

4 The Horse Close
Emmer Green
Reading
RG4 8TT

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

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reviewed by Vicky Potts MCIEEM
Ref: R3439/a*

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Kapoor to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment at 4 The Horse Close in Emmer Green, Reading (OS grid reference: SU 72106 75914). The assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a first floor extension above the existing single storey side extension.
- 1.1.2** A survey of the interior and exterior of the property was undertaken on the 24th May 2023. No evidence of roosting bats was found inside the roof void and on the whole, the property lacked external features that could provide potential roosting sites for typically crevice-dwelling bats. There was a gap in the brickwork on the single storey extension which was heavily cobwebbed and was able to be closely inspected with an endoscopic camera. The detailed inspection categorised the features as low suitability for roosting bats and found no evidence of current or past bat occupancy (droppings, staining etc.). The timber soffit was damaged on the southern corner of the property, with evidence of some plant matter growing within the soffit and internally there was evidence of nesting birds present, making the feature less suitable for roosting bats.
- 1.1.3** The planning proposals seek consent for a first floor extension above the existing single storey side extension. The proposals are considered highly unlikely to lead to the damage or loss of a bat roost or to the disturbance of bats and therefore, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required to allow the works to go ahead lawfully.
- 1.1.4** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the construction, 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.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Kapoor to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment at 4 The Horse Close in Emmer Green, Reading.

2.1.2 The assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a first floor extension above the existing single storey side extension (refer to existing and proposed elevations in **Appendix 3**).

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;
- 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 (EPS) mitigation licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations. An EPS mitigation licence 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 EPS mitigation licence is necessary before granting planning permission.
- 2.2.4** EPS mitigation licence application can be submitted once all the necessary planning consents have been granted. Natural England aims to issue a decision on EPS mitigation licence 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 days before the work is due to start.
- 2.2.6** Survey data supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or the registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (WML-CL21) 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 a detached residential property situated on the northern side of The Horse Close in Emmer Green (OS grid reference: SU 72106 75914).
- 2.3.2** The site is surrounded by further residential properties on all sides. The Hill Primary School is approximately 90 metres to the north-east of the site, which connects to extensive woodland and parkland of Caversham Manor, and includes a medium sized pond. There is an area of allotments approximately 130 metres to the south-

east of the site and connected to Reading Cemetery and Crematorium approximately 500 metres to the south-east of the site. Just over 1.5km to the south of the site is Caversham lakes, extensive water bodies connected to the River Thames.

- 2.3.3** These nearby habitats offer high suitability commuting and foraging opportunities for bats roosting locally.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Building Inspection

3.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the property was undertaken on the 24th May 2023 by Vicky Potts MCIEEM registered under the Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 (Registration Number: 2016-27162-CLS-CLS) and Meghan Porter QCIEEM registered under the Natural England Bat Survey CL17 (Registration Number: 2023-11300-CL17-BAT).

3.1.2 The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars, a Ridgid Seesnake (micro CA-100) endoscope and a high power (1 million candle power) torch looking for signs of occupation by bats and 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);
- 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;
- Under sections of raised lead flashing;
- 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;
- 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 was dry, sunny and 16°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** Number 4 The Horse Close is a detached property with a pitched roof, a sloped single storey extension on the rear elevation and a single storey flat roof extension on the south-eastern elevation (**Photographs 1 & 2**).
- 4.2.2** The main roof and single storey rear extension were covered in tight interlocking roof tiles that were tight and the tile ends were blocked with mortar (**Photograph 3; Target notes 1 & 2**). The ridge tiles were tight and intact with mortar across the roof and the lead flashing was flat around the chimney (**Photograph 4; Target notes 3 & 4**). The verge mortar was intact on the north-western gable and on the rear extension, with a slight crack of limited extent present in the verge mortar on the south-eastern gable (**Photographs 5 & 6; Target notes 5 & 6**). The eaves on the main property featured timber soffits that were tight to the brickwork on both the front and rear elevations (**Photograph 7; Target note 7**). The timber soffit was damaged at the southern corner of property, with evidence of plant matter growing within the soffit (**Photograph 8; Target note 8**). There were hanging tiles on the bay window and around the second-floor windows on the front elevation of the property which were occasionally uneven in places, and were lifted on the corners of the bay window (**Photographs 9 & 10; Target note 9**). The flat roof extension on the southern elevation was covered in bitumen roofing felt which was tight to the uPVC fascia and there was intact sealant between the uPVC soffit and brickwork (**Photograph 11; Target note 10**). There was a gap in the brickwork below the soffit halfway along the southern side elevation of the single storey extension, (**Photograph 12; Target note 11**). The gap was inspected with an endoscope camera and was heavily cobwebbed throughout, showing no evidence of use by bats.
- 4.2.3** No evidence of roosting bats was found during the external survey of the property.

4.3 Internal Survey

4.3.1 The roof void covered the footprint of the second storey of the property and was accessible via a loft hatch on the first floor. The void had an estimated floor-to-ridge height of 1.5 metres and was of 'cut and pitch' roof construction. The ridge was heavily cobwebbed throughout (**Photograph 13; Target note 12**). The roof was lined with hessian-reinforced bitumen felt, which was mostly intact apart from a tear present above the loft hatch (**Photograph 14; Target note 13**). A rendered chimney was present centrally within the void, which was heavily cobwebbed around the top where the chimney joined the roof (**Photograph 15; Target note 14**). The floor was un-boarded with fibreglass insulation present throughout. The eaves were part filled with fibreglass and part open, with daylight visible in places (**Photograph 16; Target note 15**). Both gable ends were of brickwork construction, heavily cobwebbed and had intact mortar present between the brickwork and roofline (**Photographs 17 & 18; Target note 16**). An old wasp nest was present in the eaves at the eastern corner and bird nesting material was present in the southern corner where daylight was visible (**Photograph 19; Target notes 17 & 18**).

4.3.2 There were no signs of roosting bats identified 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 inside the roof void which was cobwebbed along the ridge thus indicating a lack of recent disturbance and therefore, it is considered highly unlikely that the property supports primarily void-dwelling bats, such as long-eared species (*Plecotus* spp.) for example.
- 5.1.2** Externally, there were occasional features that could provide potential roosting sites for typically crevice-dwelling bats, such as pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* species. These included uneven hanging tiles on the front elevation of the property, damaged section of timber soffit at the southern corner of the property and a gap in the brickwork along the single storey on the south-eastern elevation. The gap in the brickwork was able to be closely inspected with an endoscopic camera. The detailed inspection categorised the features as low suitability for roosting bats due to being low level and heavily cobwebbed internally, and found no evidence of current or past bat occupancy (droppings, staining etc.). The damaged soffit at the southern corner of the property had been utilised by nesting birds which makes it unlikely that bats will use the space, and there were no signs of bats internally within the roof void.

5.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

- 5.2.1** The planning proposals seek consent for a first floor extension above the existing single storey side extension (refer to existing and proposed elevations in **Appendix 3**). The proposals will not impact on the hanging tiles on the front elevation which are to remain in-situ and the extension will be off-set from the original roofline. Therefore, the proposals are considered highly unlikely to lead to the damage or loss of a bat roost or to the disturbance of bats and therefore, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required to allow the works to go ahead lawfully.
- 5.2.2** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the construction, 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 EPS mitigation licence 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



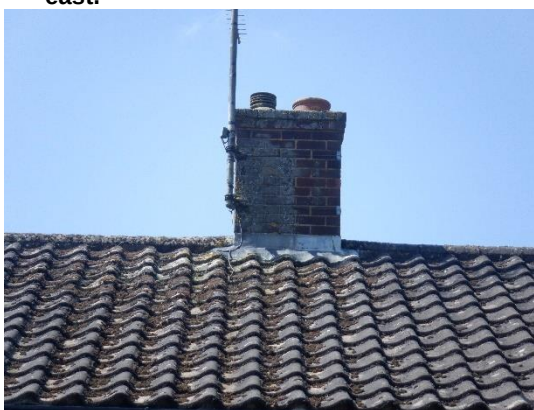
1. Front of the property viewed from south-west.



2. Rear of the property viewed from north-east.



3. Tight interlocking roof tiles (rear elevation).



4. Intact ridge tiles and flat lead flashing around chimney (rear elevation).



5. Intact verge mortar (north-western elevation).



6. Small crack in verge mortar of limited extent (south-eastern elevation).



7. Timber soffit tight to brickwork (rear elevation).



8. Damaged timber soffit at southern corner (northwest elevation).



9. Occasional uneven hanging tiles (front elevation).



10. Lifted hanging tiles on bay window (front elevation).



11. uPVC fascia tight to brickwork (south-eastern elevation).



12. Cobwebbed gap in brickwork below soffit (south-eastern elevation).



13. Cobwebbed ridge throughout (roof void).



14. Large tear in bitumen roofing felt (roof void).



15. Heavily cobwebbed rendered chimney (roof void).



16. Fibreglass insulation throughout, open eaves (roof void).



17. Brickwork gable with intact mortar (roof void).

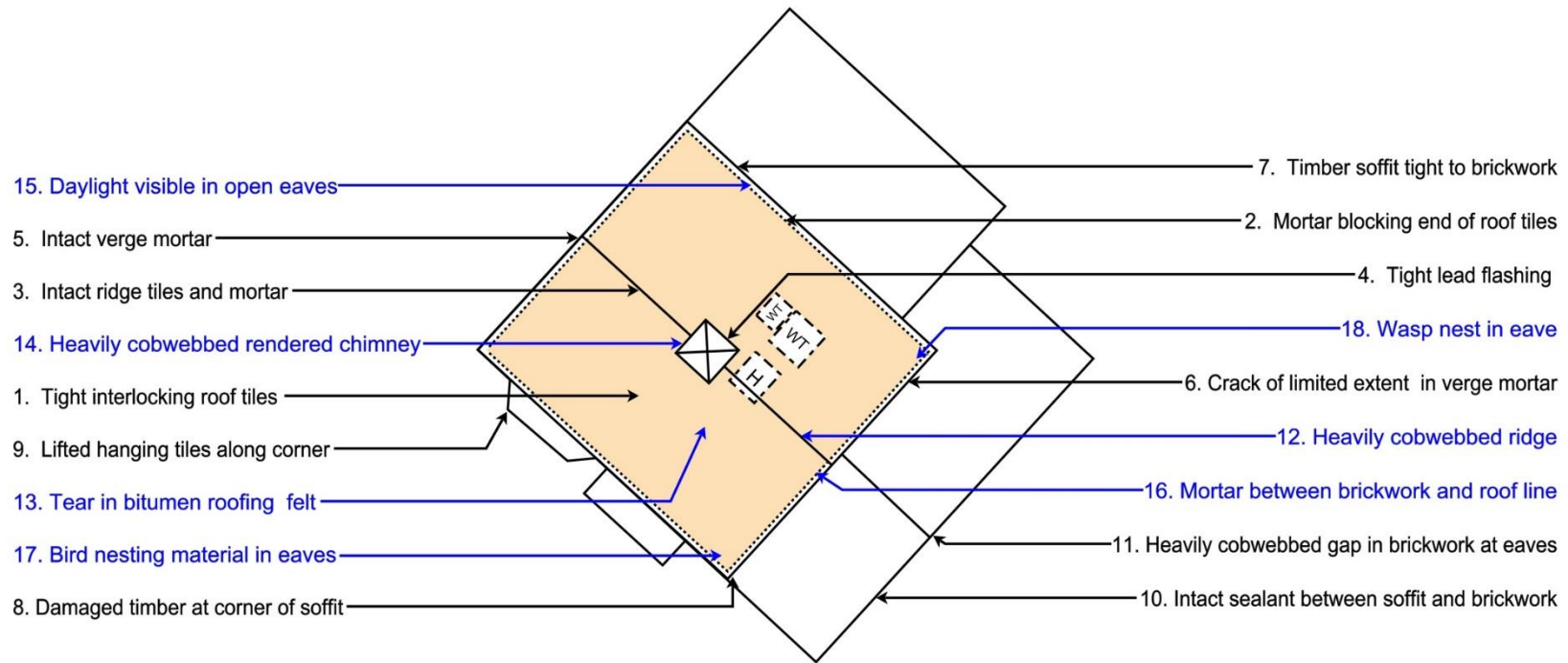


18. Cobwebbed brickwork gable (roof void).



19. Wasp nest in eastern corner (roof void).

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT PLAN



n. External target note

n. Internal target note

 Roof void

 Chimney

 Water tank

 Loft hatch

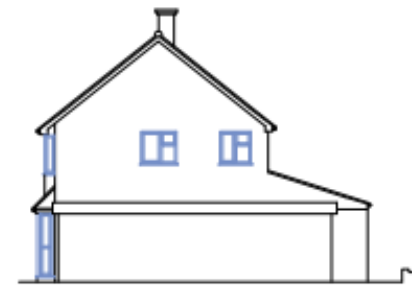
Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	4, The Horse Close, Emmer Green RG4 8TT	
MP	June 2023	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

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20/06/2023

APPENDIX 3 – EXISTING AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS



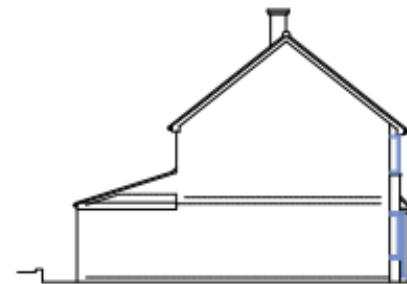
EXISTING FRONT ELEVATION



EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION



EXISTING REAR ELEVATION



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION

NOTES:
1. The drawings are to be used for the purpose of the assessment only.
2. The drawings are not to be used for any other purpose without the written consent of HAC Designs Ltd.
3. The drawings are not to be used for any other purpose without the written consent of HAC Designs Ltd.
4. The drawings are not to be used for any other purpose without the written consent of HAC Designs Ltd.
5. The drawings are not to be used for any other purpose without the written consent of HAC Designs Ltd.



SCALE 1:100

MR SUKINDER KAPOOR
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT @
4 THE HORSE CLOSE
EMMER GREEN
READING
RG4 8TT

EXISTING
& PROPOSED
ELEVATIONS

1:100 @ A2
JAN 2023
20161.SBC-12
HAYDEN COOPER

HAC DESIGNS LTD
100 BERRISDALE PLACE
WHARTFORD ROAD
WINNERSH
RG41 5RD

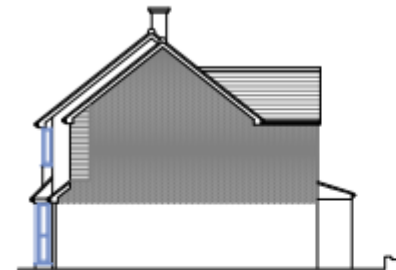
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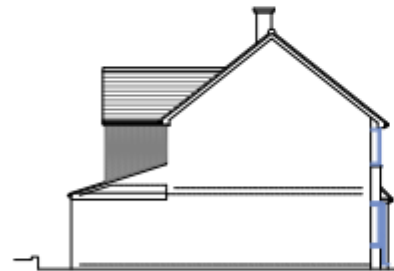
PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION



PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION

NOTES:
1. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IS A TWO-STORY HOUSE WITH A GABLED ROOF AND A CHIMNEY.
2. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IS A TWO-STORY HOUSE WITH A GABLED ROOF AND A CHIMNEY.
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SCALE 1:100

MR SUKINDER KAPOOR
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT 0:
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EXISTING
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ELEVATIONS

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