



PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST AND BREEDING BIRD APPRAISAL

126 BLANDFORD ROAD, READING
RG2 7JJ

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1. INTRODUCTION

Location

1.1 The Site is located at 126 Blandford Road, Reading RG2 8RX. National Grid Reference: **SU 72208 69289**.

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, along with local tree lines and other linear vegetation features 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 and single storey extension. The proposals will involve destructive works to the roof 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 6/05/2023.

- 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 6th May 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 bat 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 semi-detached, double-storey structure that appeared to have perhaps been built during the mid-twentieth century and was constructed of concrete. The house had a hipped roof clad with concrete interlocking roof tiles. Generally, the roof appeared to be in good condition; all tiles, lead flashing and soffits were well-sealed and showed no PRFs.

3.1.2 The south west and south east elevations were wrapped by a brick, single storey extension and this had a flat felt roof. The structure 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 lined with bitumen felt and the loft floor insulated. Some cobwebbing was present at the hip junction, however generally the roof was cobweb free, and this was considered to be due to the well—sealed nature of the roof rather than caused by animal movements. The loft floor was clean except for a layer of dust, and no evidence of bats or breeding birds was present.

Table 1.

	
Photo 1 East elevation	Photo 2 Sealed roof
	
Photo 3 Sealed roof	Photo 4 Light cobwebbing at hip junction



4. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 No evidence of bats was encountered, and this is because the building is well-sealed to the exclusion of both bats and breeding birds. 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. 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 3 x integral swift bricks are included in the proposed extension at the north east eaves and fitted to the manufacturer's instructions. This will help ensure

that the development results in a biodiversity net gain. The bricks can be found at:
www.actionforswifts.com



Brick Slip Facing 100mm Cavity



Brick Slip Facing 50mm Cavity

5. RELEVANT LITERATURE

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

Schober, W and Grimmberger, E. (1993) *Bats of Britain and Europe*. Hamlyn.

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