Bat Scoping Survey: Reading Crematorium, Caversham

Client	Reading Borough Council
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NATURAL SOLUTIONS

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Non-technical Summary

Background

In October 2025, Crossman Associates was commissioned to undertake a bat survey of Reading Crematorium, All Hallows Rd, Caversham RG4 5LP. Development proposals include extension and remodeling.

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 building is located within a residential area. Overall, the building and structures remain in good condition and provide no features suitable for roosting bats or nesting birds.

The property 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 bird nest box.
- Exterior lighting planned sensitive to nocturnal wildlife.

Contents

1. BACKGROUND **3**

SITE DESCRIPTION 3

LEGISLATION 3

2. METHODOLOGY **5**

DESKTOP STUDY 5

3. RESULTS **7**

DESKTOP STUDY 7

FIELD SURVEY 9

EVALUATION 13

4. RECOMMENDATIONS **14**

SPECIES RECOMMENDATIONS 14

BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS 15

5. LIMITATIONS **17**

6. REFERENCES **18**

1. Background

1.1. In October 2025, Crossman Associates was commissioned to undertake a bat survey of Reading Crematorium, All Hallows Rd, Caversham RG4 5LP. Development proposals include extension and remodeling. (Ordnance Survey grid reference: SU 72644 75719).

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 an extension building and flat roof structure at Reading Crematorium, which is in a residential area in Caversham, Reading.

1.5. The property is adjoined on all sides by short grass areas belonging to the cemetery grounds.

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

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 8th October 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 steppingstones 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
Reading Crematorium, Caversham	Overview	Single storey extension, flat roof structures and wall structures. The building and the structures are in good condition and are currently in use. The building has been comprehensively sealed-up with no gaps. 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. The flat roof structures and the wall structure are in good condition. The property is surrounded by the cemetery grounds.	
	Interior	Internal areas are well-sealed rooms with plaster and painted walls and ceilings. The roof void is compost of exposed timbers and type modern membrane lining. No gaps were observed.	
	Roof	Tightly fitting ceramic roof tiles with no gaps observed. The eaves course of all tiles has been filled with mortar.	

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
		All roof verges remain well-sealed, areas of soffit and where lead flashing is used to seal roof abutments remain tightly fitted in place.	

Birds

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

Evaluation

3.6. The property is located within a residential area, however, lies near to parkland and woodland 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 and the structures are 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.

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 (2024) 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 site be nearby woodland and 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.

Lighting

4.6. The site lies near to parkland and woodland, 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

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

4.8. Swifts (Apus apus) are a declining species in the UK, largely due to the loss of suitable nesting sites in modern and renovated buildings. To support local biodiversity, fulfil policy objectives and contribute to swift conservation efforts, it is recommended that

4.9. At least two swift next boxed to be installed on the building.

4.10. The nest boxes should be positioned at least 4 m above ground level, under the eaves or on an appropriate sheltered wall, with a clear flight path and minimal disturbance. Ideally, the box should face north or east to avoid excessive heat exposure.

4.11. For a long-term, low-maintenance solution, we recommend incorporating the Action for Swifts S Brick into the development. The S Brick is a discreet, integrated nest box designed to be built directly into the structure of the building, providing a secure and permanent nesting site without affecting aesthetics or maintenance requirements. Models can be found on www.actionforswifts.com.

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

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HMSO (1981) *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and subsequent amendments).* HMSO

HMSO (1995) *Biodiversity.* The UK Steering Group Report

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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	Reading Borough Council
Title	Location plan
Site	Reading Crematorium
Figure	1
Date	22 October 2025
Scale	xxx

Appendix II – Site Photographs

Photographs 1- 3

Photograph 1:

Southeastern elevation

Photograph 2:

Northeastern elevation

Photograph 3:

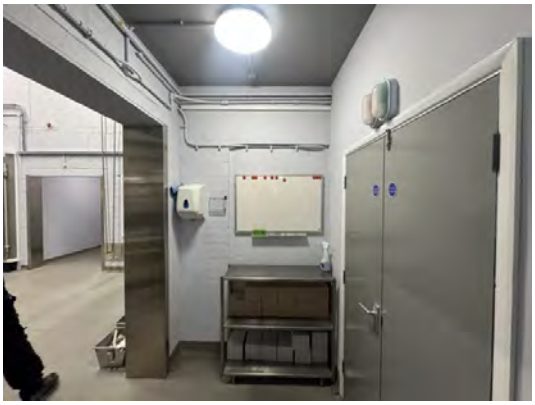
Roof void

Photographs 4 - 6

Photograph 4:

Wall structure

Internal



Photograph 5:

Flat roof

Photograph 6:

Flat roof structure

Appendix III– Information Sheets

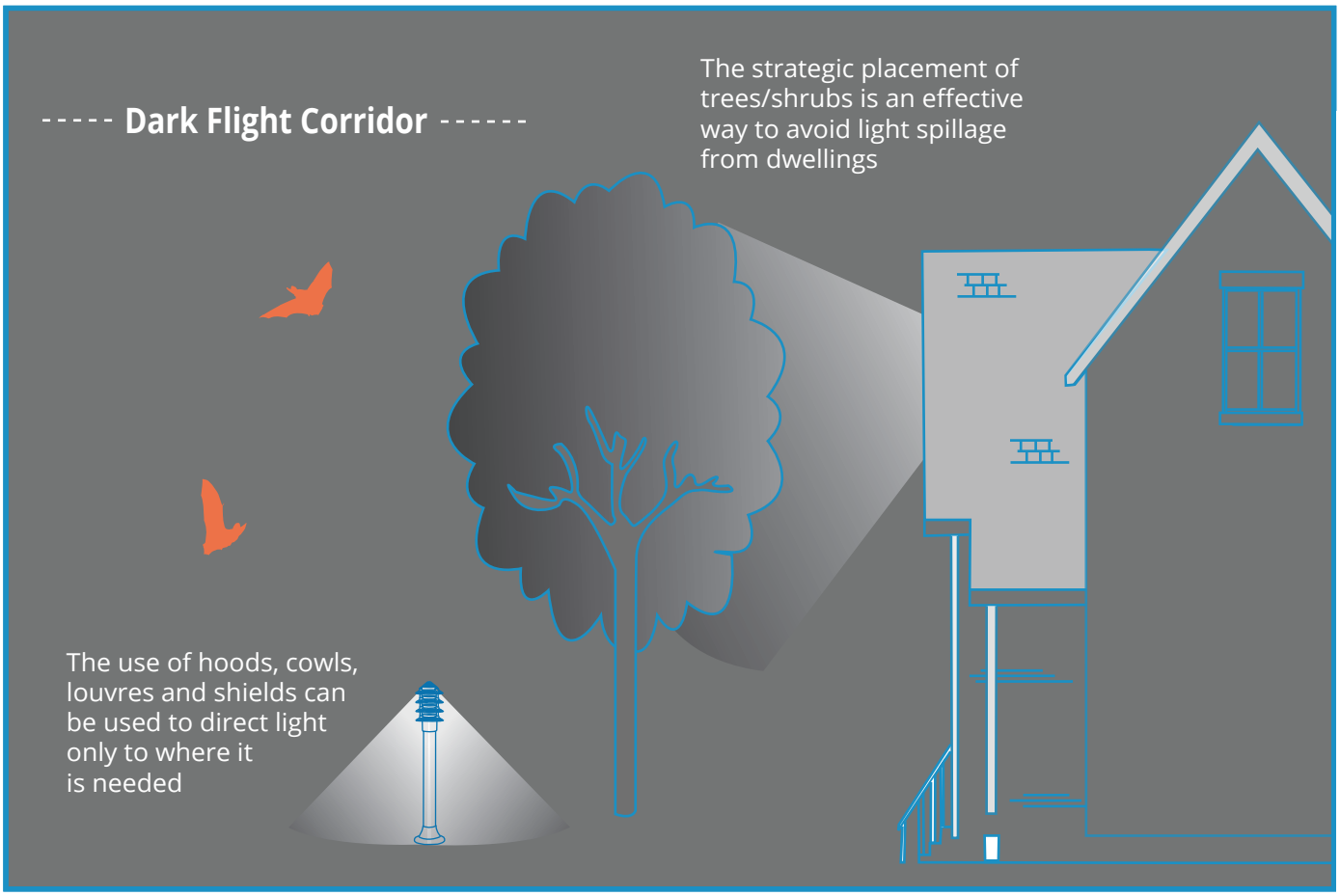
Bat Habitat Suitably Criteria

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.

Sensitive Lighting for Bats

MITIGATION GUIDELINE Nº 001



Lamp Type
The impact of light on bats can be minimised by the use of low/high pressure sodium lamps

Lighting Column
The height of lighting columns should be kept as low as possible to reduce the impact of light spill. For example for pedestrian walkways short bollard lights with a light level as low as 3lux directed downwards.

Timing of Lighting
The times at which lighting is left on should be limited where possible. The use of movement sensors for security lights can be used to reduce the amount of time a light is on each night.

Light Levels
Light levels within a land-scape plan should be as low as possible. If lighting is not needed, don't light.

Light Mapping
Mapping the light spill of a lighting scheme using computer software can prove essential in designing schemes that are fir for purpose, minimise energy costs and create dark flight corridors and foraging areas for bats

Impacts of Light on Bats
As nocturnal mammals, light causes disturbance to bats, many species of which will actively avoid lit areas. The illumination of bat roosts can delay bats emerging and thus shorten their foraging time and eventually lead to bats abandoning their roost. Lit conditions also lead to an increase of predation as they are more easily seen.

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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.