

Bat Survey of Site at 125 Highgrove Street, Reading, Berkshire

Client al3d Projects

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Non-technical Summary

Background

In September 2017, Crossman Associates was commissioned by al3d Projects to undertake a bat scoping survey of a small business premises containing workshops and offices located at 125 Highgrove Street, Reading, Berkshire, GR1 5EJ.

Proposals involve the redevelopment of the site into a residential development.

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.

Results

The site is located centrally within the town of Reading and consists of two small, narrow blocks of single storey buildings and a single square garage; used as workshops and offices. The buildings are not considered suitable in providing bats with a roosting location and are therefore considered to have **Negligible Suitability** for roosting bats.

Recommendations

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

- A precautionary approach should be taken during the demolition of the buildings in relation to bats
- The installation of integral sparrow nesting boxes within the new dwellings would provide an ecological gain

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1. Background

- 1.1. In September 2017, Crossman Associates was commissioned by al3d Projects to undertake a bat scoping survey of a small business premises located at 125 Highgrove Street, Reading, Berkshire (Ordnance Survey grid reference SU 721 722).
- 1.2. 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

- 1.3. The site consists of a small business premises located on the eastern side of Highgrove Street, Reading. The buildings consist of two separate and narrow, rectangular, single storey brick building and a single square brick garage. The buildings are used in conjunction with a motor car repair business. Immediate surroundings are dominated by a heavily urbanised environment which includes areas taken up by a mixture of both high intensity residential housing and light commercial usage, along with a network of roads and other allied infrastructure that is associated with a large town.
- 1.4. The wider landscape consists of a continuation of an urban theme with the surrounding areas taken up by the town of Reading. A number of parks and sports fields are present and form the only significant green open spaces. There are no watercourses present on site and none lie within the near environs. here are no significant areas of woodland laying in close proximity of the site.

Proposals

- 1.5. Site proposals involve the redevelopment of the site into a residential development.

Legislation

- 1.6. 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
- 1.7. 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 buildings were 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 buildings were 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 buildings were 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, and took place on 5 September 2017. Figure 2 within Appendix I provides a building location layout plan
- 3.4. The external and internal conditions of the buildings 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
Building 1	Overview	A narrow rectangular L-shaped block of brick built single storey garages dating from the 1950's and 60's. The buildings while old have been maintained so as to remain in a usable state and all are currently in use as workshops and offices.	Confirmed roost ☐ High Suitability ☐ Moderate Suitability ☐ Low Suitability ☐ Negligible Suitability ☒
	Exterior	Supporting walls are formed from solid brick work, which all remain in solid state, lacking any significant cracks or holes. Windows and doors are a mixture of original and modern replacements and include uPVC windows, standard doors, steel roller shutters and standard steel up and over garage doors. All remain in a usable state; windows remain glazed and all doors shut tightly within their respective frames. Some areas have cladding which is a mixture of close fitting timber feather edging and steel panels.	
	Interior	The interior of Building 1 is divided into a series of simple and uncomplicated bays which serve as offices and workshops.	

		The interiors lack any lofts or any complexities.	
	Roof	The majority of the roof is formed by a flat roof with a bituminous/mineralised felt covering. All felt remains well-sealed in place. Edges/eaves also remain well-sealed with tight fitting fascia boards pinning the felt tightly against the upper exterior walls, abutments, likewise also remain well sealed. The northern end building has a simple pitched roof clad with natural slates and simple ridges, and while old has been maintained; with all slates and ridges present and well-seated in place. The nature of the slates which fit tightly results in no significant gaps or crevices. Verges remain well sealed and the building lacks any soffits.	
Building 2	Overview	A rectangular and narrow brick built block of interconnected rooms used as offices. The building dates from the 1950s and 60s. The building remains generally in a good state of repair and is in full use as offices.	Confirmed roost ☐ High Suitability ☐ Moderate Suitability ☐ Low Suitability ☐ Negligible Suitability ☒

	Exterior	The supporting walls are formed from solid brick/blockwork, much of which has a rendered and painted finish; all of which remain free of significant cracks or holes. Windows and doors all remain in good order and shut tightly within their respective reveals/frames.	
	Interior	The interior consists of a series of rooms which serve as offices and welfare areas. No lofts are present. The interior lacks entirely any bat roosting suitability.	
	Roof	The roof is a flat roof design and is covered with bituminous/mineralised felt; all of which remains well sealed down. The building has no soffits and timber facias form the eaves and fit snugly with no significant gaps noted.	
Building 3	Overview	A former enclosed brick built garage which has had two of its sides removed; resulting in a very open structure which is used to store cars. The roof is a flat roof design covered with bituminous/mineralised felt, which remains in good order.	Confirmed roost ☐ High Suitability ☐ Moderate Suitability ☐ Low Suitability ☐ Negligible Suitability ☒

Birds

- 3.6. No birds or bird nesting activity was recorded in any aspect of the buildings on site

Evaluation

Bats

- 3.7. During the scoping survey no droppings, staining, feeding remains or actual bats were observed.
- 3.8. The buildings are small and simple in construction and are built using uniform and modern materials, which includes tightly pointed brick work and well-sealed roofs, leaving no significant bat roosting suitability, furthermore the buildings usage as car repair work shops and offices results in high levels of noise and disturbance.
- 3.9. In addition the site is located within a heavily urbanised setting which lacks any significant bat foraging or commuting routes. The presence of a bat roost within any of the buildings on site is extremely unlikely and overall the buildings are considered as having **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 it is not considered necessary or beneficial to undertake any further survey work on the buildings.
- 4.4. Bats are very transient in nature and can sometimes utilise buildings on an occasional or temporary basis. It is therefore recommended that works to the buildings are undertaken using a precautionary approach with all tiles and roof panels 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).

Birds

- 4.5. While no birds are currently nesting on the site there is scope to increase the biodiversity of the site as recommended under the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which actively encourages opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments.
- 4.6. It is recommended that new artificial nest boxes specifically designed for house sparrows *Passer domesticus* are built into the walls of the new dwellings. Habitat

nesting boxes are recommended and manufacture a well proven design that will last in excess of 20 years. The nest boxes should be sited under the eaves on the sheltered side of the dwellings external walls. House sparrows are a communal nesting species and boxes should be placed in pairs. For a development of this size a total of six sets are recommended.

- 4.7. Sparrow nesting boxes are available from www.habibat.co.uk.

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)

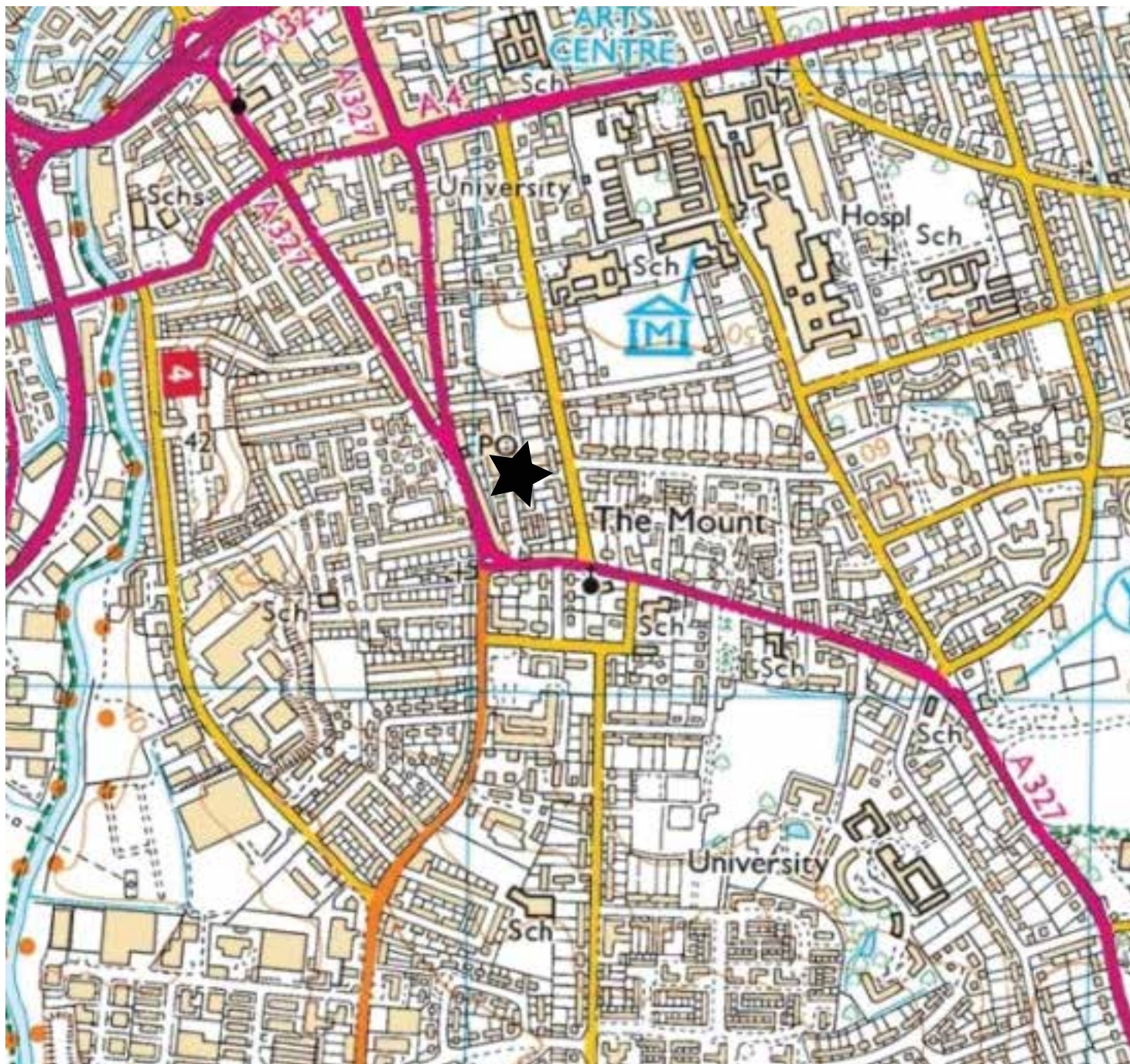
Website at www.magic.gov.uk

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 al3d projects
Title Site Location
Site 125 Highgrove Street
Figure 1
Date 06 September 2017
Scale Indicative



Site Boundary



Client al3d projects
Title Building layout
Site 125 Highgrove Street
Figure 2
Date 06 September 2017
Scale Indicative



Appendix II– Site Photographs

Photographs 1- 3



Photograph 1:

Building 1; northern end



Photograph 2:

Detail showing roof



Photograph 3:

Building 1; Central section

Photographs 4 - 6



Photograph 4:

Building 1; southern end



Photograph 5:

Detail showing tight fitting fascias; typical throughout



Photograph 6:

Detail showing tight fitting felt abutments

Photographs 7 - 9



Photograph 7:

Building 1; showing flat roof



Photograph 8:

Building 1; showing typical interior usage;
car maintenance workshop



Photograph 9:

Building 1; showing typical interior usage;
tyre fitting workshop



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.