



# PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT - REPORT

**CLIENT:** Linda Maule & Jonathan Humphreys

**SITE:** 55a Armour Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6HA

**CONSULTANT:** Margarita Smoldareva BSc PGDip

**CHECKED BY:** Oliver Tong ND Arb TechArborA

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Greenwood Environmental Ltd | Company No. 10749899 | VAT No. GB328956949

Reg. Office: 98 Hornchurch Road, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 1JS

T: 01708 982 000 | E: [info@greenwood-env.co.uk](mailto:info@greenwood-env.co.uk)

## Report Summary

In November 2021, Linda Maule and Jonathan Humphreys commissioned Greenwood Environmental Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment at 55A Armour Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6HA. This assessment is required to inform a planning application associated with demolition of existing conservatory and a new single storey rear extension, conversion of existing outbuilding to annexe with new pitched roof, new front porch with rendering of existing brick elevations, replacing all windows and extending roof loft conversion with 3no rear dormers and 3no roof lights to front elevation.

To fulfil the above brief to assess the potential for the existing buildings on site to support roosting bats, a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was undertaken on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

During the external assessment of the main residential dwelling all the roof tiles were in good condition and no missing or slipped tiles were recorded. The soffit boxes were all intact and shows no ingress points. The brick work has no missing mortar or missing bricks that could create points of entry for fauna to utilise. During the internal inspection of the loft void, it was noted that the space was used to store personal items and a water tank. The roof tiles, timber trusses and supporting timber frame were all in good state of repair and showed no ingress points. The fibre glass insulation and lower supporting timber framed showed no evidence of bats such as bat droppings.

Following the results of the Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment, the following recommendations have been made:

**55A Armour Road, Reading RG31 6HA main residential building and outbuilding** were fully inspected and no bat roosts were identified. These buildings had no potential for roosting bats. The survey data obtained for the site is valid for 12 months from the survey date. If development works to the surveyed structure have not commenced within this timeframe it will be essential to update the survey effort to establish if suitable features have developed and if bats have colonised the buildings in the interim. In the unlikely event that a bat is found during demolition works all works must immediately cease and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted.

### Nesting Birds

Any works to the building on site is recommended to be undertaken outside the bird nesting season. The nesting bird season is weather dependent but generally extends between March and end of August. If this is not possible, then the building affected should be checked by an experienced ecologist for nesting birds immediately prior to works commencing. If birds are found to be nesting, any works which may affect them would have to be delayed until the young have fledged, and the nest has been abandoned naturally.

### Habitat Enhancement

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework, the development should aim to enhance the site for bats. Bat boxes should be installed to provide roosting habitat for species such as pipistrelle. In general, bats seek warm places and for this reason boxes should be located where they will receive full/partial sun, although installing boxes in a variety of orientations will provide a range of climatic conditions. Position boxes at least 4 m above ground to prevent disturbance from people and/or predators. Please refer to Recommendation Section for further guidance.

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## Introduction

### PROJECT BACKGROUND

In November 2021, Linda Maule and Jonathan Humphreys commissioned Greenwood Environmental Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment at 55A Armour Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6HA. This assessment is required to inform a planning application associated with demolition of existing conservatory and a new single storey rear extension, conversion of existing outbuilding to annexe with new pitched roof, new front porch with rendering of existing brick elevations, replacing all windows and extending roof loft conversion with 3no rear dormers and 3no roof lights to front elevation.

To fulfil the above brief to assess the potential for the existing building on site to support roosting bats, a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was undertaken on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

All UK bat species are legally protected species, and they are capable of being material considerations in the planning process. A summary of the legislation protecting bats is included within Appendix 1. This section also provides some brief information on the ecology of British bat species.

### SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

The development site, which measures approximately 0.082 ha, is located within predominately residential area of Tilehurst, Reading. The site is located at OS grid reference SU66819 74200. At the time of the survey, the site was dominated by a residential dwelling, outbuilding building at the end of the rear garden and associated car park to the north. The site entrance off Armour Road.

Surrounding landscape was dominated by neighbouring residential properties with large, vegetated gardens. To the north within proximity Victoria Recreational Grounds, Armour Hill Allotments and Arthur Newbury Park were noted.

Further afield, designated areas for nature conservation were present such as North Essex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (1.2km W) and Chilterns OANB (2.1 km N), Mclroy Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) (700 m E) Blundells Corpse LNR and Lousehill Corpse LNR (800 m E). Thames River was noted 1.3 km north.

### DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED

The conclusions and recommendations made in this report are based on information provided by the client regarding the scope of the project. Documentation made available by the client is listed in Table 1.

| Document Name / Drawing Number | Author           |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| HumphreysDraft2a170821.pdf     | Mark A Chadd Ltd |

**Table 1: Documentation Provided by Client**

## Methodology

### DESK STUDY

The desk study included a search for statutory nature conservation sites designated for bats within a 10 km radius of the site.

### FIELD SURVEY

In line with the specifications detailed in Bat Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature, 2004) and Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016), a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of the building was conducted during daylight hours. A visual assessment was undertaken to determine the presence of any Potential Roost Features (PRFs), together with a general appraisal of the suitability of the site for foraging and commuting. Table 2 provides examples of PRFs. Any accessible PRFs were inspected using binoculars, a torch and endoscope for evidence of possible bat presence. Building was thoroughly surveyed externally and internally.

Based on the PRF's present, the survey area was assessed using the suitability classes detailed within Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016), as detailed below.

#### Externally

- Access through window panes, doors and walls;
- behind peeling paintwork or lifted rendering;
- behind hanging tiles;
- weatherboarding;
- eaves;
- soffit boxes;
- fascias;
- lead flashing;
- gaps under felt (even including those of flat roofs);
- under tiles/slates;
- existing bat and bird boxes; and
- any gaps in brickwork or stonework permitting access into access to cavity- or rubble-filled walls.

#### Internally

- behind wooden panelling;
- in lintels above doors and windows;
- behind window shutters and curtains;
- behind pictures, posters, furniture, peeling paintwork;
- peeling wallpaper, lifted plaster and boarded-up windows;
- inside cupboards and in chimneys accessible from fireplaces.
- within attic voids:
- the top of gable end or dividing walls;
- the top of chimney breasts;
- ridge and hip beams and other roof beams;
- mortise and tenon joints;
- all beams (free-hanging bats);
- the junction of roof timbers, especially where ridge and hip beams meet;
- behind purlins;
- between tiles and the roof lining; and
- under flat felt roofs.

| Suitability       | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>High</b>       | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Moderate</b>   | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed). |
| <b>Low</b>        | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).          |
| <b>Negligible</b> | Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

**Table 2: Classification of Structures with Bat Potential (Adapted from Collins, 2016)**

## Desk Study

### STATUTORY NATURE CONSERVATION SITES

The site is not located within 10 km of any statutory nature conservation sites designated for the presence of bats.

### SITE AND SURROUNDING HABITATS

Habitats within 1 km of the site suitable for roosting, commuting, and foraging include residential houses and associated gardens, running water and standing waterbodies and pockets of woodland.

## Survey Results

### INTRODUCTION

The Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was conducted on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021 by Margarita Smoldareva BSc (Hons) PGDip, Ecological Consultant.

Weather conditions were recorded and are presented in Table 3.

| Parameter             | Conditions |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Temperature (°C)      | 1          |
| Cloud Cover (%)       | 20         |
| Precipitation         | Dry        |
| Wind Speed (Beaufort) | F0-1       |

**Table 3: Weather Conditions During the Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment**

### SURVEY RESULTS

#### MAIN RESIDENTIAL BUILDING - EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

The main residential building was a two-storey brick built with a pitched clay tiled roof. The building was in a good state of repair and was occupied by the owners.

The roof of the building was made up of clay interlocking roof tiles and clay ridge tiles.

All the tiles were securely fitted and in good condition. No missing mortar, no lifted or broken tiles were recorded. The brickwork was all in good condition and no missing mortar or missing bricks were recorded. Wooden soffits were present along all elevations and were in good condition. No holes or ingress points were recorded within the soffit boxes.

Further external assessment of the building revealed no further possible ingress points for bats to utilise as the uPVC double glazed windows and door frames were in good condition and were compactly fitted around the brickwork. The single storey conservatory attached to the south-western elevation is considered as negligible to provide bat roosting places and the uPVC structure was firmly fitted to the existing brickwork and shown no crevices that bats could utilise.

No potential roosting features were recorded during the external inspection and therefore no evidence of bats in form of bat droppings, urine staining, feeding remains or scratch marks were recorded.



**Plate 1: Overview of the Residential Building (North-Eastern Elevation)**



**Plate 2: South-Western Elevation and Portion of Rear Garden**



**Plate 3: Existing Conservatory**



**Plate 4: North-Western Elevation**

#### **MAIN RESIDENTIAL BUILDING - INTERNAL ASSESSMENT**

Internally, the loft space could be accessed for inspection. The loft was used to store personal items by current owners. The loft space was at a height of approximately 2.5 meters. The roof was supported by wooden beams and minor cobwebbing was noted along the ridge area. No light was shining through from the outside as all the wooden rafters and trusses were tightly fitted. The block breeze gable ends shown no possible entry points as all the blocks were tightly fitted, in good condition and had no missing mortar. Fibre glass insulation was noted between the wooden floor supporting beams.

No evidence of bats in form of bat droppings, urine staining, feeding remains or scratch marks were recorded within the internal of the building.



**Plate 5: Inside the Loft Space**



**Plate 6: Timber Roof Trusses and Breeze Block Gable Ends**

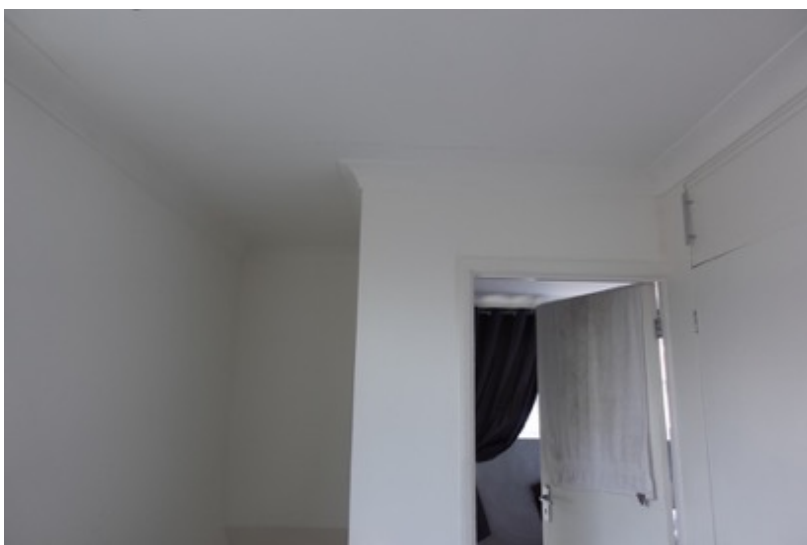


**Plate 7: Hallway**

## Discussion and Conclusions

### SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This assessment is required to inform a planning application associated with demolition of existing conservatory and a new single storey rear extension, conversion of existing outbuilding to annexe with new pitched roof, new front porch with rendering of existing brick elevations, replacing all windows and extending roof loft conversion with 3no rear dormers and 3no roof lights to front elevation.

### ASSESSMENT OF RESIDENTIAL BUILDING AND SIDE GARAGE

During the external assessment of the main residential building, no potential entry points for bats to utilise were recorded and no evidence of bats were recorded. All the roof tiles, brickwork, windows, and doors were tightly fitted.

The residential dwelling had undergone full internal inspection and no evidence of bats was recorded. The loft void had no points of entry for bats to utilise and no evidence of roosting bats were recorded.

### POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON BATS

The introduced shrubs and amenity grassland on site provide foraging and commuting habitat for bats. The wider landscape and direct connectivity to the designated landscape to the west and east provides increased opportunities for foraging and commuting bats.

Recommendation regarding roosting and foraging bats have therefore been identified in Recommendations section.

## Recommendations

All recommendations provided in this section are based on Greenwood Environmental Ltd's current understanding of the site proposals, correct at the time the report was compiled.

**55A Armour Road, Reading RG31 6HA main residential building and outbuilding** were fully inspected and no bat roosts were identified. These buildings had no potential for roosting bats. The survey data obtained for the site is valid for 12 months from the survey date. If development works to the surveyed structure have not commenced within this timeframe it will be essential to update the survey effort to establish if suitable features have developed and if bats have colonised the buildings in the interim. In the unlikely event that a bat is found during demolition works all works must immediately cease and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted.

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Any works to the building on site is recommended to be undertaken outside the bird nesting season. The nesting bird season is weather dependent but generally extends between March and end of August. If this is not possible, then the building affected should be checked by an experienced ecologist for nesting birds immediately prior to works commencing. If birds are found to be nesting, any works which may affect them would have to be delayed until the young have fledged, and the nest has been abandoned naturally.

### Habitat Enhancement

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework, the development should aim to enhance the site for bats. Bat boxes should be installed to provide roosting habitat for species such as pipistrelle as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below. In general, bats seek warm places and for this reason boxes should be located where they will receive full/partial sun, although installing boxes in a variety of orientations will provide a range of climatic conditions. Position boxes at least 4 m above ground to prevent disturbance from people and/or predators. The planting of species which attract night flying insects is encouraged as this will be of value to foraging bats, for example: evening primrose *Oenothera biennis*, goldenrod *Solidago virgaurea*, honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* and fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*.



Figure 1: Example of a Bat Roosting Feature (Bat Brick)



Figure 2: Example of a Bat Roosting Feature (Bat access slate tile)

## References and Bibliography

Altringham, J (2003). *British Bats*. New Naturalist. HarperCollins.

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

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2012). *UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework*. Available: [http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/UK\\_Post2010\\_Bio-Fwork.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/UK_Post2010_Bio-Fwork.pdf)

Jones, K and Walsh, A (2006). *A Guide to British Bats*. The Mammal Society, London.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004). *The Bat Workers' Manual* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). JNCC, Peterborough.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

## APPENDIX 1 – Bat Legislation

Bats and the places they use for shelter or protection (i.e. roosts) receive legal protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitats Regulations 2017) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (Habitats Regulations 2019). They receive further legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, as amended. This protection means that bats, and the places they use for shelter or protection, are capable of being a material consideration in the planning process.

Regulation 41 of the Habitats Regulations 2017, states that a person commits an offence if they:

- deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- deliberately disturb bats; or
- damage or destroy a bat roost (breeding site or resting place).

Disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

It is an offence under the Habitats Regulations 2017 for any person to have in his possession or control, to transport, to sell or exchange or to offer for sale, any live or dead bats, part of a bat or anything derived from bats, which has been unlawfully taken from the wild.

Changes have been made to parts of the Habitats Regulations 2017 so that they operate effectively from 1st January 2021. The changes are made by the Habitats Regulations 2019, which transfer functions from the European Commission to the appropriate authorities in England and Wales.

All other processes or terms in the 2017 Regulations remain unchanged and existing guidance is still relevant.

The obligations of a competent authority in the 2017 Regulations for the protection of species do not change. A competent authority is a public body, statutory undertaker, minister or department of government, or anyone holding public office.

Whilst broadly similar to the above legislation, the WCA 1981 (as amended) differs in the following ways:

- Section 9(1) of the WCA makes it an offence to *intentionally* kill, injure or take any protected species.
- Section 9(4)(a) of the WCA makes it an offence to *intentionally or recklessly\** damage or destroy, *or obstruct access to*, any structure or place which a protected species uses for shelter or protection.
- Section 9(4)(b) of the WCA makes it an offence to *intentionally or recklessly\** disturb any protected species *while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection*.

\*Reckless offences were added by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.

As bats re-use the same roosts (breeding site or resting place) after periods of vacancy, legal opinion is that roosts are protected whether or not bats are present.

The reader should refer to the original legislation for the definitive interpretation.

The following bat species are Species of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation in England: barbastelle bat *Barbastella barbastellus*, Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* and lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*. Species of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation in England are material considerations in the planning process. The list of species is derived from Section 41 list of the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

# Greenwood



Greenwood Environmental Ltd | Company No. 10749899 | VAT No. GB328956949

Reg. Office: 98 Hornchurch Road, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 1JS

T: 01708 982 000 | E: [info@greenwood-env.co.uk](mailto:info@greenwood-env.co.uk)