

**87 Balmore Drive
Caversham
Berkshire
RG4 8NN**

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Ref: R2757a

April 2021



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Andy Pettican to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within 87 Balmore Drive – a semi-detached house in Caversham, Berkshire.

1.1.2 The survey was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for a two storey side extension following the demolition of the existing garage.

1.2 Legislative Background

1.2.1 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.

1.2.2 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;

- **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”.

1.2.3 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 European Protected Species licensing is necessary before granting planning permission.

1.2.4 European Protected Species mitigation licence 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 of a full mitigation licence application.

1.2.5 Licensable projects affecting small numbers of seven commonly occurring bat species may fall under the remit of the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (WML-CL21). The Class Licence permits ‘Registered Consultants’ 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.

1.2.6 Survey data supporting EPS 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.

1.3 Site Location and Context

1.3.1 The house is situated on the southern side of Balmore Drive in Caversham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 71696 75410).

1.3.2 The property is in a suburban setting surrounded with residential properties on all sides. Patches of woodland are situated approximately 115 metres to the west, 395 metres to the northwest, 570 metres to the north, 730 metres

northwest, and 775 metres to the northeast. The River Thames flows just over one kilometre to the south and a number of lakes along the river are situated approximately 1.6 kilometres to the southeast.

- 1.3.3** Overall, the nearby woodlands and river provide high quality commuting and foraging habitat to bats in the local area.

2 SURVEY METHOD

2.1 Bat Survey

2.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the house was undertaken on the 31st March by an ecologist registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18.

2.1.2 The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars, and a high power (1 million candle power) torch and looked for any signs of occupation by bats, and for features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines (Collins 2016; Mitchell-Jones 2004; Mitchell-Jones & McLeish 2004).

2.1.3 The following may indicate the presence of a bat roost within a building:

- 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).

2.1.4 Residential properties may offer potential roosting sites in a number of locations, favoured locations include:

- Under roof and ridge tiles, especially when loose or missing tiles are present or sections of mortar are missing;
- At the eaves – gaining access via gaps between the soffits and wall;
- At the gable ends – access is typically gained at the roof apex via gaps in the soffits or under roof tiles;
- Within an enclosed roof space – long-eared bats (*Plecotus* sp.) for example, will often cluster at the ridge beam.

2.2 Survey Constraints

2.2.1 Full access was available to the interior and exterior of the property and therefore there were no significant constraints to the survey.

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 Building Inspection

3.1.1 Photographs of the property 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 house are described as follows:

3.2 External Survey

3.2.1 The house was semi-detached with the neighbouring property attached to the west. The house was of brick cavity wall construction and had a hipped roof, with a half-hipped dormer window on the eastern side and a pitched roof dormer window on the front elevation (**Photographs 1 & 2**). A detached flat roof garage was situated to the east of the house (**Photograph 3**).

3.2.2 The house's roof was covered with flat roof tiles that were mostly in place and fitted tightly, apart from some occasional gaps under the tiles around two skylights situated to the rear of the house (**Photographs 4 & 5; Target notes 1 & 2**). The ridge and hip tiles were all in place and fitted tightly on the main roof and dormer window (**Photograph 6; Target note 3**). The timber soffit boxes were tight to the eaves around the house (**Photograph 7; Target note 4**). The pitched roof and bay window to the front of the house was clad with hanging tiles, which were mostly tight apart from where one tile was slipped towards the apex and around the corners of the bay window (**Photograph 8; Target notes 5 & 6**). The half-hipped dormer window to the eastern side of the house was also clad with hanging tiles, which were lifted around the corners (**Photograph 9; Target note 7**). The gaps under the hanging tiles offered features suitable for roosting bats.

3.2.3 The flat roof on the garage was tightly lined with bitumen felt (**Photograph 10; Target note 8**). The timber fascias were tight to the wall on the western side of the garage (**Photograph 11; Target note 9**). A gap was present behind the timber fascia on the eastern side of the garage, which was cobwebbed (**Photograph 12; Target note 10**). A small, cobwebbed gap was present behind the fascias to the rear of the garage, which were of limited extent (**Photograph 13; Target note 11**). A narrow strip of hanging tiles on the front southern side of the garage had some gaps behind them,

but they showed no evidence of use by bats during a close inspection (**Photograph 14; Target note 12**).

- 3.2.4** No evidence of bats was visible on the exterior of the house and garage at the time of the survey.

3.3 Internal Survey

- 3.3.1** Within the house there were two eaves spaces. Eaves space 1 was situated along the front (southern) side of the house and was accessed through a central doorway. The roof within the space was of 'cut and pitch' construction. The space had an approximate floor-to-ridge height of one metre and had a front facing gable end (**Photograph 15**). A brick wall was present towards the western end of the eaves, but the eastern end was not visible (**Photograph 16; Target note 13**). The roof was unlined but was covered with plastic sheeting under the rafters (**Photograph 17; Target note 14**). The floor was boarded centrally and around the doorway with carpet in places and was insulated with fibreglass (**Photograph 18; Target note 15**). The eaves were open (**Target note 16**). The southern gable end was covered with plastic sheeting with the hanging tiles visible behind (**Photograph 19; Target note 17**).
- 3.3.2** Eaves space 2 was situated along the rear (northern) side of the house and was accessed through a couple of doorways and had an approximate floor-to-ridge height of one metre (**Photograph 20**). A plasterboard wall and pipework were present towards the south eastern end of the eaves space (**Photograph 21; Target note 18**). The roof was unlined with the undersides of the roof tiles visible (**Photograph 22; Target note 19**). The floor was boarded in places and was insulated with fibreglass (**Photograph 23; Target note 20**). The eaves were open (**Photograph 24; Target note 21**).
- 3.3.3** The garage had a concrete floor and was lined with hardboard, which was tight to the walls (**Photograph 25; Target note 22**). A gap was present around the top of the metal doorways (**Photograph 26; Target note 23**).
- 3.3.4** No evidence of bats was visible to the interior of the house and garage during the survey.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential

- 4.1.1** Much of the house's roof comprised living space and no evidence of roosting bats was found inside the house's small eaves spaces and therefore it is highly unlikely that the property supports primarily void-dwelling bat species such as the long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.) for example.
- 4.1.2** Externally, the house had features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling species such as the pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* species. These features included the gaps under and behind the hanging tiles, in particular to the eastern side and front of the house. No evidence of roosting bats (i.e. staining or droppings) was visible on the exterior of the house during the inspection.
- 4.1.3** Two species of pipistrelle bat: common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) are widespread and abundant throughout the UK (Richardson 2000). Small *Myotis* species such as the whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*) and Brandt's bat (*Myotis brandtii*) are widespread and common but less abundant than the pipistrelle species. Roosts supporting pipistrelle and/or small *Myotis* bat species are considered to be of low to moderate conservation importance (subject to the type of roost present i.e. non-breeding roosts supporting individual or small numbers of bats through to maternity roosts supporting large numbers of female bats).
- 4.1.4** Taking into account the setting and the bat roosting features, the house is considered to be of moderate potential for roosting bats.
- 4.1.5** The garage was of simple, flat roofed construction with some gaps of limited extent that showed no evidence of use by bats during a close inspection, and therefore is considered highly unlikely to support roosting bats.

4.2 Further Survey

4.2.1 Further survey of the house should be carried out to determine if roosting bats are present, and if present, the status of the bat roost(s). The surveys should comprise of at least two emergence and/or re-entry surveys. A third survey may be necessary if bats are found to be present during the first two surveys to help characterise the roost. The surveys should be completed within the period between May and September inclusive with at least one of the surveys carried out in the peak season for recording maternity roosts i.e. May to August, and at least two weeks should separate the surveys (Collins 2016).

4.3 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

4.3.1 The proposed building work will result in the loss of external features within the house's roof with potential for use by crevice-roosting bats species. Further survey work will determine if bats roost within the house, and if present, identify the access points used and therefore confirm whether the work will result in the loss of those roosts and/or lead to bats being disturbed or harmed.

4.3.2 The survey findings show that the demolition of the garage will be highly unlikely to have any impact on bats and their roosts so could go ahead lawfully with no requirement for further surveys.

4.3.3 Subject to the findings of further survey of the house, a European Protected Species licence (EPSL) or registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class licence (BMCL) (if applicable) may be required to allow the planned work to go ahead lawfully. An EPSL or confirmation of the registration of the site under the BMCL can be issued by Natural England if the three licensing tests (detailed in 1.2.2) have been met by the proposed work and can be sought once all necessary planning consents for the proposals have been granted and any wildlife related conditions discharged.

- 4.3.4** To secure a licence or site registration, it would be necessary to demonstrate that the 'favourable conservation status' of the local bat population would be maintained by mitigating the impact of the building work on bats, and by maintaining bat roosts during the course of the work, and following its completion. There would be scope to mitigate the impacts during the work, and retain roosts in the longer term, and as such it is considered that the proposals could retain the 'favourable conservation status' of the bat population as long as the mitigation and compensation proposals detailed in section 4.4 below are followed.

4.4 Mitigation and Compensation Proposals

- 4.4.1** The mitigation strategy submitted with a mitigation licence will require, under the terms of the EPSL or BMCL (if applicable), the start of the work affecting the bat roost(s) to be timed to avoid the periods when bats are most susceptible to disturbance i.e. winter hibernation season for all roosts (mid-November to February) to avoid disturbing torpid bats, and outside of the peak summer breeding season (May to mid-September) where evidence of a maternity roost is recorded.
- 4.4.2** Replacement roosting opportunities would be provided so that they are available to bats in the short-term i.e. prior to and during the work by erecting woodcrete bat boxes suitable for the species present on nearby mature trees or poles before the work starts.
- 4.4.3** A 'soft strip' approach to the work should be adopted i.e. the careful removal of hanging tiles and coverings by gloved hands under the supervision of a licensed ecologist, or Registered Consultant if working under the BMCL. In the event that bats are discovered during the course of the work, the licensed ecologist or Registered Consultant would capture the bat(s) and transfer it/them directly to one of the bat boxes erected in advance of the works.
- 4.4.4** In the longer term, as part of the licence, replacement roosting opportunities may need to be incorporated into the newly extended property. Roosting opportunities for crevice roosting bats can be incorporated into the brickwork of the newly extended building in the form of integral bat tubes or boxes.

5 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 south.



2. Rear and side of the house viewed from the northeast.



3. Detached garage to the east of the house.



4. Roof tiles mostly fitted tightly.



5. Gaps under the roof tiles around the skylight to the side of the house.



6. Ridge and hip tiles in place and mortared.



7. Timber soffits tight to the eaves.



8. Corner hanging tiles lifted on the bay window to the front of the house.



9. Hanging tiles lifted on the dormer window at the eastern side of the house.



10. Flat roof garage tightly fitted with bitumen roofing felt.



11. Timber fascias tight on the western side of the garage.



12. Gaps behind timber fascias on the eastern side of the garage.



13. Small cobwebbed gap behind fascias to the rear of the garage.



14. Strip of hanging tiles on the front of the garage lifted in places.



15. Internal view of eaves space 1 with a south facing gable end.



16. Brick wall at the western end of the eaves space 1.



17. The unlined roof covered in plastic in eaves space 1.



18. Floor boarded in eaves space 1.



19. Hanging tiles covered with plastic at the southern gable end in eaves space 1.



20. Internal view of eaves space 2.



21. Plasterboard wall at the south eastern end of eaves space 2.



22. The unlined roof of eaves space 2.



23. The boarded floor and insulation in eaves space 2.



24. The open eaves in eaves space 2.

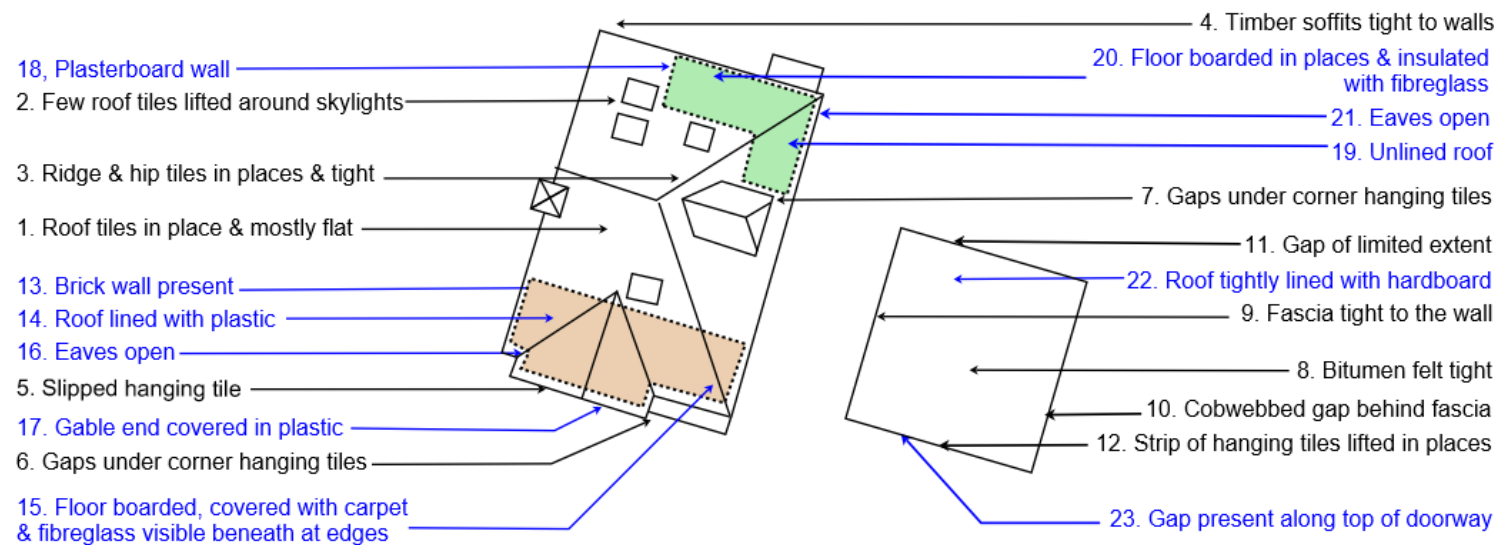


25. The internal view of the garage with hardboard tightly fitted on the roof.



26. Gap present at the top of the garage door.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



Roof space
 Eave space 1
 Chimney
 n. External Target note
 n. Internal Target note

Drawn by:	Date:	Scale:	87 Balmore Drive Caversham	
VP	April 2021	Not to scale	Preliminary Roost Assessment Findings	

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