

1 Oxford Street
Caversham
Reading
Berkshire
RG4 8HN

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Report prepared by Verity West; reviewed by Vicky Potts
Ref: R3381/a

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1 Diesel House, Honey Hill, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 3BL
Telephone: 0118 3271810 Mobile: 07979 403099 E-mail: info@wenman-ecology.co.uk
www.wenman-ecology.co.uk

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Registered office: 100 New Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, RG45 6JP where you may look at a list of members' names.

1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2	INTRODUCTION.....	4
2.1	Project Background.....	4
2.2	Legislative Background	4
2.3	Site Location and Context	5
3	SURVEY METHODOLOGY	7
3.1	Building Inspection	7
3.2	Survey Constraints	8
4	SURVEY FINDINGS	9
4.1	Introduction.....	9
4.2	External Survey	9
4.3	Internal Survey	9
5	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	11
5.1	Assessment of Bat Roost Potential	11
5.2	Impact of Proposals and Recommendations.....	11
6	REFERENCES.....	12
	APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS	13
	APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS.....	17
	APPENDIX 3 – EXISTING AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS	18

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Newlands to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment at 1 Oxford Street in Caversham, Reading. The assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a proposed two storey rear extension and single storey rear extension with roof lantern and internal alterations (Planning Application Number: 230110).
- 1.1.2** All British bat species are fully protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitat Regulations') (as amended). A survey of the exterior and interior of the property was undertaken on the 13th March 2023 by senior ecologist Vicky Potts registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 (Registration Number: 2020-27162-CLS-CLS) and assistant ecologist Verity West.
- 1.1.3** No evidence of roosting bats was found externally or internally during the building inspection. The absence of bat droppings inside the roof void indicates that primarily void-dwelling species, such as long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.), are unlikely to be present. The gaps identified in the mortar do offer potential roosting sites suitable for crevice-dwelling species, such as pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus* spp.), to exploit, however these will be retained as existing.
- 1.1.4** The end of terrace property is currently considered to be of low potential suitability for roosting bats and the proposed work will not result in the damage or loss of a bat roost or the disturbance of roosting bats and as such, a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) would not be required to allow the works to go ahead lawfully.
- 1.1.5** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the building work, the work will stop immediately and a licensed ecologist will advise how works should proceed; this may require a EPSML to permit the work to continue lawfully.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

- 2.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Newlands to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment at 1 Oxford Street in Caversham, Reading.
- 2.1.2** The assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a proposed two storey rear extension and single storey rear extension with roof lantern and internal alterations (Planning Application Number: 230110).

2.2 Legislative Background

- 2.2.1** All British bat species are fully protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitat Regulations') (as amended). In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat;
 - Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of bats to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating bats, to hibernate or migrate; or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species; and
 - Deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.
- 2.2.2** The government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSML) that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations. An EPSML can be issued if the following three tests have been met:
- **Regulation 55(9)(a)** - there is "no satisfactory alternative" to the derogation;
 - **Regulation 55(9)(b)** - the derogation "will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range"; and

- **Regulation 55(2)(e)** - the derogation is for the purposes of “preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment”.

- 2.2.3** Local authorities have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3e) of the Habitat Regulations to have regard to requirements of the Habitats Directive in the exercise of their functions. They must therefore consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by applications where survey findings show that an EPSML is necessary before granting planning permission.
- 2.2.4** EPSML application can be submitted once all the necessary planning consents have been granted. Natural England aims to issue a decision on EPSML applications within 30 working days of submission.
- 2.2.5** Licensable projects affecting small numbers of seven commonly occurring species occupying roosts of low conservation importance may fall under the remit of the ('Low Impact') Bat Mitigation Class Licence WML-CL21 (BMCL). The BMCL permits 'Registered Consultants' or accredited agents appointed by them to carry licensable operations on site on behalf of clients following registration of sites with Natural England at least 15 working days before the work is due to start.
- 2.2.6** Survey data supporting EPSML applications or the registration of the site under the BMCL must be up to date i.e. have been conducted within the current or most recent optimal survey season i.e. May to August. Therefore, if surveys show bats are present and licensable work is delayed until during or after the next survey season, updated surveys will be required to support an application or site registration.

2.3 Site Location and Context

- 2.3.1** The property is an end of terrace residential dwelling situated on the northern side of Oxford Street in Caversham, Reading (OS grid reference: SU 71531 74952).
- 2.3.2** The property is set within the Caversham suburb of Reading, with residential properties and their associated gardens surrounding the site to the west, south and east, and adjacent to Balmore Allotments to the north. Approximately 50 metres to the north of the site is Balmore Walk, and area of woodland and grassland with

scattered trees and tree lines. There are records of a maternity bat roost in a neighbouring property on the same street.

- 2.3.3** Overall, the nearby habitats provide suitable commuting and foraging opportunities for bats adapted to roosting in suburban environments.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Building Inspection

- 3.1.1** A survey of the exterior and interior of the property was undertaken on the 13th March 2023 by senior ecologist Vicky Potts registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 (Registration Number: 2020-27162-CLS-CLS) and assistant ecologist Verity West.
- 3.1.2** The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars, a high power (1 million candle power) torch and looked for features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines (Collins 2016; Mitchell-Jones 2004; Mitchell-Jones & McLeish 2004).
- 3.1.3** The following may indicate the presence of a bat roost within a building:
- Bat droppings (these can be found externally, especially in sheltered areas such as window sills, underneath roost entrances or internally within a roof space);
 - Piles of insect remains e.g. moth wings (these may be indicative of regular feeding sites used by species such as brown long eared bat);
 - Staining at roost entrances or within the roost (urine and oil from fur can leave stains on timbers when bats are gathered for long periods); and
 - Bats (live or dead).
- 3.1.4** Residential buildings may offer potential roosting sites in a number of locations – favoured locations include:
- Under roof, ridge and hip tiles, especially when loose or lifted tiles are present, or sections of mortar are missing;
 - At the gable ends – access is typically gained at the roof apex via gaps in the soffits or under roof tiles;
 - At the eaves – gaining access via gaps between the soffits and wall; and
 - Within an enclosed roof space – long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.) for example, will often cluster at the ridge beam.

3.2 Survey Constraints

- 3.2.1** There were no significant constraints because full external and internal access was available throughout the survey and the weather conditions were overcast with gusty winds and an air temperature of 10°C.
- 3.2.2** It should be noted that it is not always possible to inspect all potential roosting locations during a survey and therefore an absence of bat evidence does not necessarily equate to evidence of bat absence.

4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1** Photographs of the property are presented in **Appendix 1** and a plan of the external and internal survey findings with associated target notes is shown in **Appendix 2**. The survey findings from the exterior and interior of the property are described as follows:

4.2 External Survey

- 4.2.1** The end of terrace property had a pitched roof with single storey flat roof extensions at the rear. (**Photographs 1 & 2**).
- 4.2.2** The main roof was covered in tight flat slate tiles (**Photograph 3; Target note 1**). The ridge tiles were all fully mortared. (**Photograph 4**). The gable verge mortar was generally intact apart from one large gap near the northern chimney (**Photographs 5 & 6; Target note 2**). The lead flashing was tight on the rear extension roof and around the base of the chimneys, however there were gaps in the southern chimney mortar (**Photograph 7; Target note 3**). The uPVC soffits and fascias on the single storey rear extension were mostly sealed to the wall, however there was a gap under the flat roof exposing space between the bitumen roof and uPVC barge boards (**Photograph 8; Target note 4**). The gaps were open and did not extend into any crevices, and therefore were considered unsuitable for use by roosting bats. There was also a small gap behind the wooden soffit above the window on the first floor which was cobwebbed (**Photograph 9; Target note 5**). There was a small gap in the mortar of the brickwork in the party wall and on the gable end wall (**Photographs 10 & 11; Target notes 6 & 7**).
- 4.2.3** No evidence of roosting bats was found around the exterior of the house at the time of the survey.

4.3 Internal Survey

- 4.3.1** The house had one internal roof void which was accessed via a loft hatch in a bedroom. The void (see 'Roof void' in **Appendix 2**) was of 'cut and pitch' roof construction and covered the main footprint of the house, with an estimated floor-to-ridge height of 1.75m at its highest point. There were brickwork gable end walls at the eastern and western ends (**Photographs 12 & 13**). There were small gaps behind the rafters at the gable ends (**Photographs 14 - 16; Target note 8**). The roof

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was lined with a breathable roof membrane, with one small tear (**Photograph 17; Target note 9 & 10**). The floor was covered with very dusty fibreglass insulation, throughout, suggesting the roof had been unlined in the past and the eaves were open down to the soffits (**Photograph 18 - 20; Target notes 11 & 12**). There were occasional loose boards in places (**Target note 12**). Straw was visible in places, in the corners and under the fibreglass (**Photographs 21 - 22**).

4.3.2 No evidence of roosting bats was found during the internal inspection.

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential

- 5.1.1** No evidence of roosting bats was found externally or internally during the building inspection.
- 5.1.2** The absence of bat droppings inside the roof void indicates that primarily void-dwelling species, such as long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.), are unlikely to be present. The gaps identified in the mortar do offer potential roosting sites suitable for crevice-dwelling species, such as pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus* spp.), to exploit.
- 5.1.3** The property is currently considered to be of low potential suitability for roosting bats.

5.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

- 5.2.1** The planning proposals involve a proposed two storey rear extension and single storey rear extension with roof lantern (refer to existing and proposed elevations in **Appendix 3**). The gaps in the verge mortar and the chimney stack at the eastern facing gable end, and in the brickwork to the front of the house will be retained as existing. Furthermore no scaffolding will be erected during the works at the gable end that would block the potential access points.
- 5.2.2** The proposed work will not result in the damage or loss of a bat roost or the disturbance of roosting bats and as such, a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) would not be required to allow the works to go ahead lawfully.
- 5.2.3** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the building work, the work must stop immediately and a licensed ecologist should be called to site to attend to the bat(/s) and provide further advice on how to proceed; work must continue only once further written advice has been received. At this point, an EPSML may be required to permit the work to continue lawfully.

6 REFERENCES

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

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. & McLeish, A. P. (2004). *Bat Workers' Manual (3rd Edition)*. JNCC, Peterborough.

Richardson, P. (2000). Distribution Atlas of Bats in Britain and Ireland 1980 – 1999. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



1. Front of property viewed from south.



2. Rear of property viewed from north.



3. Tight flat slate roof tiles throughout.



4. Ridge mortar intact throughout.



5. Gable verge mortar mostly intact



6. Large gap in gable verge mortar.



7. Gaps in chimney mortar, lead flashings flat.



8. Gap under flat roof extension exposing space between roofing felt and uPVC barge board.



9. Small partly cobwebbed gap between soffit and brickwork.



10. Gap in mortar near party wall.



11. Gap in mortar near gable end.



12. Brickwork gable end party wall (western).



13. Brickwork gable end (eastern).



14. Small gaps behind rafters.



15. Small gaps behind rafters.



16. Small gaps behind rafters.



17. Breathable roof membrane liner throughout.



18. Very dusty fibreglass insulation throughout.



19. Fibreglass insulation up to eaves.



20. Eaves to soffits empty.

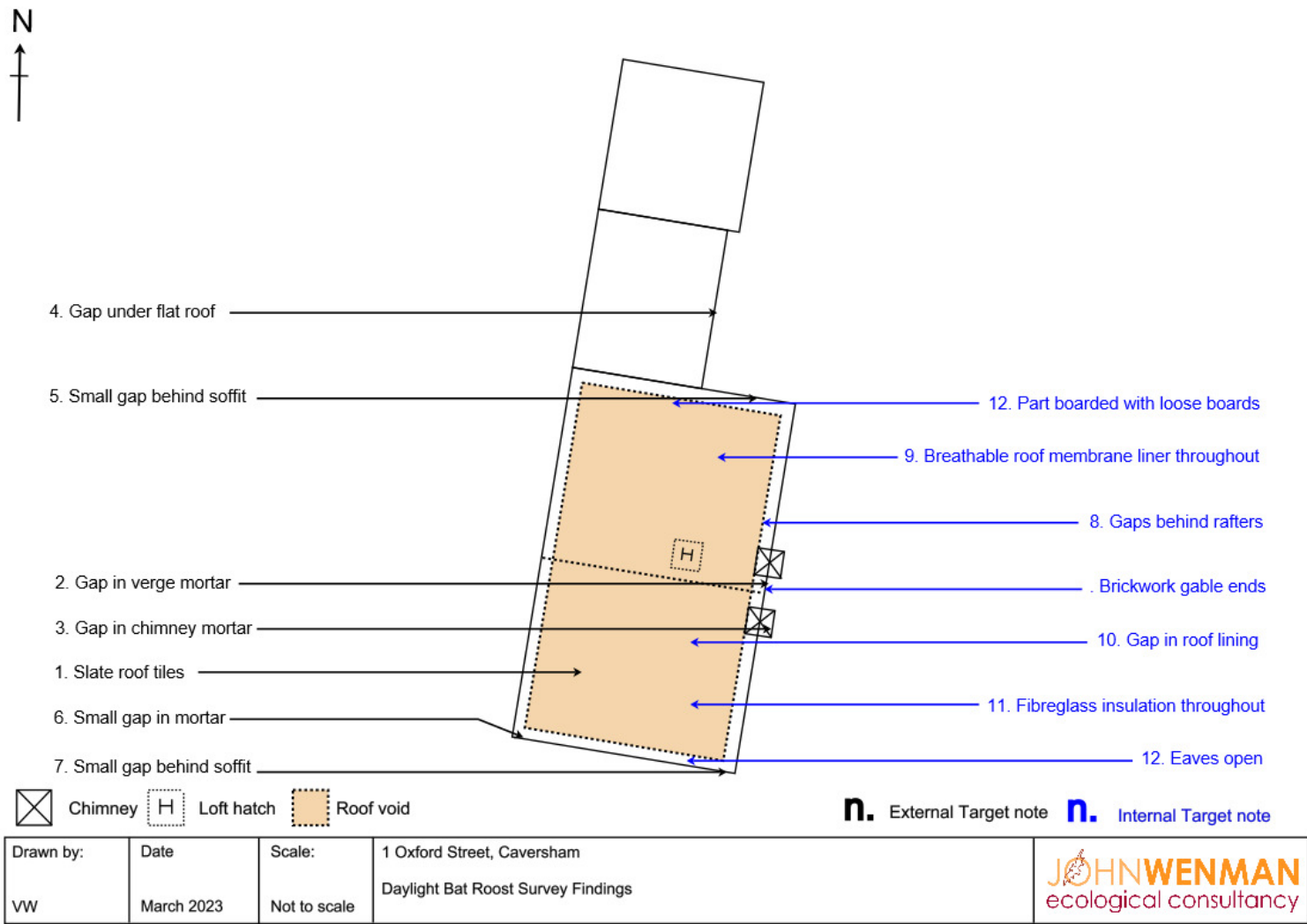


21. Straw visible under insulation.



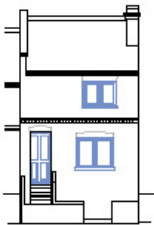
22. Straw visible in corners.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

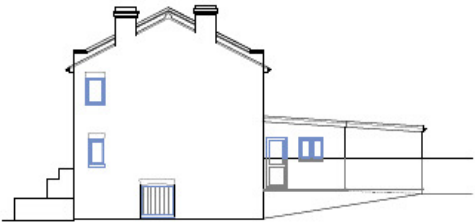


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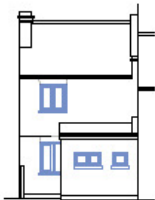
APPENDIX 3 – EXISTING AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS



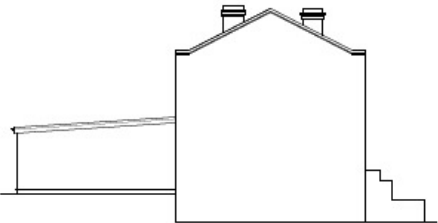
EXISTING FRONT ELEVATION



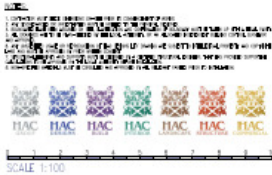
EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION



EXISTING REAR ELEVATION



EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION



MR & MRS NEILAND
DESIGN PROPOSAL @
1 OXFORD STREET
CAVERSHAM
RG4 8HN

EXISTING
ELEVATIONS

1:100 @ A2
SET 2022
22081.SPP-03
B1

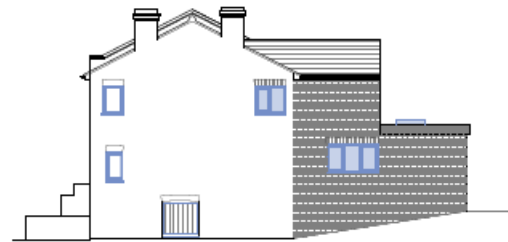
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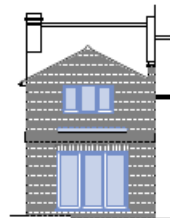
PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION



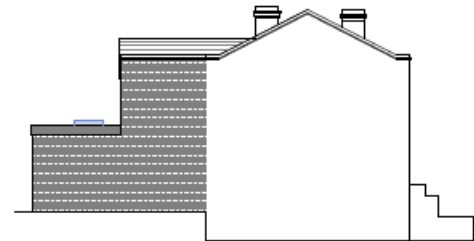
PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION

MR & MRS NEILAND
DESIGN PROPOSAL @
1 OXFORD STREET
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PROPOSED ELEVATIONS



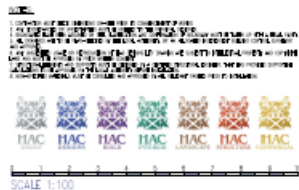
PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION

1:100 @ A2
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E1

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