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Bat Surveyy and Bird Survey of Garage Block at 17 Eldon Square, Reading

Client

Mr S Huntridge

Reference

N1103.001

Date

25 January 2012

BAT SURVEY AND BIRD SURVEY OF GARAGE BLOCK AT 17 ELDON SQUARE, READING

Executive Summary

- In January 2012, ACE Consulting was commissioned by Mr S Huntridge to undertake a bat scoping survey of a garage block at 17 Eldon Square, Reading. The building was also checked for the evidence of nesting birds
- A survey was undertaken to assess whether bats or birds are using the building and to identify any subsequent constraints or requirements for further survey work
- The building is assessed to be unsuitable for bats and no evidence of bat activity was found in association with the building
- Vegetation that is growing in close proximity to the building may support nesting birds
- There are no recommendations for any further survey work. The conversion works should proceed using a precautionary approach
- Any necessary vegetation removal works should take into account the possible presence of nesting birds

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. In January 2012, ACE Consulting was commissioned by Mr S Huntridge to undertake a bat scoping survey of a garage block at 17 Eldon Square, Reading. The building was also checked for the evidence of nesting birds.
- 1.2. The garage, which is currently in constant use, is subject to demolition proposals followed by the erection of new properties.
- 1.3. The objectives of the survey work are to provide an ecological assessment of the buildings in relation to bats and birds, and to highlight any potential constraints to the proposals.

Legislation

- 1.4. All British species of bat are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Species and Habitat (Amendment) Regulations 2011. As a signatory of the Bonn Convention, the UK is also obliged to protect sites that are important for bats and to identify and protect important feeding areas for bats from damage or disturbance. It is an offence to intentionally injure or disturb a bat or to damage or obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection by bats.
- 1.5. In Britain, all wild birds are granted legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This legislation protects birds, their eggs and nests while being built or whilst in use.

2. Site Description

- 2.1. The building lies within the grounds of 17 Eldon Square, but fronts onto Eldon Terrace (Ordnance Survey grid reference SU 725 731) (refer to Figure 1,

- Appendix I). The building is adjoined by further garages to the east and west and gardens and townhouses to the south. To the north, beyond Eldon Terrace, lie residential terraces and further gardens.
- 2.2. The building is located in the centre of Reading; the buildings' wider surroundings are very urban and are dominated by residential properties, industry and urban infrastructure. There are no amenity spaces, woodland or significant waterbodies in close proximity to the building. There are some semi-mature and mature trees within the near vicinity of the building.

3. Methodology

- 3.1. All survey work was undertaken by Alex Crossman, an experienced ecologist, licenced bat worker and member of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. On 4 January 2012 the building was systematically searched for evidence of bat presence such as droppings, food remains, staining or actual bats. The value of features within the buildings were visually assessed based on the presence/absence of any field signs and the bat roosting potential of the building, such as presence of access points and crevices. This method aimed to provide an indication of the potential value of the structures to bats; however, it cannot definitely state whether bats are using the structures as roost sites or not.
- 3.2. The survey methods followed best practice guidelines detailed in Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines (Bat Conservation Trust, 2007), Bat Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature, 2004) and the Bat Workers' Manual (JNCC, 2004).
- 3.3. Assessment of the value of a site for bats is based on the following:
- The diversity of the species present
 - The occurrence of rarer species

- Numbers of bats present/frequency of use
 - Range of habitat features, which provide opportunities for bats e.g. foraging, commuting and roosting habitat
- 3.4. The building and adjacent habitats were checked for previous bird nesting and potential for bird nesting.

4. Results

- 4.1. The building is described below; photographic reference can be found within Appendix II.
- 4.2. The building is rectangular, measuring approximately 11m x 5m. The building is constructed of dressed stone and concrete block-work with a corrugated tin and plastic roof.
- 4.3. The walls are constructed of a single layer of dressed stone, which is capped with concrete block-work. The walls are in very good condition with no cracks, subsidence, crevices or missing masonry.
- 4.4. The building is accessed from the south by a single wooden door. The door and frame are in good condition, but there are some superficial gaps between the frame and the surrounding masonry.
- 4.5. The northern aspect of the building, which faces onto Elsdon Terrace, comprises three large metal garage doors; these are all roll-shutter doors, which contain numerous small gaps.
- 4.6. The flat roof is supported by a very simple wooden beam structure. The roof comprises corrugated metal panels and transparent plastic panels. The roof panels are suspended above the tops of the walls creating a small gap along the lengths of the eaves. A wooden barge boards runs along the underside of

- the south-facing eave; this is attached approximately 6-10cm away from the wall.
- 4.7. The interior of the building is very draughty and has a cool and exposed interior microclimate. The transparent roof panels create a very light interior. The building is in constant use as a garage and is heavily disturbed.
 - 4.8. There is no evidence of bat activity associated with any part of the building and no birds' nests were recorded within the building.
 - 4.9. There are areas of vegetation in close proximity to the south of the building, including two semi-mature trees and cypress and laurel trees. The semi-mature trees do not contain any bat roosting opportunities, but along with the hedgerows provide nesting opportunities for birds.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. The building is constructed with a combination of materials that are unfavourable to bats and fail to provide the necessary insulation from fluctuations in external conditions. The building is also very light and draughty and subjected to by regular human disturbance.
- 5.2. There are no significant roosting features within the structure of the building, such as cracks in the walls or holes within the structure of the roof.
- 5.3. The complete lack of any evidence of bat activity associated with the building despite a thorough and methodical search confirms that bats are not using the building for roosting.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1. The building is considered to be of very low suitability for roosting bats and no evidence of bats was recorded despite a thorough and methodical search. It is not considered necessary or advantageous to undertake any further survey work.
- 6.2. Bats do not pose any constraint to any works to the building. It is however suggested that a cautionary approach be taken to development. A 'soft approach' should be taken during works. All workers on site should be vigilant and in the extremely unlikely event that any bats are found they should be left in situ. Works must then stop immediately and ACE Consulting or Natural England should be contacted for advice.

Other Recommendations

- 6.3. The vegetation growing in close proximity to the building may offer nesting opportunities for birds. 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. Legislation involving birds has implications on the timing of vegetation removal or building works where nesting birds are present, which should avoid the nesting season (generally occurring between March and September) or should be preceded by a thorough inspection by an ecologist or ecological clerk of works.

7. Limitations

- 7.1. 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.

- 7.2. 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.

References

Google Maps at *maps.google.co.uk*

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

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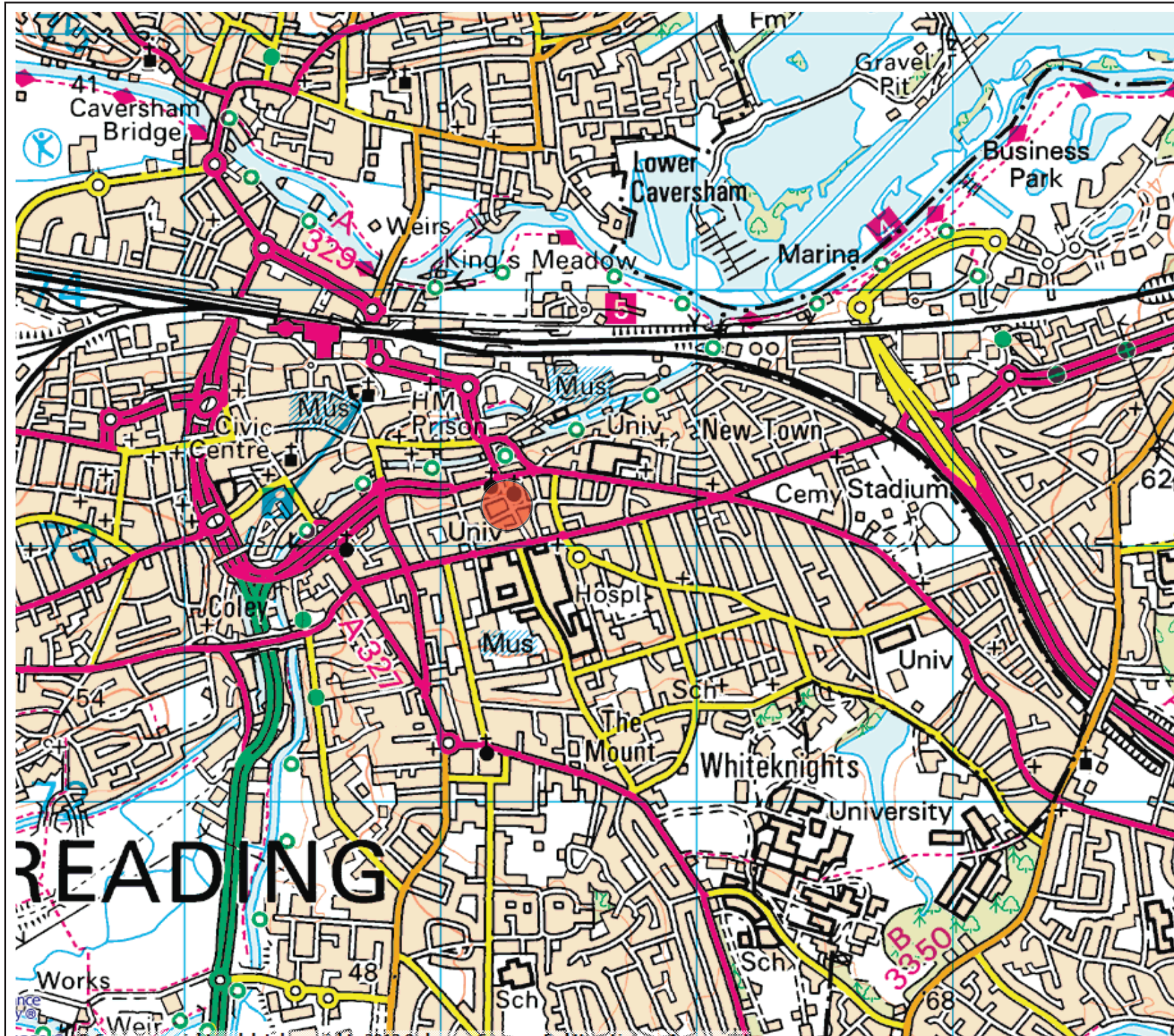
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The Bat Conservation Trust (2007) *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines*
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TSO (2006) *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act* TSO

Appendix I – Site Figures



ACE Consulting

DISCOVER SOLUTIONS

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Site location

Title

Figure 1 - Site Location Plan

Site

17 Eldon Square, Reading

Client

Mr S Huntridge

Scale

1:25000

Date

25 January 2012

Appendix II – Site Photographs



Title

Photograph 1

Description

Exterior of garage



Title

Photograph 2

Description

Interior of garage