



PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT REPORT

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SITE: 75 BIRDHILL AVENUE, READING, RG2 7JU

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In March 2021, Greenwood Arboriculture commissioned MMEcology to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment at 75 Birdhill Avenue in Reading, Berkshire. This survey is required to inform a planning application associated with the erection of a double-storey side extension, front porch and change of material on exterior walls from brick to block render, as shown in Figure 1 below.

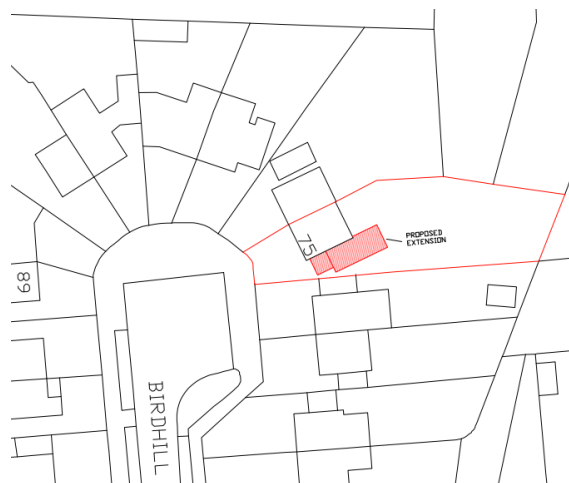


Figure 1. Proposed plan for the application site

To fulfil the above brief, it was necessary to assess the potential for the existing dwelling and garage on site to support roosting bats. Therefore, a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was undertaken on 1 April 2021. This report details the results of the Preliminary Roost Assessment.

1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a semi-detached, two-storey dwelling with a private rear garden, located within the residential area of Reading, at National Grid Reference SU 72607 70877.

The dwelling is located within an urban setting, with residential buildings located to north, south and east. Birdhill Avenue forms the western boundary of the site, beyond which is more dwellings with their associated private gardens. The nearest block of woodland is located approximately 215m south-east of the application site (Cowsey Wood). The wider landscape comprises residential dwellings and their gardens, schools and their associated grounds and a recreation ground approximately 300m south of the site, as shown in Figure 2.

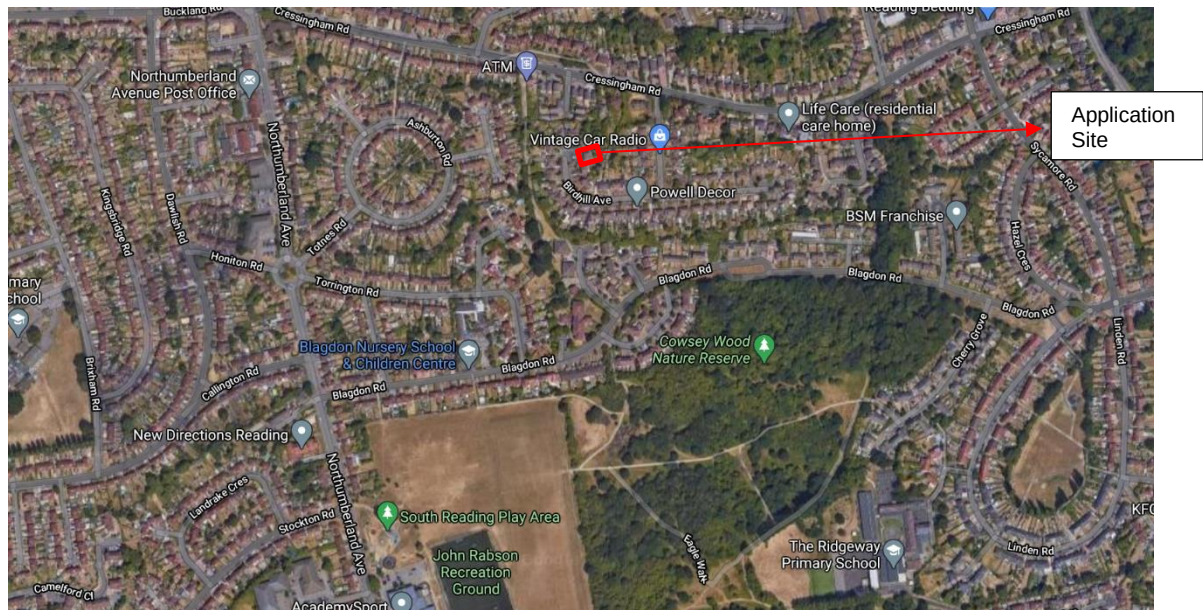


Figure 2. Aerial imagery showing the site in the wider landscape (Source: Google maps)

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT

In line with the specifications detailed in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016), a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of the building on site was conducted. The Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was conducted on 1 April 2021 by Maral Miri, Principal Ecologist, MSc, MCIEEM, CEnv, Natural England Level 2 bat class licence holder. 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. Example of PRFs include behind hanging tiles, weatherboarding, soffit boxes, lead flashing and between tiles and the roof lining.

Any accessible PRFs were inspected using binoculars, a torch and endoscope for evidence of possible bat presence. Buildings were surveyed externally and internally.

Based on the PRF's present, the building on site was assessed using the suitability classes detailed within the Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016), as detailed in table below:

Suitability	Description
High	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.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
Low	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).
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.

3. SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 EXTERNAL INSPECTION

The dwelling on site is an occupied, semi-detached, two-storey building of brick construction, with a rendered upper level. The building supports a hipped roof, covered by interlocking concrete tiles.



Figure 3. View of the rear/eastern (left) and front/western (right) elevations of the dwelling

The brickwork is in a good state of repair, with no cracks, holes or areas of missing mortar present. The roof tiles are also in a good condition and tightly fitted, with no missing, misaligned, broken or lifted tiles recorded (Figures 4 & 5). Similarly, the ridge tiles are also in a good state of repair with no areas of missing mortar recorded. The uPVC soffit is tightly fitted along the eaves, with no gaps present (Figure 6). A single flue is present in the rear elevation, along with a brick chimney in the front elevation of the building. The lead flashing around the base of both of these features is tightly fitted (Figure 7).



Figure 4. Example of roof tiles in a good condition



Figure 5. Example of roof tiles in a good condition



Figure 6. Example of tightly fitted soffit



Figure 7. View of the lead flashing around the base of the flue and chimney

No evidence of roosting bats was found during the external inspection of the dwelling. Overall, the building on site is considered to be well-sealed with no PRFs or entry points into the loft recorded for bats. Therefore, this building is considered to be of negligible potential to roosting bats.

To the south of the main dwelling on site is a detached garage with concrete walls and a pitched roof covered by corrugated (potentially asbestos) sheets (Figure 8). The eastern elevation of the garage supports single-glazed windows, with the western elevation supporting a wooden door. A single potential entry point into the garage was recorded where the corrugated roof sheet joins the concrete gable-end (Figure 9).



Figure 8. View of the detached garage on site



Figure 9. View of the potential access point into the garage

3.2 INTERNAL INSPECTION

Internally, a small loft is present (Figures 10 & 11). The floor to apex height is approximately 1m and the loft floor is insulated. Roofing felt is present between the roof tiles and the timber rafters. The roofing felt is in a poor state of repair with some areas of sagging and cuts/tears present (Figures 12 & 13). A ridge beam is also present. A brick gable separates the loft void from the neighbouring loft. No light entered the loft void, indicating that it is well-sealed.



Figure 10. Internal view of the loft void



Figure 11. Internal view of the loft void



Figure 12. Example of tears/cuts in the roofing felt



Figure 13. Example of tears/cuts in the roofing felt

No evidence of roosting bats in the form of droppings, urine staining, scratch marks or feeding remains was present within the loft. Whilst the roof underlay is in a poor condition, the interlocking concrete roof tiles are tightly fitted onto the battens and did not provide any potential access into the loft space and PRFs. Therefore, due to the lack of evidence and well-sealed nature of the dwelling on site, it is appointed a negligible value for roosting bats.

Whilst a potential access point into the garage was recorded at the time of survey, internally there are no suitable roosting features present for bats and therefore the detached garage in the south is considered to be of negligible potential for roosting bats.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The proposals are for the demolition of the existing garage in the south and erection of a two-storey extension along the side.

4.2 SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

The external inspection of the dwelling confirmed the building to be well-sealed, with no potential access points into the loft or PRFs recorded. The internal inspection did not reveal any evidence of roosting bats and further confirmed the building to be well-sealed. Therefore, the dwelling on site is considered to be of negligible potential to roosting bats. Similarly, the detached garage in the south is considered to be of negligible potential to bats, due to the absence of any suitable PRFs.

4.3 POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON BATS

All bat species are UK and European protected species and are capable of being material consideration in the planning process. This makes it an offence to:

- deliberately (or recklessly) capture, injure or kill a bat;
- deliberately (or recklessly) disturb a bat; and,
- damage or destroy a bat roost.

As bats are confirmed to be absent from within the dwelling on site, the proposal is unlikely to result in any impacts on bats.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The dwelling and garage on site have been identified to have negligible potential to support roosting bats. Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines published by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2016) do not recommend any further dusk emergence or dawn re-entry surveys for structures with negligible potential for bats. Therefore, the proposed works could be carried out with no constraints in relation to bats.

In the very unlikely event that bats or their evidence is found during the construction activities, all works must stop immediately and an ecologist or Natural England contacted.

In accordance with the local policy and National Planning Policy Framework, to ensure a net gain in biodiversity, it is recommended that a single bird (e.g. Schwegler 1SP sparrow terrace, swift nest box, etc.) or bat feature (e.g. Beaumaris woodstone bat box, 2FE Schwegler bat box, bat bricks or bat tubes) is incorporated into the design of the new extension.

REFERENCES

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

National Planning Policy Framework (2019). Available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>