



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL
APPRAISAL

37 SOUTH VIEW AVENUE, CAVERSHAM
READING RG4 5AD

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Client: Thomas Berresford

Martin Ecology LLP
28 Estcourt Road, London SE25 4SD

Tel: (South) 0208 6548580
Tel: (Midlands) 02476 678839
Mobile: 07752 243194
Email: info@martinecology.co.uk
Web: www.martinecology.co.uk

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1. INTRODUCTION

Location

1.1 The site is at 37 South View Avenue, Caversham, Reading RG4 5AD. National Grid Reference: **SU 71977 74889**.

Site description

1.2 The site consists of a detached single storey dwelling. Immediate habitats are moderate quality for bats and include medium density housing with gardens that support scattered mature trees which would provide foraging and commuting habitat for bats. These habitats offer connectivity from the site to optimal quality bat habitats which occur within 1km to the south associated with River Thames corridor.

Scope of Survey

1.3 Planning permission is being sought to demolish the house and adjacent garage to make way for a new development. Martin Ecology was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) for bats and birds to try to determine whether the proposals would impact upon them. This report details the findings of the PEA and makes future recommendations based on these.

Legislative context-bats

1.4 All species of bats are protected under national legislation and it is an offence to deliberately kill, injure, recklessly disturb or take bats, obstruct access to their roosts (or place of rest), damage or destroy bat roosts, possess, sell bats (or any parts of bats) unless acquired legally. Bats often tend to re-use roosts after periods of vacancy, so bat roosts are afforded protection whether or not bats are present.

1.4.1 According to planning policy, prior to planning permission being determined it is expected that all survey work pertaining to protected species (and mitigation scheme if required) should be completed and reported.

1.4.2 Bats commonly use man-made structures to roost within and when undertaking building work in houses or other structures such as remedial work, extension, renovation or demolition there is potential to contravene the legislation outlined in 1.4.

Legislative context-birds

1.5 All species of wild bird and their nests and eggs are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*). This makes it illegal to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; and
- Intentionally take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

1.5.1 Schedule 1 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* gives some bird species (including barn owls) greater protection against disturbance whilst breeding.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Building inspection

2.1.1 A daytime visit was made to the site and the interior of the buildings were searched for bats and evidence of bats (such as droppings, fur, feeding remains and roost exits). All accessible roof void sections were examined, and the inspection was made using a ladder and with the assistance of a one million candlepower torch. All accessible potential roosting features (PRFs) where bats might roost were inspected for bats, or evidence of bats.

2.1.2 An inspection was then made of the exterior of the buildings for signs of bats such as: staining, grease marks, urine, fur, feeding remains and droppings on windowsills and walls, or PRFs that might offer access for bats into the building (such as cracks and fissures on or around roof and ridge tiles, soffits, barge boards or brickwork). A one million candlepower torch, an extendable ladder and binoculars were used to undertake the external inspection and all accessible features were inspected for bats or evidence of bats.

2.1.3 During the visit signs of nesting birds was also looked for within the buildings and at the exterior also. A photographic record was made of the site and some photos are included within a table in this report.

2.1.4 Dean Martin (MCIEEM) conducted the survey work on 26th November 2020. Natural England bat licence number: 2015-10605-CLS-CLS.

2.1.5 No desk study was undertaken. Google maps was used to make a general assessment of the site and local habitats. The buildings were assessed along with local habitats and considered to show potential for common and widespread crevice-dwelling bat species.

2.1.6 Constraints
None were identified.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Building inspections

3.1.1 The house was a brick structure with a hipped roof with a dormer to the north elevation and a pitched gable to the north and south elevations. The roofs were clad with clay plain tiles with half-round clay ridges at the ridges and hips. The roof appeared to have been well-maintained and all roof sections were in good condition and well-sealed at all elevations. The timber soffits and fascia boards had also been well-maintained and were also well-sealed. Five vertical joints could be seen at the south gable that appeared to present PRFs, although on closer inspection were found to be shallow and had been bored into by mortar bees where poor-quality mortar had been used, but the gaps were not sufficient to allow bats to pass through. No evidence of bats or features for nesting birds could be found at the exterior.

3.1.2 Inside the loft void it could be seen that much of the space had been converted into living area, leaving the accessible space at the eaves which was access via small doors. The roof was found to be lined with traditional felt and the loft floor was part-boarded to facilitate storage and the floor was generally fairly clean and supported no evidence of bats. Low levels of cobwebs were present around hip timbers, and in some areas, cobwebs were hanging across the full depth of the roof void, indicating that no bats had disturbed the area recently. The small void between the vaulted ceiling and the felt liner was viewable and in all cases was either stuffed with fibreglass insulation or was cobwebbed and didn't support any evidence of

bats.

3.1.3 No evidence of bats was encountered within the loft void.

3.1.4 The single storey side garage was brick structure with a hipped roof clad with clay plain tiles. The roof was well-sealed with the exception of a single gap at the south gable that presented a PRF. A good view was attained of the interior of the PRF using the full length of the endoscope and the void between the bitumen felt could be well-explored, though the hole was covered with old cobweb at the entrance, which suggested that no bats had passed through the feature and no evidence of bats could be seen inside the void. The feature was too small to allow birds any access.

3.1.5 Inside the garage it could be seen that the roof was vaulted, although a small section had been boarded to allow storage which had created a small floor area. This was clean and showed no evidence of bats.

3.1.6 At the north gable of the garage ivy had part covered the brickwork, although the growth was perhaps not significantly thick to support breeding birds.



Photo 1 South elevation



Photo 2 West pitch and south hip well-sealed



Photo 3 West hip and pitch well-sealed



Photo 4 North elevation



Photo 5 Sealed soffit

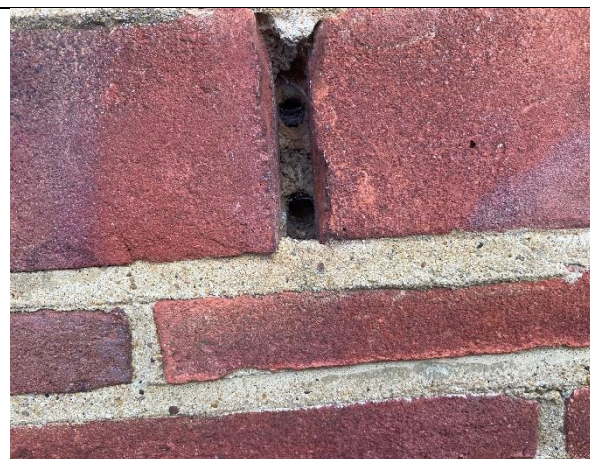


Photo 6 Example of PRF at north gable found to be insignificant

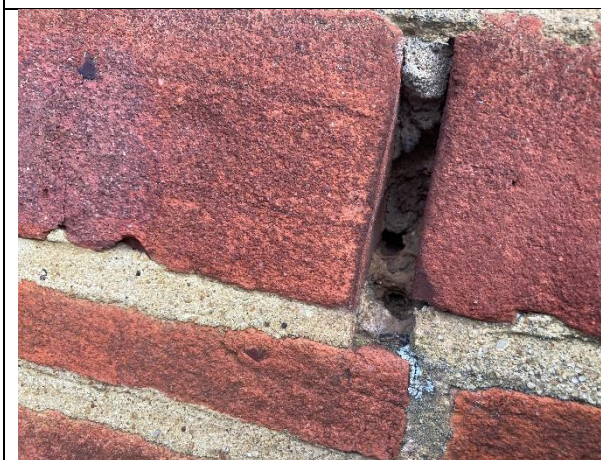


Photo 7 Example of PRF at north gable found to be insignificant

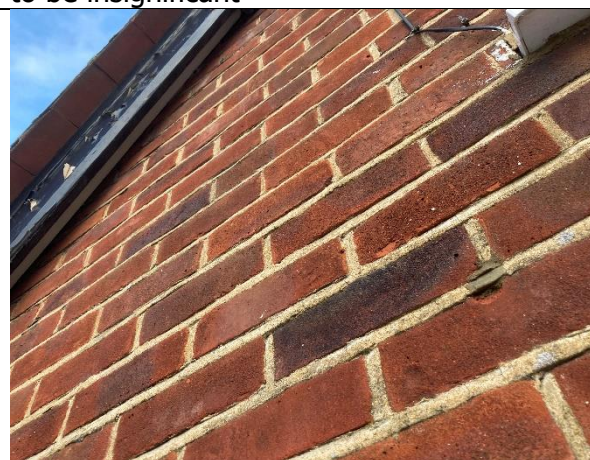


Photo 8 Sealed fascia board north gable



Photo 9 East loft void situation



Photo 10 Old cobwebs at roof timbers

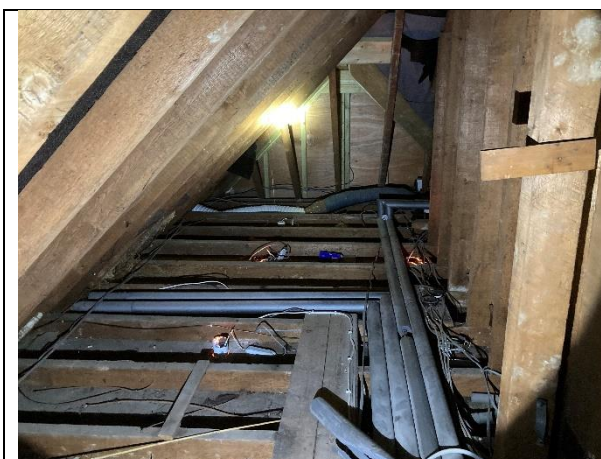


Photo 11 West loft void situation



Photo 12 Example of cobwebbed void between vaulted roof and felt

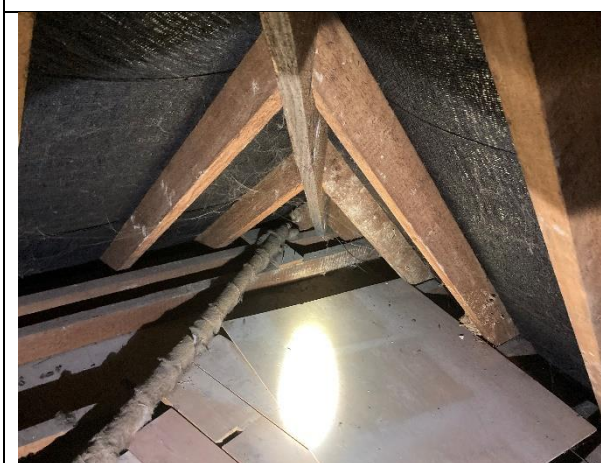


Photo 13 Cobwebbed hip timbers



Photo 14 No evidence of bats at loft floor



Photo 15 Garage south elevation



Photo 16 Garage north elevation



Photo 17 PRF Garage south gable verge



Photo 18 Sealed soffit at garage

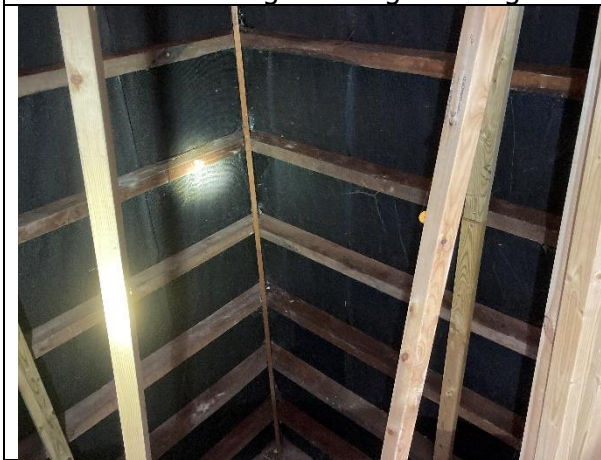


Photo 19 Cobwebbed garage ridge



Photo 20 garden context

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The house is well-sealed and offers no PRFs that bats could exploit and also revealed no evidence of bats at the exterior or interior, and so the structure in its current state is considered to show negligible bat roosting suitability for any bat species and consequently no further bat surveys are recommended at this time.

4.2 The garage is also well-sealed with the exception of the small gap at the south gable verge (photo 17) which showed no evidence of bats.

Mitigation

4.3 Despite that the building was assessed as having negligible bat suitability, planning consent remains extant for three years, during which time physical characteristics and features of structures can change due to ageing / weathering. It is therefore recommended that prior to demolition of the building, the roofs of the house and garage are carefully stripped carried out by hand (ideally over winter) with bats in mind. If any bats are found at this time then works will stop until Natural England have been contacted (0300 060 3900) for advice on how best to continue legally.

4.3.1 It is recommended that the PRF at the garage north gable verge immediately blocked off to prevent any bats from gaining access via this potential ingress point prior to demolition.

4.4 If one-year elapses from this survey being carried out without the consented work being implemented, a repeat 'top up' bat inspection will be required. The existing report can then be amended to report any changes or lack of changes to conditions found during this survey.

4.5 It is recommended that the ivy at the garage north gable is immediately removed to prevent the growth from becoming substantial enough to provide breeding habitat for birds. This should not be undertaken between March and September in case any birds are able to breed within the feature.

4.6 It is recommended that integral breeding habitats for swift and house sparrows are included in the proposed development. This will help ensure that the development results in a biodiversity net gain.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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