Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (BATS) AT 33 BLAGDON ROAD READING

Prepared for:
Mr P Singh
33 Blagdon Road
Reading
RG2 7NT

3 October 2022

Ref: SPH/ET/PEA-22/22.09

Offices in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Worcestershire
Tel: 0118 976 2902

Bramley House
Newnham Bridge
Tenbury Wells
Worcestershire
WR15 8NX
Tel: 0118 976 2902
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1. Introduction
1.1 Instruction
1.2 Aims and Objectives
1.3 Proposed works
1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

2. Legislation and Planning Policy
2.1 Legislative Background

3. Site Location and Description
3.1 Site Location
3.2 Site Description

4. Survey Methodology
4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search
4.2 Daylight Survey
4.3 Constraints

5. Survey Findings
5.1 External Inspection
5.2 Internal Inspection

6. Evaluation

7. Conclusions
7.1 Interpretation
7.2 Contingency plan

8. References

9. Queries

Appendix 1

©2022 Urban Tree Experts
All rights in this report are reserved. No part of it may be reproduced, edited or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature, without our written permission. Its content and format are for the exclusive use of Mr P Singh and his agents in dealing with this site. It may not be sold, lent, hired out or divulged to any third party not directly involved in this site without the written consent of Urban Tree Experts. It may be reproduced as part of a planning application.

The validity of this report ceases at the prescribed time limit or after 12 months from the site inspection, or if the site conditions change due to unspecified works that affect the site whichever is the sooner.

Executive Summary

Urban Tree Experts was commissioned by Mr P Singh to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of 33 Blagdon Road, Reading, RG2 7NT. This is to support a current planning application to Reading Borough Council (reference: 220622).

The site visit was carried out on Thursday 22 September 2022 at 12.30pm, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property took place to look for signs of bats.

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) comprised a detailed search of the exterior and interior of the building for bats, signs of bats and features suitable for use by roosting bats. This includes droppings, internally or externally, scratch marks, rubbing and staining at exit holes, live or dead bats and other features such as missing tiles, this list is not exhaustive.

A desk top study was conducted prior to the survey to review existing information about the site and its surroundings and to inform the design of subsequent bat surveys, if required. The desk top study was conducted based upon a 2km search radius and it revealed one statutory designated site is located within, and no current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats have been granted within 2km of the proposed development site.

Internally and externally, there was no evidence of bats (current or historically) within the property. The building is in a good condition and offered no roosting opportunities for bats or access into the building for bats to roost.

Due to the absence of roosting potential and the lack of evidence of bats found during the detailed inspection, it is concluded that there is negligible potential for roosting bats to be present within the property. Based on the recommendations in the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines prior to works, no further survey effort is required.

1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr P Singh to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of 33 Blagdon Road, Reading, RG2 7NT to support a current planning application to Reading Borough Council.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) is designed to:

- Identify the presence/likely absence of bats within the building.
- Provide information on the status of bats using the building currently or previously).
- To add confidence where no bats are found, or to categorise the nature of a roost where evidence of bats are found.
- To establish whether further surveys, mitigation or an EPSL is required.

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) and report writing were carried out in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, 2016).

1.3 Proposed Works

The survey was commissioned in connection with a current planning application to Reading Borough Council (reference: 220622) that is seeking to construct a part single, part two storey side extension onto the existing property.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats was completed by Emma Turnbull and the report was written by Simon Holmes CEnv. Emma holds a Class 2 Bat Licence (CLS-41628) and Possession Licence (SCI-44140). She has been surveying bats for 5 years and has received training in surveying techniques, bat detector use, echolocation analysis, bat biology and identification and netting and ringing and is a registered bat carer with the Bat Conservation Trust.

Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI29096). He has 32 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work.

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

2.1 Legislative Background

All species of British bat are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Under this legislation it is an offence to kill or injure a bat or interfere with any roosting or resting site. A bat roost is interpreted as "*any structure or place used for shelter or protection*" whether or not bats are present at the time. A summary of the main legislation and planning considerations are included at Appendix 1.

Seven species of bat are also Species of Principal Importance for nature conservation in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This places a duty on all government departments to have regard for the conservation of these species and on the Secretary of State to further, or promote others to further, the conservation of these species.

3. Site Location and Description

3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU 7251 7062, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 33 Blagdon Road, Reading, highlighted.

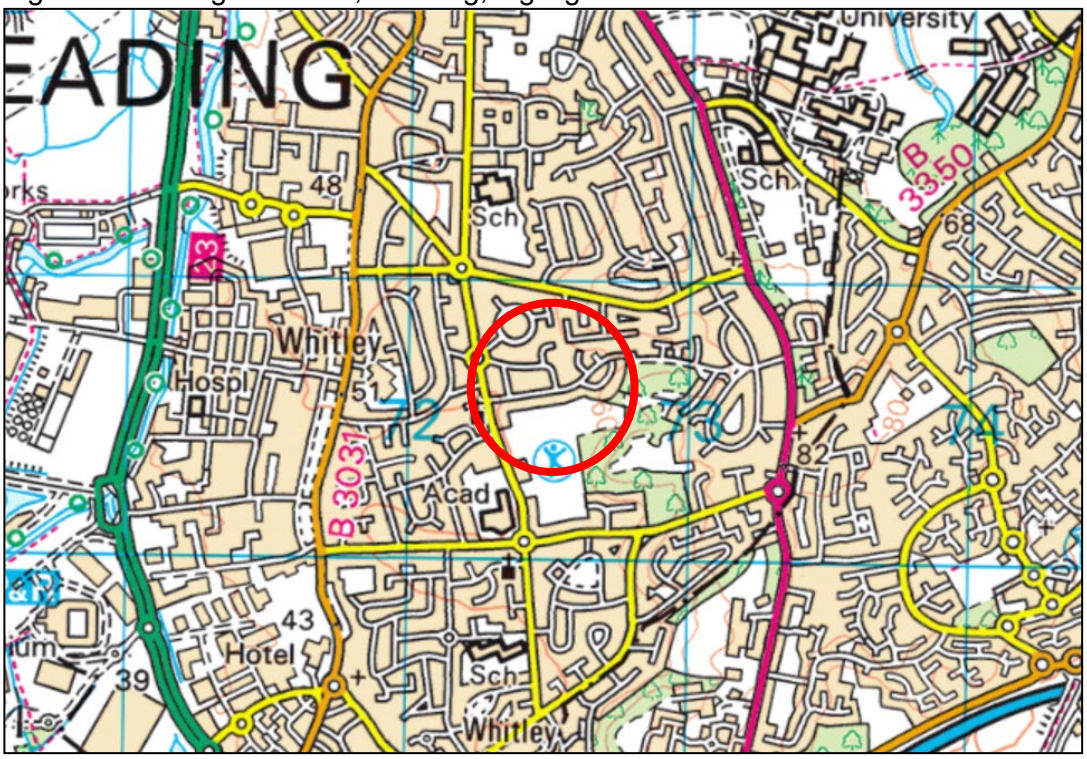

Figure 2. 33 Blagdon Road, Reading, overview of the immediate area.

3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached, brick-built property with a gravel driveway. The remainder of the site comprises a small front garden laid to lawn and a rear garden which is mainly laid to decking and lawn with some shrubs throughout, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers limited foraging or commuting habitat for bats.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 33 Blagdon Road, Reading. 22.09.22

4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

Google Earth and MAGIC maps (magic.defra.gov.uk) websites were used prior to the survey to determine the suitability of the surrounding habitat to support roosting bats and to identify any statutory designated sites within 2km of the site. Due to the suburban area, the scale of the proposed development, and the very local impact that may occur, no data was sought from local records centre at this time.

The property is situated on the outskirts of the town of Reading and is surrounded by properties and gardens of similar sizes and styles. Immediately to the south lies a recreational ground which extends east into Cowsey Wood Nature Reserve comprising woodland and grassland. These areas are likely to provide good habitat for bats and are within travelling distance for bats. To the north and west lie large housing developments which provide limited habitat for bats. Further afield lie pockets of woodland, large waterbodies and recreational grounds, all of which are likely to provide good habitat for bats, although there is no ecological connectivity to the site from these areas.

Pearman's Copse Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies within 2km of the proposed development site, although there is no ecological connectivity from the site to this designated area. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed no current EPSL's for bats have been granted within 2km of the site, although there are seven historical records of EPSL's within the search area.

4.2 Daylight Survey

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of 33 Blagdon Road, Reading, RG2 7NT was carried out by Emma Turnbull on Thursday 22 September 2022 at 12.30pm. The weather conditions for the survey were sunny with a temperature of 19 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole and a ladder.

During the preliminary ecological appraisal (bats), an external and internal inspection of the property was carried out to identify any signs of occupation by bats and features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines. Features investigated included:

- Construction of the building– soffits, loft space, tiles/slates, lead flashings etc.
- Building condition – structure of roof and walls.
- Internal conditions – microclimate stability, draughts etc.
- Access points – potential entry and exit points for bats.
- Roosting points – cracks and crevices, between underlay and roofing tiles/slates.

Field signs that would indicate the presence of bats were searched for. These included:

- Bat droppings on the floor and walls of the building.
- Feeding remains (particularly butterfly and moth wings).
- Evidence of urine and/or oily staining around possible roost entrances.
- Presence of areas cleared of cobwebs.
- Where a breathable roofing membrane has been fitted staining on the membrane may suggest use by bats.
- Odour can sometimes suggest the present of bats.
- Squeaking and chattering can reveal bats roosting between the tiles and roofing underlay.

Buildings or structures that were not to be affected by the current proposals or with no bat roosting potential were not inspected.

4.3 Constraints

Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client and there were no constraints to the survey.

5 Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property were examined for signs described in section 4.2. Windowsills, exposed features around the windows, fascia's and walls were inspected for any evidence of bat droppings or staining.

The property is a semi-detached, brick-built building that is in a good condition externally. The roof of the property is pitched and covered in close fitting composite tiles, none of which are missing or broken, see Figure 4 below. The ridge and hip tiles are all tightly fitted with no gaps which could be used by roosting bats (see Figure 5 on page 9) and the verges are all well sealed and had no cracks in which roosting bats could exploit. The lead flashing around the chimney is all tightly fitted and had no gaps in which crevice dwelling bats could utilise for roosting (see Figure 6 on page 9), and the soffits and fascia's are all tightly fitted to the walls and had no cracks or splits in which bats could use for roosting, see Figure 7 on page 10.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the external inspection of the property and externally there were no visible features which could be utilised by roosting bats.

Figure 4. Example of roof tiles. 33 Blagdon Road, Reading. 22.09.22

Figure 5. Example of hip tiles. 33 Blagdon Road, Reading. 22.09.22

Figure 6. Lead flashing around chimney. 33 Blagdon Road, Reading. 22.09.22

Figure 7. Soffits and fascia's. 33 Blagdon Road, Reading. 22.09.22

5.2 Internal Inspection

An internal inspection of the property was undertaken and was examined for any signs of bats (as described in section 4.2).

The loft space was accessed by ladders through a hatch (see Figure 8 on page 11) and is in a good condition internally. The loft space is uncluttered, not lit, not boarded but insulated, see Figure 9 on Figure 11. The roof tiles were lined with bitumen felt all of which is in a good condition with no rips or tears which could be utilised by roosting bats, see Figure 10 on page 12.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the loft and internally there are no visible roosting opportunities for bats.

Figure 8. Entrance to loft. 33 Blagdon Road, Reading. 22.09.22

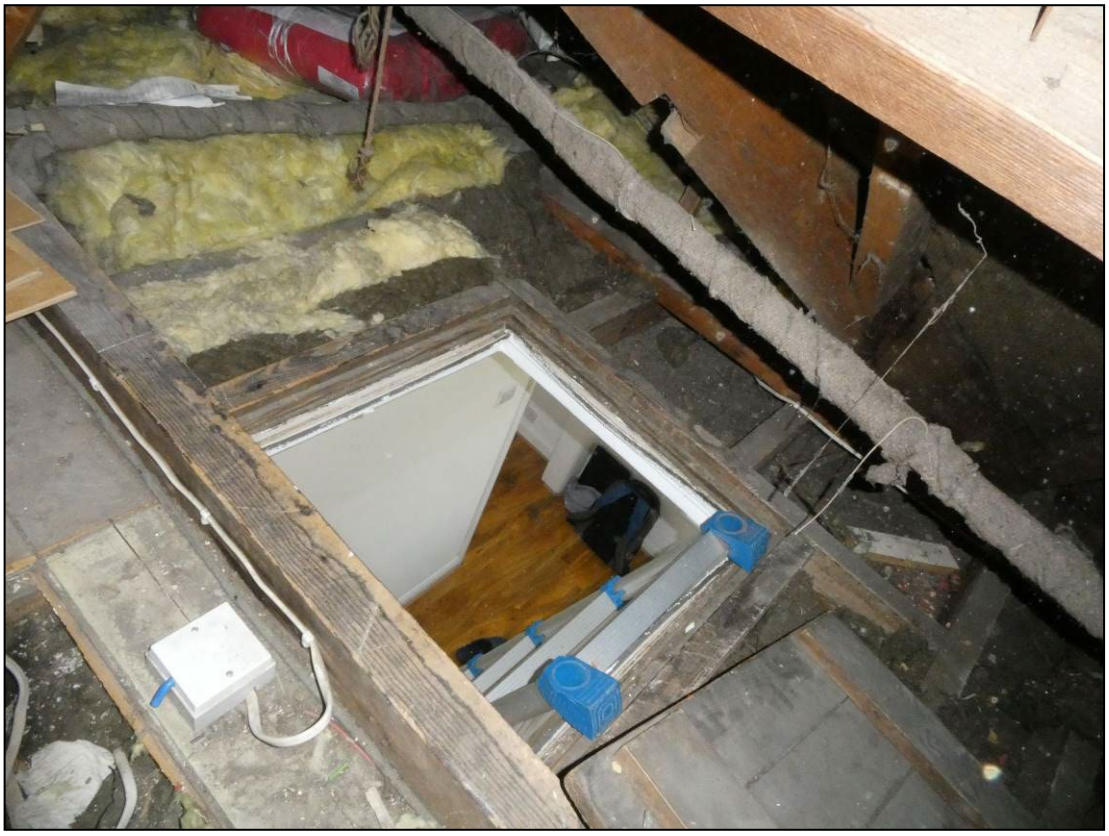

Figure 9. Example of loft space. 33 Blagdon Road, Reading. 22.09.22

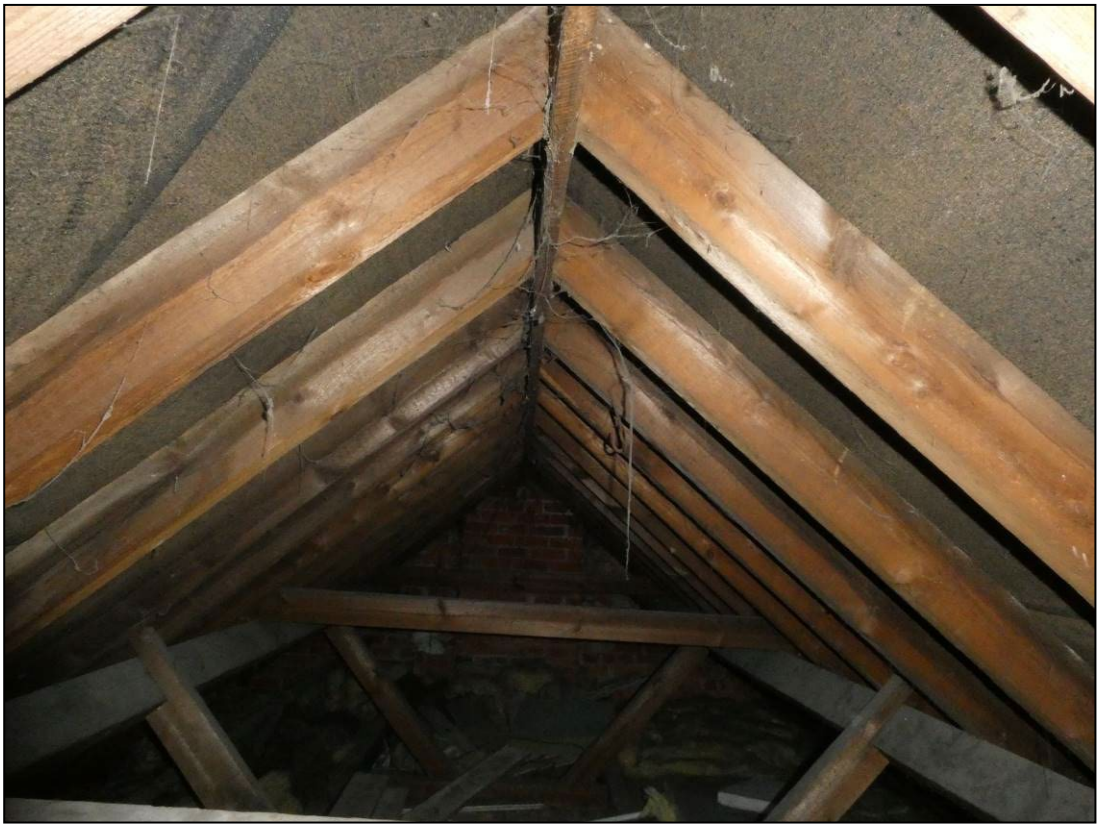

Figure 10. Bitumen lining of roof tiles. 33 Blagdon Road, Reading. 22.09.22

6. Evaluation

The bat roost potential of the features within the site have been assessed with reference to the criteria laid out in the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Mitchell-Jones, 2004). These criteria are listed on page 22 of the guidelines with the features **highlighted in bold**.

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be higher where structures:

- are of a pre-20th Century construction;
- are in a lowland rural setting;
- **have woodland, mature trees, species-rich grassland and/or water nearby;**
- have large dimension roof timbers with cracks, joints and holes;
- have numerous crevices in stonework and structures;
- have an uneven roof covering with gaps, though not too draughty;
- have hanging tiles or roof cladding, especially on south-facing walls;
- **have a roof warmed by the sun;**
- are disused or little used; largely undisturbed;
- provide appropriate hibernation conditions, such as abandoned mines, tunnels, kilns, or fortifications; or
- Recent and **historical records of bat roosts in the general area.**

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be lower where structures:

- **are in an urban setting with little green space;**
- are subject to heavy disturbance (constant movement due to draughts and noise, also unstable microclimate);
- **have a small,** cluttered **roof void (particularly for brown long-eared);**
- **are of a modern construction with few gaps or crevices that bats can fly or crawl through (though pipistrelle bats may still be present);**
- are comprised of prefabricated steel or sheet materials; (some sections);
- are active industrial premises.

Please note that the above list provides generic screening criteria only and there are exceptions to consider.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Interpretation

The combined evidence from the internal and external inspection of the provides a high level of confidence in support of the opinions as set out in this report. There are no visible features externally on the building in which bats could roost or access the building to roost and there are no opportunities internally for bats to roost.

Informed by the results of the survey and the factors highlighted in Section 6, it is concluded that there is negligible potential for roosting bats within the property. Based on recommendations in the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, no further survey effort is required.

7.2 Contingency Plan

In the unlikely event that bats are found during the proposed works, all work must stop and advice sought from Urban Tree Experts or another licenced bat ecologist.

If, for whatever reason, there is a time delay of greater than 12 months between this survey and the commencement of work, then the survey should be repeated as the condition of the building may have changed and bats may start roosting at the site.

8. References

Collins, J (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edition). Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), London.
HM Government (2017) Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations.
HM Government (1981) The Wildlife and Countryside Act.
HM Government (2006) Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.
Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (1999). Bat Workers' Manual (2nd Edition). Joint Nature Conservancy Committee, Peterborough.

9. Queries

Any queries regarding this report should be addressed, in the first instance, to Urban Tree Experts:

Telephone: 01189 762902
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

Urban Tree Experts
Bramley House
Newnham Bridge
Tenbury Wells
Worcestershire WR15 8NX

Simon Holmes CEnv
Consultant, Urban Tree Experts
Natural England Licence CLS-CLS-17637, CLS-CLS-17638

APPENDIX 1

In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat.
- 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.
- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

Planning Considerations:
Government guidance to Local Planning Authorities stipulates the need to consider biodiversity and protected species during the consideration of planning applications. The NPPF makes clear that the planning system should help minimise the impacts that development can have on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. In addition, the ODPM Circular 04/2005 states "*It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision".*

Policy CS36 of the Reading Borough Core Strategy states *"Development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest (including protected species and their habitats) found within the application site into their schemes. On sites with recognised biodiversity or geological value, development will not be permitted where there would be a direct or indirect adverse impact on the site, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that: -*

i. The need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and
ii. Appropriate compensation, impact minimisation, mitigation and compensation are provided".

Developments that compromise the protection afforded to bats or roosts under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 will require a European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England (NE).

NE, the government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, is responsible for issuing EPS licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations.

Three tests must be satisfied before this licence (to permit otherwise prohibited acts) can be issued:

- Reg 44(2)(e) – the derogation is "in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment".
- Reg 44(3)(a) – there is "no satisfactory alternative" to the derogation.
- Reg 44(3)(b) –the derogation is "not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range".

Tests (a) and (e) can be met with the issue of planning permission for the proposed works. Test (b) is determined by NE's ecology department that requires the development of a suitable mitigation strategy that would ensure that any bats present on site, are retained at the same population level or better.