

Bat Survey of 10 Pegs Green Close, Reading, Berkshire

Client Mr and Mrs Akhtar

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Non-technical Summary

Background

In March 2019, Crossman Associates was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Akhtar to undertake a bat survey of 10 Pegs Green Close, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2HH. The house is a modern semi-detached dwelling located within a residential area.

Development proposals involve the enlargement of the dwelling via a wraparound two storey extension to the northern and western elevations and the conversion of the roof void.

Methodology

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

Results

The property is located fairly centrally within Reading and consists of a modern well-maintained semi-detached dwelling with a small detached garage set within a residential area. Areas of naturalistic habitat are however present within the near environs and include a local nature reserve. The house and garage are constructed using modern and uniform materials including well pointed brick and interlocking roof tiles. The building has a sealed loft. During the survey, no bats, bat droppings or any other bat related evidence was noted to be present. No birds were noted in association with any aspect of the building.

The house and garage are considered to have **Negligible Suitability** for roosting bats.

Recommendations

There is no recommendation for further survey works.

- Precautionary approach to demolition in relation to bats
- Ecological enhancement to include new bird roosting features

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1. Background

- 1.1. In March 2019, Crossman Associates was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Akhtar to undertake a bat and bird scoping survey of a modern three-bedroom semi-detached dwelling at 10 Pegs Green Lane, Berkshire RG30 2NH (site Ordnance Survey grid reference SU 6866 7301).
- 1.2. Figure 1 within Appendix II provides a site location map.
- 1.3. Development proposals involve enlargement of the dwelling via a two storey wrap around extension to the northern and western elevations and the conversion of the roof void.
- 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. 10 Pegs Green lane is a modern detached and conventionally built three-bedroom brick semi-detached dwelling with a small single bay, detached garage. The house is located within its own small plot that includes a well-maintained rear and front garden and driveway and is located centrally in a residential area of Reading.
- 1.6. Immediate surroundings are characterised by further similar dwellings which occupy the sides of Pegs Green Lane, which is a cul-de-sac. A narrow band of mature trees runs along the northern boundary of the property and neighbouring dwellings and forms a green corridor separating the area from further areas of urbanisation. This corridor links into a more significant block of mature broad-

leaved woodland known as Lousehill Copse, which is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) that is situated approximately 90 m from the dwelling and extends northwards where it forms a significant green buffer separating areas of urbanisation. A pond present within the reserve provides the closest significant watercourse and lies approximately 500 m to the north-west of the site.

- 1.7. The wider surrounding landscape is characterised by expanses of moderate to dense areas of urbanisation that make up the town of Reading. There are frequent areas of urbanisation of green areas that include public and private open spaces (that provide significant areas of naturalistic habitat) and pockets of mature woodland some of which are Local Nature Reserves.

Legislation

- 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.
- 1.9. In Britain all wild birds are granted legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act ((1981) (as amended)). This legislation protects the birds, their eggs and nests whilst 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 internally and externally 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 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 and whether these voids provide adequate protection and shelter for roosting bats. If the building is not confirmed as a roost, it is assessed from High to Negligible Suitability as follows (refer to Appendix III for further details);
- **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 buildings were 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, and took place on 3 April 2019. The building was fully accessible.

- 3.4. The external and internal conditions of the building are described in the table below and photographic reference can be found within Appendix II.
- 3.5. A table within Appendix III; information sheets set out the criteria for the way a building is assessed for its potential to support roosting bats.

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
10 Pegs Hill lane	Overview	Semi-detached modern three-bedroom brick built semi-detached dwelling with a simple hipped roof covered with concrete interlocking tiles. A small detached single bay brick-built garage with a simple pitched roof covered with the same type of roof tile is also present. Overall the dwelling and garage remains in good condition and the dwelling is currently inhabited.	Confirmed roost ☐ High Suitability ☐ Moderate Suitability ☐ Low Suitability ☐ Negligible Suitability ☒
	Exterior	Supporting walls are of a cavity design thought to be formed from an inner wall of thermalite blocks, with an outer skin of decorative red brick work. The garage has solid brick walls. All walls are in good order with no significant holes or cracks. Windows and doors are modern uPVC and are all in excellent condition and shut tightly within their respective reveals.	

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
		The garage has a single Crittall-style metal-framed glazed window on the northern gable elevation and a standard steel garage style door on the southern gable elevation, which is no longer properly attached. <u>Bird boxes</u> There are three wooden bird boxes on the garage; 2 number on the eastern (side) elevation and 1 number on the northern gable. None were active on the day of the survey.	
	Interior	A single and spacious square shaped roof void forms the loft with floor to ridge height of approximately 2.5 m. The loft is uncomplicated and allowed for a full and thorough examination. The roof is supported by standard style cut and pitch roof constructed using modern gauged timber with no complex carpentry or significant complexities. Tar paper forms the sarking layer and is generally in poor condition with numerous tears and holes which leads to the exposure of the underside of the tiles in various places; however due to the tight-fitting interlocking nature of the tiles no significant gaps are present.	

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
		The garage provides one single bay, clear to apex. Traditional type 1 f sarking felt is on show and remains intact throughout. Internal walls are well-pointed brick and due to the poorly fitting door the interior is well lit and draughty. The interior of the garage is in regular use as a laundry drying area and general store.	
	Roof	<i>Dwelling</i> The dwelling has a simple square shaped hipped roof, which is entirely clad with modern style Ludlow interlocking concrete tiles. All are present and due to the interlocking nature of the tiles, no significant crevices are present. Simple ridge and hip tiles are also present, and all remain well-cemented in place. A slight roof hang on the eaves elevations necessitates the use of soffits, which remain in very good condition, sealing well to the roof eaves and top course of masonry, with no obvious entry points that may lead into the cavity or roof void. <i>Garage</i>	

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
		The garage has a simple double pitched roof clad with the same type of concrete interlocking tile and simple concrete ridges that are used on the house; all remain present and well seated in place and for the same reasons discussed above provide no significant crevices. Both roof verges remain well-sealed with mortar. Simple fascias carry the guttering and no significant cavities / crevices are present.	

Birds

- 3.6. No birds or bird nesting activity was recorded in association with any aspect of the property. House sparrows were observed around the property; however, the house offers no nesting opportunities for this species which favours gaps around roof eaves for nesting sites.

Evaluation

- 3.7. During the scoping survey no droppings, staining, feeding remains or actual bats were observed.
- 3.8. The property is relatively new and has been constructed from modern building materials, which include tight fitting peg tiles that preclude any gaps or potential access points for bats. Soffits are tight-fitting, which results in a well-sealed roof void with no obvious entry points. The presence of a bat roost is considered very unlikely, and the building is considered to have **Negligible Suitability** for roosting bats.

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.

Bats

- 4.3. **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.**
- 4.4. Due to the transitory nature of bats there is a small possibility that bats could be encountered during building works; therefore all works must proceed under a cautionary approach. Tiles and roof panels will be removed in a vertical rather than horizontal sliding motion. Soffits and masonry will be dismantled using a 'soft' approach taking care with cavity walls where present. All site workers will be vigilant at all times and in the very unlikely event that a bat is found then works must stop immediately and advice should be sought from Crossman Associates or Natural England (telephone number 0300 0603900).

Birds

Bird boxes on exterior garage wall

- 4.5. Prior to the demolition of the garage a careful check should be carried out on the three wooden bird boxes present on the exterior garage wall and If birds are found

to be nesting or rearing young then works must be delayed until all young have left the nest. Birds are afforded legal protection as discussed under paragraph 1.9.

- 4.6. If no active bird nests were found to be present then it is recommended to remove the boxes and relocate onto the trunk of the mature oak tree *Quercus robur* in the north-east corner of the garden. Place boxes securely on the tree and at least 2 m off the ground.

Ecological enhancements

- 4.7. During the construction phase of the new development there is a good opportunity to incorporate inexpensive ecological enhancements that aim to increase the biodiversity of the site.

Sparrow nesting boxes

- 4.8. Sparrow nest boxes are recommended for the site as this species is known to inhabit urban environments and was noted within the local environs. House sparrows are currently suffering a decline in the UK. The boxes can be incorporated within the outer skin of the supporting walls or alternatively surface mounted models can be fitted. The nest boxes should ideally be fitted below eaves or on gable walls. Suitable models are produced by Habibat and are strong, durable, long lasting, discreet and available in brown, stone colour or match required brick finish. Surface mounted models are produced by various companies and are readily available. It is recommended that two sparrow terraces are fitted.
- 4.9. Habibat boxes are available at www.habibat.co.uk. Surface mounted nest boxes are available from Wildcare; telephone number 01451 493885 www.wildcare.co.uk

10 Pegs Green Close,
Reading, Berkshire.



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

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Mitchell-Jones, A.J , & McLeish A.P. (2012) *The Bat Worker's Manual* (4th Edition)

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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

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Appendix I – Site Figures



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Site Location



Client Mr and Mrs Akhtar

Title Site Location Map

Site 10 Pegs Green Close, Reading

Figure 1

Date 04 April 2019

Scale Indicative



Appendix II– Site Photographs

Photographs 1- 3



Photograph 1:

Front (southern) and side (western) elevation



Photograph 2:

Rear (northern) elevation



Photograph 3:

Example of tight fitting soffit; typical throughout

Photographs 4 - 6



Photograph 4:

Loft



Photograph 5:

Garage; Northern gable and side (eastern) elevation



Photograph 6:

Garage; southern gable

Photographs 7 - 8



Photograph 7:

Garage; internal



Photograph 8:

Roof of dwelling and garage; covered with tight fitting 'Ludlow' interlocking concrete tiles throughout.



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.