

**93 Woodcote Road
Caversham
Reading
Berkshire
RG4 7EZ**

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Ref: R2652/a

November 2020



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Thorpe to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the property at 93 Woodcote Road in Caversham, Berkshire.

1.1.2 The survey was commissioned in connection with planning proposals lodged with Reading Borough Council (RBC) seeking consent for a part single-storey, part two-storey front and side extension (Planning Application Number: 201284). In summary, RBC Ecological Consultations comments were: *'the building may host roosting bats and to confirm whether this is the case, and if so how bats will be affected by the proposals, a bat survey will need to be carried out [...] prior to determination of the application or the application would need to be refused on the grounds that insufficient evidence had been provided to determine the likely impact of the proposals on bats'*.

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 species occupying roosts of low conservation importance may fall under the remit of the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (WML-CL21). The Class Licence permits ‘Registered Consultants’ or accredited agents appointed by them 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.

1.2.6 Survey data supporting EPS 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 detached house is situated on the southwestern side of Woodcote Road (A4074) in Caversham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 70224 75792).

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1.3.2 The property is in a suburban setting and sits amongst similar residential plots along Woodcote Road, which consist of garden lawns, shrubs and scattered trees. Mapledurham Playing Fields is just over 200 metres to the southwest of the property and comprises sports fields, scattered trees and a parcel of broadleaved woodland. The wider landscape around the property includes Caversham Heath Golf Course (approx. 580 metres) to the west, Bugs Bottom meadow (approx. 750 metres) to the northeast, and the River Thames (approx. 820 metres) to the south.

1.3.3 Overall, the landscape provides nearby areas of high-quality habitat for commuting and foraging bats adapted to suburban areas.

2 SURVEY METHOD

2.1 Building Inspection

2.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the property was undertaken on the 2nd November 2020 by an ecologist registered under Natural England bat survey Class Licence CL17 and an assistant ecologist.

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 several 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 property.

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Photographs of the property 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 house had a hipped roof with a pitched gable end above a front bay window; an adjoining garage, a single-storey rear extension and small side extension (**Photographs 1 & 2**).

3.2.2 The hipped roof was covered in machine-made overlapping tiles that were mostly flat and intact, except on the rear elevation where there were several raised tiles; particularly adjacent to the roof hip (**Photograph 3; Target note 1**). A single roof tile was slightly lifted on the southeast elevation offering a potential opening for bats (**Photograph 4; Target note 2**). The ridge and hip tiles were all securely mortared in place (**Photograph 5; Target note 3**). Verge mortar was intact on the front gable end but there was a possible point of bat access through a gap at the apex behind the fascia (**Photograph 6; Target note 4**). Elsewhere the walls were rendered up to the soffits (**Photograph 7; Target note 5**).

3.2.3 A front porch roof extended out above the front of the adjoining garage and was covered in flat overlapping tiles with secure ridge tiles (**Photograph 8; Target note 6**). The sides of the porch roof had intact verge mortar and were tightly clad in hanging tiles (**Photograph 9; Target note 7**). There were small, cobwebbed gaps leading into the brickwork around the porch roof timbers (**Photograph 10; Target note 8**). The rest of the garage roof was gently sloping and covered in slates (**Target note 9**). A large hole in the soffit led inside the garage (**Photograph 11; Target note 10**).

3.2.4 The single-storey rear extension and small side extension both had tight interlocking roof tiles and intact verge mortar (**Photographs 12 & 13; Target note 11**). Timber barge boards were tightly fixed to the brickwork and the rear extension had a panelled overhang (**Photograph 14; Target notes 12 & 13**).

3.2.5 No evidence of roosting bats was observed during the external inspection of the property.

3.3 Internal Survey

3.3.1 The roof void covered the two-storey footprint of the house and was accessible via a central loft hatch on the first floor. The void had an approximate floor-to-ridge height of 2.5 metres and was of hipped roof construction (**Photograph 15**). The roof was unlined throughout, but foil bubble wrap insulation had been tacked onto the underside of the rafters (**Photograph 16; Target note 14**). There was fibreglass insulation behind the foil in the front gable end but in the southeast-facing hipped end the roof was bare (**Photographs 17; Target notes 15 & 16**). Space between ridge tiles and the ridge beam was visible behind the foil insulation (**Photograph 18; Target note 17**). Loose chipboards and miscellaneous storage were on the floor with old fibreglass beneath; foil wrapped fibreglass was present along the north western eaves and the front gable end (**Photograph 19; Target note 18**). The front gable end was boarded but had a cobwebbed gap at its apex (**Photograph 20; Target note 19**).

3.3.2 The adjoining garage roof was open with exposed timber joists and rafters (**Photograph 21**). The roof was lined with bitumen-based roofing felt and a roof light was present at the back of the garage (**Photograph 22; Target note 20**). No signs of roosting bats were visible during the internal inspection of the property.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential

4.1.1 The house showed no evidence of the presence of roosting bats. There were no bat droppings inside the house's roof void, and the garage lacked an enclosed roof, indicating that void-dwelling species such as long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.) are highly unlikely to be present.

4.1.2 Although the house had several raised roof tiles, they were unlikely to provide crevices suitable for bats because the roof was unlined. In addition, evidence of use by bats would have been visible inside the roof void and therefore it is considered highly unlikely that crevice-dwelling bats such as pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and small *Myotis* species are present. There were potential access opportunities for bats elsewhere, including a gap at the apex of the front gable and gaps in brickwork around porch timbers, but these showed no signs of use by roosting bats.

4.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

4.2.1 The proposed work involves a part single-storey, part two-storey front and side extension (refer to existing and proposed elevations in **Appendix 3**). The work will have an impact on a small section of the property that lacked opportunities for bats; the potential ingress opportunities for bats showed no evidence of use and are to be retained unaffected by the works, and as such it is considered highly unlikely the work will lead to the disturbance of bats or lead to the loss of a bat roost during the works, and therefore, a European Protected Species mitigation licence would not be required to allow the works to go ahead lawfully.

4.2.2 In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the building work, the work must stop immediately, and a licensed ecologist should be 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 or 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. Front of property viewed from northeast.



2. Rear of property viewed from southwest.



3. Raised roof tiles adjacent to roof hip (rear elevation).



4. Slightly lifted roof tile (southeast elevation).



5. Hip tiles securely mortared in place (front elevation).



6. Gap at apex of front gable end (front elevation).



7. Walls rendered up to soffits (southeast elevation).



8. Front porch and garage roof (front elevation).



9. Tight hanging tiles on sides of porch roof (northwest elevation).



10. Cobwebbed gap into brickwork around porch roof timber (front elevation).



11. Large hole in soffit leading into garage (southeast elevation).



12. Tight interlocking roof tiles on rear extension (rear elevation).



13. Rear and side extensions with intact verge mortar.



14. Tight timber barge boards and rear overhang.



15. Roof void viewed from rear hipped end.



16. Foil bubble wrap insulation tacked to roof rafters.



17. Unlined roof in southeast-facing hipped end.



18. Space between ridge tiles and ridge beam.



19. Foil wrapped fibreglass at northwest eaves.



20. Gap over boarding at apex of front gable end.

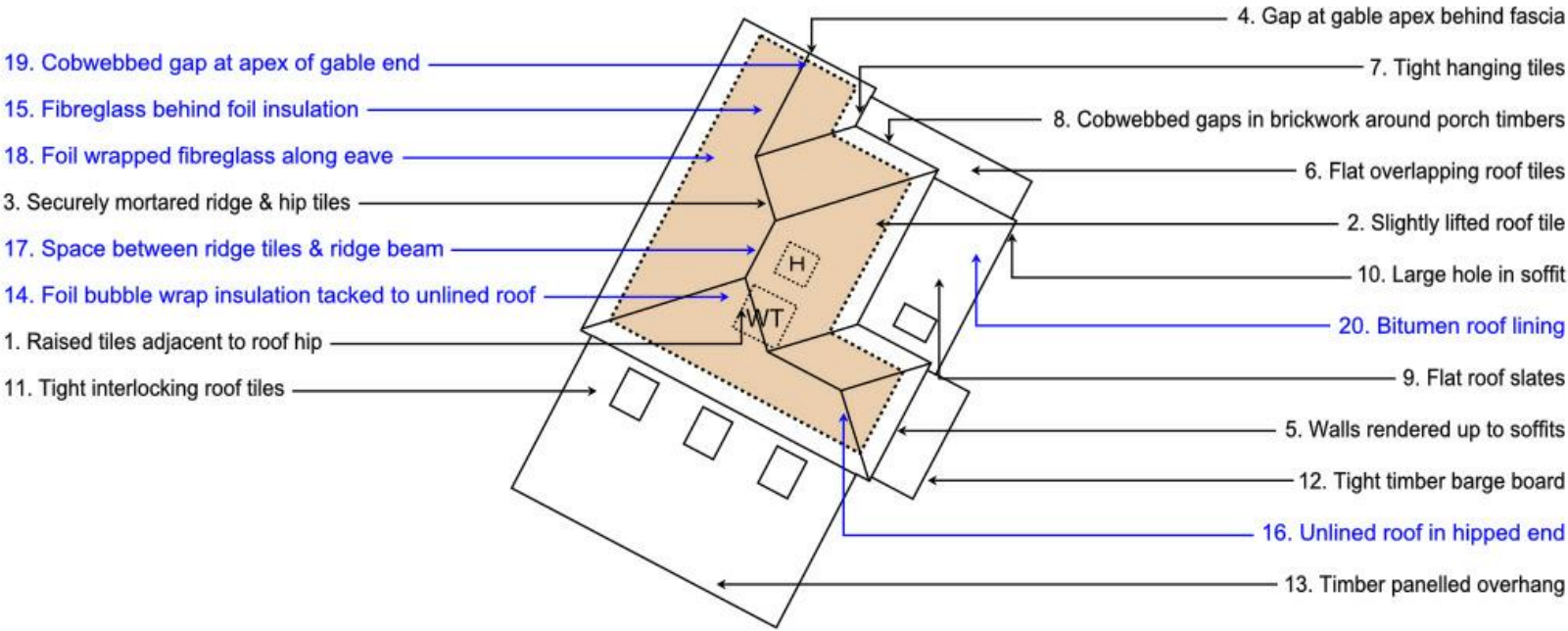


21. Open garage roof.



22. Roof light in garage roof.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



 Chimney  Roof void  Loft hatch  Water tank **n.** External target note **n.** Internal target note

Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	93 Woodcote Road Caversham	
CW	November 2020	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

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APPENDIX 3 – EXISTING AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS



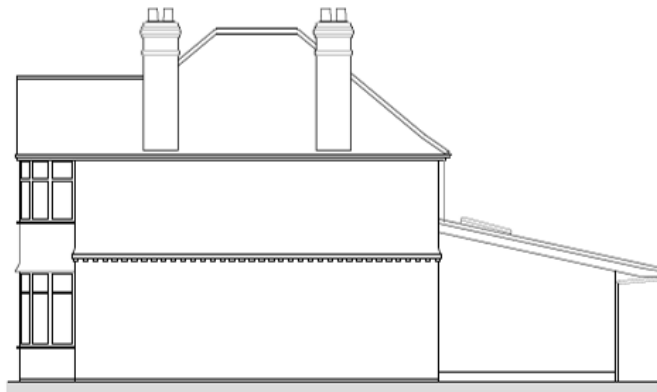
EXISTING EAST ELEVATION

SCALE 1 : 100



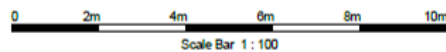
EXISTING NORTH ELEVATION

SCALE 1 : 100



EXISTING WEST ELEVATION

SCALE 1 : 100



Scale Bar 1 : 100



EXISTING SOUTH ELEVATION

SCALE 1 : 100

NOTES

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Client:

MR & MRS THORPE

Project:

TWO STOREY SIDE EXTENSION

Location:

93 WOODCOTE ROAD
CAVERSHAM, READING RG4 7EZ

Drawing Title:

EXISTING ELEVATIONS

Date:

SEP 2020

Sheet Size:

A3

Drawn:

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Drawing No:

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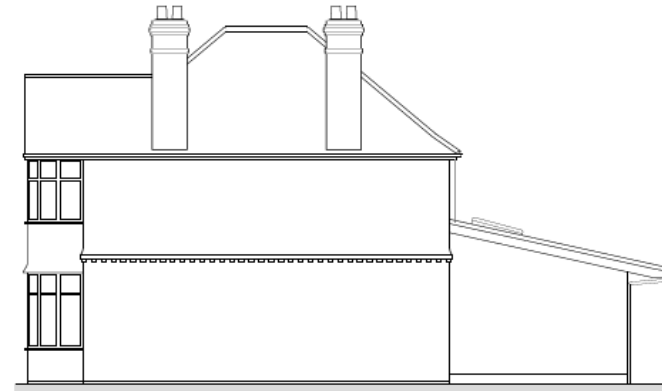


PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION
SCALE 1 : 100

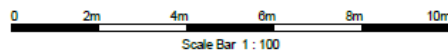


PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION
SCALE 1 : 100

First floor extension is flush to front of existing house, same as extensions granted permission either side at No.91 and No.95



PROPOSED WEST ELEVATION
SCALE 1 : 100



PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATION
SCALE 1 : 100

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