

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Access Self-Storage
62 Portman Road
Reading
RG30 1EA

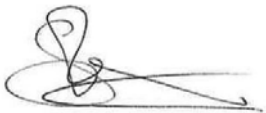
25th April 2016



PJC ref: 3144AO/16 Rev 01

This report has been prepared by

PJC Consultancy Ltd
on behalf of
Access Self Storage Ltd

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PJC Consultancy Ltd were commissioned by Access Self Storage Ltd to provide an extended phase 1 habitat survey and preliminary bat roost assessment at Access Self-storage, Reading. The purpose was to classify the habitats present, highlight the potential of the site to support protected species, and recommend suitable ecological enhancements and/or mitigation methods where appropriate. When implemented successfully, these recommendations will ensure that the development proceeds in line with all relevant laws pertaining protected species and their habitats, as well as contributing to an increase in site biodiversity. This report has been produced in accordance with NPPF – more specifically *Chapter 11 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment'* as well as policy CS36 – *Biodiversity and Geology* of the Reading Borough Council Core Strategy adopted January 2008.

Based on current proposals, the results of the extended phase 1 habitat survey can be summarised in the following table:

Protected Species/Habitats	Suitable Habitat Present	Recommended Further Surveys	Ecological Mitigation and Enhancements (see paragraph 5.8 for more)
Bats	Building found to have negligible potential to support roosting bats	None	None (site not suitable for bats)
Birds	Scattered trees	None	Vegetation clearance outside of nesting season or under supervision of an ecologist. Installation of five swift nest boxes.

CONTENTS

1 Introduction

2 Site Details and Observations

3 Survey Methodology

4 Results

5 Discussions and Recommendations

6 Conclusions

7 References

Figure 2 – Phase 1 Habitat Map

Figure 3 – Bat Roost Assessment

Appendix I – Photographs

1. INTRODUCTION

Instruction

1.1 PJC Consultancy Ltd have been commissioned by Access Self Storage Ltd to undertake an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and preliminary bat roost assessment of Access Self-Storage, Reading.

Documents and information provided

1.2 PJC Consultancy Ltd were provided with the following documents relating to the site:

- Existing Site Layout

Survey Objectives

1.3 This report has been produced in accordance with BS 42020:2013 'Biodiversity. Code of practice for planning and development' and as such seeks to:

- Classify the existing habitats on site following the Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – technique for environmental audit (JNCC 2010).
- Highlight the potential of the site to support species protected under EU and domestic legislation.
- Provide recommendations for further survey, mitigation and enhancements measures to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible, in line with Chapter 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Scope of this report

1.4 This report is only concerned with the habitats within the property boundaries of the site, or in areas that have the potential to be affected by construction works.

Background information

1.5 A number of proposals are currently being considered, all of which include the extension of the existing building. Subsequently, PJC Consultancy Ltd have been commissioned to undertake an extended phase 1 habitat survey following the guidelines set out in BS42020:2013 '*Biodiversity. Code of practice for planning and development.*' and a bat roost assessment following best practice guidelines (BCT 2016).

2. SITE DETAILS AND OBSERVATIONS

Site Address and OS Grid Reference

2.1 Access Self-Storage, 62 Portman Road, Reading, RG30 1EA. Central OS grid reference SU 6905 7419.

Site Description

2.2 The site is situated to the north of Portman Road and east of Wigmore Lane more broadly to the northwest of Reading town centre. The surrounding land use comprises industrial units to the east and west, residential development to the south and a railway line to the north. The location of the site within its environs is shown in figure 1.



Figure 1: Location of Site and Environs

2.3 The site comprises a self-storage building with associated car parking and small area of ornamental planting to the south.

Limitations of the Survey

2.4 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no single investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment.

2.5 The protected species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on site, based on the suitability of the habitat and any direct evidence on site. It should not be taken as providing a full and definitive survey of any protected species group.

Additional surveys may be recommended if, on the basis of this assessment it is considered reasonably likely that protected species may be present.

- 2.6 Due to the scale of the survey not all habitat types could be fully represented e.g. small plots of introduced shrub or ornamental planting in private gardens. In each case, the dominant habitat type in the area was recorded, along with any information deemed relevant in the production of this ecological appraisal.

3. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

- 3.1 Biological records and statutory and non-statutory designated site information was obtained from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre at a search radius of 1km from the centre of the site. The records were received on the 20th April 2016. The records were analysed and summarised in the results section.

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 3.2 The Extended Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken on the 12th April 2016 by Adam Earl BSc(Hons) MCIEEM and Sam Dawson BSc(Hons) following the standard 'Phase 1 habitat survey' auditing method developed by the Joint Nature Conservancy Council (JNCC). The site was surveyed on foot and the existing habitats and land uses were recorded on an appropriately scaled map (Figure 2). In addition, the dominant plant species in each habitat were recorded, as was any evidence of protected species. The potential for the site to support protected species was also assessed. Those ecological features not classified as a habitat are denoted using a target note.

Bat Roost Assessment

- 3.3 Adam Earl BSc(Hons) MCIEEM (NE licence number 2015-10845-CLS-CLS) and Sam Dawson BSc(Hons) undertook a bat roost assessment of the building on the 12th April 2016. An external assessment was undertaken following good practice guidelines (BCT 2016). The surveyors assessed the externals of the buildings during daylight hours for potential crevice roosting opportunities/access points into the roof void. Such roosting features include:

- Missing/slipped/lifted roof or hanging tiles
- Lifted/warped weatherboarding
- Lifted lead flashing
- Lifted felt
- Missing mortar or joining material
- Gaps in soffits/wall plates

- 3.4 The building was assessed according to the criteria listed above and assigned to one of five categories detailed in table 1 below.

Table 1. Categorisation of bat roost potential

Level of evidence	Suitability
Evidence of use by bats including bats present.	Confirmed Roost
No evidence of bats. One or more suitable features that are obviously suitable for larger numbers of bats, on a more regular basis and for longer periods of time.	High
No evidence of bats, but are unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.	Moderate
No evidence of bats., one or more potential roost sites that could be used by low numbers of bats opportunistically. However, potential sites are not suitable to be used by larger number of bats on regular basis.	Low
No evidence of bats, no suitable features and not connected to suitable foraging habitat.	Negligible

4. RESULTS

Desk Study

4.1 The results of the desk study are detailed below:

Designated Sites

4.2 One statutory and one non-statutory designated site (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) were highlighted in the records search. These are summarised in table 2 below:

Table 2. Statutory and non-statutory Site Summary

Site Name	Reason for Designation	Distance and Direction from Site
Statutory		
West Reading Woodlands	Local Nature Reserve	990m southwest
Non-Statutory		
McIlroy Park (including Round Copse)	Local Wildlife Site	1km west

Protected Species

4.3 No protected species records exist for the site itself, however, a number of records have been made within 1km of the site. These are summarised below:

Bats

4.4 One record of a pipistrelle bat species *Pipistrellus spp.* was made within 500m of the site in 1998.

Mammals (excl. bats)

4.5 Two records of eurasian badger *Meles meles* have been made within 1km of the site, the most recent of which was recorded in 2008 at a distance of around 1km south of the site. One record of European water vole *Arvicola amphibious* was also made 530m northeast of the site.

Amphibians

4.6 60 sightings of Smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* have been made within 750m southwest of the site, the most recent of which was in 2008. Two records of common frog *Rana temporaria* were also made in 2008 within a 1km surrounding area of the site.

Invertebrates

4.7 Three records of stag beetle *Lucanus cervus* have been made within 850m southwest of the site.

Birds

- 4.8 A total of four species have been recorded within a 1km radius of the site including two listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 4.9 A total of four habitat types were identified on site during the survey. Each habitat is shown on Figure 2 and are described in turn below:

A3.1 Scattered Trees

- 4.10A line of three semi-mature trees; hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, plum *Prunus spp.* and purple leaf plum *Prunus cerasifera*, are located on the amenity grassland to the south of the site.

J1.2 Amenity Grassland

- 4.11Amenity grassland is located to the south of the site and is dominated by perennial rye *Lolium perenne* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* with abundant forget-me-not *Myosotis spp.*, daisy *Bellis perennis*, self-heal *Prunella vulgaris* and common yarrow *Achillea millefolium*. Frequent dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus* and white clover *Trifolium repens* is present with occasional germander speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*, bittercress *Cardamine spp.*, geranium *Pelargonium*, creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, common storksbill *Erodium cicutarium*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, bristly oxtongue *Helminthotheca echinoides*. This is interspersed with rare numbers of spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*.

J1.4 Introduced Shrub

- 4.12Californian lilac *Ceanothus spp.* and lavender *Lavandula spp.* shrubs are located to the west of the site, adjacent to the amenity grassland and car park.

J3.6 Buildings and Hard-standing

- 4.13Two storey industrial style unit with more modern extension to north. A full description of the building can be found in paragraph 4.10. Concrete paving surrounds the site with car parks located within the north, east and west sections of the site.

Bat Roost Assessment

- 4.14No evidence of roosting bats was identified during the external assessment. The building was also found to be absent of any features with the potential to support roosting bats. Therefore, the building has been classified as having

negligible potential to support roosting bats. A full description of the building is detailed below:

Access Self-Storage (main building)

4.15 Brick built two-storey industrial building with flat roof. The brickwork is in good condition no missing pointing. The flat roof is covered with metal sheet panels. The roof condition could not be assessed from ground level, however it is assumed that the sheeting is well sealed as to prevent water ingress. The window/door lintels are formed concrete and are also of good condition with no missing pointing or cracks. A more modern extension has been constructed to the north of the main building. The extension has interlocking metal panel walls and roof all of which are well sealed providing no potential roosting features. It was also noted that the building supported extensive security lighting (see photograph 1).

5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Relevant Planning Policy

5.1 This report has been prepared to comply with and with reference to national and local planning policy. Those relevant policies are listed below:

- NPPF – more specifically Chapter 11 '*Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment*'.
- Policy CS36 – *Biodiversity and Geology* of the Reading Borough Council Core Strategy adopted January 2008.

Designated Sites

5.2 One statutory and one non-statutory designated site are located within 1km of the site boundary. The development will be confined to the site boundary and will therefore have no direct impact on the designated sites.

Habitats

5.3 The habitats on site are common and widespread and are of negligible ecological value. The scattered trees have some intrinsic ecological value for their potential to support nesting birds.

Protected Species

5.4 No protected species records exist for the site itself nor do those records submitted for the surrounding area directly indicate that the site will support a protected species. Protected species that have the potential to inhabit suitable habitat on the site, are discussed in more detail below. Protected species not discussed in this report, are not considered to be present on site.

Bats

5.5 Bats are legally protected under EU (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010) and domestic legislation (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)) which makes it an offence to disturb, injure or kill a bat or damage or destroy a bat roost (even if bats are absent).

5.6 No evidence of roosting bats was identified during the roost assessment. The building was also found to be absent of potential roost features and therefore has been classified as having negligible potential to support roosting bats. Therefore, these buildings can be demolished without constraint from legislation and planning policy pertaining to bats.

Birds

5.7 All birds and their nests are protected from harm and destruction under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The site supports vegetation in the form of scattered trees, which has the potential to support nesting

birds. If the proposals require the removal of the vegetation to facilitate development, then clearance should be undertaken outside of the bird-nesting season (March to August inclusive for most British bird species) so to avoid potentially disturbing a nest. If the clearance works are to be undertaken from March to August, an ecologist should undertake a check for nesting birds immediately prior to any vegetation being removed.

Ecological Mitigation and Enhancements:

5.8 In line with Chapter 11 of the NPPF and policy CS36 – *Biodiversity and Geology* of the Reading Borough Council Core Strategy (adopted January 2008) the following enhancements will help provide a net gain in biodiversity at the site:

- The proposed landscape and planting scheme shall utilise native species where possible. Consideration shall be given to plant selection to ensure the site provides a range of flowering plants and fruit and berry bearing shrubs and trees.
- Five swift boxes (Schwegler 17B or similar) shall be installed on the proposed building. The boxes shall be sited at a minimum height of 5m in a sheltered position out of direct sunlight i.e. on a northerly aspect. The boxes shall be located so to avoid/minimise disturbance.
- Two insect boxes (Schwegler Clay and Reed Insect Block or similar) should be installed within the planted areas to increase available nesting opportunities for insects. The boxes should be installed close to vegetation in a sheltered, sunny position where possible.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The Phase 1 habitat survey found the site to support four habitat types. The habitats were considered to be of negligible ecological value. However, the scattered trees and introduced shrub has some intrinsic ecological value for its potential to support protected species.
- 6.2 The bat roost assessment did not find any evidence of roosting bats nor did the assessment highlight any potential roost features. Therefore, the building was classified as having negligible potential to support roosting bats. Demolition of the building can therefore proceed without constraint from legislation and planning policy pertaining to bats.
- 6.3 The scattered trees were identified as providing suitable bird nesting habitat. Therefore, the vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside of the bird-nesting season (March to August inclusive) or under the supervision of an ecologist. Five swift boxes (Schwegler 17B or similar) shall be installed on the proposed building.
- 6.4 If the recommendations listed in section 5 are adhered to, the proposed development can proceed without constraint from legislation and planning policy pertaining to protected species and habitats. The mitigation and enhancements listed in paragraph 5.8 will help ensure that the development will lead to a net gain in biodiversity.

7. REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust (2016) Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition

JNCC (2007) Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A Technique for Environmental Audit (Revised reprint). Joint Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough.

Natural England (2004) Bat Mitigation Guidelines

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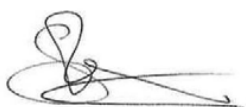
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Date: 4th May 2016

FIGURE 2
PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP



- Key:**
- Building
 - Hardstanding
 - A Amenity Grassland
 - Introduced Shrub
 - Scattered Trees
 - Site Boundary

Drawing should be viewed in colour

All locations are indicative and have been plotted to best of surveyors ability using plans provided and aerial imaging

Drawing No.: PJC/3144AO/16			Rev: 01	Sheet number: 1 of 1
Client : Access Self Storage				
Project : Access Self Storage Reading Site, 62, Portman Road, Reading, RG30 1EA.				
Drawing title: Phase 1 Habitat Map				
Date drawn: 04/05/2016				
Scale: NTS				
Drawn by: SD		Checked by: LW		

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APPENDIX I PHOTOGRAPHS



Photograph 1: Security lighting on eastern aspect of building. Photograph taken by Adam Earl 12/04/2016.