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Project title Reading Girls School

Job number

235714-00

cc

File reference

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Date

23 May 2016

Subject Reading Girls School - Planning Condition 9 Review

1 Introduction and Background

Interserve Kajima commissioned Ove Arup and Partners Ltd (Arup) to undertake a bat assessment at Reading Girls School, Reading in 2014 in support of a planning application for the redevelopment of the school.

Bat emergence and return surveys were undertaken at the school during July and August 2014. Although no roosts were confirmed on site, the most easterly boiler room on the roof of the main building (boiler room 3 in Figure 1) was flagged as having the potential to support a small roost of low conservation importance. As the emergence and return surveys could not rule out the presence of a single or small number of male or non-breeding female common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* using this part of the building, further internal building inspections were recommended¹. The aim of these was to gather further information on whether bats were using the building for roosting purposes, identifying any signs of use by bats in the boiler rooms using the methodology described in section 2.

As part of the planning application process for the redevelopment of Reading Girls School, a planning condition ('Condition 9'), was attached to the application by Reading Borough Council. Condition 9 requires either a licence for development works affecting bats to be submitted, or a report setting out why the applicant concludes that such a licence is not required, to be submitted and approved in writing by Reading Borough Council. Using the information obtained from the emergence and return surveys, in addition to the building inspection, this note aims to satisfy Condition 9, providing the information required to show that a licence for development works affecting works is not required for works on or the demolition of the current school buildings, under the Reading Girls School redevelopment.

¹ Ove Arup & Partners Ltd (2014) Reading Girls School Bat Report – Issued August 2014

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2 Methodology and Limitations

Internal building inspections of boiler rooms 1 – 4 (see Figure 1) were undertaken on Tuesday 9th February 2016, by an ecologist experienced in bat work who holds a Natural England Level 2 Bat Survey class licence, and in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines (2016)². The aim of these inspections was to identify and record any evidence of bats using the building for roosting purposes, and assess whether the building is being used by roosting bats. During the inspection, evidence such as droppings, feeding remains, staining, scratches and bats were searched for in a systematic fashion, with all visible areas of each structure assessed.

Internal areas of boiler room 5 could not be surveyed, as there was no safe access to this part of the building on the day of survey. However, this was not considered as a constraint on the conclusions of this inspection, as external areas of the room could be inspected using binoculars from a suitable vantage point. In addition to this, bat activity recorded during 2014 was concentrated over the more central part of the building, around boiler rooms 1-3, with no bat activity recorded over boiler rooms 4 and 5. The main focus of the inspection were therefore boiler rooms 1-3, with boiler rooms 4 and 5 inspected as a matter of good practice.

3 Inspection Results

Boiler rooms 1 and 2 were well sealed, lacking any opportunity for bats to enter each room, and demonstrated no evidence of roosting bats within them. Each room also lacked features on the external façades which would be suitable for roosting bats.

A large gap in the eastern external wall of boiler room 3 was recorded, providing a suitable entrance point to the room. However, no evidence of use by roosting bats was recorded within or on the external façade of boiler room 3, with the interior lacking suitable features such as crevices or voids which could be utilised by roosting bats.

The door of boiler room 4 was missing, allowing access to the interior; however, no evidence of bat use was recorded within or on the external façade of the room.

A gap where the door of boiler room 5 had warped was identified, but this room could not be accessed on the date of the inspection, as there was no safe access to this part of the building. The room was therefore assessed from a distance using binoculars with no clear evidence of bat use recorded. In addition to this, as detailed in section 2, no bat activity was recorded in these areas during the earlier emergence and return surveys. Therefore, lack of access to the room is not thought to have significantly impacted the assessment of the building, and bats are not thought to be using this room to roost.

4 Conclusions and Condition 9

Emergence and return surveys undertaken at Reading Girls School in 2014 identified low levels of activity from a single common pipistrelle close to the boiler room 3 on the main school building, 21 minutes before dawn, during a single dawn survey. However, no bats were specifically observed

² Collins, J. (eds.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

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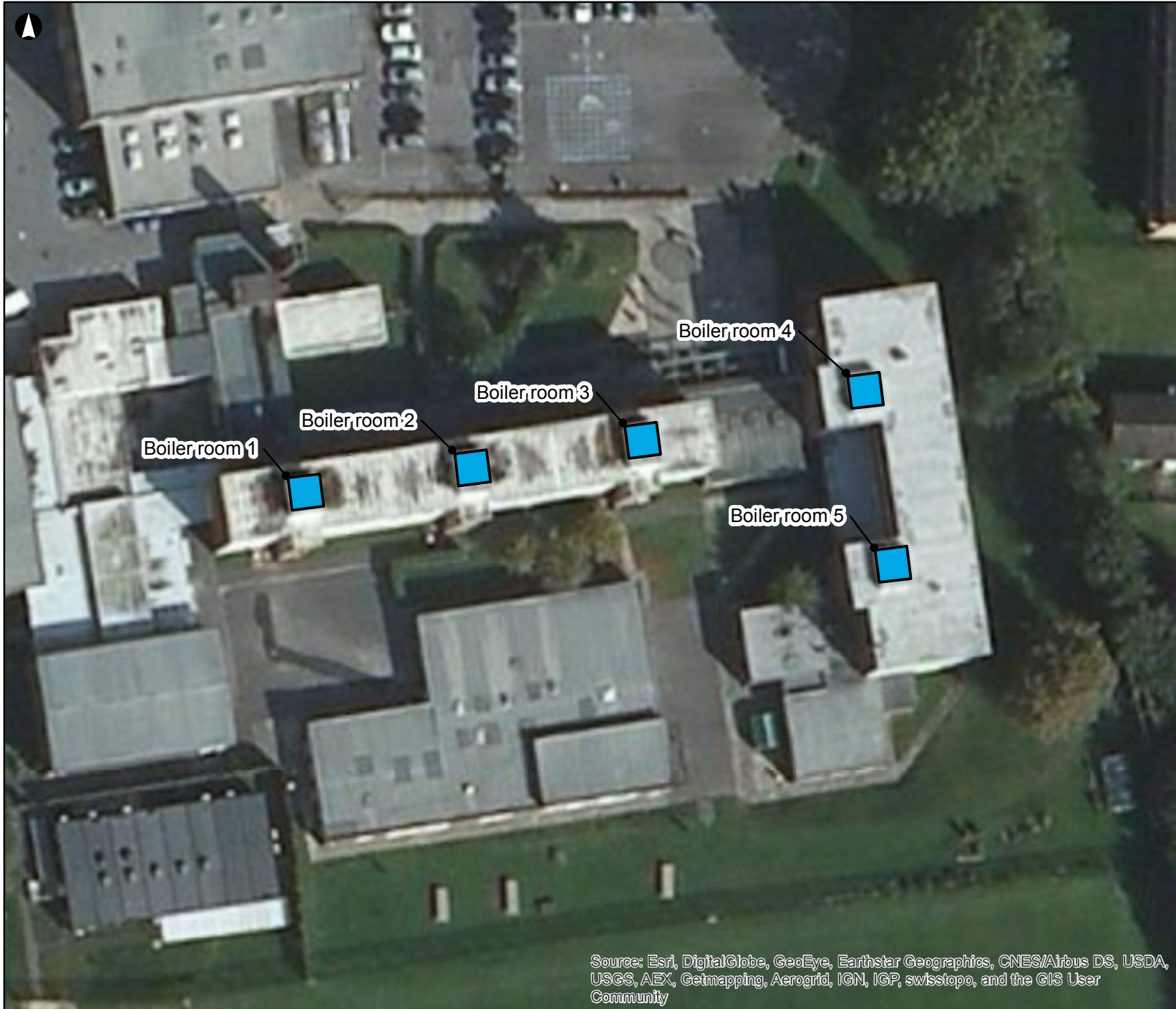
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flying into the building. A subsequent survey identified commuting bats adjacent to the school up to 36 minutes before dawn; however, no bats were recorded flying up to or entering the building. A consequent building inspection was undertaken in February 2016, as although bats were not seen entering the building, activity recorded around boiler room 3 close to dawn meant that a roost could not be definitively ruled out without an internal inspection. No evidence of bat use was recorded in any of the boiler rooms inspected at Reading Girls School. Therefore, it can be concluded that bats are not using the main building to roost.

Natural England require a licence to be sought if the proposed works have the potential to disturb, injure or kill bats, or damage or obstruct habitat they rely upon to breed and rest (e.g. roosts). A series of emergence, return and inspection surveys have found no evidence of roosting bats, and limited opportunities for bats within the structures inspected. Consequently there is no mechanism or requirement for a bat mitigation licence to cover the works proposed on the buildings at Reading Girls School as part of the site's redevelopment. This note should therefore satisfy the need of Condition 9 for a report setting out why the applicant concludes that such a licence is not required to be submitted.

DOCUMENT CHECKING (not mandatory for File Note)

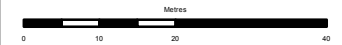
	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
Name	Kate Harrington	Neil Harwood	Neil Harwood
Signature			

**Legend** Boiler Room

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Issue	Date	By	Chkd	Appd
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Client

Interserve Kajima

Job Title

Reading Girls School

Job Title

Bat Inspection Reference Map

Scale at A4

1:1,000

Job No 26271-61	Drawing Status Issue
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Drawing No 001	Issue P1
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