

**23 Woodcote Road
Caversham
Reading
Berkshire
RG4 7BA**

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Ref: R3034/a

February 2022



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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Emily Swanborough to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment of the property and attached garage at 23 Woodcote Road in Caversham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 70411 75275). The assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a loft conversion and side extension following the demolition of the garage.
- 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 and attached garage was conducted on the 7th February 2022 by an ecologist registered under the Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 and an assistant ecologist.
- 1.1.3** The roof voids within the house and attached garage lacked key features used by roosting bats and there were no bat droppings found, which indicates that primarily void-dwelling species, such as the long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.), are highly unlikely to be present. The house and garage also lacked external features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bats, such as pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* species.
- 1.1.4** The house and garage both showed no evidence of the presence of roosting bats and lacked features with bat roost potential. Therefore, the construction work is considered highly unlikely to lead to the disturbance of bats or lead to the loss of a bat roost. A European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) would not be required to allow the works to go ahead lawfully.
- 1.1.5** 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 Emily Swanborough to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment at 23 Woodcote Road in Caversham in Reading, Berkshire.

2.1.2 The assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a loft conversion and side extension following the demolition of the garage.

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 (BMCL). The BMCL 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 BMCL 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 situated on the northern side of Woodcote Road between Highmoor Road and Darell Road in Caversham in Reading, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 70411 75275).

2.3.2 The property is set in a suburban area amongst other residential properties with gardens and scattered trees. While the surrounding area is primarily residential with two recreational grounds situated approximately 290 metres to the northwest and 520 metres to the north, approximately 0.8ha of woodland is also situated 80 metres to the northeast. In addition, a further 1.8ha and 1.9ha of woodland is located

approximately 590 metres to the east and 770 metres to the northeast respectively. The River Thames flows approximately 380 metres to the south and is bordered by over 16ha of mixed woodland on its northern bank and agricultural land on its southern bank, 100 metres to the south of the property. While the further surroundings to the north and east are primarily residential with fragmented woodland distributed throughout, large patches of agricultural land, woodland and semi-improved grassland are distributed to the west within Mapledurham.

- 2.3.3** Overall, the suburban setting with patches of woodland and the River Thames close to the south provide bats with moderate to high quality commuting and foraging habitat in the vicinity.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Building Inspection

3.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the house and garage was conducted on the 7th February 2022 by an ecologist registered under the Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 and 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 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); 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;
- 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; 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 was full access to the exterior and roof space of both the house and attached garage, and so there were no significant constraints to the survey.

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4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Photographs of the property and garage 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 and garage are described as follows:

4.2 External Survey

- 4.2.1** The detached house was of modern brick cavity wall construction with a half-hipped roof (**Photographs 1 & 2**). The roof was covered with tight interlocking tiles on all elevations with a fully mortared ridge, hips and vent brick (**Photographs 3 & 4; Target notes 1, 2 & 3**). Whilst the lead flashing around the fluepipe on the north facing section of the roof was tight with no visible gaps, the flashing was lifted on the front porch, however, the crevices were large and the brick wall could be seen behind (**Photographs 5, 6 & 7; Target note 4**). The UPVC soffit was tight to the brick wall around the entire property with no gaps observed (**Photograph 8; Target note 5**).
- 4.2.2** No evidence of roosting bats was observed at the time of the external inspection of the house.
- 4.2.3** The garage was partly attached to the eastern wall of the house with the northern section being a flat roof and the southern section having a pitched, tiled roof (**Photographs 9 & 10**). The northern flat roofed section was tight to the soffit with no visible gaps; the southern section was covered with tight interlocking tiles and had a fully mortared ridge (**Photographs 11 & 12; Target notes 6, 7 & 8**). The tiles had capped end and occasionally these had moved leaving the tile end open, they were closely inspected and unsuitable for bats (**Photograph 13; Target note 9**). The lead flashing between the garage and the main house was fitted closely to the wall with no gaps observed (**Photograph 14; Target note 10**). The UPVC soffit was generally tight to the brick wall of the garage; however, the soffit on the flat roof section did not fully connect to the main property (**Photograph 15; Target note 11**).
- 4.2.4** No evidence of roosting bats was observed at the time of the external inspection of the garage.

4.3 Internal Survey

- 4.3.1** The roof void was accessible via a loft hatch with an approximate ridge height of 2.5 metres and was of 'cut and pitch' roof construction (**Photograph 16; Target note 12**). The roof was cobwebbed throughout and lined with generally tightly fitted bitumen felt although there were small sections of roof tiles exposed where the felt overlapped and through occasional tears (**Photograph 17; Target note 13**). The ridge was cobwebbed throughout the void (**Photograph 18; Target note 14**). The blockwork of the half-hipped gable ends was filled with foam cavity wall insulation; however, they did not reach the ridge with a large opening at the top where the soffit was visible behind (**Photograph 19; Target note 15 & 16**). A large gap in the felt with surrounding wire was also visible where a pipe passed through the felt (**Photograph 20; Target note 17**). The floor was boarded with fibreglass insulation beneath, filling some of the eaves whilst others were left open, and daylight could be seen (**Photograph 21; Target notes 18 & 19**).
- 4.3.2** No signs of roosting bats were observed during the internal inspection of the house.
- 4.3.3** The garage had an open roof and was used for storage, accessible via a large, up and over door to the front, and a smaller rear door to the garden (**Photograph 22; Target note 20**). The roof was lined with a mixture of tightly sealed bitumen felt on the northern tiled section and wooden boarding on the southern flat roof section (**Photograph 23; Target note 21 & 22**). The garage was cobwebbed throughout, and timbers were tight to the wall with occasionally mouse droppings present throughout (**Photograph 24; Target note 23 & 24**). Daylight was however observed through the timbers where the external soffit did not fully connect to the main property (**Photograph 25**).
- 4.3.4** No signs of roosting bats were observed during the internal inspection of the garage.

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential/Status

- 5.1.1** The house and garage showed no evidence of the presence of roosting bats. The house's loft lacked suitable features for crevice-dwelling bats and no droppings were visible, which indicates that primarily void-dwelling species, such as the long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.), are highly unlikely to be present.
- 5.1.2** The roof of the main property and garage both lacked external features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bats, such as pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* species at the locations of the proposed window installations.
- 5.1.3** Overall, the house and garage were of modern construction with tightly fitted roof coverings and roofline and lacked features suitable for bats and as such are considered to be of negligible bat roost potential.

5.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

- 5.2.1** The house and garage showed no signs of used by bats and lacked suitable bat roost features in the location of the proposed work, and as such, the construction work is considered highly unlikely to lead to the disturbance of bats or lead to the loss of a bat roost. A European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) would not be required to allow the works to go ahead lawfully.
- 5.2.1** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during 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.

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 house viewed from the northeast.



2. Rear of the house viewed from the southwest.



3. Tight interlocking tiles with a fully mortared ridge and vent brick, viewed from the southwest.



4. Fully mortared hips viewed from the southwest.



5. Lead flashing around the flue pipe tight to roof tiles, viewed from the southwest.



6. Lifted lead flashing with brick wall visible behind, viewed from the northeast.



7. Lifted lead flashing with brick wall visible behind, viewed from the northwest.



8. UPVC soffit tight to the brick wall, viewed from the north.



9. Front of the garage, viewed from the northeast.



10. Rear of the garage, viewed from the southwest.



11. Felt tight to the UPVC soffit, viewed from the southwest.



12. Tight interlocking tiles with a fully mortared ridge, viewed from the northeast.



13. Open caps on interlocking tiles, viewed from the northeast.



14. Lead flashing tight between garage and main house, viewed from the northeast.



15. UPVC Soffit not fully attached to brick wall of the main property, viewed from the southeast.



16. Cut and pitch roof construction.



17. Small tear in bitumen felt.



18. Cobwebbed ridge throughout void.



19. Stone block half-hipped gable end with soffit visible behind.



20. Large gap in bitumen felt with surrounding wire where pipe passes through



21. Some eaves left open whilst others filled with fibreglass insulation.



22. Garage with open roof space being used for storage.



23. Wooden boarding on flat roofed section of the garage.

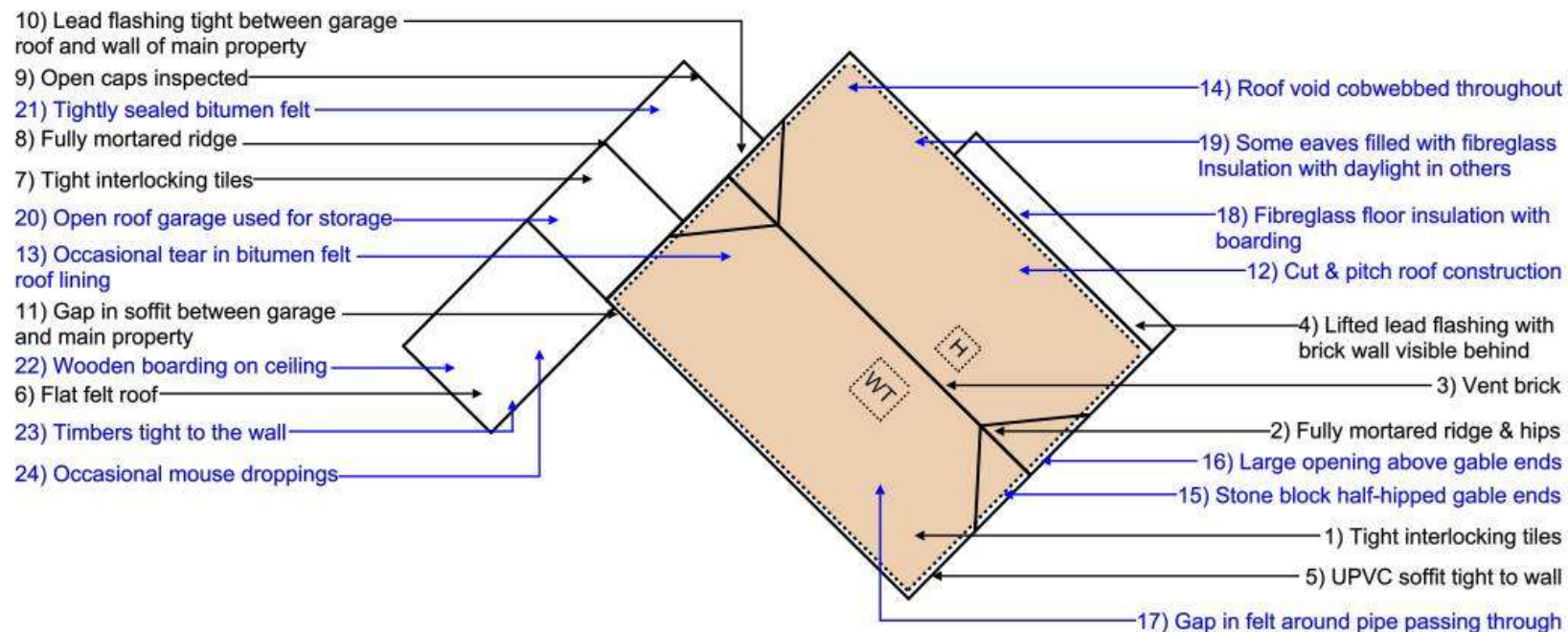


24. Timbers tight to the brick wall.



25. Daylight between soffit and wall of garage and house.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT PLAN



WT Water Tank Roof Space H Loft Hatch n. External Target Note n. Internal Target Note

Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	23 Woodcote Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7BA	
JM	February 2022	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

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