



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

507 BASINGSTOKE ROAD
READING RG2 0SH

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1. INTRODUCTION

Location

The site is located at 507 Basingstoke Road, Reading RG2 0SH. National Grid Reference: **SU 71740 69964**.

Site description

1.2 The site consists of a semi-detached double 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 1.5km to the west and north, associated with River Kennet and Thames corridors.

Scope of Survey

1.3 Planning permission is being sought to extend the house at the north elevation, and this will entail partial destruction to the existing roof. Martin Ecology was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) for bats and breeding 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 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which make it 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 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.

Planning context

1.5 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.

1.5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that development should enhance the environment by *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity*.

Licensing

1.6 The presence of bat roosts that will be affected by proposals that would trigger the above legislation necessitates the application for a derogation license from Natural England. Such licences permit activities that would otherwise be unlawful. Licences are only issued if three tests are satisfied, and these are;

- there is no satisfactory alternative
- there are overriding reasons of public interest and,
- the favourable conservation status of bat populations is maintained.

Legislative context-birds

1.7 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.

1.7.1 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 building was 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 made of the exterior of the building 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 PRFs were inspected for bats or evidence of bats.

2.1.3 During the visit signs of nesting birds was looked for within the building 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 8th April 2021. Natural England bat licence number: 2015-10605-CLS-CLS.

2.1.5 Google maps was used to make a general assessment of the site and local habitats. The government website <https://magic.defra.gov.uk> was checked for European Protected Species (EPS) licences issued by Natural England for bats within 2km of the site which revealed licences issued for crevice-dwelling and void-seeking bat species. Including common pipistrelle bat, soprano pipistrelle bat and brown long-eared bat. The building was assessed along with local habitats and considered to show potential for common and widespread crevice-dwelling bat species.

2.1.6 If any bat droppings were present in sufficient quantities a sample would be taken for later DNA analysis if required.

2.1.7 Constraints
None were identified.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Building inspection

3.1.1 The house appeared to have been built during the 1920s or 1930s, and was a brick double storey structure and had a pitched roof, with a hip at the north elevation and gable to the west elevation and the roof was clad with clay plain tiles. Overall, the roof was in sound order, although several PRFs could be seen at the ridge of the south elevation and north east hip where mortar had fallen away. The PRF at the hip was easily access for a close inspection by carefully lifting the tile to inspect the area beneath, and no evidence of bats or breeding birds could be found.

3.1.2 The soffit was a solid timber construction and this was well-sealed, no with evidence of bats or birds present in association with this feature.

3.1.3 Inside the roof void it was apparent that the roof was supported by light weight timbers and the roof was not lined, and the tiles were torched. Wool insulation had been retro-fitted between the rafters by crudely stuffing the material in place, and this had disturbed the loft and roof and had had a cleaning effect in the void which had removed most cobwebs which would have been present prior to this. The insulation was easily removed to obtain a good view of the interior roof and areas behind the PRFs noted from the exterior. No evidence of bats or breeding birds could be found in association with the PRFs. The loft floor was covered in a thick layer of insulation, and the floor was boarded beneath. The insulation was lifted to check for evidence of bats, and none was found.



Photo 1 East elevation



Photo 2 PRFs east elevation



Photo 3 PRF north east hip



Photo 4 Insulated roof



Photo 5 Clean ridge



Photo 6 West interior gable

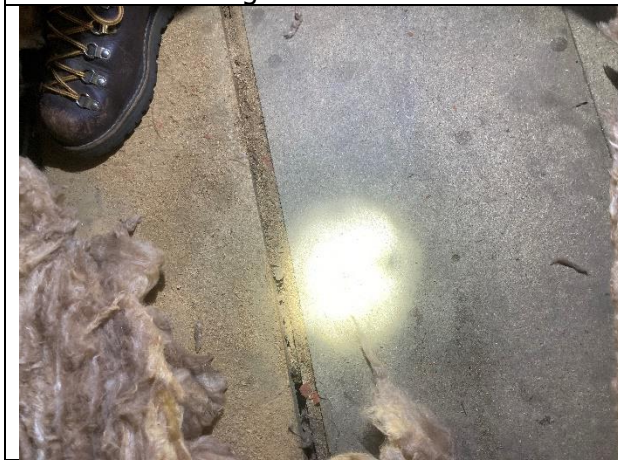


Photo 7 Clean floor beneath insulation



Photo 8 Sealed soffit

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 No evidence of bats was discovered during the survey. The roof and the soffits and are mostly well-sealed, and the PRFs identified at the east elevation were examined from the interior, and it is thought that some evidence would have been present had bats roosted within these features historically, and so it is considered that bats and breeding birds are currently unlikely to be impacted by the work.

Mitigation

4.2 Although it is considered that no bat roosts are currently present, the PRFs found at the east elevation show potential for bats to ingress the roof at any time in the future. To safeguard any bats that may incidentally use these features (even for a single night) it is recommended that the destructive works to the roof are undertaken by hand with the expectation that bats could be found. If any bats are encountered during this time, then work will pause indefinitely, and tiles replaced around the roost area until Natural England has been contacted (0300 060 3900) for advice on how best to continue legally. It is likely that a license from Natural England would be required before any further work can continue.

Validity of data

4.3 If one-year elapses from this survey being carried out without the current proposals or similar proposals being implemented a repeat 'top up' bat inspection may be required to obtain more up to date information on the presence or likely absence of bats at the site.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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