8 Kelmscott Close
Caversham
Berkshire
RG4 7DG

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Hadi Moallemi to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment of the detached house and garage at 8 Kelmscott Close in Caversham, Reading, Berkshire.

1.1.2 The survey was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent to demolish the existing buildings and construct a replacement dwelling on the plot.

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'). 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.

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' or their appointed accredited agents 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. Survey data supporting EPS mitigation 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 at 8 Kelmscott Close is situated at the south western end of Kelmscott Close – a residential house in Caversham, Reading (OS grid reference SU70454 75026).

1.3.2 The house is in the established residential area of Caversham, which is about 2km to the north of Reading town centre. The immediate surroundings comprise residential houses with established gardens. In the wider area, the River Thames flows just under 200m to the south, beyond which is open grassland comprising paying fields and farmland. Overall, the habitats surrounding the house are of moderate value to bats.

2 SURVEY METHOD

2.1 Building Inspection

2.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the house and garage was undertaken by an ecologist registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 on the 23rd April 2019.

2.1.2 The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars and a high power (1 million candle power) torch and looked 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:

- 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);
- Bats (live or dead).

2.1.4 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;
- 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 There were no significant survey constraints as full access was available to the exterior and interior of the house and garage.

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Photographs of the site 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 detached house was of brick, cavity wall construction with a hipped roof; a sloped roofed, single storey extension/conservatory was situated on the southern side of the house and a detached double garage to the north west (**Photographs 1 - 4**).

3.2.2 The main roof was covered with flat concrete tiles, which were intact and fitted tightly (**Photograph 6; Target note 1**). The ridge tiles and hip tiles were all in place and mortared fully (**Photographs 6 & 7; Target notes 2 & 3**) and the lead flashings around the chimneys were closely fitted (**Photograph 9; Target notes 19 & 20**). The timber soffit boxes at the eaves were all complete and fitted tightly to the external brickwork providing no visible opportunities for bats to gain access (**Photograph 8; Target Note 4**).

3.2.3 The single-storey pitched-roofed extension at the southern end of the house was of simple construction with timber frame and glass walls and a roof covered with timber shingles (**Photograph 11**). The shingles were largely flat with some minor warping at the bottom edge of the tiles creating superficial gaps that were unsuitable for bats (**Target note 6**). The lead flashing at the junction of the extension and house was tightly fitted. A gap was present between timber framework of the extension and house's wall on the western side, but this was cobwebbed and showed no evidence of use by bats during a close inspection (**Photograph 12; Target note 7**).

3.2.4 The house's painted walls were in sound condition and lacked any cracks or crevices suitable for bats. A sparse covering of ivy had grown up part of the north facing side elevation (**Photograph 3; Target note 18**), but this did not provide crevices beneath suitable for roosting bats. A hole had been created in the wall - likely where a pipe formerly passed through - at a height of approximately 1m above the ground on the front elevation (**Photograph 10; Target note 5**). The hole was open to the cavity wall and showed no evidence of use by bats during a close inspection.

3.2.5 The detached double garage was constructed from pre-fabricated concrete panel walls and had a shallow pitched, corrugated sheet roof; these lacked any visible opportunities for roosting bats (**Photographs 13 & 14; Target note 8**). There were small sections of timber cladding at each gable end (**Photograph 15; Target notes 9 & 10**). The cladding was interlocking vertically and provided no opportunities for roosting bats. Timber barge boards were visible on the southern elevation and these were mostly tight to the wall; a slight gap was visible towards the eastern end but a close inspection showed no evidence of use by bats (**Photograph 16; Target note 11**). The northern side of the garage was close to the boundary and obscured by dense vegetation.

3.2.6 No evidence of bats was visible on the exterior of the house or garage during the survey.

3.3 Internal Survey

3.3.1 The main roof space was accessed via a loft hatch in the south eastern corner and the void was approximately 1.75 metres from the floor to the ridge (**Photograph 19**). The floor of the space had a large section of ceiling missing in the south western corner but otherwise the floor was covered with loose vermiculite insulation (**Photograph 20; Target note 15**). The roof was of traditional 'cut and pitch' construction with exposed ridge beam and rafters. The roof was lined with paper backed felt that was largely intact (**Photograph 21; Target note 14**); a tear was visible at the north western hip (**Target note 17**). The ridge was heavily cobwebbed throughout (**Photograph 21**). The eaves were open to the loft space; no daylight was visible. Covered water tanks were situated at the south eastern corner and an old wasps' nest was visible at the eaves at the northern end of the roof (**Photograph 22; Target note 16**). No bats or evidence of bat activity was

visible within the roof space.

3.3.2 The interior of the detached garage was used for storage and the pre-fabricated concrete panel walls and underside of the sheet roof were visible throughout; these lacked any opportunities for bats (**Photographs 17 & 18; Target notes 12 & 13**). Daylight was widely visible where the roof met the walls. The corrugated sheet roof was supported by a metal framework that lacked any opportunities for bats. No evidence of bats was visible within the garage.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Status/Potential

4.1.1 The house and garage showed no evidence of use by bats and on the whole lacked features suitable for bats, with complete and tightly fitting roof coverings and soffits/barge boards. Both buildings had features of sufficient size to allow bats access considered to be of low bat roost potential, but close inspections of these showed no evidence of use by bats and as such it is considered highly unlikely that bats have roosted within the buildings.

4.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

4.2.1 The planned demolition work is highly unlikely to lead to the loss of bat roosts, or lead to the disturbance of bats and as such it is considered could proceed lawfully with no requirement for a European Protected Species mitigation licence.

4.2.2 The house is situated in an established residential area with habitats nearby suitable for bats, and because bats are highly mobile, it remains possible that bats could be present in the future and therefore should the work be delayed more than three years after this survey, a survey update should be carried out.

4.2.3 In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the demolition work, the work must stop immediately, and a licensed ecologist 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, a European Protected Species licence of confirmation of the site's registration under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence CL21 (if applicable) may be required to permit the work to continue lawfully.

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.

APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

1. The house viewed from the front (east).

2. The house viewed from the rear (west).

3. The house's northern end with ivy growth.

4. The house's southern end.

5. The single storey extension at the southern end of the house.

6. The flat and tightly fitted tiles and closely fitted ridge tiles.

7. The hip tiles all in site and fully mortared.

8. The complete and tightly fitted soffits.

9. The flat and tight lead flashings around the chimneys.

10. The whole into the wall on the front (eastern) side of the house.

11. The timber shingles covering the single storey extension largely flat or with superficial gaps beneath.

12. Cobwebbed gap at junction of the single storey extension and house.

13. The detached garage.

14. The garage's corrugated sheet roof.

15. The tightly interlocking timber cladding at each end of the garage.

16. Slight gap beneath barge board on garage showing no signs of use by bats.

17. The interior of the garage showing the metal frame supporting the corrugated sheet roof.

18. The pre-fabricated concrete panel walls.

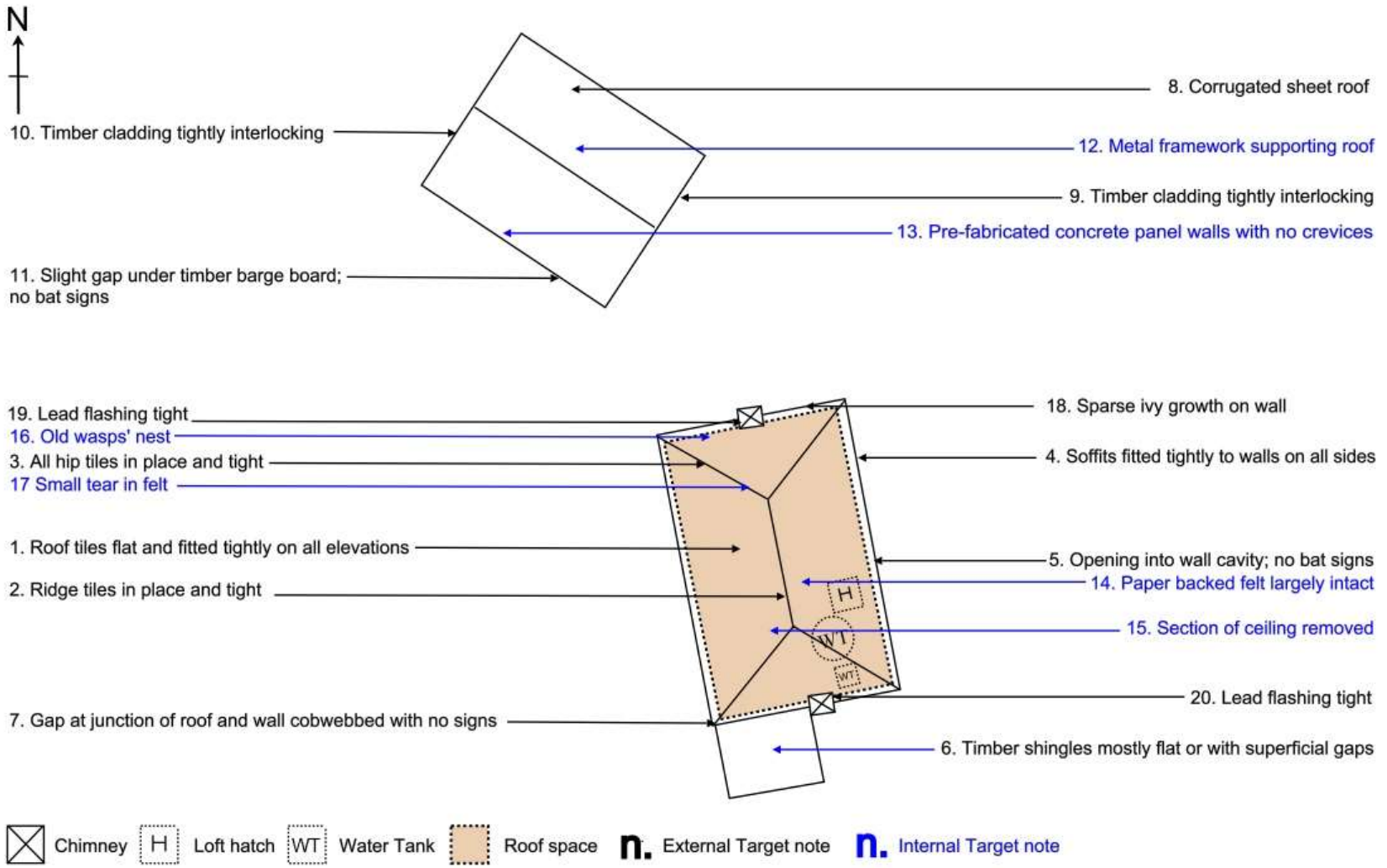
19. The loft space looking towards the southern end and the water tanks.

20. Section of removed ceiling in the south western corner of the loft space.

21. The largely intact paper backed felt widely cobwebbed at the ridge.

22. The old wasps' nest at the northern end of the loft.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	8 Kelmscott Close Caversham	JOHNWENMAN ecological consultancy
VP/JW	Apr 2019	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment	