



PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST AND BREEDING BIRD APPRAISAL

1 BARNSDALE ROAD, READING
RG2 7JJ

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1. INTRODUCTION

Location

1.1 The Site is located at 1 Barnsdale Road, Reading RG2 7JJ. National Grid Reference: **SU 72755 71465**.

Site description

1.2 The Site is a semi-detached, two storey dwelling. Immediate habitats are low quality for bats and include medium density housing with gardens that support scattered mature trees which would provide foraging and commuting habitat¹ for bats. These habitats offer connectivity from the Site to optimal quality bat habitats which occur within 2km to the west associated with River Thames corridor.

Scope of Survey

1.3 A planning application is being prepared to carry out a first floor extension. The proposals will involve breaking through the north hip and demolition of a single storey extension. Martin Ecology was asked to undertake a Preliminary Roost Appraisal (PRA) for bats to try to determine whether the proposals would impact upon them. Potential impacts on breeding birds would also be assessed.

Legislative context-bats

1.4 All species of bats are protected under *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*), *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017* and it is an offence to:

- deliberately kill, injure, recklessly disturb or take bats;
- obstruct access to their roosts (or place of rest);
- damage or destroy bat roosts;
- Possess or sell bats unless acquired legally

1.4.1 Bats commonly use man-made structures to roost within and when undertaking building work in houses or other structures such as remedial work, extension, renovation or demolition there is potential to contravene the legislation outlined in 1.4.

Planning context

1.5 According to planning policy, prior to planning permission being determined it is expected that all survey work pertaining to protected species (and mitigation scheme if required) should be completed and reported.

1.5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that development should enhance the environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

Licensing

1.6 The presence of bat roosts that will be affected by proposals that would trigger the above legislation (such as removal of a roof / roof tiles or demolition of a building) necessitates the application for a derogation license from Natural England. Such licences permit activities that would otherwise be unlawful. Licences are only issued if three tests are satisfied, and these are;

¹ Source: <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> checked 28/04/2023.

- there is no satisfactory alternative
- there are overriding reasons of public interest and,
- the favourable conservation status of bat populations is maintained.

Legislative context-birds

1.7 All species of wild bird and their nests and eggs are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*). This makes it illegal to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; and
- Intentionally take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

1.7.1 Schedule 1 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* gives some bird species greater protection against disturbance whilst breeding.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Building inspection

2.1.1 A daytime visit was made to the site and the interior of the building was searched for bats and evidence of bats (such as droppings, fur, feeding remains and roost exits). All accessible roof void sections were examined, and the inspection was made using a ladder and with the assistance of a one million candlepower torch. All accessible potential roosting features (PRFs) where bats might roost were inspected for bats, or evidence of bats.

2.1.2 An inspection was made of the exterior of the building for signs of bats such as: staining, grease marks, urine, fur, feeding remains and droppings on windowsills and walls, or PRFs that might offer access for bats into the building (such as cracks and fissures on or around roof and ridge tiles, soffits, barge boards or brickwork). A one million candlepower torch, an extendable ladder and binoculars were used to undertake the external inspection and all accessible features were inspected for bats or evidence of bats.

2.1.3 During the visit signs of nesting birds was also looked for within the buildings and at the exterior also. A photographic record was made of the site and some photos (including PRFs recorded) are included within Table 1.

2.1.4 Dean Martin MCIEEM conducted the survey work on 25th April 2023. Natural England bat licence number: 2015-10605-CLS-CLS.

2.1.5 The building was assessed along with local habitats and its potential for widespread crevice-dwelling and void-seeking bat species was considered. Google maps was used to make a general assessment of the site and local habitats. The government website <https://magic.defra.gov.uk> was checked for European Protected Species (EPS) licences granted by Natural England for bats within 2km of the site which revealed licences issued for common pipistrelle bat, soprano pipistrelle bats and brown long-eared bat to destroy a resting place for these species.

2.1.6 Constraints
None were identified.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Building inspection

3.1.1 The building was a detached, double-storey structure that appeared to have perhaps been built in the early twentieth century. The house had a hipped roof clad with clay plain tiles and included a gable over a bay to the front. Generally, the roof appeared to be in reasonable condition although PRFs were noted including:

- gaps beneath tiles at east elevation (photo 1)
- Gaps in the verge of the west gable over bay (photo 2)
- Gaps at the east hip where mortar had fallen away (photo 1)

3.1.2 The east elevation single storey extension had a hipped roof clad with clay plain tiles. The roof was sealed and showed no PRFs.

3.1.3 No evidence of bats was encountered around the exterior of the house.

3.1.4 Inside the roof void it was found that the roof was for the most part unlined, although some pieces of cardboard and bitumen felt had been retro-fitted to alleviate dust. The areas beneath the PRFs noted at the exterior were viewable and no evidence of bats was found in association with these. The ridge supported significant cobwebbing, which perhaps indicated a lack of disturbances by bats or other animals. The loft floor was covered with loft insulation consisting of two layers of varying ages, and this supported an old layer of dust, although neither layer of loft insulation supported any evidence of bats.

3.1.5 No evidence of breeding birds was encountered in association with the house, the PRFs identified were considered to be of insufficient size to allow birds to ingress.

Table 1. PRFs indicated circled red.

	
Photo 1 PRFs east hip	Photo 2 PRFs west gable verge
	
Photo 3 West elevation	Photo 4 East elevation
	
Photo 5 Cobwebbed ridge	Photo 6 Unlined roof



Photo 7 West gable interior



Photo 8 Area beneath PRFs



Photo 9 Cobwebbed ridge



Photo 10 Old dust at loft floor

4. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 No evidence of bats was encountered, and it is considered that had roosts been present, since the PRFs found were examined from the interior some evidence would have been present beneath a roof void that was largely unlined. It is considered that the building shows negligible bat suitability and consequently no further bat surveys are recommended at this time.

Mitigation

4.2 Despite the above statement, planning consent remains extant for three years, during which time physical characteristics and features of structures can change due to ageing / weathering. Moreover, the building supports PRFs that could be used by bats in future. The destructive works to the roof will therefore be carefully carried out by hand (ideally over winter) with bats in mind. If any bats are found at this time, then works will stop until Natural England have been contacted (0300 060 3900) for advice on how best to continue legally.

4.3 If one-year elapses from this survey being carried out without the consented work being implemented, a repeat 'top up' bat inspection will be required. The existing report can then be amended to report any changes to conditions found during this survey.

4.4 It is recommended that integral breeding habitats for swift and house sparrows are included in the proposed development. This will help ensure that the development results in a biodiversity net gain.

5. RELEVANT LITERATURE

Bat Conservation Trust (2016) *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines*.

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