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Bat Scoping Report

43 & 43A London Street, Reading

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Report Summary

1. Mr K. Soobadoo commissioned the Ecology Co-op to undertake a Bat Scoping Survey at 43 & 43A London Street, Reading. The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the appraisal and identify potential ecological constraints to proposed alterations to the building.
2. An assessment of the site was carried out by Owen Crawshaw BSc (Hons) ACIEEM and Charlie Gardiner BSc (Hons) on the 20th August 2019. This included a ground-based external inspection of the buildings and an appraisal of the surrounding habitats, to evaluate the site for its potential to support roosting bats. All bat species are European Protected Species (Annex IV, 'Habitats Directive').
3. The site comprises two simple buildings (a former dental surgery and chapel) set between a busy high street to the east and a car park to the west. The site exists within the centre of Reading and is surrounded by an urban environment.
4. The buildings were assessed as having 'negligible' bat roost potential. No evidence of roosting bats or potential roost features were observed, and the urban environment surrounding the site is considered to create unsuitable foraging habitat for bats.
5. The proposed works will have no foreseeable impacts on bats or their roosts. No further survey effort is required and a European Protected Species (EPS) licence will not be required for the works to proceed.

This report has been prepared by The Ecology Co-operation Ltd, with all reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the Contract with the client. This report only becomes the property of the client once payment for it has been received in full.

We disclaim responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the scope of the above.

This report is confidential to the client and we accept no responsibility of whatsoever nature to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Report

The Ecology Co-op has been commissioned to undertake a Bat Scoping Assessment of 43 & 43A London Street, Reading by Mr K. Soobadoo. This report presents the findings of a walkover survey and building inspection for occupation by bats, undertaken by Owen Crawshaw BSc (Hons) Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (ACIEEM) (Natural England Level-2 Class Survey Licence) and Charlie Gardiner BSc (Hons) on 20th August 2019. It provides details of the potential for any protected species and/or habitats to be present at the site and an assessment of the potential ecological constraints to the proposed redevelopment of the site. Recommendations for further surveys that are likely to be required to inform a planning application are provided, if necessary. Where appropriate, measures to avoid, mitigate and/or compensate for impacts are outlined.

1.2 Background

The site is located at 43 & 43A London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS. The central grid reference for the site is SU 7181 7313.

The site comprises a two-storey former dental surgery (43 London Street) which is connected to a two-storey flat-roof structure (43A London Street), formerly used as a chapel, to the east. The buildings are set between a busy high street to the west and a car park to the east. The site exists within the centre of Reading and is surrounded by areas of commercial trading and urban development.

The survey area is based on the site plan provided by The Douglas Stephen Partnership, which shows the boundary to the development site and is reproduced in Figure 1.

The proposed development/project includes part-demolition of the existing London Street façade and internal works to the building alongside demolition of the two-storey building to create 21 new residential units.



Figure 1. A plan showing the location of the site at 43 & 43A London Street. Reproduced from The Douglas Stephen Partnership (43 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS – Location Plan. Drawing No. LSR 000 Rev. P1).

1.3 Policy and Legislation

Legal protection applying to all bat species in the UK is outlined in Appendix 1 of this report.

The results of this survey will be used to determine the need for further surveys, impact avoidance measures and/or an appropriate mitigation strategy to ensure compliance with UK and EU wildlife legislation.



2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this survey are in accordance with the bat survey guidelines produced by the Bat Conservation Trust¹.

2.1 Desk Study

A search of on-line mapping resources was undertaken to characterise the local context of the site with respect to semi-natural habitats and linear features of value to foraging and commuting bats.

The MAGIC website resource (www.magic.gov.uk) was used to identify the location of designated sites for nature conservation within 2km and EPS licences granted within a 1km radius of the survey site. Priority habitats and ancient woodland sites upon or adjacent to the site have also been identified, due to their ecological value and potential to act as important foraging resources for bats.

2.2 Field Survey

Bats can use a wide range of features including loft spaces, cavity walls, loose tiles, mortice joints and cracks/gaps in a variety of built structures. They can also be found in trees with holes, splits, cracks, cavities, ivy, and loose bark.

A detailed building inspection was carried out, looking for potential access points and 'potential roosting features (PRFs)' that bats could use and any evidence indicating the presence of bats using the building, such as rub marks, staining or droppings. This included a ground-based external inspection around the buildings. There are no accessible loft spaces within the buildings.

The potential for roosting bats for each feature, or group of features was assessed as either negligible, low, moderate, or high, in accordance with best practice. Any evidence confirming the presence of bats that was found was clearly recorded including photos and samples taken (e.g. droppings) where appropriate.

The habitats surrounding the site and wider landscape were broadly assessed for their potential to support foraging and commuting bats.

2.3 Other Protected and/or Notable Species

Any birds identified, or evidence of nesting birds discovered during the site visit were recorded. Special attention was paid to notable species such as red-listed Birds of Conservation Concern (Eaton et al. 2015) and those species afforded special protection on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

¹ Collins, J.(ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.



Whilst this survey focussed on bats and no specific searches were made with respect to other protected species, any evidence of other protected species that was encountered during the site visit was also recorded.

3 RESULTS/OBSERVATIONS

3.1 Desk Study

There are no designated sites that include bats as a designated feature within the zone of influence from the site.

There are 4 EPS licences granted for mitigation projects concerning bats within 1km of the site shown on the Magic Maps website (Figure 2); details of these licences are provided in Table 1. There are no EPS licenses for mitigation projects concerning any other protected species.



Figure 2. Granted European Protected Species (EPS) licences granted for mitigation projects concerning bats (shown as blue squares) within 1km of 43 & 43A London Street. <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

**Table 1.** Details of granted European Protected Species (EPS) within 1km of 43 & 43A London Street.

Reference number	Proximity to study site	Species covered	Period covered	Other information
2016-22301-EPS-MIT	380m SE	Common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	21/04/2016 – 20/04/2021	Destruction of a resting place.
EPSM2013-6155	570m N	Common pipistrelle	19/09/2013 – 31/08/2015	Destruction of a resting place.
2017-28045-EPS-MIT	750m N	Daubenton's bat <i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	08/03/2017 – 08/03/2022	N/A
2017-32379-EPS-MIT	1km SW	Common pipistrelle	04/12/2017 – 29/11/2022	Destruction of a resting place

3.2 Site Context and Surrounding Habitats

43 London Street is constructed from walls of painted brick and sits between two neighbouring larger red-brick buildings. A small hipped roof section exists to the western side of the building and is covered by machine-made clay roof tiles, with a flat-roof section at the eastern side of the roof. The building is connected to 43A London street to the rear by a flat-roof section with concrete parapets and a rubber roof lining. 43A London Street is constructed from walls of sold concrete render supporting a flat-roof.

The buildings exist within a urban environment and are surrounded by commercial development set within a busy and extensive network of roads.

3.3 Building Inspection for Bats

No evidence of bats was recorded in association with the buildings. No potential roost features were recorded in association with the buildings and both structures were assessed as having 'negligible' bat roost potential.

Overall, the bat roost potential at this site is rated as 'negligible', considering the condition of the buildings and its context within an urban environment creating poor foraging habitat for bats.

There are no trees contained within the boundary of the site and tree roosting bats would therefore not be a constraint to development.

3.4 Other Protected and/or Notable Species

Habitats within the site are unsuitable for other protected/notable species of wildlife being comprised of buildings and hard standing only.

3.5 Survey Limitations

An initial site assessment such as this is only able to act like a 'snapshot' to record any flora or fauna that is present at the time of the survey. It is therefore possible that some species may not have been



present during the survey, but may be evident at other times of the year. For this reason, habitats are assessed for their potential to support bats, even where no direct evidence (such as droppings) has been found.



3.6 Photographs



Photograph 1. 43 London Street (outlined in red) viewed from the west.



Photograph 2. The hipped roof of 43 London Street's eastern aspect.



Photograph 3. 43A London Street viewed from the north-east.



Photograph 4. Flat-roof sections of 43A London Street.



4 ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

There is no evidence to indicate the presence of bat roosts within the buildings of 43 & 43A London Street. The buildings are considered to be unsuitable for roosting bats and are assessed as having 'negligible' bat roost potential in accordance with best practice guidance. As a result of this assessment, the proposed works will have no foreseeable impacts on bats or their roost sites.

No further surveys are recommended and a European Protected Species (bat) licence is not considered necessary for the proposed works to proceed.

If any protected species are found during the proposed work, work should be stopped immediately, and an ecologist must be contacted immediately for advice.

Should you need any further advice on the information provided above, please do not hesitate to contact The Ecology Co-op.



APPENDIX 1 – Wildlife Legislation and National Planning Policy

The following text is intended for general guidance only and does not constitute comprehensive professional legal advice. It provides a summary of the current legal protection afforded to bats.

All bat species in the UK are included in Schedule II of the Habitats Regulations 2017, which transpose Annex II of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora ("The EC Habitats Directive"). As such all bat species in the UK are defined as 'European Protected Species (EPS).

Four species of bat (Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*, Barbastelle bat *Barbastella barbastellus*, greater and lesser horseshoe bats, *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* and *R. hipposideros*) are also listed on Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive. This requires the designation of a series of sites which contain important populations of these species as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

All species of British bat are also fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), as amended, through inclusion in Schedule V.

All species of bat are listed on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006). Section 41 of the NERC Act lists the habitats and species of principle importance. This places a statutory duty on all public bodies, including planning authorities, under Section 40, to take, or promote the taking by others, steps to further the conservation of habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England (commonly referred to as the 'Biodiversity Duty'). This duty extends to all public bodies the biodiversity duty of Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, which placed a duty only on Government and Ministers.

Under the above legislation it is an offence to:

- Kill, injure or take any individual bat of any species;
- possess any part of an individual bat, either alive or dead;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place or structure used by bats for shelter, rest, protection, or breeding;
- intentionally or recklessly disturb these species whilst using any place of shelter or protection; or
- deliberately disturb bats in such a way as to be likely to impair their ability to:
 - survive, to breed or reproduce, to rear or nurture their young; to hibernate or migrate; or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
- keep (possess), transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange, any live or dead bat, or any part of, or anything derived from a bat.

It is also an offence to set and use articles capable of catching, injuring, or killing bats (for example a trap or poison), or knowingly cause or permit such an action. There is also protection under Schedule 6 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) relating specifically to trapping and direct pursuit of bats.

A European Protected Species License (EPSL) in relation to bats is required from Natural England for any work that would result in an otherwise unlawful activity (e.g. damage to a bat roost). A license can



only be issued to permit otherwise prohibited acts if Natural England are satisfied that all the following three tests are met:

- The proposal is for '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';
- There is no satisfactory alternative; and
- The action authorised by the license will not be detrimental to the maintenance of bat populations at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

A bat roost is defined by the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys—Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition as "the resting place of a bat". In general, the word roost is interpreted as "any structure or place, which any wild bat uses for shelter or protection."

Bats tend to re-use the same roosts; therefore, legal opinion is guided by recent case law precedents, that a roost is protected, whether or not the bats are present at the time. This includes summer roosts used for resting during the day and/or breeding; or winter roosts, used for hibernating.