



Indigo House, Mulberry Business Park

Potential Roost Assessment

29/09/2021



Client	Bowen Evans Consultancy
Job name	Indigo House, Mulberry Business Park
Report title	Potential Roost Assessment
File reference	21_1621_Report_MF_KV

	Name	Position	Date
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1 Introduction

1.1 Site Description

The site comprises land at Indigo House, located within Mulberry Business Park, to the south-west of Wokingham, in the County of Berkshire at approximate postcode RG41 2GY.

The site, which is estimated to be around 0.4 hectares in size, is centred on Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference SU 801 677 and contains a relatively large commercial building with adjacent hard standing access/car parking, along with miscellaneous planting.

The land immediately surrounding the site is suburban in character, containing commercial and residential properties, along with roads, amenity grassland and scattered trees.

The site and surrounding area are illustrated in an aerial image provided in Appendix 1 and photographs of the site are provided in Appendix 2.

1.2 Proposed Works

It is understood that the proposed works are the subject of a planning application to Wokingham Borough Council, the Local Planning Authority (LPA), for the removal of the existing roof and construction of a new level, to increase the building height to three-storeys.

1.3 Aims of Study

To inform the planning application, GreenLink Ecology Ltd. has been commissioned to conduct a Potential Roost Assessment (PRA) of the commercial building, to identify whether there is any evidence of/or potential for bats.

The aims of this report are to present the results of the assessment, evaluate the potential for the proposed works to impact on bats and establish the need for mitigation measures to be implemented, to comply with the legislation.

2 Legislation and Policy

2.1 Bats

All species of bat and their habitats are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRow Act 2000) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

The legislation makes it illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take a wild bat;
- Be in possession or control of any live or dead wild bat, or any part of, or anything derived from a wild bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a wild bat uses for shelter or protection; and
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

The legislation makes it illegal under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European Protected Species;
- Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species. Disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely to:
 - impair their ability -
 - to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
 - in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
 - to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
- Deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal; or
- Deliberately damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The Government revised the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2021. The NPPF states that when determining planning applications, LPAs should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by encouraging opportunities to be taken for the incorporation of biodiversity in and around developments.

3 Methodology

Since the proposals include the vertical extension of the existing commercial building, which could impact on bats (if present), this was assessed by Natural England bat licence holder Marcus Fry MCIEEM¹ (no. 2015-10955-CLS) in accordance with the 2016 Bat Conservation Trust's (BCT) guidance², for any evidence of/potential for bats, including:

- Roof and wall construction;
- Features that have the potential to be actual bat roosts or provide access to roosting opportunities within the building;
- Any droppings and/or staining on external walls;
- Scattered or accumulated bat droppings (identified by their dry, powdery texture when compressed) within the building and around entrances to potential roosts;
- Oily staining, scratch marks and/or urine staining around access points to potential roosting locations;
- Places where cobwebs have been swept away; and
- The actual presence of live/dead bats.

Although it is understood that the small trees within the miscellaneous planting will be retained and protected, these were assessed on a precautionary basis and categorised (to align with BS 8596:2015 "Surveying for Bats in Trees and Woodland") in accordance with the 2016 BCT guidance:

- Negligible potential – Unlikely to be used by roosting bats.
- Low potential – A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roost features but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only limited roosting potential
- Moderate potential – A tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation significance.
- High potential – A 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, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

¹ Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (Full)

² Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*, Bat Conservation Trust (3rd Edition)

4 Results

The commercial building is two-storey and constructed from brick/metal cladding walls with a pitched roof clad in corrugated metal panels. Internally there is a roof void used as a plant room.

There was no evidence of bats recorded during the survey and overall the building is considered to have no significant potential for use by roosting bats.

The low numbers of scattered trees within the adjacent miscellaneous planting were all assessed as having negligible potential for use by roosting bats, on the basis of their immaturity and absence of suitable features.

The surrounding area was evaluated as having low potential for use by commuting/foraging bats due to the presence of large buildings with artificial lighting (bats are nocturnal and will tend to avoid illuminated areas) and the general absence of semi-natural habitat types.

Although the main focus of this report is bats, the larger shrubs and small trees within the miscellaneous surrounding the building represent potentially suitable habitat for seasonal use by breeding birds, some of which are likely to be disturbed by the proposals.

5 Assessment

5.1 Constraints

It was possible to access all relevant parts of the site, the survey work was undertaken by an appropriately experienced and licensed consultant ecologist using standard survey techniques and in accordance with the published guidelines. It is therefore considered that there were no significant constraints to the PRA.

5.2 Potential Impacts

5.2.1 Bats

Since there was no evidence of bats recorded during the survey and there was no significant potential for bats identified, it is considered that there is no perceived risk of impacts to bats as a result of the proposed works.

5.2.2 Breeding Birds

Due to the presence of potentially suitable breeding bird habitat around parts of the building, breeding birds could be impacted on by the initial phase of the proposed works, if undertaken during the breeding season (March-July/August, as a guide).

Breeding birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst it is in use or being built, or to take or destroy its eggs.

To avoid the seasonal risk of impacts to breeding birds, precautionary mitigation measures are recommended in a subsequent section.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Mitigation Measures

6.1.1 Bats

Since there was no evidence of bats recorded during the survey and there was no significant potential for bats identified, it is considered that there is no perceived risk of impacts to bats as a result of the proposed works and therefore, no need for mitigation measures for bats.

However, if at any time during the implementation of the proposals it becomes apparent that bats are present and at risk of impacts, works will need to temporarily stop whilst a Natural England bat licence holder is consulted about how to proceed further without the risk of an offence being committed.

6.1.2 Breeding Birds

The disturbance/clearance of potentially suitable breeding habitat (i.e. larger shrubs and smaller trees within the miscellaneous planting) should ideally be initiated outside of the breeding bird season (avoiding March-July/August). Once underway, the disturbance associated with the implementation of the proposals should deter birds from nesting.

If it is necessary to conduct this work during the breeding season, it should be carried out under the supervision of an experienced ecologist, who will check the habitats for the presence/absence of any birds' nests.

If any active nests are found then works with the potential to impact on the nest must cease and an appropriate buffer zone should be established until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use.

6.2 Enhancement Measures

To ecologically enhance the site in accordance with the principles of the NPPF (Section 2.2), in a way that is appropriate for the site's ecological characteristics and proportionate to the scale of the development, it is recommended that 6 no. wall-mounted birds boxes (available from <https://www.nhbs.com>) are installed on external walls throughout the building. These should be positioned above at least 2-3 metres from ground level and on different aspects, although in the absence of shade, none of these boxes should be facing due south, to avoid over-heating during the summer months.

7 Conclusions

To inform a planning application, GreenLink Ecology Ltd. was commissioned to undertake a PRA for the site, which has been completed without significant constraint.

The assessment that was undertaken by an appropriately experienced and licensed consultant ecologist, determined that there was no evidence of bats, or significant potential for bats associated with the commercial building or associated trees.

Since there is no perceived risk of impacts to bats as a result of the proposed work, mitigation measures are not considered necessary for bats

Although not main focus of the survey, habitat that is potentially suitable for seasonal use by breeding birds is present in close proximity to the building, which may be disturbed during the proposed works and therefore, precautionary mitigation measures have been recommended for birds.

In accordance with the NPPF, recommendations have also been made for ecological enhancement measures to benefit breeding birds, which is considered to be appropriate for the site and proportionate to the scale of development.

Overall, there are no known overriding ecological constraints that would prevent the proposed works going ahead, subject to the recommendations made in this report being correctly implemented.

8 Disclaimer

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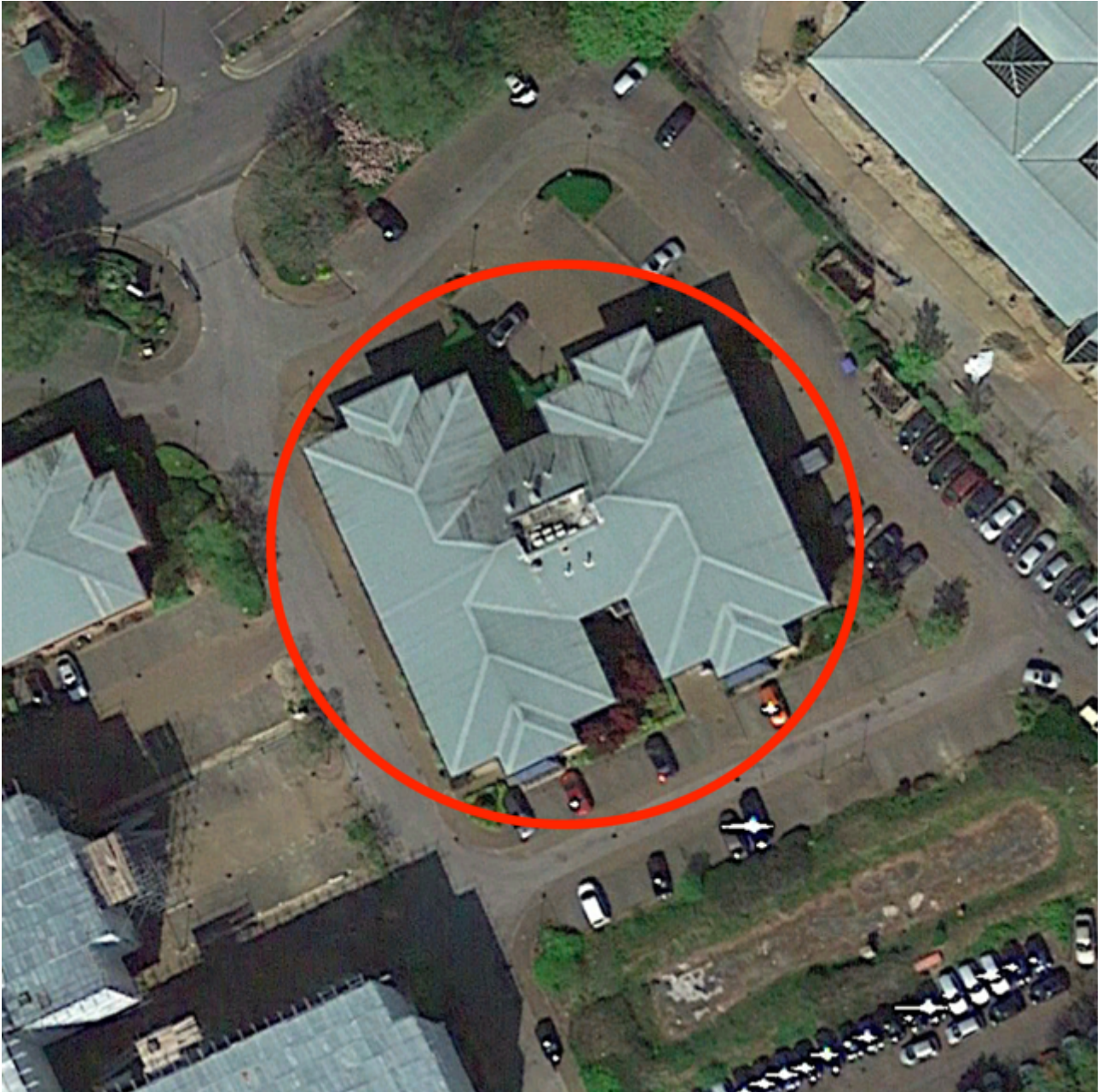
Any recommendation, opinion or finding stated in this report is based on circumstances and facts as they existed at the time that GreenLink Ecology Ltd. performed the work.

Nothing in this report constitutes legal opinion. If legal opinion is required the advice of a qualified legal professional should be secured.

9 Appendices

Appendix 1: Aerial images illustrating the site location and surrounding area

Photograph 1: The site location and immediate surrounding area



Photograph 2: The location and wider surrounding area



Appendix 2: Photographs of the site

Photograph 1: Southern aspect of the site, looking west



Photograph 2: Southern aspect of the site, looking east



Photograph 3: Northern aspect of the site, looking south-east



Photograph 4: Northern aspect of the site, looking south



Photograph 5: Eastern aspect of the site, looking north-west



Photograph 6: Typical view inside the plant room

