

8 February 2018

Our ref: 183039/JDT

Mr B Williams
Just Caversham Developments Limited
24 Green Lane
Shipston-on-Stour
Warwickshire
CV36 4HG

Dear Mr Williams

3A PROSPECT STREET, CAVERSHAM

Introduction

In accordance with your instructions, AA Environmental Limited (AAe) carried out an ecological survey of the above site on Friday 2 February 2018. The purpose of the survey was to determine the existence and location of any ecologically valuable areas and to record any evidence of protected species, in particular bats. This information will serve to assess the ecological impact of the proposals and identify any ecological constraints and/or mitigation measures that may be required. A series of photographs has been attached for reference.

The proposals are for the re-development of 1a North Street and rear ground floor of 3 Prospect Street to provide 8 residential units including the upwards extension to existing flat on first floor of 3 Prospect Street to provide additional living accommodation.

Methodology

Baseline Data

As certain baseline data is now readily available on the internet, the Multi-agency website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk) was consulted to determine whether any part of the site or nearby habitats have been statutorily or otherwise designated. In addition, a review of Google Earth's satellite imagery (http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/index.html) was completed to determine past land uses of the site and surrounding land.

Walk-over Site Survey

During the walk-over survey, particular attention was paid to record the presence of bats in accordance with the following survey methodologies:

Currently there are 17 species of bat known to breed in the UK. All species and their roosts are protected under Regulation 41 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. As a signatory to the *Bonn Convention (Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe)* the UK is also required to protect their habitats. This legislation makes it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats, or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts. Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

A visual survey of the site was completed to record any evidence of bats or features that could provide potential roosting opportunities. The survey was carried out following the guidelines provided by the Bat Conservation Trust¹. A thorough internal and external examination of the existing buildings on site was carried out, with any

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

potential access points inspected for evidence of bats. All internal roof voids/spaces, where present, were accessed to check for any evidence of bats.

The surrounding habitat was also surveyed to identify any important features such as mature trees with suitable features for roosting bats and any established lines of vegetation that might provide important flightlines.

Evidence of bats is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- the presence of bat droppings, which tend to accumulate under established roost sites or at roost entrances;
- the accumulation of large numbers of moth wings, which have been discarded by feeding bats;
- areas of staining by urine or from fur rubbing; and
- the presence of bats themselves or their corpses.

The visual survey was facilitated by the use of binoculars, ladders, powerful torches (1M candlepower) and a Visual Optics VO36-10ww endoscope.

In accordance with good practice, the site was checked for any evidence of other protected species or species of particular note.

Results

Baseline Data

According to the multi-agency website, there are no ecological statutory or non-statutory designated sites located on or directly adjacent to the site. The nearest statutory designated site is Clayfield Copse Local Nature Reserve (LNR), located 2.2 km north-north-east of the site.

There are no priority habitats located on or adjacent to the site, with the closest being an area of Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI) 'Deciduous Woodland' located 0.4 km north of the site.

Google Earth Imagery shows that the site has remained largely unchanged since at least 2003, being dominated by the existing buildings and associated areas of hardstanding.

Site Description (Photographs 1-4)

The site is located off Prospect Road in Caversham, Reading centred at National Grid Reference: SU 714748 and covers an area of approximately 0.1 of a hectare. The site is dominated by the existing buildings and associated areas of hardstanding. It is bordered by North Street and residential properties to the north, Prospect Road to the west and buildings/residential properties with associated gardens and hardstanding to the east and south.

The site is occupied by a two-storey masonry constructed property used as a restaurant (currently closed) and associated single storey extensions to the rear for the kitchens and storage areas. There were two separate roof spaces for the two-storey section of the building, both of which were unlined exposing the undersides of the slate tiles. The single storey extensions were flat roofed and covered by a bitumen based felt. Externally there was some weather-boarding present which was either well fitted and/or covered by debris and cobwebs.

Although the majority of the site was dominated by the existing buildings and areas of hardstanding, restricted colonising vegetation was present in the gaps and cracks of the hardstanding. Species recorded included Canadian fleabane (*Conyza canadensis*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), ragwort (*Senecio* sp.) and herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), with ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) saplings also present.



Bats

No evidence of bats was recorded during a careful internal and external examination of the buildings. The roof spaces were in a cobwebbed condition with only rodent droppings and an old bird nest recorded. The visual inspection of the roof spaces was facilitated by the lack of any roof lining.

The site, dominated by buildings and hardstanding, set within a built up urban location provides poor foraging habitat and connectivity for bats.

Other Wildlife

Apart from an old bird nest and a few common species of birds, either recorded on the site or flying overhead, no other species of any note were recorded.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The proposals are for the re-development of 1a North Street and rear ground floor of 3 Prospect Street to provide 8 residential units including the upwards extension to existing flat on first floor of 3 Prospect Street to provide additional living accommodation. There are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. The site is of overall low ecological value, with the species described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded.

Although there are considered to be no ecological constraints to the proposals, a series of generic mitigation measures, as detailed below, could be implemented to reduce any impact the development proposals may have on local wildlife. There is also an opportunity to implement some enhancement measures to increase the nature conservation value of the site in the long term in accordance with Government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012².

Although no evidence of bats was recorded, all site operatives should be made aware of current legislation protecting bats and their roosts. In the unlikely event of any bats being encountered on the site, then works should stop immediately and Natural England or AAe contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided.

It should be noted that all species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Therefore, in order to avoid contravention of current legislation, site clearance works should be timed to avoid the main bird nesting season, which, in general, runs from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible, a check should be carried out prior to any clearance works to ensure there are no active nests present.

In order to protect any adjacent vegetation, suitable fencing may be required at certain locations to reduce the possibility of any damage that could be caused during the works. To minimise accidental damage, any overhanging branches should be pruned back to suitable live growth points. All works should be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced specialist contractor and should conform to current industry best practice, i.e. BS 3998: 2010 *'Tree Work - Recommendations'*.

A series of bird/bat boxes could be installed on site to provide enhanced nesting/roosting opportunities. Any boxes installed should be positioned in accordance with good practice.

As part of the proposals, soft landscaping may be carried out. Where any new planting is proposed it should aim to use native species, but where this is not practicable then species of known value for wildlife can be used. In particular, flowering plants will be of benefit to invertebrate species and shrubs and trees may provide nesting opportunities for birds once they become established.

² Department for Communities and Local Government (2012). *National Planning Policy Framework*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

The effects of lighting on plants and animals are difficult to assess, but it is thought that lighting can adversely affect invertebrates, birds and bats. Although the site is currently well-lit, in accordance with good practice, any new lighting to be introduced should be designed to minimise light spillage and pollution and not directed onto any bird/bat boxes installed.

The recommendations provided above try to pre-empt any issues that may arise as well as provide some mitigation and enhancement measures. I trust this is of interest to you and provides the Council with enough information to determine the application but let me know if further clarification is required.

Yours sincerely



Julian Thornber
BSc (Hons) MCIEEM
Class Licences CL08 and CL18

Encl. Photograph Record Sheet (Drg. No. 183039/01)

cc Mr D McCaffery, Highway Planning





Photograph 1: Showing the building from the front of the site.



Photograph 2: Showing the rear yard area.



Photograph 3: Showing the roof inspected from the top of the flat roof extensions.



Photograph 4: Showing one of the cobwebbed and unlined roof spaces present (main building at the front of the site).

Rev.	Details	Drawn Chkd.	Date
PROJECT			
3A Prospect Street Caversham			
TITLE			
Photograph Record Sheet			
 AAe Environmental Consultants AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T: 01235 536042 F: 01235 523849 info@aae-llp.com www.aae-llp.com			
Scale	Date 08.02.18	Drg No.	Rev.
NTS	Drawn MB	Chkd. ARB	183039/01