

Bat Scoping Survey

15 The Crescent, Earley, Reading

Client Mr F Philip

Reference P1149.001

Issue One

Date 16 July 2021

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Non-technical Summary

Background

In June 2021, Crossman Associates was commissioned Mr F Philip to undertake a bat and bird survey of a garden building at 15 The Crescent, Earley, Reading.

Methodology

The scoping survey was undertaken by Miguel Alvarez, an experienced ecologist. 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 provides no significant features suitable for roosting bats or nesting birds.

The dwelling is assessed to have **negligible suitability** for roosting bats.

Recommendations

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

- A precautionary approach to development with regard to bats.
- Install a house sparrow nest terrace.

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1. Background

- 1.1. In June 2021, Crossman Associates was commissioned by Mr F Philip to undertake a bat scoping survey of 15 The Crescent, Earley, Reading RG6 7NW; the site Ordnance Survey grid reference for the site is SU 75161 71550.
- 1.2. Figure 1 under Appendix II provides a site location map.
- 1.3. The objectives of the survey were to:
 - Make an assessment of 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 small brick, pitched roof garden suite in a suburban environment to the south east of the city of Reading.

Legislation

- 1.5. 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) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. 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 take into account bats within the planning process and the level of bat activity on-site must be fully assessed prior to the assessment the planning application.

- 1.6. 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 12th July 2021 by Miguel Alvarez, an experienced ecologist.
- 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. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains sections of relevance to nature conservation that include:

- Paragraph 174: 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 biodiversity; wildlife corridors and steppingstones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation⁵⁷; 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.

- Paragraph 175: 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 reasons⁵⁸ and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
 - d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

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
15	Outbuilding	Detached garden suite. The property, built within the last two years, is in very good condition and is currently unoccupied. No bats or evidence of bats were found inside or outside of the property.	Negligible Suitability ☒
	Exterior	Brick walls have no gaps or cracks. Double glazed uPvc windows and doors are well sealed. A garden with small trees and herbs is present at the back of the property.	
	Interior	The building is well-sealed with plaster and painted walls and ceilings. The loft is inaccessible, approximately 60cm high.	
	Roof	Tightly fitting concrete roof tiles with no gaps observed. uPVC soffit with no gaps observed.	

Birds

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

Evaluation

- 3.6. During the scoping survey, no droppings, staining, feeding remains or actual bats were observed.
- 3.7. The property is located within a residential area surrounded by sub-optimal bat habitat. It is likely that more light tolerant bats (typically common pipistrelle bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) will make occasional use of the garden and surroundings to forage and commute.
- 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. Under the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.
- 4.4. Paragraph 174b) of the NPPF (2018) states 'Plans should ...identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity' and Paragraph 175d) states that '...opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity'.

Bats

- 4.5. 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.

- 4.6. Due to the transitory nature of bats, there remains a very small possibility that bats could be encountered during renovation 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.

Ecological enhancements

- 4.7. During the construction phase of the extension, there is an opportunity to incorporate inexpensive ecological enhancements that aim to increase the biodiversity of the site.
- 4.8. 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.
- 4.9. 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.

Hedgehog

- 4.10. In the UK hedgehogs are listed on schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as Amended which makes it illegal to kill or capture wild hedgehogs. Hedgehogs are also listed as a species of 'principal importance' under the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006, which is meant to confer a 'duty of responsibility' to public bodies.

- 4.11. Excavated holes and trenches on building sites have the potential to trap wildlife including hedgehogs leading to the potential suffering and death of the animal (s) particularly if they become filled with water.
- 4.12. If during the development excavated holes / trenches are likely to be left open, then timber builders' planks should be fitted as ramps to enable any wildlife including hedgehogs a means of escape.

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 (2012) *National Planning Policy Framework*. TSO

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Appendix I – Site Figures



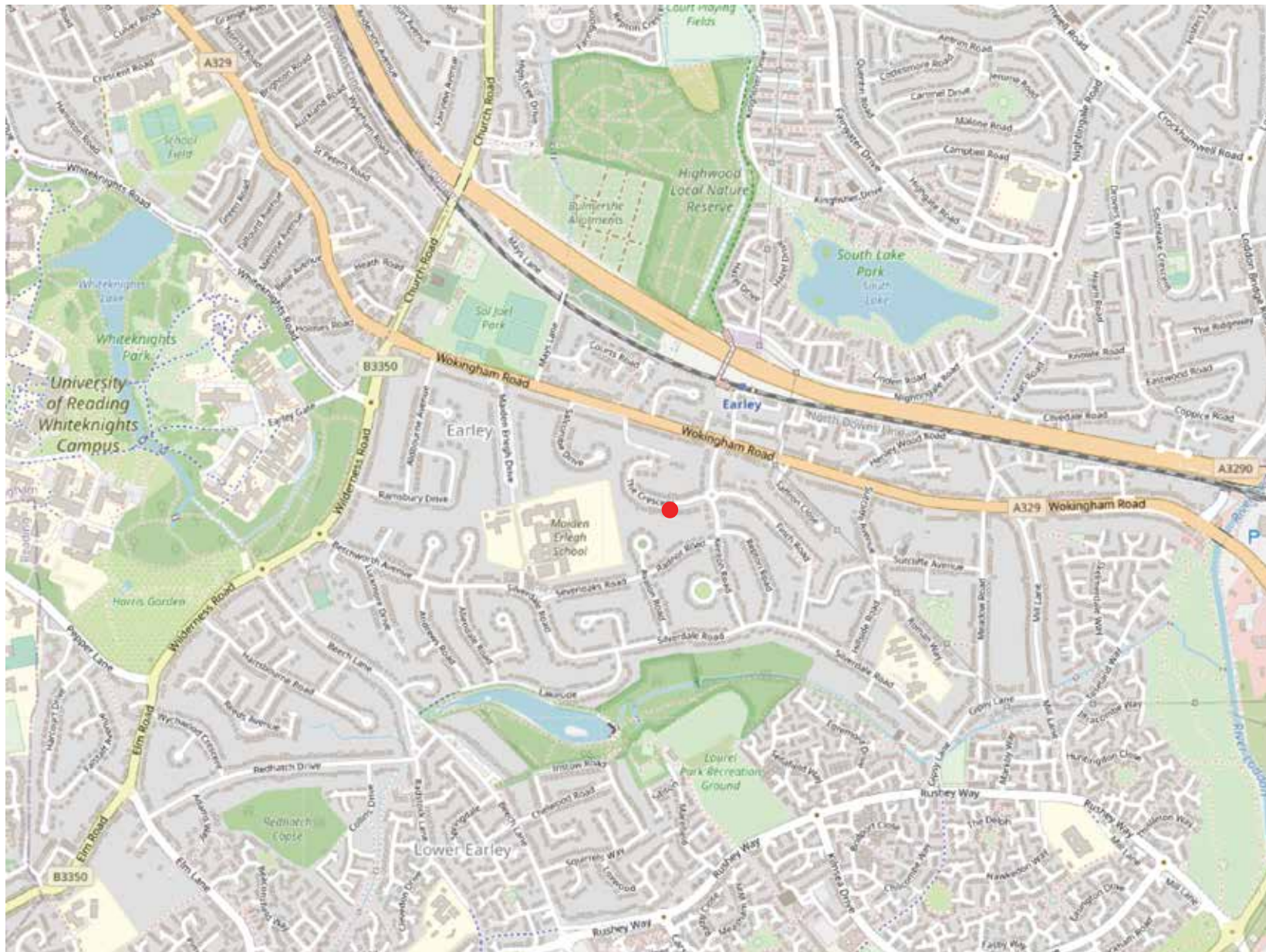
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Site location



Client Mr F Philip
Title Location plan
Site 15 The Crescent, Earley
Figure 1
Date 16 July 2021
Scale Not to scale



Appendix II – Site Photographs

Photographs 1- 3



Photograph 1:

Exterior front



Photograph 2:

Rear of building



Photograph 3:

Well sealed soffits, gable and eaves

Photographs 4 - 6



Photograph 4:

Interior



Photograph 5:

Interior



Photograph 6:

Detail: Well sealed soffits



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.