall top creating a shallow gap. The feature could be inspected and no sign of bats was found.
	2 – Hanging tiles at the roof edge could not be inspected and may offer potential for crevice dwelling bats. However, a similar feature (please refer to target note 3) on an adjacent roof did not provide any gaps suitable for bats. In addition, the vertical wall finish below the feature is formed from a smooth metal sheet. On balance, the feature probably offers low-negligible potential for bats although this could not be definitively proven during the site visit.
	3 – Underside of the hanging tile feature on the northern roof pitch. Gaps were considered insufficient to allow access for roosting bats. This feature appears identical to that of target note 2.

B - Portacabin



A Portacabin provides additional office space with the Greyfriars building complex but offers no potential for roosting bats.

C – Sackville Street Properties



Former residential properties recently purchased by the church. The properties were used to provide single rooms for social housing and are interlinked internally. A single roof space sits above the properties. The roof is finished with slate and has been recently re-roofed.



4 – The roof of the Sackville houses is finished in closely interlocking slates. The ridge line and roof edges are also well-pointed. Internally, the use of modern roofing membrane was evident and no sign of bats was found.



5 – An extension to the properties was also roofed with closely interlocking slates. No gaps were evident beneath soffits, at the ridge line or under flashing. Internally, no sign of use by bats was found.

D – Entrance Foyer



The entrance foyer dates from the 1970s and is a single storey semi-circular structure with a flat roof. The walls are inset with stone to mirror the main body of the church. A low tower-like structure at the north-western end of the building hosts a water tank. No features with potential to support roosting bats were found.

E – Memorial Hall



The Memorial Hall dates from the 1900s. The walls are inset with stone and the roof finished with clay tiles.

The proposals do not include works to Memorial Hall.

	6 – Occasional damaged, lifted and missing tiles offer bats potential access to the roof structure.
	7 – A louvred window offers a potential flyway into the structure of the building.
F – Greyfriars Church	
	Greyfriars Church dates from the 1311 but after falling into ruin was rebuilt in 1863. The walls are finished with inset stone and the roof with clay tiles. The proposals do not include works to the church. 8 – In common with the Memorial Hall, occasional gaps under tiles offer potential for roosting bats.
G – Former Vicarage	
The former Vicarage is a Georgian Style building with a roof largely hidden by a parapet as well as nearby trees. The proposals do not include work to the vicarage building.	