# Bat Scoping Survey: 58 Bath Road, Reading

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|---|---|
| Client | Mr N Phillips |
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NATURAL SOLUTIONS


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# Non-technical Summary

## Background

In January 2025, Crossman Associates was commissioned to undertake a bat survey of 58 Bath Road, Reading RG30 2AY. Development proposals include demolition and replacement.

## Methods

The scoping survey was undertaken by Miguel Canovas, an experienced ecologist and licenced bat worker. The building was inspected both externally and internally for any evidence of bat / bird presence, such as droppings, food remains, staining or actual bats / birds.

## Results

The dwelling is located within a residential area. Overall, the dwelling remains in good condition and provide no features suitable for roosting bats or nesting birds. The garden is maintained.

The dwelling has **negligible** suitability for roosting bats.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that the following be undertaken as part of the development:

- A precautionary approach to development regarding bats.
- Install a house sparrow nest terrace.
- Exterior lighting planned sensitive to nocturnal wildlife.

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# 1. Background

1.1. In January 2025, Crossman Associates was commissioned to undertake a bat survey of 58 Bath Road, Reading RG30 2AY. Development proposals include demolition and replacement. (Ordnance Survey grid reference: SU 69794 72695).

1.2. Figure 1 under Appendix II provides a site location map.

1.3. The objectives of the survey were to:

- Assess the likely presence or absence of bats.
- Identify any legislative or planning policy constraints relevant to the site.
- Determine the need for further surveys, compensation, or mitigation.

## Site Description

1.4. The site comprises a large bungalow with a garage which is in a residential area in Cookham, Berkshire. The property has a maintained garden.

1.5. The property is adjoined on all sides by similar detached/ semi-detached properties with well-maintained gardens.

1.6. The environs are predominately residential with a mix of medium/large properties. The wider landscape includes parkland.

## Legislation

1.7. 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 (Amendment) Regulations. 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 consider bats within the planning process and the level of bat activity on-site must be fully assessed prior to the assessment the planning application.

1.8. 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. A bat scoping survey was carried out on the 29th January 2025 by Miguel Canovas, an experienced ecologist and licenced bat worker.

2.4. The building was 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.

2.5. The building was 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. Buildings 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*

2.6. The building was 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. National policy guidance is provided by National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024), which sets out the Government' planning policies for England and how they should be applied to planning applications;

<u>Conserving and enhancing the natural environment</u>

- Planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

  a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

  b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

  c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Habitats and Biodiversity

- To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

  a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity68; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and

  b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

- When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons70 and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

## Field Survey

*Bat scoping survey*

3.3. The external and internal conditions of the buildings are described in the table below and photographs can be found in Appendix II.

3.4. 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 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **58 Bath Road, Reading** | Overview | Detached bungalow. The property is in good condition and is currently unoccupied.<br><br>No bats or evidence of bats were found inside or outside of the property. | Negligible Suitability ☒ |
| | Exterior | The brick walls are in good condition; no gaps or cracks were observed. The windows and doors are all well-sealed.<br><br>The property has a maintained garden of lawns.<br><br>The garage is in good condition no gaps observed. | |
| | Interior | Areas of living accommodation are composed of well-sealed rooms with plaster and painted walls and ceilings. The roof void is insulated, compost of exposed timbers and type 1 bituminous sarking felt lining. No gaps were observed. | |
| | Roof | Tightly fitting concrete roof tiles with no gaps observed.<br><br>All roof verges remain well-sealed, areas of soffit and where lead flashing is used to seal roof abutments remain tightly fitted in place. | |

| Building | Feature | Feature Description | Bat suitability |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | The chimney brick work is in good condition and the flash/ concrete work which seals the chimney to the roof remains well fit in place. | |

*Birds*

3.5. No birds or bird nesting activity was recorded in any aspect of the dwelling.

## Evaluation

*Building*

3.6. The property is located within a residential area, however, lies near to parkland with habitats likely to function as commuting and foraging resource for bats.

3.7. During the scoping survey, no droppings, staining, feeding remains or actual bats were observed. The building is in good condition and well-maintained. All verges and soffits are in good condition and fit tightly. All tiles and ridges are sealed. The property is constructed from modern and uniform material and lacks any abiotic roosting opportunities.

3.8. The property has **negligible suitability** for roosting bats.

*Trees*

3.9. Reference has been made to the tree schedule and tree report for the site (GHA Trees, 4th February 2025).

3.10. Four trees and part of a hedgerow are being removed as part of the proposals.

- G11 – a mature Leyland cypress. The tree has a reduced crown and canker. The tree has low suitability for roosting bats.
- T12 – a semi-mature Leyland cypress. The tree is in good condition except for some loose park and minor dead wood. The tree has low suitability for roosting bats.

- T13 – a semi-mature oak. The tree is in good condition with no significant deadwood, rot or holes. The tree has negligible suitability for roosting bats.
- G15 – a Leyland cypress hedge. The hedgerow is in good condition and has no noticeable features for bats. Negligible suitability
- T16 – a mature bay tree. The tree is in good condition. Negligible suitability for roosting bats.

# 4. Recommendations

4.1. The recommendations in the paragraphs below are provided 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. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) states that a public authority must 'in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity; Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'.

4.3. The NPPF (2021) states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

## Species recommendations

*Bats*

4.4. Due to the lack of evidence of roosting bats within any aspect of the building on site, it is not considered necessary or beneficial to undertake any further survey work.

4.5. Due to the transitory nature of bats, there remains a very small possibility that bats could be encountered during the works; therefore, all works must proceed under a precautionary approach. Tiles and roof panels will be removed in a vertical rather than horizontal sliding motion. Soffits and masonry will be dismantled using

a 'soft' approach taking care with cavity walls where present. All site workers will be vigilant at all times and in the very unlikely event that a bat is found, then works must stop immediately and advice should be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

4.6. All trees should be felled in a careful and phased manner with the work to be carried out by a qualified tree surgeon who has been made aware of the findings of this report.

Lighting

4.7. The site lies near to parkland, these habitats are likely to support a number of species of bat; typical species that would be likely to be present include common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle, therefore any exterior lighting that is to be employed should be of the modern LED-type and should take into account the presence of bats and avoid over illumination of the garden, trees and adjacent properties. This can be achieved by using directional lights and or cowls.

## Biodiversity enhancements

*Birds*

4.8. During the phase of the works, there is an opportunity to incorporate inexpensive ecological enhancements that aim to increase the biodiversity of the site.

4.9. New nesting opportunities will be provided for the local bird population with a particular emphasis on house sparrows (which have suffered significant decline) and it is recommended that a sparrow nest box is installed within the development.

4.10. Sparrow nest boxes are ideally fitted below eaves. Suitable models include the Vivara Woodstone Sparrow Nest Box, which is suitable for integral and surface mounting. This model is strong, durable, long lasting and available in brown or stone colour; models can be found at vivira.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. 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 (2021)** *National Planning Policy Framework.* TSO

**TSO (2006)** *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act* TSO

# Appendix I – Site Figures

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● Site location

| | |
|---|---|
| Client | Mr N Phillips |
| Title | Location plan |
| Site | 58 Bath Rd, Reading |
| Figure | 1 |
| Date | 29 January 2025 |
| Scale | xxx |

# Appendix II – Site Photographs

# Photographs 1- 3

## Photograph 1:

Southeastern elevation and garage

## Photograph 2:

Southern elevation

## Photograph 3:

Western elevation

# Photographs 4 - 6

## Photograph 4:

Roof void

## Photograph 5:

Garage interior

## Photograph 6:

Garden

# 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.

# Information sheet  Artificial bird nesting boxes for Buildings: Swifts, house martins and house sparrows

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Habibat house sparrow nest box

Vivara woodstone sparrow nest box; suitable for both integral fitment or surface mounting

Ibstock Swift boxes are also suitable for house sparrows. Can be customised to suit any exterior finish.Site boxes under eaves, away from windows  and direct sunlight.

Ibstock Box

Sparrow boxes  should be grouped together and be at least 2 m of the ground. The boxes can be also be sited on gable walls. At least 3 per averaged size house.

Swifts boxes should be at least 5 m above the ground with an clear un-obstructed flight path.

Schwegler model 9b

Schwegler house martin box model 9 b double is a suitable box for house martins and can be used to encourage the uptakeof a building by this species. The boxes can be attached to the exterior walls in a sheltered position; ideally beneath the eaves. At least two sets should be placed on an averaged size house.