

**White Lodge
The Warren
Caversham
Reading
Berkshire
RG4 7TH**

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Ref: R3184/a

Report prepared by Meghan Porter; reviewed by John Wenman

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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

John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales with registered number OC339057.
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	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	Weather Conditions	8
3.3	Survey Constraints.....	7
4	SURVEY FINDINGS	8
4.1	Introduction	8
4.2	External Survey.....	8
4.3	Internal Survey.....	8
5	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	10
5.1	Assessment of Bat Roost Potential/Status.....	10
5.2	Impact of Proposals and Recommendations	10
6	INDICATIVE MITIGATION AND COMPENSATION REQUIREMENTS.....	12
7	REFERENCES	13
	APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS.....	14
	APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT PLAN	18

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Andrew Richards to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment at White Lodge, on The Warren in Caversham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 70668 74874). The assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a two-storey extension on the eastern elevation.
- 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 interior and exterior of the house was conducted on the 8th August 2022 by an ecologist registered under the Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL17 and an assistant ecologist.
- 1.1.3** The house had external features suitable for crevice-dwelling bat species, in the form of gaps under uneven roof tiles. Approximately 10 small-sized bat droppings, of a size, shape and distribution most typical of those deposited by a *Pipistrellus* species, were present on top of the car and one on the wall of the property indicating bats are active in the area around the house.
- 1.1.4** The proposed works may have an impact on crevice dwelling bat species that could occupy the potential crevice roost features in the house by damaging or destroying a roost. Additionally, the work may disturb and/or harm any bats present at the time of works. Further survey is required to determine the presence or absence of any bat roosts within the property, and whether they will be impacted by the works and this should comprise two emergence and/or re-entry surveys completed between May and September, with at least one visit between May and August.
- 1.1.5** If roosting bats are found that will be affected, a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) or if applicable, registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) will be required to allow the planned works to go ahead lawfully. Avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures should be adhered to from the pre-construction stage through to the post-construction stage.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Andrew Richards to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment at White Lodge, on The Warren in Caversham, Berkshire.

2.1.2 The bat roost assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a two-storey extension on the eastern elevation.

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 significantly affect 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. A 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. The Council 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 applications can be submitted once all necessary planning consents have been granted and Natural England aim to issue a licence decision within 30 working days.
- 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 Bat Mitigation Class Licence (WML-CL21). The Class Licence permits ‘Registered Consultants’ or accredited agents appointed by them to carry out licensable operations on site on behalf of clients following the registration of sites with Natural England at least 15 working days before the work is due to start.
- 2.2.6** Survey data supporting EPS 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 detached house is located on the northern side of The Warren in Caversham, Reading, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 70668 74874).
- 2.3.2** The house is in an sub-urban setting, with neighbouring residential properties and their respective gardens on all sides of the house. The River Thames flows to the rear of the properties on the southern side of The Warren, approximately 25 metres to the south of the house. There is an area of woodland present to the north of the site and extends to the west along The Warren and along the riverbank. Due south of the site, over the river was the open grassland of

Rivermead Park with scattered mature trees along the edge of the river bank.

- 2.3.3** The proximity of the riverine habitat, and the nearby woodland and open grassland offer high quality commuting and foraging opportunities to bats adapted to living in a sub-urban environment.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Building Inspection

3.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the house was conducted on the 8th August 2022 by Conor Watson - an ecologist registered under the Natural England Bat Survey Class Licences CL17 (registration CL17 2020-44817-CLS-CLS) and Meghan Porter – an assistant ecologist.

3.1.2 The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars and a high power (1 million candle power) torch, searching 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 windowsills, 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;
- Under sections of raised lead flashing;
- 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 survey constraints because full internal and external access was available throughout the survey, which was carried out in good weather conditions; however, due to the roosting behaviour of bats it is possible that not all of the evidence of bats was visible during the survey.

4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1** Photographs of the house 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 house are described as follows:

4.2 Weather Conditions

- 4.2.1** The weather conditions during the survey were dry, sunny (0/8 cloud cover), calm with a temperature of 27°C.

4.3 External Survey

- 4.3.1** The detached house was of rendered and painted brick construction, with timber cladding on the second-storey of the property,. The house had a complex pitched roof with pitched roofed dormers and skylights (**Photographs 1 & 2**). The clay roof tiles were uneven across the roof, offering potential roosting and access opportunities to bats (**Photograph 3; Target note 1**). The ridge and hip tiles had been re-mortared in 2018 and were intact across the house (**Photograph 4; Target notes 2 & 3**). The verge mortar was intact across the pitched roofs, with tongue and groove timber cladding tightly fitted on the gables and dormer windows (**Photographs 5 & 6; Target notes 4 - 6**). The timber soffit was flush to the brickwork on all elevations, with a missing section of soffit at the north-western corner of the house (**Photograph 7; Target note 7**). One small-sized bat dropping was present on the wall below the hole in the soffit on the northern elevation (**Photograph 8**). There was a gap behind the soffit at the eaves on the eastern elevation, which currently had an active wasp nest in situ (**Photograph 9: Target note 8**). There were approximately six small-sized bat droppings present on the car parked on the driveway to the east of the house (**Photograph 10**).

4.4 Internal Survey

- 4.4.1** There were two roof voids, which were both accessible via loft hatches on the first floor. The first roof void covered the northern and western end of the roof and the ridge height was approximately one metre; the ridge was lightly cobwebbed throughout (**Photograph 11; Target note 9**). The roof was lined with non-bituminous felt, which was intact (**Photograph 12; Target note 10**). The floor was un-boarded, with thick fibreglass insulation present throughout the void and filling

the eaves (**Photograph 13; Target note 11**). There was a blockwork gable at the western end of the void, which was tight to the roofline (**Photograph 14; Target note 12**). A large brickwork chimney was situated at the eastern end of the first void and this was heavily cobwebbed; the second roof void was visible through a gap beside the chimney (**Photograph 15; Target note 13**).

- 4.4.2** The second roof void covered the southern and eastern end of the roof, with the eastern end visible, but not accessible due to a large brickwork chimney (**Photograph 16**). A small roof light was present into the void and the floor to ridge height was approximately one metre; the ridge was moderately cobwebbed throughout the void (**Photograph 17 & 18; Target note 14**). The roof was lined with a non-bituminous felt, with evidence of the old straw roof insulation present throughout the void (**Target note 15**). The floor was boarded and the eaves were open at the southern end of the void (**Photograph 19; Target note 16**). The southern gable was of brickwork construction, which had gaps between the brickwork and the roofline (**Photograph 20; Target note 17**).

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential/Status

- 5.1.1** The observation of small-sized bat droppings, typical of a *Pipistrellus* species on the northern elevation of the house and on top of a parked car to the east of the house, confirm the presence of commuting bats in the near vicinity of the house. The house had numerous potential roost features suitable for crevice-dwelling bats, such as the pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and small *Myotis* species, in the form of gaps under uneven and lifted roof tiles across the roof and gaps in the soffit box.
- 5.1.2** Two species of pipistrelle bat: common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), are widespread and abundant throughout the UK (Richardson 2000). Small *Myotis* species such as the Whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*) and/or Brandt's bat (*Myotis brandtii*) are widespread and common but less abundant than the pipistrelle species. Roosts supporting pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* bat species are of low to moderate conservation importance (subject to the type of roost present i.e., non-breeding roosts supporting individual or small numbers of bats through to maternity roosts supporting large numbers of female bats) (Mitchell-Jones 2004).
- 5.1.3** Overall, considering the features suitable for bats and the riverine setting, the house is considered to be of moderate value to crevice dwelling bat species.

5.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

- 5.2.1** The proposals are for the addition of a second-storey extension at the north-eastern corner of the house, with the removal of a skylight. These proposals will lead to the removal of uneven roof tiles providing potential external roost features and therefore may disturb and/or harm any bats present at the time of works and damage and/or destroy. Further survey work is required to determine the presence or absence of roosting bats within the crevice roosting features to be impacted by the works.
- 5.2.2** Further survey of the house should comprise of an evening emergence and a dawn re-entry survey with at least two weeks separating each survey. The surveys should be undertaken in the period between May and September inclusive with at least one of the surveys carried out in the peak season for recording maternity roosts i.e., May to August (Collins 2016).
- 5.2.3** A European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (ESPML) or if applicable, the

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registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) will be required to permit the lawful damage of any bat roost shown to be present and unavoidably affected, and to permit the disturbance of any bats present at the time of the work. A licence can be issued by Natural England if the three licensing tests (detailed in **Paragraph 2.2.2**) have been met by the proposals.

- 5.2.4** To meet one of the licensing tests, it is necessary to demonstrate that the ‘favourable conservation status’ of bats using the house is maintained throughout and after the completion of the work by employing mitigation measures during the work, by providing compensatory roosts in the short-term and ensuring that roosting sites are retained on site in the long-term, as indicatively summarised in **Section 6** below.

6 INDICATIVE MITIGATION AND COMPENSATION REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1.1** Under the terms of the EPSML or BMCL (if applicable), the commencement of work affecting bat roost(s) would be timed to avoid the periods when bats are most susceptible to disturbance, i.e. winter hibernation season for all roosts (mid-November to February) to avoid disturbing torpid bats, and outside of the peak summer breeding season (May to mid-September) where evidence of a maternity roost is recorded. **N.B. Current survey information does not indicate that a maternity roost is present.**
- 6.1.2** Replacement roosting opportunities would be provided so that they are available to bats in the short-term, i.e. prior to and during the work by erecting at least one woodcrete bat box on a mature tree or pole in the rear garden before the work starts.
- 6.1.3** A 'soft strip' approach to the work affecting identified roosts would be adopted, i.e. the careful removal of tiles associated with the roost(s), by gloved hands and with hand-held tools under the supervision of a licensed ecologist or the Registered Consultant if working under the BMCL. In the event that bats are discovered during the course of the work, the licensed ecologist or Registered Consultant would capture the bat(s) and transfer it/them directly to one of the bat boxes erected in advance of the works.
- 6.1.4** In the long-term, roosting locations would be retained within the house through the presence of uneven roof tiles, which will remain unaffected by the works.

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. Side of the house viewed from the west.



2. Side of the house viewed from the east.



3. Uneven roof tiles.



4. Intact ridge and hip tiles and mortar.



5. Intact verge mortar.



6. Tight timber cladding on dormer and gable.



7. Small-sized bat dropping on northern elevation.



8. Small-sized bat dropping on northern elevation.



9. Active wasp nest in gap at eaves (eastern elevation).



10. Small-sized bat dropping on car parked to the east of the house.



11. Lightly cobwebbed ridge (first roof void).



12. Intact non-bituminous (first roof void).



13. Eaves filled with fibreglass (first roof void).



14. Blockwork gable tight to roofline (first roof void).



15. Cobwebbed brickwork chimney (first roof void).



16. Brickwork chimney blocking access to eastern end of void (second roof void).



17. Rooflight in void (second roof void).



18. Cobwebbed ridge (second roof void).

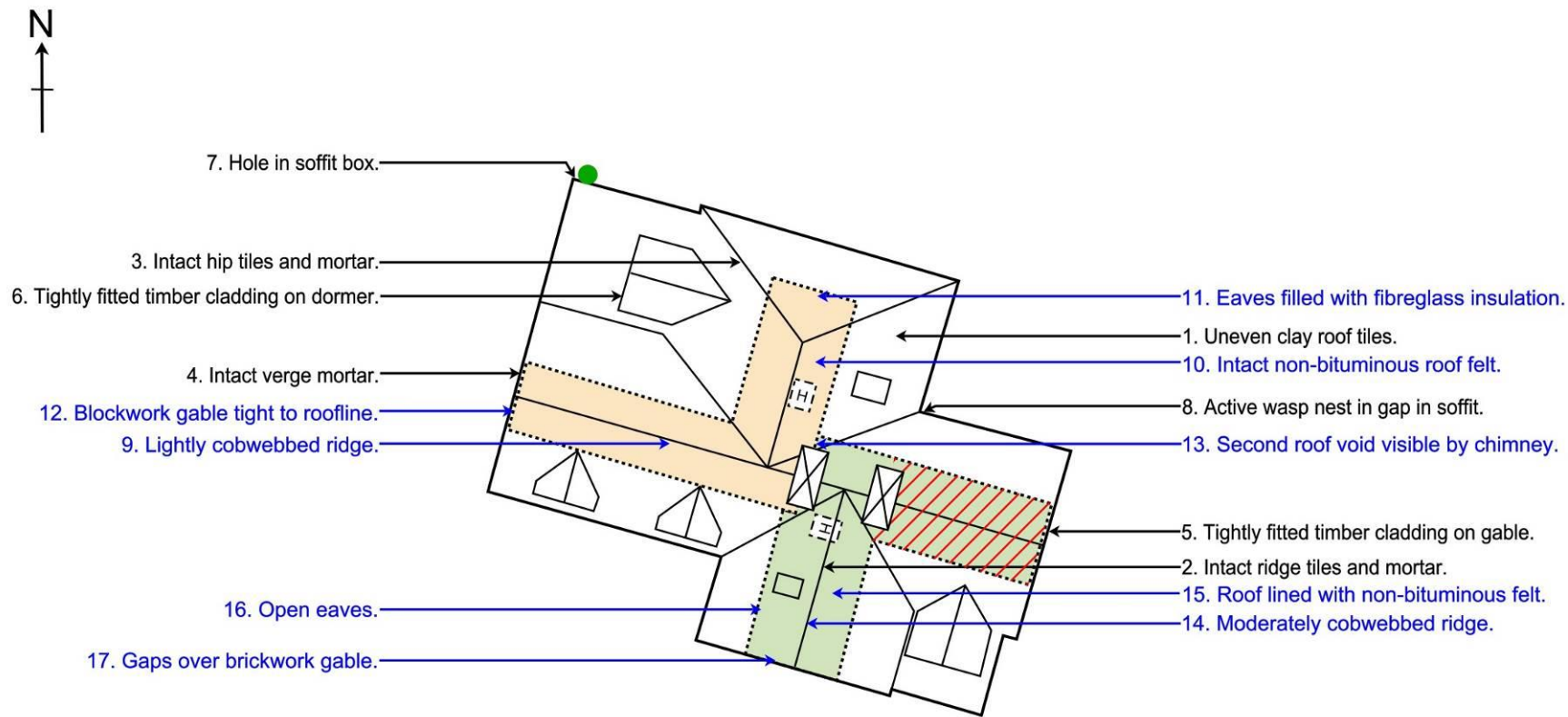


19. Open eaves (second roof void).



20. Heavily cobwebbed gap over brickwork gable (second roof void).

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT PLAN



n. External target note

n. Internal target note

● Small-sized bat dropping

First roof void

Second roof void

H

Loft hatch

Inaccessible area

Chimney

Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	White Lodge, The Warren, Caversham RG4 7TH	
MP	August 2022	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

APPENDIX 3 – PROPOSED ELEVATIONS



SOUTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION

1:100 scale Bar
This Drawing has been produced for printing onto A3 size paper.



REV	COMMENTS	DATE
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stl **SHAUN TANNER**
ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING
www.starchitecture.co.uk studio@starchitecture.co.uk 0118 989 0800

CLIENT	Mr A. Richards							
PROJECT	White Lodge The Warren, Caversham, Reading - RG4 7TH							
DRAWING	Proposed Elevations							
STATUS	Planning	DATE	Apr 2022					
SCALE	1:100	DRAWN	RC	CHECKED	NO	3743/203	REV	

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