

Bat Survey of 4 Buxton Avenue, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire

Client Mr and Mrs Farquhar

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Non-technical Summary

Background

In May 2018, Crossman Associates was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Farquhar to undertake a bat scoping survey of a residential dwelling; 4 Buxton Avenue, Caversham, Reading Berkshire.

Development proposals involve the enlargement of the property with a two storey extension planned for the western elevation. The property has a loft, which will remain un-converted.

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 presence, such as droppings, food remains, staining or actual bats.

The property consists of a 1930's detached brick-built dwelling located at the eastern end of Caversham, Reading and both immediate and wider surroundings are urbanised. The property has been maintained to a good standard and has a well-sealed roof and loft. No evidence of bat activity was recorded and overall the house lacks any significant abiotic bat roosting potential.

The building has **negligible suitability for roosting bats**.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the following be undertaken as part of the development;

- Precautionary approach to the development with regard to bats.
- Ecological enhancements to include a sparrow nesting terrace.

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1. Background

- 1.1. In May 2018, Crossman Associates was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Farquhar to undertake a bat scoping survey of 4 Buxton Avenue, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7BU (Ordnance Survey grid reference SU 7049 7567).
- 1.2. Figure 1 within Appendix I provides a site location plan.
- 1.3. Development proposals involve the enlargement of the house via a two storey extension to the western elevation.
- 1.4. The objectives of the survey were to:
 - Make an assessment of the likely presence or absence of bats and birds
 - Identify any legislative or planning policy constraints relevant to the site
 - Determine the need for further surveys, compensation or mitigation

Site Description

- 1.5. The property consists of a moderate-sized detached 1930's dwelling with a maintained garden, which extends around the house and consists of amenity lawn and ornamental planting. The property is located at the northern end of Buxton Avenue on the eastern side of Caversham; a suburban district of Reading, which lays approximately 1 km to the south.
- 1.6. The immediate and wider surroundings are predominantly of an urbanised nature, characterised by a network of roads lined with residential dwellings and other allied infrastructure. Houses generally have small gardens, which leads to a moderately leafy environment. Occasional larger green open spaces lay around the site and include small public parks and playing fields, the most significant lies approximately 400 m to the west and consists of a large tree-edged sports ground.

- 1.7. There are no significant areas of woodland or significant watercourses in close proximity to the site.

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;

- **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 building was 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 165: planning policy and decision should be based on up-to-date information about the natural environment.
- Paragraph 118: when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles;
 - If significant harm resulting from development cannot be avoided (through relocating on alternative sites with less harmful impact), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused
 - Proposed development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) likely to have an adverse effect on a SSSI (either individually or in combination with other developments) should not normally be permitted. Where an adverse effect on the site's notified special interest feature is likely, an exception should only be made where the benefits of the development, at this site, clearly outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the

features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the national network of SSSI's

- Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted
- Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged
- Planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

Field Survey

Bat scoping survey

- 3.3. Survey work was undertaken by Fairbrass Knowles an experienced ecologist and fully licensed bat worker; licence number 12392 cls-cls and took place on 5 June 2018. 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 in Appendix III set out the criteria for the way a building is assessed for its potential to support roosting bats.

Table 1: building description and bat suitability.

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
4 Buxton Avenue	Overview	A 1930's red brick two-storey threebedroom detached dwelling. The dwelling has over the years been modernised and enlarged, including a single storey extension added to the western (rear) elevation. Overall the house remains in an excellent state of repair.	Confirmed roost ☐ High Suitability ☐ Moderate Suitability ☐ Low Suitability ☐ Negligible Suitability ☒
	Exterior	All supporting walls are formed from decorative red brick work; all of which remains in excellent condition; exhibiting no significant cracks or holes. All windows and doors are modern replacements; all are in good condition and fit well within their respective openings.	
	Interior	Internal space consists of well-sealed living accommodation.	

		A single L-shaped loft is present; the floor is boarded out with standard glass fibre insulation between the ceiling joists. Overall the loft appears well sealed and its simple design allowed for a full and thorough examination, during which no bats, bat droppings or any bat related evidence was noted to be present.	
	Roof	The roof is formed by a traditional cut and pitch roof with a floor to ridge height of approximately 1.8 m. All roof timbers are formed from engineered timbers; all of which remain in an excellent state. Traditional type 1f bituminous felt forms the sarking layer and all sections remain free of any significant holes or tears. The main roof is formed from a simple hipped design with a cross gable double pitched roof section on the front (east) elevation. Two modern extensions are present on the rear (west) elevation and the front elevation. Roofs are mainly clad with modern concrete interlocking Roman style tiles and simple concrete ridges; all remain present and well seated in place and due to the close interlocking design no significant gaps are present. Both the modern extensions also have sections of flat roof covered with modern mineralised roofing felt; all of which remains well sealed in place.	

		Modern soffits and facias are fitted along the eaves and all remain in good, well-sealed condition. Roof verges all remain well-sealed with mortar. Overall all roof sections of the building lack any significant bat roosting features.	
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Birds

- 3.6. During the survey no birds, bird nests or any bird related evidence was found in association with the house.

Evaluation

Bats

- 3.7. During the scoping survey no droppings, staining, feeding remains or actual bats were observed.
- 3.8. The property is set within an urban location and adjacent habitats are considered to provide bats with sub-optimal foraging and commuting opportunities.
- 3.9. The building is constructed from uniform and modern materials that include a well-sealed roof, clad with close-fitting interlocking modern concrete tiles, well-sealed verges and eaves that overall lack any significant abiotic bat roosting opportunities.
- 3.10. 4 Buxton Avenue Road has **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.

Species recommendations

Bats

- 4.3. The property has **negligible suitability for roosting bats**; it is not considered necessary or beneficial to undertake any further survey work.
- 4.4. Bats are transient in nature and can sometimes utilise buildings on an occasional or temporary basis. It is therefore recommended that works to the building are undertaken using a precautionary approach with all roof panels and cavity walls (where present) being removed cautiously by hand. In the unlikely event that a bat is found, works should stop immediately and further advice must be sought from Crossman Associates or Natural England. (telephone number 0300 0603900).

Ecological enhancements

Birds (House Sparrows).

- 4.5. There is a good opportunity to enhance the sites bird nesting potential. A house sparrow terrace nest box is recommended for the site as this species is known to inhabit built environments and is currently suffering a decline in the UK. The boxes can be incorporated within the outer skin of the supporting walls and are ideally fitted below eaves or on gable walls. Suitable models are produced by Habibat (www.habiabt.co.uk) and are strong, durable, long lasting, discreet and available in brown, stone colour or match required brick / render finish. It is recommended that one sparrow terrace is fitted. Alternatively an exterior, wooden house sparrow terrace can be obtained from a supplier such as www.nhbs.com and fitted according to the manufacturers instruction.

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

Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) *Bats and Lighting in the UK* BCT

HMSO (1981) *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and subsequent amendments)*. HMSO

HMSO (1995) *Biodiversity*. The UK Steering Group Report

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) *Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Reptiles and Amphibians* (2004) JNCC

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

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

Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)
Website at www.magic.gov.uk

Stace, C. (1997) *New Flora of the British Isles 2nd Edition*. Cambridge University Press

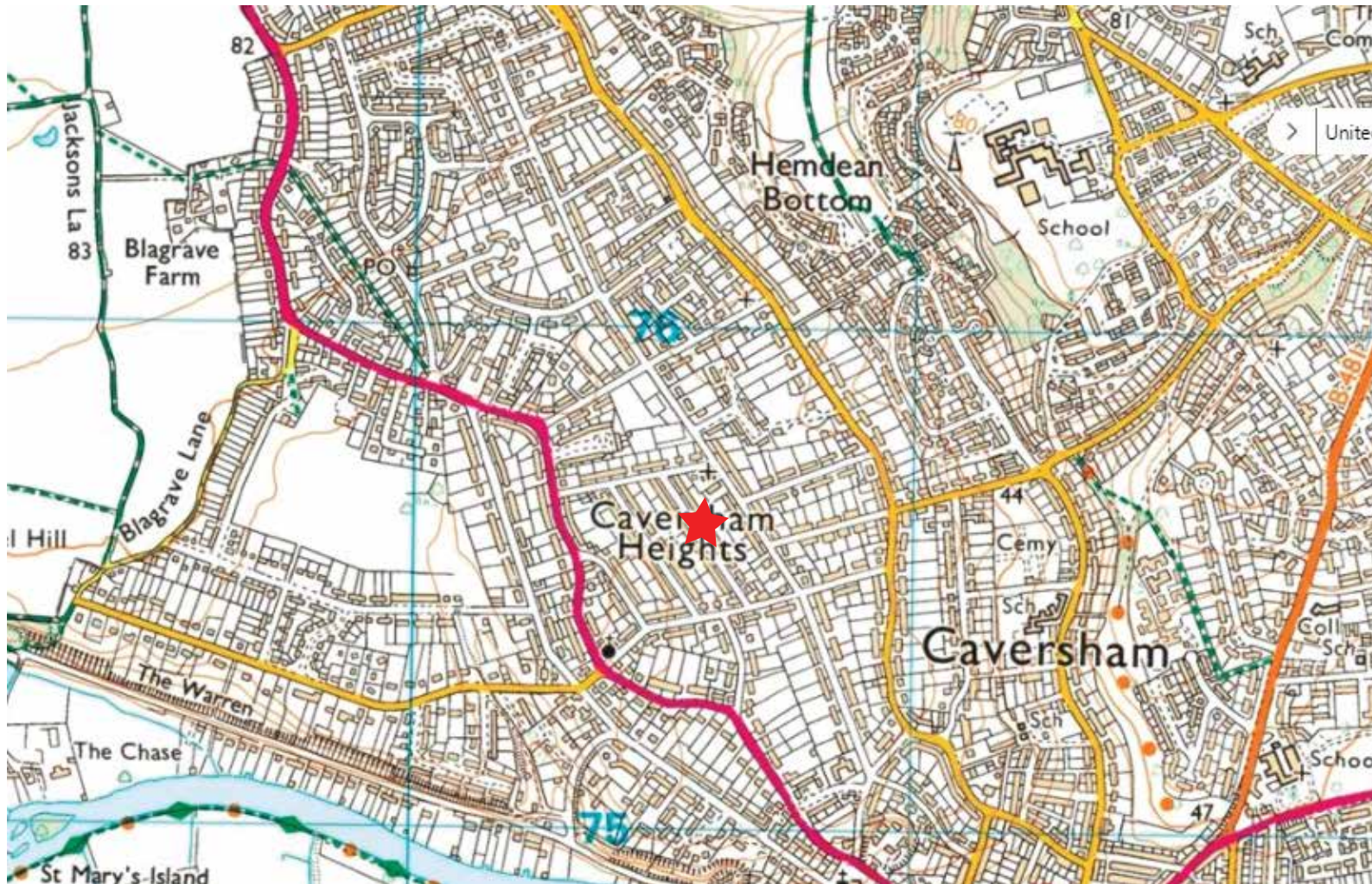
TSO (2012) *National Planning Policy Framework*. TSO

TSO (2006) *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act* TSO

Appendix I – Site Figures



Site Location



Client Mr and Mrs Farquhar Location

Title map

Site 4 Buxton Avenue, Caversham

Figure 1

Date 12 June 2018

Scale Indicative



Appendix II– Site Photographs

Photographs 1- 3



Photograph 1:

Front (eastern) elevation



Photograph 2:

Rear (western) elevation



Photograph 3:

Side (southern) elevation

Photographs 4 - 6



Photograph 4:

Side (northern) elevation



Photograph 5:

Detail; illustrating tight-fitting concrete interlocking roof tiles; present throughout



Photograph 6:

Detail; illustrating close-fitting soffit; typical throughout

Photographs 7



Photograph 7:

Loft



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.