



214 Wensley
Road, Reading,
RG1 6DP

Preliminary Roost Assessment Report

September
2020



Ref: 20-7358

QUALITY STANDARDS CONTROL

The signatories below verify that this document has been prepared in accordance with our quality control requirements. These procedures do not affect the content and views expressed by the originator.

This document must only be treated as a draft unless it has been signed by the originators and approved by a director.

Revision	-
Date	15/09/2020
Prepared by	P. Holden (on behalf of Syntegra Consulting Ltd)
Checked by	M. Buck
Authorised by	P. Holden MSc MCIEEM

Note

The advice which we have prepared and provided within this report is in accordance with the CIEEM Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional opinions. Opinions and information provided in the report are based on Syntegra Group Ltd using reasonable skill, care and diligence in the preparation of the same in compliance with the CIEEM Code of Professional Conduct.

Validity of Data

The findings of this study are valid for a period of 12 months from the survey date. If the approved works have not commenced within the 12 months, it may be necessary to have an updated survey carried out to allow for any changes in the status of bats on site to be assessed and to inform any mitigation or recommendations.

LIMITATIONS

Syntegra Consulting Ltd (“SC”) has prepared this report for the sole use of the **client, Mr Paul Dalfsen**, in accordance with the agreement under which our services were performed. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this report or any other services provided by SC.

The conclusions and recommendations contained in this report are based upon information provided by others and upon the assumption that all relevant information has been provided by those parties from whom it has been requested and that such information is accurate. Information obtained by SC has not been independently verified by SC, unless otherwise stated in the report.

The methodology adopted and the sources of information used by SC in providing its services are outlined in this report. The work described in this report was undertaken in **2020** and is based on the conditions encountered and the information available during the said period of time. The scope of this report and the services are accordingly factually limited by these circumstances.

Where assessments of works or costs identified in this report are made, such assessments are based upon the information available at the time and where appropriate are subject to further investigations or information which may become available.

SC disclaim any undertaking or obligation to advise any person of any change in any matter affecting the report, which may come or be brought to SC’s attention after the date of the report.

Certain statements made in the report that are not historical facts may constitute estimates, projections or other forward-looking statements and even though they are based on reasonable assumptions as of the date of the report, such forward-looking statements by their nature involve risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from the results predicted. SC specifically does not guarantee or warrant any estimate or projections contained in this report.

Where applicable, costs may vary outside the ranges quoted. Whilst cost estimates are provided for individual issues in this report these are based upon information at the time which can be incomplete. Cost estimates for such issues may therefore vary from those provided. Where costs are supplied, these estimates should be considered in aggregate only. No reliance should be made in relation to any division of aggregate costs, including in relation to any issue, site or other subdivision.

No allowance has been made for changes in prices or exchange rates or changes in any other conditions which may result in price fluctuations in the future. Where assessments of works or costs necessary to achieve compliance have been made, these are based upon measures which, in SC’s experience, could normally be negotiated with the relevant authorities under present legislation and enforcement practice, assuming a proactive and reasonable approach by site management.

Forecast cost estimates do not include such costs associated with any negotiations, appeals or other non-technical actions associated with the agreement on measures to meet the requirements of the authorities, nor are potential business loss and interruption costs considered that may be incurred as part of any technical measures.

Copyright

©This report is the copyright of SC. Any unauthorised reproduction or usage by any person other than the addressee is strictly prohibited

INDEX TO CLAUSES

1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
2	INTRODUCTION	4
3	LIMITATIONS	5
4	LEGISLATION	6
5	METHODOLOGY.....	6
6	RESULTS	8
7	ASSESSMENT	11
8	CONCLUSION	13

APPENDIX:

I. PHOTOS FROM INSPECTION

II. EXISTING AND PROPOSED PLANS

1 Executive Summary

Syntegra Group was commissioned by the applicant, Mr Paul Dalfsen to conduct a preliminary roost assessment (PRA) at 214 Wensley Road, Reading, RG1 6DP (Grid Ref: SU 70007203) in support of a Planning Application, 200970.

The site consists of a terraced dwelling set within hard standing grounds.

A preliminary roosting assessment and nesting bird assessment were undertaken on the 11th September 2020.

The existing building is best described as two storey brick-built dwelling under a pitched cement roof.

The proposals are a rear first floor extension. The extension will knock into the lower section of the roof and first floor wall space.

The internal survey of the building noted no loft spaces, with living space extending into the roof space.

The external survey of the building noted limited to no potential access points and crevice roosting spaces. No evidence of nesting birds was noted during the external inspection of the building.

The search of DEFRA's MAGIC Maps returned five known EPSM applications for known bat roosts within 2km of the site. The site's rear boundary backs onto deciduous woodland.

Under BCT guidelines, the building was deemed as negligible potential, and no further surveys are recommended. Works can proceed with standard precautionary measures in place.

2 Introduction

2.1. Syntegra Group was commissioned by the applicant, Mr Paul Dalfsen to conduct a preliminary roost assessment (PRA) at 214 Wensley Road, Reading, RG1 6DP. The surveys were carried out on the 11th September 2020.

2.2. The proposals are for a first-floor rear extension. The proposals will knock into the existing upper floor wall and roof space.

2.3. All bat species are protected by European and national legislation. A bat survey is therefore required to determine the presence or likely absence of bats at the site. The survey aimed to determine whether bat species are present at this site, the type of roost at the site, and the population size.

2.4. The brief was to survey the proposed development site and identify the presence or likely absence of bats and nesting birds. Syntegra Consulting undertook a basic internet-based search of statutory designated sites and known EPSL within 2km of the site using the Natural England/DEFRA web-based MAGIC database (www.MAGIC.gov.uk) for MAGIC. Recommendations will be made as necessary in order to inform a mitigation strategy and licence application if required.

3 Limitations

3.1. The daytime inspection was conducted in September, a transitional period for bats. Individuals are known to be active during suitable temperatures and conditions (BCT Guidelines, 2016). Whilst evidence of roosting can be confirmed by a daytime inspection alone, very often features that could support bats cannot be searched thoroughly to confirm whether bats are indeed roosting. In line with BCT guidelines, daytime inspections are not considered enough survey effort to conclude likely absence of roosting bats and to ensure no offence is being committed by proposed works.

3.2. Desktop data searches are a valuable tool in evaluating a sites potential to hold protected species. However, it is not an absolute in confirming presence or absence of species due to the nature of how the records are collected and shared. In order to ensure a comprehensive search of all known bat records within 2km of the site, it is always recommended that the client commissions a local biological records data search to inform the report.

3.3. All areas and aspects of the building that were accessible were fully surveyed by the assessor by torch, and binoculars. The upper sections of the roof space could not be fully surveyed given their height and limited accessibility to the surveyor, however binocular inspection was used and considered sufficient for determining potential or aiding in ruling out potential.

3.4. This report only applies to plans drawn up at the time of survey. Any alterations to plans may render the report void and/or require further surveys and should be communicated to the ecologist at the earliest opportunity.

3.5. The client is responsible for reading and understanding the advice given in this report. The client must ensure that, where recommended, mitigation is followed through.

4 Legislation

4.1. This section details the legislation relevant to the protection of species and habitats. It also details the relevant policies within national, regional, and local planning policy.

4.2. The National Planning Policy Framework in summary requires that the planning system should aim to contribute and enhance the natural and local environment. The aims are to protect and enhance valued landscapes as well as geological conservation interests and soils; recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services; and minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible.

4.3. All species of bats are strictly protected through UK and European regulations. Bats have been placed on protected lists due to the overall steady decline of species over the last century. They are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), under which bats are protected from intentional or reckless disturbance.

4.4. Under Regulation 43 of the 2017 Habitats Regulations, it is an offence to deliberately capture or kill a wild animal of a European protected species, deliberately disturb any such animal and/or to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting site. Since August 2007, amendments to the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 have changed the term 'deliberately disturb' such that it is an offence if the species are disturbed in such a way that it is likely to significantly affect the colony's ability to survive, breed or rear their young; or affect the local distribution or abundance of that species. If the deliberate disturbance is considered to fall below the threshold for the regulations, no licence under this legislation is necessary, but the disturbance may still be an offence under Wildlife and Conservation Act 1981 (as amended).

4.5. Licences are needed if the disturbance has a significant effect on the bat colony and would otherwise be an offence. Licences are granted after strict following of Section 55 under the Habitat Regulations, following the submission of a licence application to Natural England. Licences permit the work that is otherwise considered to be an offence under the legislation.

4.6. Natural England (NE) is the authority for determining licence applications for works associated with developments affecting bats. In cases where licences are required, certain conditions must be met to satisfy Natural England under the three tests set out in Habitats Regulations 2017 when granting licences. These tests are:

*The consented operation must be for "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"; and
There must be "no satisfactory alternative"; and
The action authorised "will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range".*

4.7. In order to meet the tests, Natural England expects the planning position to be fully resolved. Full planning permission, if applicable, will need to have been granted and any conditions relating to bats fully discharged.

4.8. All native birds receive protection whilst nesting under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Barn owls receive additional protection under Schedule 1 and 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended).

5 Methodology

5.1. On the 11th September 2020, internal and external inspections were carried out. The surveys were carried out by Patricia Holden MSc MCIEEM, the Director of Ecology Services at Syntegra

Group. Patricia is an experienced ecologist who has undertaken numerous bat and nesting bird surveys and has undergone professional training in bat surveying techniques (Bat Licence # upon request). The survey followed guidelines by the Bat Conservation Trust (2016) Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines 3rd edition. Any bat droppings found were noted for shape, size, texture, and age. The survey also assessed the site to support foraging and commuting bats in line with BCT Good Practice Guidelines. The building was assessed as either negligible, low, moderate, high, or confirmed potential - refer to Table 1 below.

Table 1: Roost Classification, adapted from Collins 2016

Category	Description of Roosting Habitat	Number of Surveys Required
Negligible	Little to no suitable locations for roosting, not ideal for supporting bats.	No further surveys.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roosting spaces that could be used by opportunistic individual. The features and surrounding habitats do not provide enough suitable conditions and or space for use as a maternity or hibernation roost.	One survey carried out between the May and August (dusk or dawn).
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roosting spaces that could be use by individuals based on the features (size, shelter, conditions, and surrounding habitat) but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation value.	Two further surveys (one dusk and one dawn, spaced two weeks or more) between May-September with one survey between May and August.
High	A structure with one or more potential roosting spaces that are suitable for use regular use and or larger numbers of bats for a more prolonged period due to the conditions and surrounding habitats.	Three further surveys (at least one dawn) carried out between May to September with two undertaken between May to August. The surveys must be undertaken two weeks apart, spaced surveys are preferred.
Confirmed	Positive evidence of bats - i.e. droppings, individuals, or bat records.	

5.2. Bats Internal and External Inspections

5.2.1. The internal inspections of the building identified features of interest and potential bat roost sites. The floor spaces within the building were searched for evidence of bats in the form of droppings and insect debris. Within the roof spaces, features such as cracks,

crevices, and ridge beams were inspected for droppings, insect debris, urine stains or markings, scratchings, and bat remains.

5.2.2. The external survey of the building identified features of interest such as likely exit and entrance points; examples include: holes in walls, gaps in windows and doors, cracks in stonework, hanging roof tiles, and loose eaves. The grounds around the building were searched for evidence of bats such as droppings or feeding remains.

5.3. Desktop Study

5.3.1. Records of protected species in the form of known EPS Licences and statutory designated wildlife sites within 2km of the site were obtained via Magic.gov.uk. These records have been used to inform recommendations made in this report. It is always recommended for a more comprehensive record search in line with BCT guidelines and CIEEM report guidelines and a requirement for all EPSL, that the client commissions a bat records search. This will occur from the local biological record centre, without this information it is unknown whether known roosts or individual records of species are within 2km of the site.

6 Results

6.1. Position in the Landscape

6.1.1. Grid reference: SU 70007203

6.1.2. The terrace dwelling is located on Wensley Road, an area that is characterised by high density-built form and surrounded by further residential land, roads, parkland, and woodland.

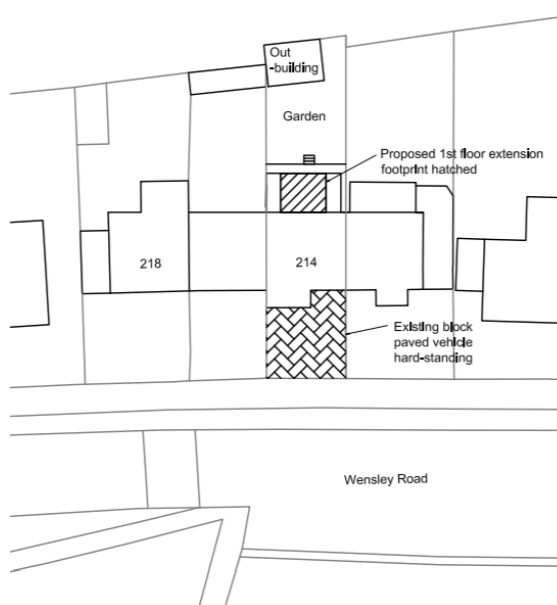


Figure 1: OS Image of the Site, Provided by the Agent

6.1.3. The building is situated within hard standing grounds. The surrounding landscape is typical of residential grounds with areas of hard standing, with no areas of garden typical planting or amenity grassland. The grounds show signs of regular management. The adjacent landscapes as viewed on Google Earth and DEFRA's MAGIC Map, show further residential land, roads, parkland and deciduous woodland. The site itself consisting of hard standing only is of low foraging and traversing value for local bats. The sites woodland boundary, located to the rear of the dwelling, is of high value for local traversing and foraging bats.



Figure 2: DEFRA's MAGIC Map Showing Deciduous Woodland Adjacent to the Site

6.1.4. No part of the site contains, or is within, statutory sites of nature conservation interest, such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and/ or Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The site is directly adjacent to deciduous woodland, a Section 41, habitat of principal importance.

6.1.5. A MAGIC search for any Granted European Protected Species Applications within 2km of the site, returned five known EPSL Applications. The closest application is 499m north-west of the site for the destruction of a known resting and breeding place for soprano pipistrelle bats (2010). The remainder of the application ranged from 2013 to 2017 for the damage and/or destruction of known resting places for common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats.

6.1.6. The rear grounds are hard standing only bound by a panel fence and considered of limited value for protected species (i.e. hedgehogs, badgers, birds, and reptiles).

6.2. External inspections

6.2.1. The site surveyed consisted of a mid-terraced dwelling set within hard standing grounds. The exteriors of the building were inspected for access points and evidence of bats and nesting birds.

6.2.2. The building is best described as a two-storey brick built terraced dwelling under a pitched cement roof with cement soffits.

6.2.3. The inspection of the building noted limited to no potential crevice roosting spaces and access points.

6.2.5. The table below summarises the external survey of the dwelling and identifies the confirmed and potential features along with the overall potential of the building. Under the section Confirmed Evidence/Potential, green denotes limited to low potential for use by roosting bats and yellow denotes potential for use by roosting bats.

Table 2: Summary of Buildings Features, Confirmed Presence and or Potential

Location	Feature	Confirmed Presence or Potential
Roof	Pitched cement tiles with cement ridge	Intact with no areas of gaps, holes, lifts or missing sections. Ridge intact, no areas of holes, gaps, missing cement. OVERALL: Limited Potential for Access and Crevice Space.
Roof	Velux Roof Windows	Intact, with sealed plastic flashing around windows. OVERALL: Limited Potential for Access and Crevice Space.
Walls	Brick	Walls in a good state of repair. No stains, marks, dropping or notable debris. Upper brick walls meet cement 'soffits' with no notable gaps, cracks or missing sections. OVERALL: Limited potential for Access and Crevice Space.
Walls	uPVC windows	Window frames in a good intact state of repair. OVERALL: Limited potential for Access and Crevice Space.
Ground Floor Extension	Brick walls, flat plastic lined roof, uPVC windows and doors	All in a recent built form, good state of repair. Meet the main dwelling wall with no gaps, holes, lifts or missing sections. OVERALL: Limited potential for Access and Crevice Space.

6.3. Internal inspections

6.3.1. The internal inspections of the building examined features of interest, potential bat roost sites, and bird nesting areas.

6.3.2. In summary, the building had no loft spaces with living space extending into the roof space. The living space consists of carpets, plasterboard walls and ceiling. Two Velux windows are within the roof space, these are enclosed by tight and intact timber frames.

7 Assessment

7.1. The internal survey of the dwelling noted living space that extends into the roof space with no potential access points or crevice roosting opportunities. The external survey of the dwelling noted limited to no potential access points and crevice roosting opportunities. No signs of active or remnant nesting birds was noted.

7.2. The applicant has told the ecologist that the whole roof was retiled and felted 9 years ago. The loft conversion, under permitted development was also completed 9 years ago. The ground floor extension under permitted development is under active construction. It is not considered that the roof space, wall space, or soffit areas provide suitability for use given the lack of potential access points and/or crevice roosting opportunities.

7.3. The site is set within the residential area of Wensley Road. The grounds are typical of residential grounds with hard standing with boundary deciduous woodland. The wider local landscape as viewed on Google Earth and MAGIC Maps show further residential land, roads, parkland, and woodland. The proposed site's habitats overall have low to limited value for foraging bats and traversing bats. The sites boundary woodland provides high value for traversing and foraging bats. The wider landscape with the linear features including woodland and parkland, provides high potential for use by local bats for both traversing and foraging grounds.

7.4. The desktop study by use of Natural England's Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) returned five known EPSL Applications. The closest application is 499m north-west of the site for the destruction of a known resting and breeding place for soprano pipistrelle bats (2010). The remainder of the application ranged from 2013 to 2017 for the damage and/or destruction of known resting places for common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats.

7.5. In line with Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Survey Guidelines (3rd edition, 2016), buildings with negligible potential features suitable for use by roosting bats require no further surveys. Works can proceed under standard precautionary measures.

7.6. No signs of nesting birds were noted at the time of the survey. The dwelling lacked features that would be appealing for species such as house sparrow and tit.

7.7. The grounds around the building are of limited value for use by potential protected species (i.e. hedgehogs, badgers, and reptiles), and no further measures are required.

7.8. The site is directly adjacent to s41 Deciduous Woodland. It is recommended that pollution prevent measures as advised by GOV.UK, are followed to ensure that no debris, materials, and/or spills enter into the deciduous woodland.

7.9. In line with Reading Brough Local Plan (2019) Policy EN12, *'On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible. Development should: Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable.'* The scheme must ensure protection of the adjacent s41 deciduous woodland, and the report recommend pollution prevent measures. The scheme must ensure enhancements for biodiversity. Future landscape within the rear gardens, if any, could include planting of native and wildlife-friendly species within the residential grounds that attract insects (such as jasmine, evening primrose, rosemary, ivy, lavender, and honeysuckle) to provide good future foraging grounds for local bats and birds. Lighting proposals at the rear, if any, must ensure direct lighting, with fixtures that are directed downwards, and ensure minimal light spill. The proposed building extension provides limited scope for incorporation of a bat or bird box. If the council would allow, given the woodland is not in ownership of the applicant, there are provisions to hang a bat box within the adjacent woodland boundary. These prescribed enhancement measures are in line with policy EN12.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1. The site is located within the residential area of Wensley Road, Reading, and is surrounded by further residential land, roads, parkland, and woodland.
- 8.2. The site consists of a terraced house situated within hard standing grounds.
- 8.3. The proposals are for a first-floor rear extension.
- 8.4. The internal survey found no potential crevice roosting opportunities and no potential access points.
- 8.5. The external survey of the building noted limited potential access points and crevice roosting opportunities.
- 8.6. The use of MAGIC Maps has identified five EPSM applications for roosting bats within 2km of the site.
- 8.7. The external inspection noted no evidence of active or remnant nesting sites.
- 8.8. The grounds around the building are of limited potential for use by potential protected species.
- 8.9. The building was deemed as negligible potential based on the features of the building for use by roosting bats.
- 8.10. To ensure that this site complies with wildlife legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework, the following recommendations are made:
- 8.10.1. In line with BCT Guidelines (2016), buildings with negligible potential require no further surveys. Standard precautionary measures are advised for the works.
- 8.10.2. In line with NPPF and Reading Borough Local Plan, enhancements for biodiversity are required for planning applications, recommendations include the rear gardens to incorporate native and wildlife friendly species, lighting to ensure no direct lighting or light spill onto the rear boundary woodland, and if council approved, erection of a bat box within a boundary mature tree.
- 8.10.3. The site is directly adjacent to deciduous woodland, pollution prevent measures must be in place for the works.

References:

Collins (2016) Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust.

Department for Communities and Local Government (2019). National Planning Policy Framework.
www.communities.gov.uk

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

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. Bat Mitigation Guidelines. Jan 2004. English Nature.

Reading Borough Council. 2019. Reading Borough Local Plan. Accessed on 14/09/2020:
https://www.reading.gov.uk/media/10410/Reading-Borough-Council-Local-Plan/pdf/Local_Plan_Adopted_November_2019.pdf

Stebbing, R.E, Yalden, D.W., Herman, J.S. Which Bat Is It? The Mammal Society. 2007.

Appendix I: Photos from Site Inspection



Deciduous woodland located to rear of site



Intact cement 'soffits' at rear



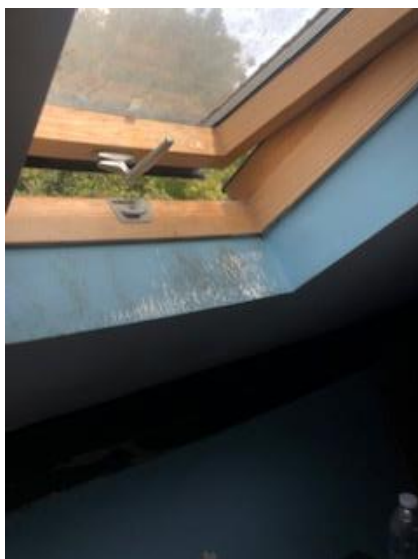
Rear dwelling with new ground floor extension



Roof space of converted loft space



View out of Velux window, intact plastic flashing around window and tight and intact cement tiles



Intact window frames around loft windows

Appendix II: Existing and Proposed Plans

