



23 Kidmore Road, Caversham RG4 7LR

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site details:

23 Kidmore Road (grid reference SU709753) is situated in Caversham, Berkshire. The site contains a detached house built in 1905, a derelict detached garage with a garden, and a driveway. The building had its loft void converted to accommodation five years ago and at this time the building was re-roofed.

Proposed works:

One planning application has been lodged with Reading Borough Council (201312) to extend the rear of the property with internal re-modelling. The detached garage will also be demolished.

Survey methodology:

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats was conducted on the dwelling on 22nd September 2021 following a memo being lodged with the Planning department highlighting the possible use of the buildings by bats.

Findings:

No evidence of bats was found within the unconverted eaves spaces of the house nor inside the garage. The house loft itself was converted to accommodation around five years ago leaving only the eaves spaces relatively untouched. The PRA did not identify any external features suitable for supporting roosting bats on the house or garage.

Impact Assessment:

In the absence of mitigation, there is a risk of destruction of any bat roosts within the building, and/or a risk of death or injury to bats themselves, should they be present.

Recommendations:

No further surveys are required as the buildings have been judged as negligible for roosting bats. However, it would be prudent to soft strip the lean-to rear single storey extension roof of the main house and garage to ensure in the unlikely event bats are present they are not harmed, after this full demolition can be undertaken.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background

There are plans to demolish the single storey extension on the rear of the house and the detached garage at 23 Kidmore Road, Caversham, with a planning application currently lodged with Reading Borough Council (ref: 201312). A new rear extension is proposed, with internal remodelling. Consequently, there is a risk of destruction of any bat roosts present within the buildings, and/or a risk of death or injury to bats themselves, therefore a preliminary roost assessment (PRA) for bats was requested to assess this risk.

Legislative context

Bats and their roost sites are protected by law such that it is an offence to deliberately, intentionally, or recklessly disturb, kill, take, or injure bats or damage or destroy their roost sites. Actions that will constitute an offence in law may be mitigated against if sufficient precautions are followed and/or a mitigation license is sought from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO; Natural England). Therefore, a precautionary approach has been adopted to ascertain the use, if any, bats are making of these buildings in relation to a planning application submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to better inform any subsequent decisions.

Landscape and ecological context

The house under consideration is 23 Kidmore Road, Caversham (grid reference SU 709753) and is situated on Kidmore Road, a built-up area with many detached houses. The site contains detached house built in 1905, a detached garage, gravel driveway, and a medium-sized garden, mature. The site is surrounded by other houses and their associated gardens. Further from the site is the river Thames and Caversham bridge.

Objectives of the survey and report

The preliminary bat roost assessment survey included an internal and external inspection of the buildings to identify their potential to contain bat roosting sites. This involved a systematic search with binoculars and an endoscope (where appropriate) and a high-powered torch, looking for bats themselves as well as any evidence of bat use. Bat surveys have been conducted in accordance with current guidance¹.

Potential appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures are assessed for this site following the legal protection given to bats under The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, and any requirement for a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence or Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL – formerly the Bat Low Impact Class Licence) is considered.

¹ Collins, J (ed) (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

3. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Field survey personnel

The survey was conducted by Dr Merryl Gelling CEcol MCIEEM. Dr Gelling is a Chartered Consultant Ecologist specialising in protected species and has over twenty years practical experience of wild mammal surveying in the UK. Dr Gelling has published several scientific papers on wild animal health and welfare, and is an experienced bat surveyor, holding Natural England Bat Survey Licences WML CL 19 and 20 (Levels 3 & 4; numbers 2015-13150-CLS-CLS & 201-13151-CLS-CLS), permitting disturbance of bats for the purposes of surveying for science and education or conservation, and WML CL 21 (Registered Consultant RC083), permitting the registration of individual sites under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence. She also holds other Natural England Protected Species and Home Office licences. A significant portion of Dr Gelling's work has focused on advising on suitable bat mitigation for development projects.

Assistance during the PRA survey was provided by Dr Amanda Lloyd MCIEEM, who also holds a level 2 Natural England Bat Survey Licence (WML CL 18 2016-23252-CLS-CLS).

Preliminary Roost Assessment Survey for bats

The property was assessed for its suitability to support roosting bats using high powered torches, ladders, and binoculars where appropriate. Signs searched for, and indicative of bat use, included:

- Faeces – these typically contain fragments of insect exoskeleton and crumble (unlike those of small rodents, which typically harden over time). Bat droppings will stick to surfaces including walls, windows, and window ledges. They may also become caught in cobwebs below a roost site or feeding perch.
- Urine staining and droplets on horizontal surfaces – like faeces, urine is a sign of recent activity and may highlight flyways.
- Feeding remains – these include the discarded wings of flying invertebrates, which may accumulate under a feeding perch. Some species, such as the Brown long-eared bat, have a well-known penchant for moths of the Noctuid family. Therefore, the accumulated wings of these Noctuid moths are indicative of the presence of this bat.
- Oil staining – the fur of bats may leave an oily residue on surfaces close to occupied roost sites and access / re-entry points.
- Diurnal vocalisations – these are most pronounced at larger roost sites during periods of hot weather.
- Absence of cobwebs – a well-used bat roost, and its access points, are typically clear of cobwebs.
- Scratches – scratch marks, produced by the claws of many bats, may be apparent close to the access point for a well-used roost.
- Dead bats.
- Tracks in dust.
- Odour – most bats have a distinctive odour and certain species, such as the Noctule and Soprano pipistrelle are noted for their pungent-smelling roosts, resulting from urine scent marking activity and oily fur.

Consideration was also given to the following factors, regarding identifying the suitability of building's features to support roosting bats:

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- Surrounding habitat: potential bat flight-lines and bat foraging areas locally.
 - Construction features: architectural features including loft spaces, barge boards, soffit boxes, lead flashing, cavity walls and hanging tiles can provide bat roosting potential. Some construction features and materials are more favourable to bat occupation than others.
 - Building condition: if the building has no roof or has a sound roof with no potential bat entry gaps, then there is a lower likelihood of bats being present.
 - Internal conditions: temperature regime, protection from the elements and wind/light/rain penetration.
 - Potential bat-access points: both flight and crawl access.
 - Potential roosting locations: all bat-accessible voids, cracks, and crevices.

In addition, the Swift Ecology Bat Roost Trigger Index², aimed at helping to evaluate the suitability of structures and buildings to support summer bat roosts was used. This tool has been designed to augment professional judgement and allow comparison of different structures and buildings to help maintain a consistent and systematic approach to their assessments across a range of structure or building types, characters, and ages. Results of the Trigger Index are only given for buildings and structures where evidence of bats has not been confirmed, to establish potential of the building to support roosting bats.

No other specific faunal surveys were undertaken. However, incidental records were made, and the habitats identified on site were evaluated for their potential to support species of conservation interest, including protected and priority species.

Desk study

Google maps and 'Where's The Path' websites were accessed to view aerial images of the site. Assessment of the likelihood of bat species being present within the local environment has been informed by collating records of known roosts in the area. European Protected Species Mitigation licences that have previously been granted were searched for on the MAGIC website³, which also identifies local Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's), local and national Nature Reserves and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's), which have been designated as such due to a significant population or species of bat.

² <http://swiftecology.co.uk/trigger.php>

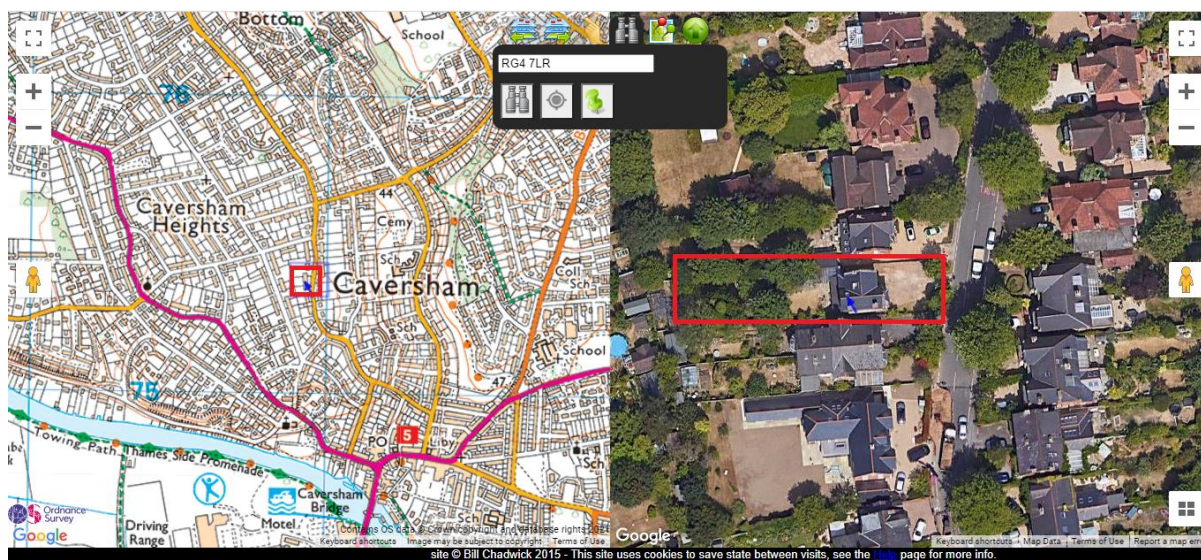
³ MAGIC, 2018: <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/>

4. RESULTS

Desk study

Site maps

Figure 1: Where's the Path street map of the site location and aerial image of the site.



The site lies within 5km of seven Local Nature Reserves. None of these are designated as such due to bat species. Twelve European Protected Species licences have been granted within 2km of the site; the closest being a resting place for Common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats which was granted in 2017 and is situated 311m south-west. All the licences granted were for resting places of brown long-eared, common pipistrelle or soprano pipistrelle bats.

Inspection survey

The buildings under consideration are a detached house built in 1905 and a detached garage. The weather during the survey was dry, bright, and mild. Internal and external surveys were carried out on both buildings.

External inspection

The House:

This is a three-storey residential dwelling built with red brick walls and grey slate tiles. There are parapet ends on the front and side gables. There is a single storey mono-pitch rear extension.

The brickwork, window frames and plastic soffits are tight. The roof and ridge tiles are tight as the building was re-roofed around five years ago. A few slipped tiles were noted on the mono-pitch rear extension. Gaps were noted in the walls, but the house is single skin with no internal cavity.

The Garage:

This is a small garage with grey slate roof tiles. Both the ridge and roof tiles have slipped. There is wooden shiplap on the western gable end, but this was covered in cobwebs

Internal inspection

The house has one large loft which has been converted to living accommodation. Small loft spaces are found within the eaves which have small doors accessing this cramped space. All of these spaces have MDF boarding on the floor and roof with some cupboards being used as storage

No bat droppings were found within the eaves spaces inspected.

Trigger Index: 0.48 Negligible

The Garage: This is open from floor to unlined roof above with the garage door being open at the time of the survey, there is also a broken window. No evidence of bats was found

Trigger Index: 0.46 Negligible

Figure 1: Photos of the site



1: Front view of the house. 2: Rear view of the house. 3: Garage. 4: View of the roof and ridgeline from a skylight window in the previously converted loft.



5: Internal view of the shower room in the converted loft. 6: Internal view of the converted loft.
7: Internal view of the eaves storage space showing second access door. 8: Internal view of detached garage.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

No evidence of bats was found in the buildings at Kidmore Road, Caversham and the buildings have been judged as having negligible potential for roosting bats. Following standard guidance, buildings which have been judged to have a negligible potential for bat roosts do not require further scrutiny, therefore no further surveys are needed for 23 Kidmore Road.

However, it is recommended that the rear extension roof and the detached garage of 23 Kidmore Road is soft stripped prior to full demolition to ensure in the unlikely event bats are present they are not harmed.

Constraints

There were no constraints during survey.

Further survey

No further surveys are required, assuming works commence within one year of the date of this report.

Future considerations

Planning permission

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019) is concerned with sustainable development under three mutually dependent elements: economic, social, and environmental. The environmental element aims to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built, and historic environment and, as part of this, help to improve biodiversity. This provides guidance to local planning authorities when considering biodiversity and conservation, indicating that if significant harm to local biodiversity cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated against, or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. It is vital that appropriate survey work is undertaken and mitigation recommendations, if required, are proposed before a developer submits a planning application. Where planning has been consented with conditions, it is necessary to demonstrate that all conditions have been met before works commence.

Potential mitigation and enhancements

Although the buildings have a negligible potential for bats currently, placing a bat box on a mature tree or onto a gable end of the house would provide a net gain for biodiversity and enhance the site. Planting native flowering species within the garden to provide foraging opportunities for insects would also benefit any local bat populations in the area.

Additional ecological considerations

No other ecological considerations were noted during the survey.

Limitations

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