

31 Northcourt Avenue
Reading
Berkshire
RG2 7HE

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Report prepared by Vicky Potts; reviewed by Sarah Foot

Ref: R3153/a

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1 SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by James Pardoe to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment of the detached chalet bungalow at 31 Northcourt Avenue in Reading, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 72806 71770). The assessment was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a rear extension and the addition of dormer windows on the northern roof elevation and velux windows on the southern roof 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 property, was undertaken on the 20th June 2022 by an ecologist registered under the Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 and an assistant ecologist.
- 1.1.3** The chalet bungalow showed no evidence of the presence of roosting bats internally within the roof space. Externally, the bungalow possessed no potential roost features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bats. Therefore, it is considered highly unlikely that the proposed works will have any impact on bats or their roosts. A European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) 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 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.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by James Pardoe to undertake a preliminary roost assessment of the detached chalet bungalow at 31 Northcourt Avenue in Reading, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 72806 71770).

2.1.2 The assessment was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a rear extension and the addition of dormer windows on the northern roof elevation and velux windows on the southern roof 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 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 licences 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, and;
- **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;

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- **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 planning proposals affecting European Protected Species before granting planning permission.

2.2.4 If a European Protected Species mitigation licence is necessary, a licence can be sought once all the necessary planning consents have been granted. Natural England aims to issue a decision on 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 Bat Mitigation Class Licence (Low Impact) (WML-CL21), which would enable consultants registered by Natural England, or accredited agents appointed by them, to carry licensable work under the Class Licence once sites have been registered in advance with Natural England. Registration forms must be submitted at least three weeks before work is due to start, and if acceptable, Natural England aims to register sites within two weeks.

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 situated on the northeastern side of Northcourt Avenue in Reading, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 72806 71770).

2.3.2 The property is in a residential setting with further houses and flats on all sides. The grounds of the University of Reading at Whiteknights is situated 110 metres to the

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northeast, comprising of parkland with scattered trees, and a lake. Tree-lined recreational grounds are situated 220 metres to the northwest. The Kennet and Avon Canal is situated 1.55 kilometres to the west.

- 2.3.3** Overall, the habitats nearby offer high quality habitat suitable for commuting and foraging bats adapted to urban environments.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Building Inspection

3.1.1 A survey of the exterior and interior of the chalet bungalow was undertaken on the 20th June 2022 by Vicky Potts - an ecologist registered under Natural England bat survey Class Licence CL18 (Registration no. CL18 2016-27162-CLS-CLS) - and Meghan Porter - an assistant ecologist.

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);
- 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;
- Beneath lifted barge boards;
- 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* sp.) for example, will often cluster at the ridge beam.

3.2 Survey Constraints

- 3.2.1** Full access was available to the exterior and interior of the property, and therefore there were no significant constraints to the survey. It must be noted that due to the roosting behaviour of crevice-dwelling bats in particular, it is possible that evidence of roosting bats may not be visible during the survey and could be hidden in crevices such as wall cavities and in the space between roof coverings and lining; an absence of evidence does not mean an absence of roosting bats.

4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1** Photographs of the chalet bungalow 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 chalet bungalow are described as follows:

4.2 External Survey

- 4.2.1** The detached chalet bungalow was of painted render, cavity wall construction with a pitched roof. A single-storey extension with a flat roof was attached to the rear and a bay window was attached to the front (**Photographs 1 & 2**). The interlocking roof tiles were in place and tightly fitted across the main roof offering no access opportunities for roosting bats (**Photograph 3; Target note 1**). The ridge tiles were in place and mortared (**Photograph 4; Target note 2**). The lead flashing was tight along the sides of the dormer window on the northern roof elevation (**Photograph 5; Target note 3**).
- 4.2.2** The soffit boxes were mostly of timber construction which were tight to the rendered walls at the eaves (**Photograph 6; Target note 4**). A gap was present in the mortar at the front southern corner of the eaves, which was of limited extent as further mortar was visible behind, and it did not offer any features suitable for use by bats (**Photograph 7; Target note 5**). A gap was also present between the paintwork and timber soffit in the rear northern corner of the bungalow which did not lead to any crevices for use by bats (**Photograph 8; Target note 6**). The verge tiles were tight to the rendered walls (**Photograph 9; Target note 7**). The clay roof tiles were uneven on the bay window to the front of the bungalow (**Photograph 10; Target note 8**). The single-storey rear extension was tightly fitted (**Photograph 11; Target note 9**).

- 4.2.3** No evidence of roosting bats was found on the exterior of the bungalow.

4.3 Internal Survey

- 4.3.1** The bungalow had one roof space along the ridge. The roof space had an estimated floor-to-roof height of 1.25 metres and was accessed via a loft hatch. The floor was partially boarded at the front southeastern end of the roof space and had fibreglass

insulation (**Photograph 12; Target note 10**). The ridge was lightly cobwebbed, which can indicate little or no roosting activity by bats at the ridge (**Photograph 13; Target note 11**). The roof was unlined with the undersides of the roof tiles exposed with some daylight in places between the tiles (**Photograph 14; Target note 12**). The eaves were filled in places with insulation, foil-covered insulation and timber, and also open in places (**Photographs 15 & 16; Target notes 13, 14 & 15**). The gable ends were of blockwork cavity wall construction. A gap was present at the apex of the front southwestern gable end wall (**Photograph 17; Target note 16**). Gaps were present around the blockwork and fibreglass insulation was present filling the gaps at the rear northeastern gable end wall (**Photograph 18; Target note 17**). Two sealed ventilation ducts exited the base of the wall at the rear northeastern gable end wall (**Photograph 19; Target note 18**).

4.3.2 No evidence of roosting bats was found to the interior of the chalet bungalow.

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential

5.1.1 No evidence of roosting bats was found inside the bungalow's roof space, and therefore it is highly unlikely that the void supports primarily void-dwelling bat species such as the long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.) for example.

5.1.2 The bungalow had no potential roost features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bat species, such as the pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* species, apart from a few gaps under the roof tiles on the bay window. There were a couple of gaps at the soffits but they were of limited extent and did not offer suitable crevice-dwelling opportunities for bats.

5.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

5.2.1 The proposed works include the addition of a rear extension and the addition of dormer windows on the southeastern side and velux windows on the northwestern side. There were no suitable features for use by bats on the sections of the bungalow to be impacted and there were no signs of the presence of bats within the roof space during the preliminary bat roost assessment. Therefore, it is considered highly unlikely that the proposed works will have any impact on bats or their roosts.

5.2.2 In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the building work, the work must stop immediately, and a licensed ecologist should be called to site to attend to the bat and provide advice on how to proceed; work should not continue until further written advice has been received. At this point, a European Protected Species 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 bungalow viewed from the southwest.



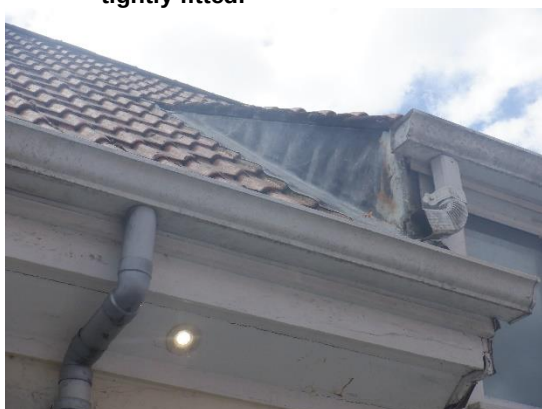
2. Rear of the bungalow viewed from the northeast.



3. Interlocking roof tiles in place and tightly fitted.



4. Ridge tiles in place and mortared.



5. Lead flashing tight along the sides of the dormer window.



6. Timber soffits tight to the rendered walls along the northwestern side of the bungalow.



7. Gap in the mortar with further mortar visible behind at the front southern corner.



8. A gap present between the paintwork and timber soffit in the rear northern corner.



9. Verge tiles tight to the rendered wall to the rear of the property.



10. Roof tiles uneven on the bay window to the front of the property.



11. Single-storey rear extension tightly fitted.



12. Internal view of the roof space boarded at the front southwestern end.



13. Ridge lightly cobwebbed.



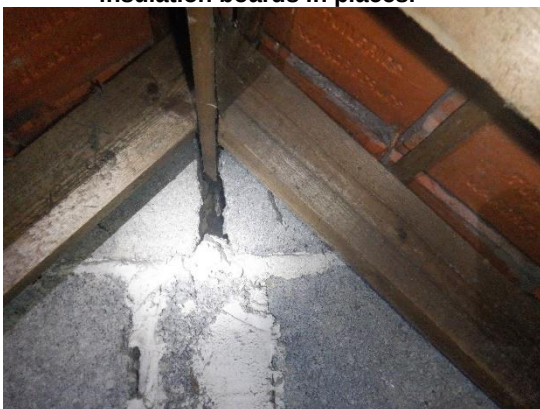
14. The unlined roof with undersides of the roof tiles exposed.



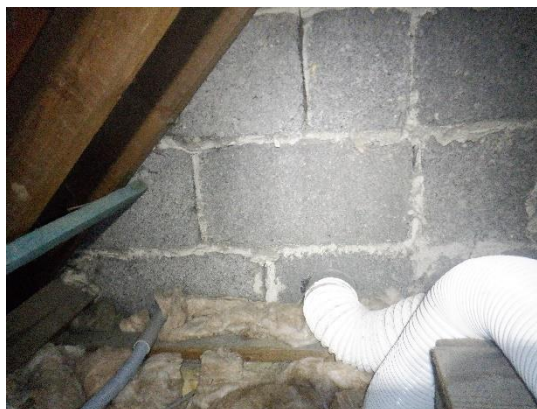
15. Eaves filled with foil-covered insulation boards in places.



16. Eaves open in places.



17. Gap present at the apex of the front southwestern gable end wall.

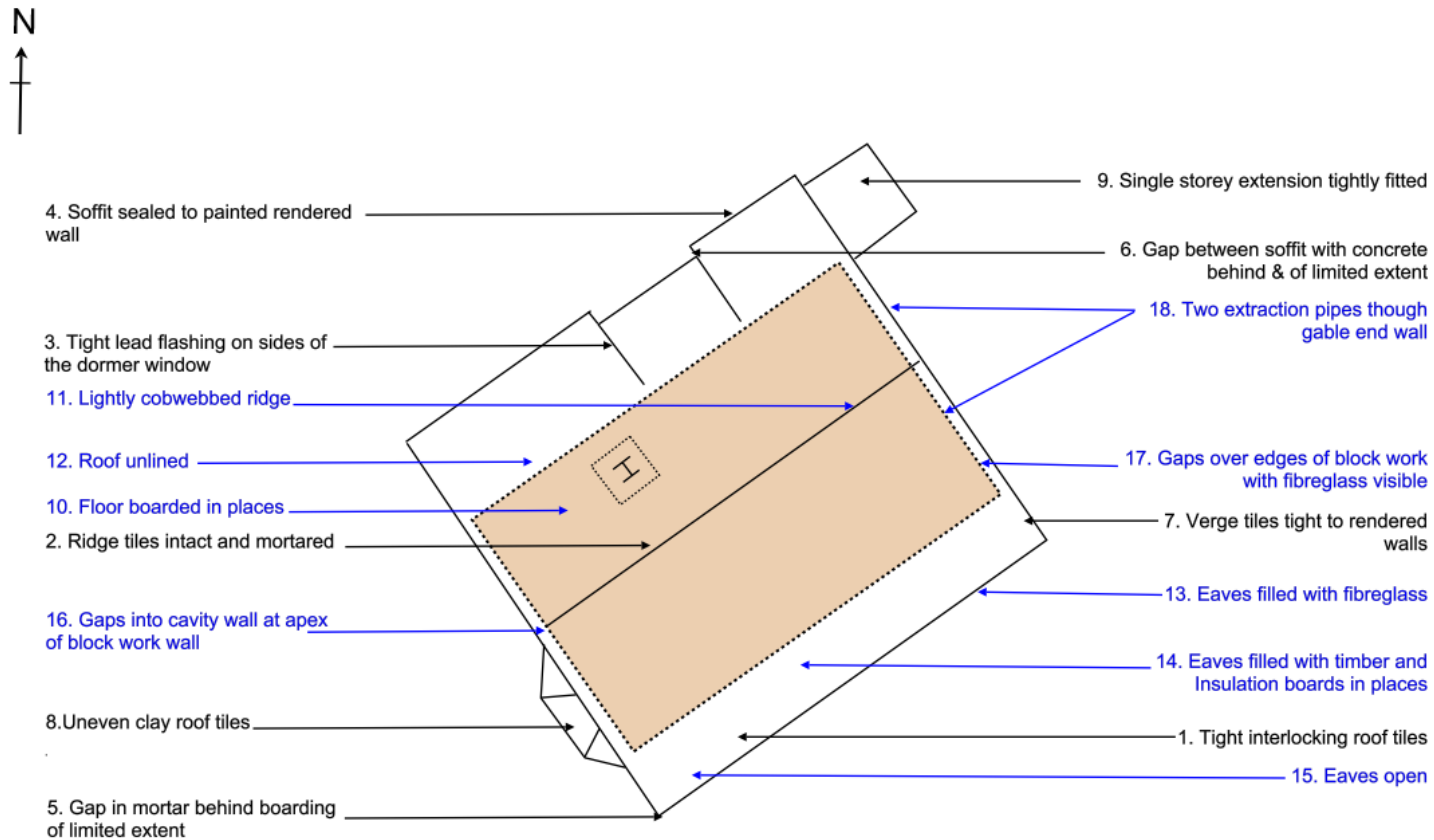


18. Gaps present around the blockwork filled with fibreglass insulation at the northeastern gable end wall.



19. Sealed ventilation ducts in the wall of the northeastern gable end wall.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



 Roof Space
 H Loft Hatch
 n. External Target Note
 n. Internal Target Note

Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	31 Northcourt Avenue Reading	
VP	July 2022	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

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