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Preliminary Roost Assessment

Survey site:

Astec House, 187-189 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 4EX

Client:

Kevin Tallon

Survey date:

28th March 2025

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with the Reading Borough Council. The proposal is described as:
The conversion of an unoccupied office building to student accommodation, including replacing portions of the car park for amenity grass.

PRA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PRA Methodology and Legislation - 2024](#).

The survey results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updated site visit may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion.

The site survey was undertaken by Inez Daly, BA (Hons), Accredited Agent on Natural England Bat Licence Number 2018-33540 CLS-CLS.																	
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (km/h)	Rain												
28/03/2025	13	55	15	16	None												
PRA Survey Factor		Detailed using desk study and site survey. Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.															
See PRA plan in Appendix 1, location plan in Appendix 2, proposed plans in Appendix 3, and additional photos in Appendix 4.																	
Survey Limitations																	
None.																	
Background and Site Location																	
<i>Summary of site and desk Study</i>		Astec House, RG1 4EX (hereafter referred to as 'the site') is centred on National Grid Reference SU 72579 73292 and has an approximate area of 0.14ha. It comprises one unoccupied office building (B1), a car park, amenity grassland and two mature trees (T01 and T02). The site is located within the borough of Reading and is surrounded by built-up commercial and educational areas. There are two rivers in the vicinity: the River Kennet ~0.1km north of the site and the River Thames ~0.85km northeast. There are small parcels of amenity grass located throughout the commercial developments, with larger public and private playing fields ~0.17km south and ~0.43km south, respectively. There is limited foraging and commuting habitats for bats; however, local bats may use the secluded car park for foraging. The tree within the car park (T01) may provide invertebrate habitat, increasing the foraging value for local bats. In addition, T01 may contain roosting habitat for low numbers of bats due to several small deadwood features present. To the author's knowledge no previous ecology reports have been produced for this site. There are twelve EPSLs listed on Magic Maps for bats within 2km of the site. <i>Table 1: EPSLs within 2km of the site</i> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>EPSL reference</th> <th>Bat species affected</th> <th>Approximate distance from site</th> <th>Impacts allowed by licence</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2019-44194-EPS-MIT</td> <td>Common pipistrelle (CPIP), soprano pipistrelle (SPIP)</td> <td>0.58km west</td> <td>Destruction of a resting place</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016-22301-EPS-MIT</td> <td>CPIP</td> <td>0.6km southwest</td> <td>Damage and destruction of a resting place</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				EPSL reference	Bat species affected	Approximate distance from site	Impacts allowed by licence	2019-44194-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle (CPIP), soprano pipistrelle (SPIP)	0.58km west	Destruction of a resting place	2016-22301-EPS-MIT	CPIP	0.6km southwest	Damage and destruction of a resting place
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2016-22301-EPS-MIT	CPIP	0.6km southwest	Damage and destruction of a resting place														

	EPSM2013-6155	CPIP	0.8km northwest	Destruction of a resting place
	2017-28045-EPS-MIT	Daubenton's bat (DAUB)	0.95km northwest	No impacts
	2014-3941-EPS-MIT	CPIP, SPIP	0.97km south	Damage and destruction of a resting place
	EPSM2010-2126	CPIP	0.29km southeast	Destruction of a resting place
	2017-32379-EPS-MIT	CPIP	1.77km southwest	Damage and destruction of a resting place
	EPSM2010-2266	CPIP, brown long-eared bat (BLEB)	1.81km southeast	Destruction of a breeding place and a resting place
	EPSM2011-3175	CPIP	1.87km north	Unknown
	EPSM2012-4478	CPIP, SPIP	1.88km southeast	Destruction of a resting place
	2020-44895-EPS-MIT	CPIP, SPIP, DAUB, BLEB	1.9km north	Destruction of a resting place
	2014-1343-EPS-BDX	SPIP	1.95km northwest	No impacts
There are no designated sites within 2km of the site.				
There are four types of priority habitats within 2km of the site.				
<i>Table 3: Priority habitats within 2km of the site</i>				
Habitat type		Approximate distance from site		
Ancient Woodland		1.73km northeast		
Good quality semi-improved grassland		1km northwest		
Floodplain grazing marsh		1.88km southwest		
Woodpasture and parkland		1.21km southeast		

Field survey results

*Summary of Survey Findings.
See additional photos in
Appendix 4.*

Roosting habitat**B1**

B1 is a multi-storey, stone-built office building with a southern stone parapet roof (Fig. 1, 2). The roof comprises angled slate tiles and flat roofing materials. The stonework is in excellent condition with no gaps or crevices across all elevations. Windows and windowsills are of PVC construction and are tightly sealed. The roof tiles appear to be in good condition, with no gaps or crevices suitable for roosting bats. Lead flashing on the roof and dormer windows appear to be in good condition, with no gaps or crevices suitable for roosting bats.

There is no loft space in B1; instead, a small boiler room is present above the top floor at the east (Fig. 3). No light spill was noted within this space and no access points were found. The top floor of B1 consists of a dropped ceiling. No light spill was found within the ceiling and no access points were found.

Two small concrete cellars (C01 and C02), both of which house various building systems, are present beneath B1 with exterior access from the north elevation. Both cellars are fully sealed off from the



Figure 1 B1, northern elevation



Figure 2 B1, southern elevation

rest of the building; however, the door leading to C02 is of timber airwave construction. The door is boarded, save a small section at the top and the bottom providing access to the interior. Bat hibernation is unlikely due to the temperature fluctuations caused by the housed machinery. Bat roosting during the active season is unlikely as the cellar conditions are suboptimal (i.e., does not receive adequate heat during the day, is not of a suitable length for warm-up flights). No roosting evidence (droppings or feeding remains) were found. The thick layer of dust present on the wooden slats of the door suggest no bat activity has taken place within recent months.

B1 is assessed to contain **low** value for roosting bats, due to the access for bats into the cellar (C02). No further suitable roosting features were found on or within the building.

T01

T01 is a mature oak *Quercus robur* located at national grid reference SU 72580 73334. The tree



Figure 3 B1 roof, facing east



Figure 4 Hole feature PRF1 on eastern limb on T01

has an approximate height of 15m and a DBH of approximately 550mm. Three features were identified T01.

PRF-1 (PRF1) is a hole that is present on a limb at the eastern side of T01 (Fig. 4). The hole is too high to inspect from ground level, and as such the depth of the feature could not be determined. The feature requires further investigation (FAR) to determine its suitability for roosting bats.

PRF-2 and PRF-3 are two small holes are present on the trunk at the west (Fig. 5). Both holes are too high to inspect from ground level, and as such the depth of the features could not be determined. Both features requires further investigation (FAR) to determine its suitability for roosting bats.

The tree is assessed as **PRF**.

T02

T02 is a semi-mature blue atlas cedar *Cedrus atlantica* located at national grid reference SU 72574 73282. Fig. 6). T02 contains no deadwood in the canopy, cavities, or crevices suitable for roosting bats. Due to the lack of features suitable for roosting bats, T02 is assessed as **NONE**.

Foraging/commuting habitat

There is minimal vegetation on site in the form of amenity grassland, T01, T02, and small shrubs against the wall at the north. The vegetation is



Figure 5 PRF2 (left) and PRF3 (right) on the trunk of T01 at the west



Figure 6 T02 and amenity grass at the south of the site

	unlikely to support large populations of invertebrates, which lowers the foraging suitability for bats. Built linear features are present in the form of the two paved pathways at the west and the east of the site. The relation of B1 to the surrounding areas may form linear features for commuting and dispersing bats in the local landscape; the built-up area is. The overall foraging and commuting value of the site is assessed as low.	
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed works will involve the replacement of several car parking spaces with amenity grass, and internal refurbishments of B1 to facilitate the change from an office building to student accommodation. One roosting feature was found within B1 in the form of access into cellar C02, however, bats are unlikely to use the cellar due to suboptimal conditions for both hibernation and roosting. Nonetheless, if bats are present at time of works, individuals may be disturbed, injured, or killed. The proposed development is not to affect T01 or T02; however, the proximity to the works may result in disturbance to roosting bats, if present at time of works. Any new external lights installed post-development may further deter foraging or commuting bats in the vicinity.	
<i>Recommendations</i>	Buildings A pre-commencement check of the cellars C01 and C02 by a bat licenced ecologist is to occur prior to the beginning of works. In the unlikely event that a bat or evidence of bats is discovered in the cellar, all work must stop and a bat licensed ecologist contacted for further advice. Trees No further surveys are required. Due to the proximity of the works to T01, a precautionary working method is advised and is to include: - All works to be conducted within daylight hours. - Avoiding the use of unnecessary lighting, particularly at night, or implementing a low impact lighting strategy to avoid illumination of retained roost features on T01. - A tree protection buffer must be put in place to prevent construction works encroaching near the tree and to prevent pollution affecting the features.	

	Foraging and commuting habitat Minimal foraging and commuting habitat may be disturbed during the proposed works. No loss of foraging or commuting habitat is anticipated. A low impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during post-development which outlines the areas of the site (in particular, the northern portion of the site, including T01) that will be retained as dark corridors. Parameters can be found on the Bat Conservation Trust website: https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting Suggested biodiversity enhancements The installation of two bat boxes at the site will provide additional roosting habitat for bats. The bat boxes are to be installed on B1 (ideally the box is to be placed on the southern elevation; however, the northern elevation may be more suitable due to facing the courtyard rather than the road to the south). They will be suitable for pipistrelles (which are common locally as suggested through EPSL data). Suitable bat boxes include Habibat Bat Box, Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box or similar alternative brand. Bat boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing in a south or south-westerly direction with a clear flight path to and from the entrance, away from artificial light.
Nesting Birds	
Summary of Survey Findings	Buildings No evidence of nesting birds was found on site during the surveys. It is unlikely that B1 would support nesting birds due to a lack of suitably sheltered areas for nest construction. Trees and vegetation Birds may utilize T01 and T02 for nesting habitat; no evidence of previous nor current nesting birds were found. Barn owls The site does not appear to provide any suitable nesting sites for barn owls. Overwintering birds Due to the small size of the site and the extent and type of the habitats recorded, the site not considered suitable to support a significant assemblage of protected and/or notable birds

<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Buildings/trees While the proposed development is not to affect B1, T01, or T02, refurbishment activities could result in the disturbance and subsequent abandonment of nearby active bird nests. Barn owls None foreseen. Overwintering birds None foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Buildings/trees Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any nests so as not to disturb nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged. Barn owls None required. Overwintering birds None required. Suggested biodiversity enhancements Two bird boxes to be installed on the building to provide additional nesting habitat for birds e.g. Schwegler No 17 Swift Nest Box (buildings), Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace (buildings), Woodstone Nest Box (buildings or trees), or a similar alternative brand. If applicable, swift and sparrow boxes should be positioned at the eaves of the building.

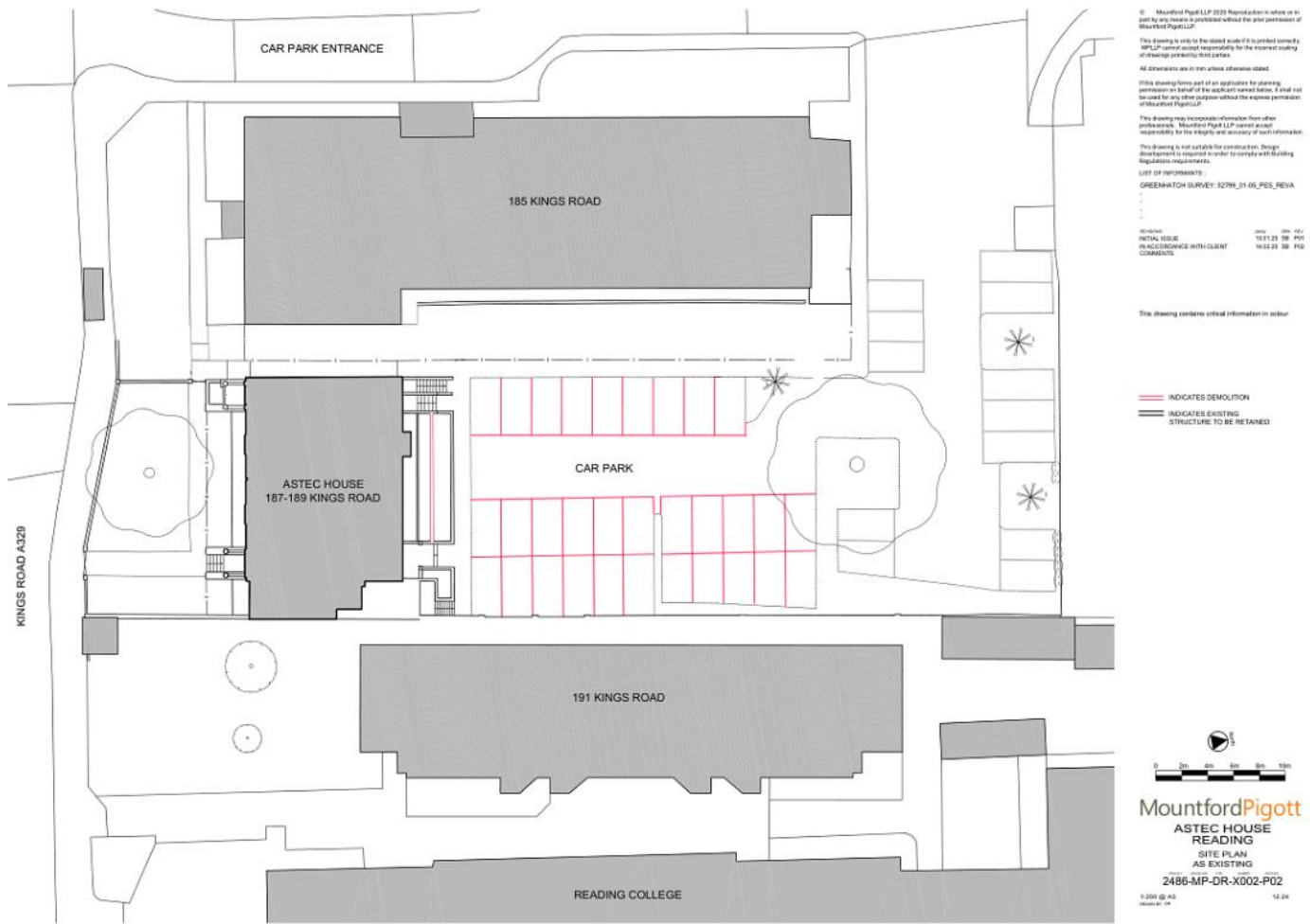
Appendix 1: PRA plan

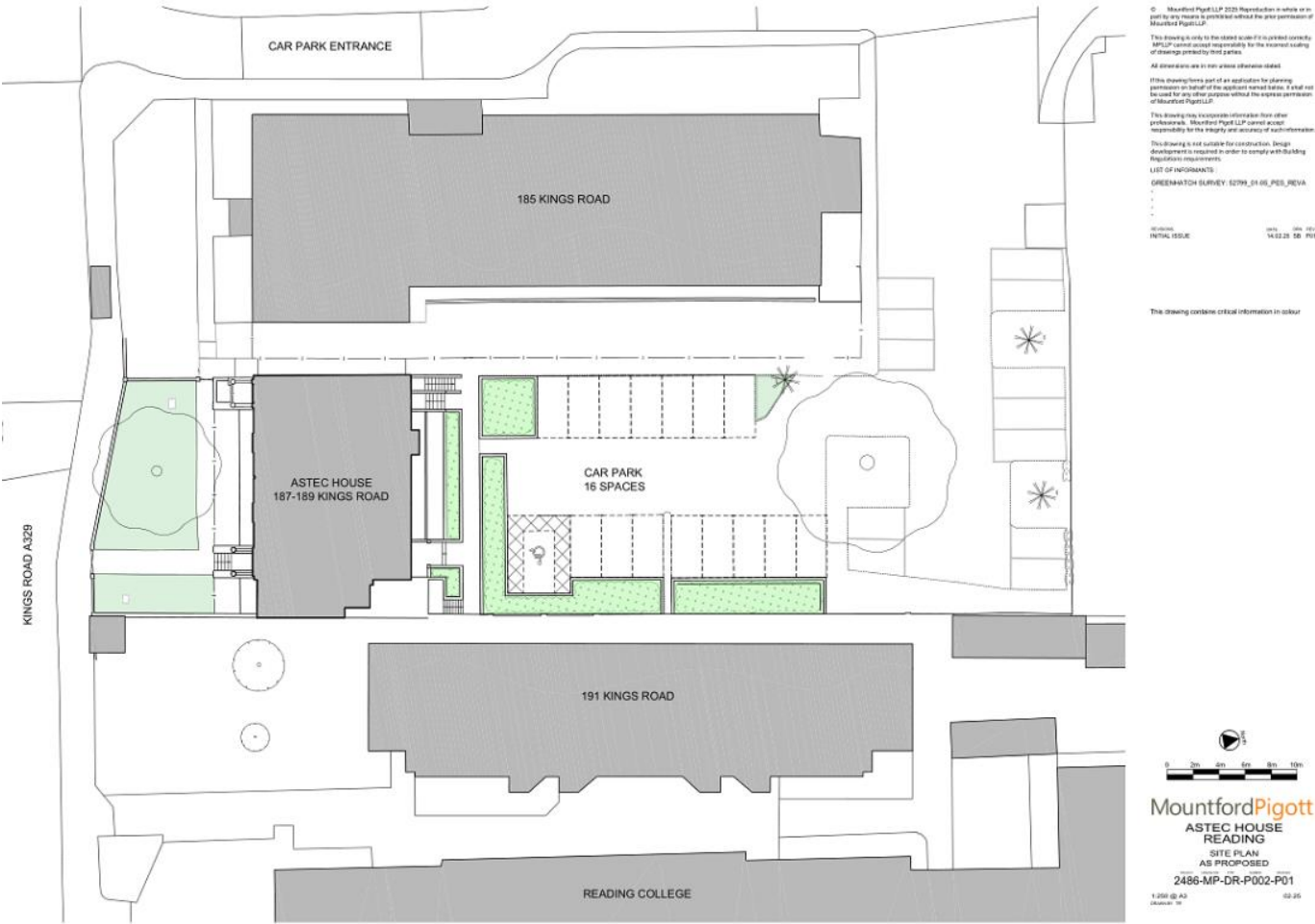


Appendix 2: Location map



Appendix 3: Proposed plans





Appendix 4: Additional photos



Figure 7 Internal ceiling of the boiler room within B1



Figure 8 Space between dropped ceiling at the top floor in B1



Figure 9 Angled slate tiles at the north of B1, facing west



Figure 10 Angled slate tiles at the south of B1, facing east



Figure 11 Well-sealed lead flashing at the south of B1



Figure 12 Well-sealed nature of C01 within B1

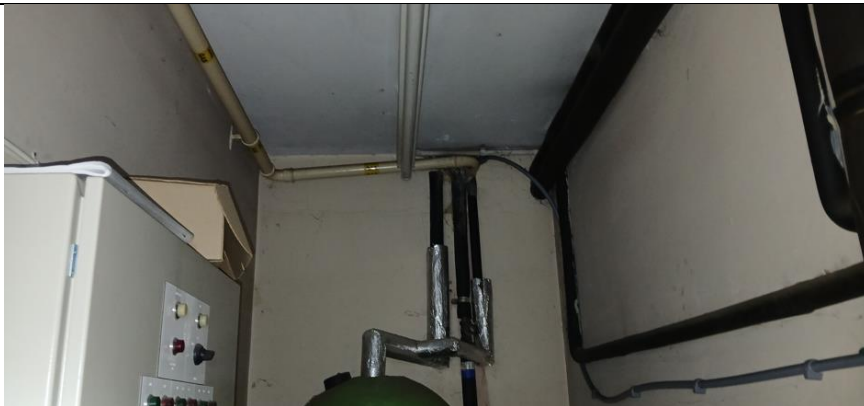


Figure 13 Well-sealed cellar area C02, with housed systems



Figure 14 Airwave door leading to C02, with boarded area at bottom (Open access circled)



Figure 15 T01 and B1



Figure 16 Low amounts of vegetation present beyond site boundary at the north

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