

PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT

99 LONDON ROAD, READING RG1 5BY



Commissioned by: **Royle Berkshire Developments Ltd**

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ASW Ecology Ltd

Office/Mobile: 07710 150590

London Euston Woburn Place, 16 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0BS

E-mail: andrew@aswecology.co.uk Website: www.aswecology.co.uk

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. There was no bat evidence found during this Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment at 99 London Road, during February 2023.
2. There is no loft at this house, with the roof space being converted previously for bedrooms.
3. The building exterior had no bat roosting potential, with the house being in very good condition.
4. There are a few minor crevices present at the house rear but these were found to be unsuitable for bats, upon inspection, with these features being too narrow for bat access or spider webs are blocking them.
5. There are no constraints in regards to building works commencing as soon as possible at this property.
6. A bat watching brief is still recommended as good practice during the building works, so that the client and all contractors adhere to current best national and international bat protection legislation.

1. INTRODUCTION

- A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was undertaken at 99 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5BY, during February 2023, for the client: Royle Berkshire Developments Ltd.
- The national grid reference for this site is: SU726731.
- This assessment was required since the client wishes to build both a rear single storey and double storey extension to the current house, as well as installing new dormer windows.
- The main method used for bat assessment, as well as the full results and the recommendations can be found within this report.
- Both this bat assessment and the report were undertaken and compiled by Mr Andrew S. Waller, Consultant Ecologist, ASW Ecology Ltd.
- Mr Andrew S. Waller MSc BSc (Hons) MCIEEM, Director of ASW Ecology Ltd - has been a Consultant Ecologist since 1997, and has very extensive experience/knowledge of protected wildlife species/issues including bats, for which he is fully licensed to survey throughout England by Natural England for consultancy purposes (Bat Class 2 Licence Registration Number: 2015-15703-CLS-CLS). He also has Natural England survey licences for great crested newts and barn owls. He has been studying bats for 30 years and wildlife in general for 41 years. He is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and meets the requirements of being a Suitably Qualified Ecologist.

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2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Bat assessment method

- On the 14th February 2023, a daytime based bat assessment was undertaken of house at 99 London Road.
- A licensed bat consultant, with an assistant, using appropriate equipment, such as torches, an endoscope and binoculars, conducted a comprehensive search of the existing building both internally and externally for any possible features or evidence which could suggest the presence of a bat roost.
- Weather conditions and visibility were very good at the time of the visit, with it being cool, cloudy (8/8CC), calm and dry.
- Indications of bats roosting at any site during a bat inspection can include the presence of actual bats, crumbly bat droppings, insect prey remains and the staining of any timbers/wooden beams by natural oils in the bats fur or by urine.
- All results from this bat survey can be found in the next chapter of this report. And a map can be found in Appendix 2, showing the site plan.

2.2 Constraints

- Due to the timing of this bat assessment, only the Winter period could be covered. This is a standard constraint for any assessment which can only investigate part of any year.
- The October to March period is critical for hibernating bats, with February being a key month to check buildings and other structures for the presence or absence of these legally protected mammals. This assessment was hence undertaken at the optimum time for undertaking a Winter based study.
- As always though, without taking into account any further active surveying or monitoring, this study can only provide a “snapshot” of the presence of bats at the site during the period of this study.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

3.1 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Building description:	• This is a three storey, red brick house, with solid walls and a pitched roof. The roof is slate covered and is in a very good condition. There are also fascia boards and sealed soffit boxes present. This building is most likely Victorian, in terms of when it was built, but has been modified since
External bat survey	• A few minor crevices are present at the house rear under lead flashing, a fascia board and under a single slate. All have spider webs within, upon inspection, so have no interest for bats. A small hole at the front apex of the house is considered shallow and has no interest for bats but does have nesting bird potential
Internal bat survey	• No interest for bats inside the building as no loft space present. The roof void has been previously converted to bedrooms
Bat evidence present	• None present
Other wildlife evidence present	• None
Overall bat roost grading for the building	• NIL

3.2 Desk study

- A 2km radius online data search was undertaken by us for bats records near to the application site.
- This does not replace a formal biological records search but does contain some of the same information and helps support this report.
- The NBN Gateway (with strict permission), the web and the MAGIC website were all used. The ASW Ecology database was also used for a data trawl for wildlife records as this has collated records in the UK for 41 years.
- The key summary findings are below:

Magic lists 8x **Protected Species Licences** within 2km:

- Bat EPSM Licence – Daubenton’s bat – 2017 to 2022
- Bat EPSM Licence – Common pipistrelle – 2013 to 2015
- Bat EPSM Licence – Common pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle - 2020
- Bat EPSM Licence – Common pipistrelle – 2016 to 2021
- Bat EPSM Licence – Common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle – 2014 to 2019
- Bat EPSM Licence – Common pipistrelle – 2010 to 2012
- Bat EPSM Licence – Common pipistrelle, Brown long-eared bat – 2010 to 2012
- Bat EPSM Licence - Common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle – 2012 to 2016

NBN Atlas has the following bat records:

- Serotine
- Noctule
- Daubenton’s bat
- Common pipistrelle
- Soprano pipistrelle

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Significance of the Bat Assessment results

- In summary, there was no bat evidence found during this Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment at 99 London Road.
- There is no loft at this house, with the roof space being converted previously for bedrooms.
- The building exterior had no bat roosting potential, with the house being in very good condition.
- There are a few minor crevices present at the house rear but these were found to be unsuitable for bats, upon inspection, with the crevices either being too narrow for bat access or spider webs are blocking them.
- The small hole at the front apex of the house is considered shallow, from inspection and is only suitable for nesting birds.
- There will be no negative risk to bats from the proposed new dormers and new rear extensions to the house.
- There are no constraints in regards to building works commencing as soon as possible at this property.
- There are bat records for six species within a 2km radius of the application site, as shown in our desk study. Bats such as common and soprano pipistrelles will roost in houses and would be expected within Reading.
- However, since the house at 99 London Road has no bat roosting potential, bats will not be interested in this building. Especially as far more suitable houses will be present nearby, within this very dense housing conurbation in this part of Reading.
- Please see the next chapter of this report for the formal recommendations, so that the client adheres to current best practice guidance and to UK bat legislation.

4.2 Impact assessment

In the absence of any mitigation measures or precautions, the following direct or indirect impacts from the proposed development works at the application site on bats would be predicted as:

- **DIRECT:** There would be no negative impact to bats by the potential development works, if no mitigation was undertaken at all. There is no risk that without mitigation, that the occasional bat could be disturbed, injured or killed during building works. **Impact magnitude predicted: NIL**
- **INDIRECT:** Given that no notable bat related habitat is to be lost, without mitigation, there is no impact by the loss of bat related features or fragmentation of the local bat populations due to the proposed building works. **Impact magnitude predicted: NIL**

4.3 Summary of the legal protection of bats in the UK (please see other texts for full details of the legislation)

4.3.1 THE LEGAL PROTECTION OF BATS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Introduction

All species of bats in England and Wales are protected by law. Their legal protection derives from two sources:

- the strict species protection provisions of the EU Habitats Directive as implemented in England and Wales by Part 3 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the **“2017 Regulations, amended by the 2019 Regulations due to Britain leaving the EU”**); and
- Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (“2017 Regulations, as amended by the 2019 Regulations”)

The 2017 Regulations came into force on 30th November 2017. They replace the previously applicable regulations (Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 and the 2010 Regulations) in relation to England and Wales. The 2017 Regulations are the principal means by which the EU Habitats Directive is transposed in England and Wales.

The Regulations contain a number of Parts which set out the protection to be afforded to “European Protected Species” (“EPS”), which includes all species of British bats. The list also includes other species which are rare on a European scale, such as great crested newts, otters and dormice.

Under the 2017 Regulations both bats themselves and their “breeding sites and resting places” (most commonly their roosts) are protected.

It is a criminal offence to do the following (note that this is not an exhaustive list of all offences but rather a list of offences which will be of most relevance to developers):

- a. to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat (even if bats are not present at the time);
- b. to deliberately capture, injure or kill a wild bat;
- c. to intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or to deliberately disturb a group of bats, in particular:
 - i. any disturbance of bats which is likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
 - ii. any disturbance of bats which is likely to impair their ability to hibernate or migrate; or

- iii. any disturbance of bats which is likely to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
- d. to have in one's possession or to control or to transport or to sell or exchange or offer to sell or exchange any live or dead bat or part of a bat which has been taken from the wild; or any part of, or anything derived from, a bat or any part of a bat; and
- e. to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

The maximum penalty that can be imposed for the above offences is (as at May 2010) a fine of up to £5,000, and/or up to six months imprisonment. The offences can be committed by individuals or by bodies corporate. Where a body corporate has committed the offence, the directors or officers of the company may also be prosecuted if the offence has been committed with their consent or connivance, or is attributable to their neglect.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (“WCA 1981”)

The WCA 1981 protects a wide range of animals, plants and habitats in the UK. All British bat species are afforded protection under Part 1 of the WCA 1981, in addition to the protection they have under the 2017 Regulations (as amended by the 2019 Regulations).

As regards England and Wales the following offences apply to protect bats under the W&CA 1981:

- a. to intentionally or recklessly disturb any bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection (s9(4)(b) WCA 1981);
- b. to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place which any bat uses for shelter or protection (s9(4)© WCA 1981);
- c. attempting either of the above (s18(1) WCA 1981).

The maximum penalty that can be imposed for the above offences is (as at May 2010) a fine of up to £5,000, and/or up to six months imprisonment. The offences can be committed by individuals or by bodies corporate. Where a body corporate has committed the offence, the directors or officers of that company may also be prosecuted if the offence has been committed with their consent or connivance or is attributable to their neglect (s69(1) WCA 1981).

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Requirement for a formal bat watching brief during building works

- As a standard precaution only as per any development related site, the future building contractors should be fully aware of the legal protection of bats and what to do if an unexpected bat is found or suspected at the site during all works.
- This is especially relevant during any soft stripping works, where external/internal features may be removed by hand, such as roof tiles, ridge tiles, slates, fascias, soffit boxes, brickwork, timbers, roofing felt and lead flashing, for example.
- A licensed bat consultant can be present on site during the main soft stripping of as a precautionary approach. So that they are on hand to provide immediate advice and supervision for the client and contractors. This bat watch brief is an option for the client to consider.
- Bats and their evidence such as droppings can unexpectedly be present under such features and be completely hidden until accidentally uncovered.
- If any new bat evidence such as crumbly droppings composed of insect remains or an actual bat is seen, during any building related works, then such work must stop and a licensed bat consultant contacted immediately for urgent advice.
- Usually, late summer/early autumn e.g. late August/September/October or early spring e.g. April/early May, are ideally the best times to work on such structures, as this avoids both the main bat breeding season and the winter hibernation period.
- **However, since no bat evidence and no bat roosts have been found at the stated building at this property, there are no bat related constraints in regards to the building work commencing.**

5.2 Best practice guidance – nesting birds and development works

- **FOR AWARENESS PURPOSES ONLY:** As per any development related site, the general advice is that no vegetation eg trees, bushes, shrubs, hedges, bramble scrub or dense ivy cover should be removed during the bird nesting season as all bird nests are fully protected by law, and this includes whilst a nest is being built by the adult birds. This also includes buildings and bird boxes that have been proved to have active bird nests present.
- **If any nests are present within the building during the future building works phase, then these must be left alone until the young birds have fully fledged from the nest and no further breeding attempts are to take place.**
- The bird nesting season in the UK, currently runs mainly from early-January to September, but sometimes birds can start breeding before or after this period e.g. some resident birds can start building nests during the end of December, including crows, magpies, feral pigeons and woodpigeons. This early start of the nesting building phase for some bird species is due to human derived climate change.

- Therefore, September to mid-December can be the best months for such works, although with a bird watching brief for any early or late nesters as stated above.
- **An experienced ecologist can be present though on a site during the nesting bird season, if applicable, to search the building for any active bird nests.**

6. REFERENCES

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- (7) Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004) Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature.
- (8) Mitchell-Jones, A.J. and McLeish, A.P. (2004) The Bat Workers' Manual. 3rd Ed. JNCC, UK.

APPENDIX 1:
PHOTOGRAPHS A-J
(All photos are dated 14/2/2023)



Photograph A

The interior of the house had no bat evidence and no bat roosting potential, given the conversion of the roof void to living space



Photograph B

There was no bat evidence on the exterior of the house either, upon inspection



Photograph C

The house was in a very good condition, with no disrepair found, that bats could use for roosting



Photograph D

The rear slate roof of the current rear extension had no interest for bats, with no missing or slipped slates present



Photograph E

The soffit boxes and bargeboards were all in very good condition, with no access for bats



Photograph F
Close-up of the rear slate roof of the extension



Photograph G

Sealed soffit boxes with no obvious potential for bats



Photograph H
Further sealed soffit box with no access for bats



Photograph I

The house has no interest for bats, given the very good condition it is in



Photograph J

Further interior photograph, showing a bedroom, with no access or interest for bats

APPENDIX 2:

MAP A: SITE PLAN FOR 99 LONDON ROAD - FEBRUARY 2023

