



Bat Survey Report – Preliminary Roost Assessment

58 Mayfair, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4RD

September 2020

Report conditions

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Summary

A preliminary bat roost assessment was carried out at 58 Mayfair, Reading, to assess the possible presence or likely absence of bats and bat roosts in order to support a planning application with Reading Borough Council for a proposed extension.

58 Mayfair is a semi-detached two storey end-terrace house believed to date from the mid twentieth century. It is of traditional brick construction with a timber-framed and pitched, hipped roof of interlocking concrete tiles. It is set within an extensive mature residential area towards the west of Reading.

The habitat in the immediate area is found to offer generally low-quality bat foraging habitat, although there are areas of higher-quality habitat further afield.

Visual bat survey work of the house and garage finds no direct evidence of bat use, either internally or externally. External inspection identifies no suitable bat access points.

Overall, the house and garage are judged to present negligible roost suitability, and bats are considered likely absent from the site. No further survey work is recommended.

In view of the survey findings, it can be concluded that the development is unlikely to result in a breach of the legislation that protected bats and is likely to accord with relevant planning policy with respect to biodiversity.

1. Introduction

Objectives

- 1.1. The purpose of this assessment is to provide information on the possible presence or likely absence of bats at 58 Mayfair, Reading, to support a planning application with Reading Borough Council. Where bat roosts are identified, or where their presence cannot be confidently ruled out, the report sets out an assessment of the impacts to these and where necessary makes recommendations for measures to avoid, mitigate or compensate for impacts to bats as necessary, dependent on the nature and scale of the impacts.

Site Description

- 1.2. 58 Mayfair is a semi-detached two-storey end terrace house set within an extensive mature residential area towards the west of Reading. The house faces north-east onto Mayfair, with the main ridge running north-west to south-east..
- 1.3. The house is of traditional brick construction and is believed to date from the mid twentieth century. It has a timber-framed and pitched, hipped roof of interlocking concrete Redland-49 type tiles and concrete half round ridge and hip ridges. The loft is lined with traditional bitumen felt and has a deep layer of modern glass fibre insulation laid over the original loose-fill vermiculite that is still present between the joists.
- 1.4. There is a hipped gabled bay to the front elevation and a modern flat-roofed uPVC and glazed conservatory to the rear.
- 1.5. There is a small pitched-roof detached garage to the side of the house, with a small flat-roofed extension to the rear. There is a small garden to the rear of the property.
- 1.6. Photos 1 and 2 in Appendix 1 show the front and rear elevations of the house.

Proposed works

- 1.7. The development is for the demolition of the garage and conservatory and the construction of a new two-storey side extension with a further single-storey flat roofed extension with roof lantern running along the rear of the house.
- 1.8. Appendix 2 shows the existing and proposed elevations.

Limitations

- 1.9. All external elevations of the house were fully visible during the survey work. Internally, the loft was fully accessible.
- 1.10. There are therefore no identified significant limitations to the survey work.

2. Methods

Desk study

- 2.1. A desk-based assessment was carried out on. This used a variety of information. Online ecological data (MAGIC¹) was used to gain information on designated sites and priority habitats within 1km of the site. Aerial photos and Ordnance Survey mapping (again via MAGIC) were used to gain an understanding of the landscape context of the site. MAGIC was also used to identify if any licenses had been granted by Natural England for developments in the search area affecting European protected species (EPS).
- 2.2. The Reading Borough Council Proposals Map² was reviewed to identify any locally-important biodiversity areas.
- 2.3. A data request from the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) or the Berkshire and South Bucks Bat Group (BSBBG) was not carried out at this time. Consideration of the value of seeking additional records on the context of the bat use of the site (if present) was taken after the site survey work.

Field survey

- 2.4. A visual bat survey was carried out on 25th September 2020 by Adam Egglesfield of AE Ecology, who holds a current licence to survey bat roosts. Survey methodology used during the work is guided by and consistent with that set out in the Bat Conservation Trust's *'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines'* 3rd edition, (Collins, J. (ed) 2016).
- 2.5. The house was subject to a detailed internal and external search. The aims of this were to identify evidence of bat activity and/or identify the presence of any features that could potentially support roosting bats or features through which bats could gain access to possible roost locations. External areas were inspected to identify potential bat access points and roosting features. Such features typically include missing, slipped, broken or bowed roof tiles, gaps

¹ Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside - <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

² [https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/Adoption Proposals Map Nov19 Overview and Key.pdf](https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/Adoption%20Proposals%20Map%20Nov19%20Overview%20and%20Key.pdf)

around fascias and soffits, gaps in brickwork (such as missing mortar or expansion gaps), lifted chimney, roof, or window flashing, and gaps around window and door casements.

- 2.6. The external inspection also aimed to identify any actual direct evidence of bat use such as droppings adhering to walls, floors or windowsills below gaps, or staining around possible access gaps.
- 2.7. Features were inspected using Opticron Discovery 10x42 close-focusing binoculars and where necessary and safely possible, a ladder. High-powered torches (Clulite Clubman CB2 and Lenser P7.2) were used to illuminate potential roost and roost access features.
- 2.8. Where present and safely accessible, any internal voids and similar spaces were inspected for evidence of bat presence such as live bats, corpses, droppings, feeding remains and staining. The building was subsequently assessed for its suitability to support roosting bats, from 'negligible' to 'high', in line with the survey guidelines.

Foraging and commuting habitat

- 2.9. An assessment was made of the suitability of the site and the surrounding landscape to support foraging and/or commuting bats. The assessment was based on the presence of key habitat features such as woodland, scrub, hedgerows, grassland, and open water and watercourses, which are highly attractive to bats as both a foraging resource and as commuting routes. The presence of such habitats, particularly in a mosaic or network with other suitable habitat, typically increases the potential for structures to be exploited by bats where suitable roost and access opportunities are present. The presence of unlit semi-natural vegetation and habitat linkages between the site and the surrounding landscape were also considered.

3. Results

Desk study

- 3.1. Appendix 3 shows the location of the site and its surrounding relevant ecological interest features produced from MAGIC.

Nationally and locally designated sites and notable habitats

- 3.2. There are no statutory designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the search area. The most notable areas of habitat in the search area are the area of woodland and parkland to the south and south-east of the site, at Calcot Golf Club and Prospect Park. There is a large area of woodland known as The Rookery at Prospect Park.
- 3.3. There is a network of woodlands to the east of the site, with Blundell's Copse being within approximately 550m of the site, and Round Copse and Lousehill Copse lying just outside the 1km search area. All these woodlands are locally designated as Local Wildlife Sites, in recognition of their local value to biodiversity. These form part of a broader Biodiversity Opportunity Area.
- 3.4. Outside of these areas, the land within the search area is highly urbanised, with extensive residential development around the site.
- 3.5. Further afield, outside the search area and outside the urban area of Reading, lies the broad swathe of floodplain grazing marsh Priority Habitat along the valley of the River Kennet to the south of Reading, which is also a Local Wildlife Site. To the west lies a network of open farmland, woodland, and meadows, many of which are of high biodiversity value.

Protected species

- 3.6. There is one record of a licence being granted for a development affecting bats in the search area. This was for a development approximately 675m to the south-east that affected a roost for common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and brown long-eared bats *Plecotus auritus*.

Preliminary roost assessment

Internals

- 3.7. Internally, the loft was fully inspected. Photos 3 and 4 show the conditions in the loft. Examination of all surfaces, including internal timbers, floor, walls, and domestic services was carried out. Particular attention was paid to features such as the ridge apex at either end of the loft and joints in the timber work.
- 3.8. No droppings were seen on the floor (Photo 5) or any stored items (Photos 5-7) or the internal timbers or brickwork between the house and the adjoining property (Photo 8).
- 3.9. The insulation at the end of the house was carefully inspected, and spot checks were undertaken beneath the insulation in several places. Although a fair degree of dust and debris was noted in some areas, no evidence of recent or historic bat roosting activity was found (Photos 9 and 10).
- 3.10. The roofing felt was in generally good condition (Photo 11) aside from a small area of damage (Photo 12). The area around the damaged section was thoroughly inspected and no bat evidence seen. The exposed roof tiles were inspected and found to be well fitting with no gaps present between the interlocking tiles that could allow bats access.
- 3.11. No evidence of recent or historic bat roosting activity was seen in any areas.

Externals

- 3.12. Externally, the roof tiles to front, rear, and side elevations were all found to be in good condition with no areas of damage, missing, or slipped tiles. They were found to be tightly fitting with no gaps. See Photos 13-16.
- 3.13. The ridge tiles and hip bonnets were undamaged, and the bedding mortar was in place with no areas of deterioration that could allow bat access.
- 3.14. There are plastic soffit boxes around the house. These were inspected and found to be in good condition – see Photos 17 and 18.
- 3.15. The garage roof was similarly in good condition with no damage to the tiles. The verge mortar to the garage gable ends was in good condition with no

deterioration (Photo 19). The flat roofed section of the garage has a timber fascia, which was found to be in good condition and tight to the external walls with no gaps present – see Photo 20.

4. Discussion

Legislation and planning policy

- 4.1. Bats are legally protected under both domestic and international law (the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)³ and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)⁴ respectively). All native bat species are European Protected Species (EPS). This legislation makes it an offence to kill, injure or disturb bats, or to destroy or damage their roosts, even when the bats are not present. In view of the findings of the survey work at 76 Hurst Road, it is concluded that the development is unlikely to result in a breach of the Habitats Regulations.
- 4.2. Paragraph 175 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2018) requires that when determining planning applications, if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.
- 4.3. Policy CS36 'Biodiversity and Geology' of the Reading Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy (revised 2015) states that:
- "Development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest (including protected species and their habitats) found within the application site into their schemes."*
- 4.4. The supporting text to the policy states that
- "Protected species identified by the Species Action Plan of the Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and their habitats must also be protected from any direct or indirect harm resulting from development."*

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/contents/made>

Interpretation of habitat context

- 4.5. The immediate surroundings are characterised by denser residential development, with some larger areas of higher-quality bat foraging habitat further afield. The value of the surrounding habitat to bats is reduced by the denser urban development and higher degree of streetlighting, although there is likely to be an established localised population of species such as common and soprano pipistrelle bats that are more adapted to urban environments.

Interpretation of roost suitability

- 4.6. Internally, the main loft space does present a suitable roosting location due to the timber beams and other construction features. However, no evidence of historic or recent bat use was seen in any areas of the loft. No potential access points were noted into the loft.
- 4.7. It is confidently concluded that the loft does not support roosting bats, nor is there evidence to suggest that there have historically been bats roosting within the loft.
- 4.8. All external features were found to be in good condition and no potential roost access opportunities were identified in any areas across the main roof faces, ridge and hip ridge tiles, or soffits, or on the garage.
- 4.9. Overall, it is therefore concluded that the house and garage at 58 Mayfair offer negligible bat roost suitability. In view of the findings of the survey work at 58 Mayfair it is concluded that the development is unlikely to result in a breach of the Habitats Regulations.

Recommendations

- 4.10. Bats are considered likely absent from the site. Therefore, it is concluded that the development is unlikely to affect bats, there is no recommendation for any further bat survey work.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. Visual bat survey work at the site found no direct evidence of bat use, either internally or externally. External inspection identified no suitable bat access points.
- 5.2. Overall, the house was judged to present negligible roost suitability, and bats are considered likely absent from the site. No further survey work is recommended.
- 5.3. In view of the survey findings, it can be concluded that the development is unlikely to result in a breach of the legislation that protected bats and is likely to accord with relevant planning policy with respect to biodiversity.

References

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). (2013), *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. CIEEM; Winchester.

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

MHCLG, (2018). *National Planning Policy Framework*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; London.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature; Peterborough.

Appendix 1 – Photos



Photo 1 Front elevation



Photo 2 Rear elevation



Photo 3 General conditions in loft (hipped gable end)



Photo 4 General conditions in loft (partition wall)

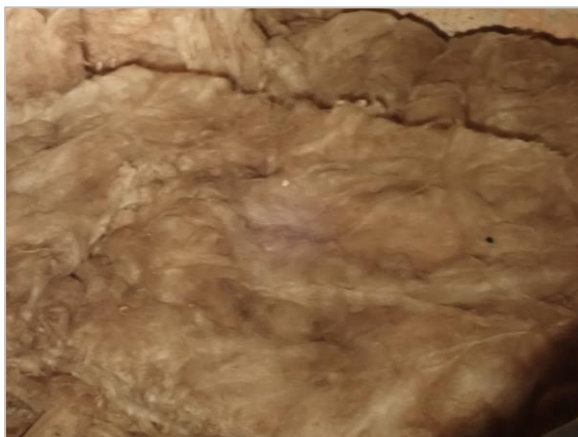


Photo 5 Loft floor



Photo 6 Loft floor



Photo 7 No droppings on stored items



Photo 8 Brickwork partition wall



Photo 9 Brickwork at base of partition wall (debris but no bat droppings)



Photo 10 Spot check under modern insulation

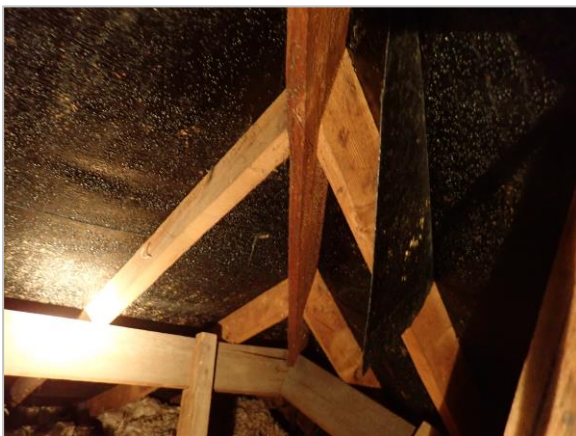


Photo 11 Roofing felt in generally good condition



Photo 12 Section of damaged felt



Photo 13 Roof and ridge tiles in good condition



Photo 14 Roof and ridge tiles in good condition



Photo 15 Roof and ridge tiles in good condition



Photo 16 Roof and ridge tiles in good condition



Photo 17 Soffit in good condition



Photo 18 Soffit in good condition



Photo 19 Garage roof in good condition



Photo 20 Fascia around garage

Appendix 2 – Existing and proposed plans



Existing elevations



Proposed elevations

(From plans produced by Andy Sears Design Solutions to support the planning application)

Appendix 3 – MAGIC Map

