

Bat Survey: Old Turgis Hall, Reading Road Hook

Client H Johal
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Non-technical Summary

Background

In November 2021, Crossman Associates was commissioned by H Johal to undertake a preliminary bat and bird scoping survey of Old Turgis Hall, Reading Road, Hook RG27 0AU. Proposals include a loft conversion.

Methods

The scoping survey was undertaken by Miguel Canovas, an experienced ecologist and 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 farmland area. Overall, the dwelling remains in good condition and provides no significant features suitable for roosting bats or nesting birds.

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 with regard to bats.
- Install a house sparrow nest terrace.

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1. Background

- 1.1. In November 2021, Crossman Associates was commissioned by H Johal to undertake a preliminary bat and bird scoping survey of Old Turgis Hall, Reading Road, Hook RG27 0AU. Proposals consist of a loft conversion. The site Ordnance Survey grid reference for the site is SU 6971 5974.
- 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 dwelling is a detached two-storey house with a medium size garden located on the A33. The property is rural, approximately 3 miles north-west of Hook, Hampshire.
- 1.5. To the east and the west are areas of farmland. To the north and the south are scattered cottages and farmhouses along the A33 road.

Legislation

- 1.6. 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.

- 1.7. 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 2 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 3th November 2021 by Miguel Canovas, an experienced ecologist and 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 2 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 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.

- 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
Old Sturgis Hall, Reading road RG27 0AU	Overview	<p>Detached two storey house. The property, is in good condition and is currently occupied.</p> <p>No bats or evidence of bats were found inside or outside of the property.</p>	Negligible Suitability ☒
	Exterior	<p>Brick walls, no gaps or cracks were observed. Double glazed uPVC framed windows and doors all are well sealed.</p> <p>A small-size and well-maintained garden is present at the front and back of the property.</p>	
	Interior	<p>Areas of living accommodation are composed of rooms with well-sealed rooms with plaster and painted walls and ceilings. The loft is present at the northern elevation of the building, insulated and plastered. Square-shaped and approximately 3 m high. No gaps were observed. The fallen piece of the plaster at the east side of the loft does not create a gap to outside.</p>	

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
	Roof	<p>Tightly fitting flat clay peg roof tiles with no gaps observed. All roof verges remain well-sealed and areas of soffit remain tightly fitted in place.</p> <p>Two chimney stacks are present, one at the end of the eastern elevation and the other at the north elevation of the eastern gable. The chimneys remain in an excellent state and lead flashings that seal the chimneys to the roof.</p>	
	Garage	<p>The garage is made of bricks and the roof of tightly fitting clay flat peg roof tiles; no gaps were observed.</p>	Negligible Suitability ☒



Birds

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

Other species and habitats observations

- 3.6. The back and front garden presents an area of well managed lawn. At the time of the survey, the short grass lacks suitability for protected species.

Evaluation

- 3.7. During the scoping survey, no droppings, staining, feeding remains or actual bats were observed.
- 3.8. The property is located within a farmland 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.
- 3.9. 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'.

Species recommendations

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.

Hedgehog

- 4.7. 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.
- 4.8. 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.
- 4.9. 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.

Ecological enhancements

- 4.10. 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.

- 4.11. 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.

- 4.12. 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.

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

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

Appendix I – Site Figures





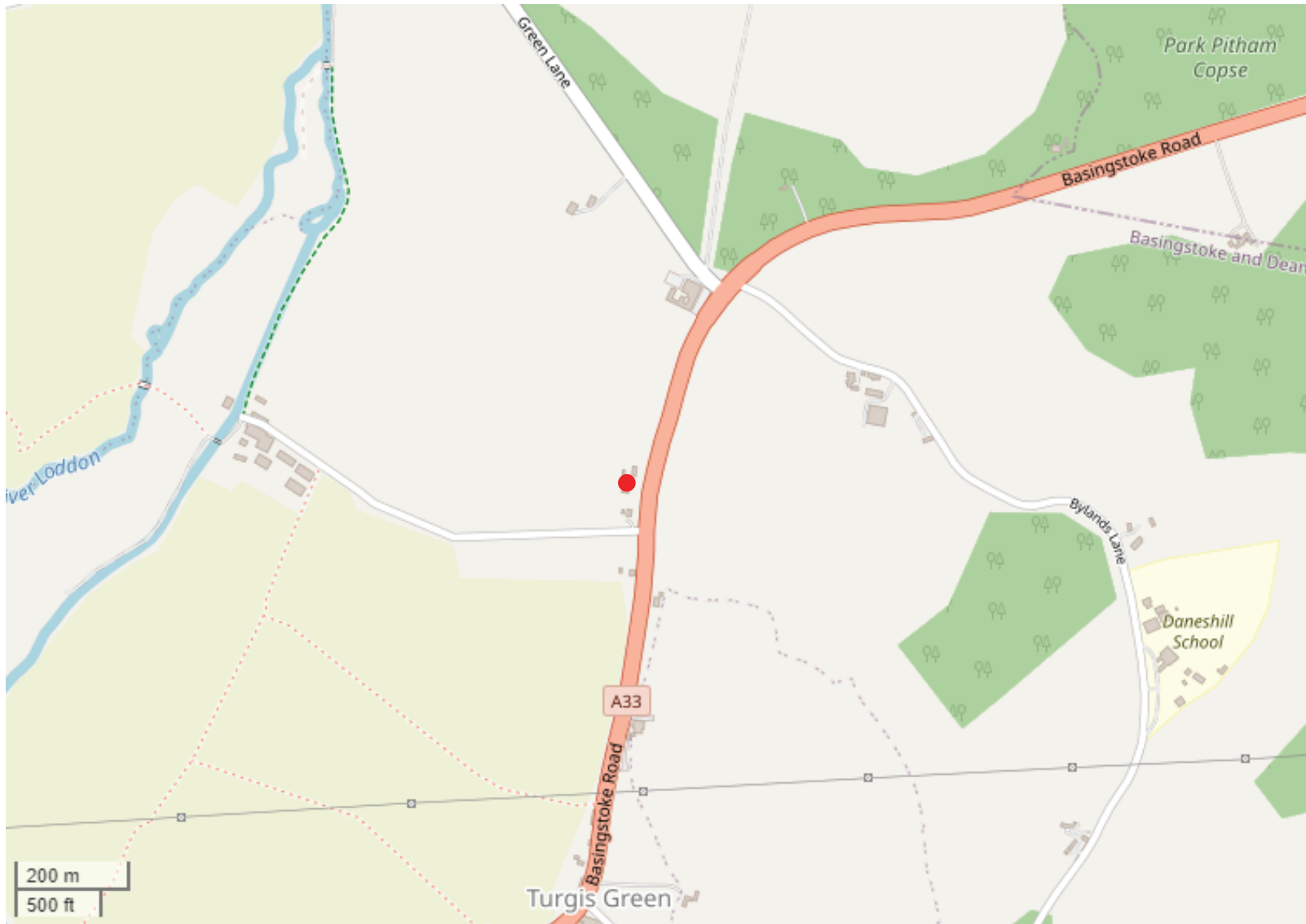
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Site location



Client H Johal
Title Location plan
Site Old Turgis Hall, Hook
Figure 1
Date 08/11/2021
Scale xxx



Appendix II – Site Photographs



Photographs 1- 3



Photograph 1:

Western elevation



Photograph 2:

Southwestern elevation



Photograph 3:

Eastern elevation

Photographs 4 - 6



Photograph 4:

Northern elevation



Photograph 5:

Roof void



Photograph 6:

Garage interior