

**2 Hewett Avenue
Caversham
Reading
Berkshire
RG4 7EA**

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Ref: R2642/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 Gross to undertake a survey for the presence of bats at 2 Hewett Avenue – a chalet bungalow 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 single-storey rear extension, roof extension and reconfiguration, garage conversion and new garage (Planning Application Number: 200736). RBC Ecological Consultations comment summarises that: *'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 chalet bungalow is situated at the northern end of Hewett Avenue in Caversham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 69727 75851).
- 1.3.2** The bungalow is set on the edge of Caversham amongst similar residential properties along the western side of Hewett Avenue. The property backs onto Caversham Heath Golf Course – a mosaic of grassland, woodland parcels and ponds. Chazey Wood is just over 700 metres east of the property and consists of (mostly replanted) ancient woodland; and the River Thames – a well-known wildlife corridor – is just over 750 metres to the south.
- 1.3.3** Overall, the landscape provides 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 19th October 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 a number of 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 Access into the eaves space was restricted due to the size of the space and the presence of pipework and cables running along the floor. However, full

access was available to the exterior of the property and as such, it was not considered to be a significant constraint to the survey.

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 chalet bungalow are described as follows:

3.2 External Survey

- 3.2.1** The chalet bungalow was of modern, brick cavity wall construction and had a hipped roof with front and rear pitched gable ends; a pitched roofed rear extension and two flat-roofed side extensions (**Photographs 1 & 2**).
- 3.2.2** The hipped and pitched roofs were covered in concrete interlocking roof tiles, which were tightly fitted and uniform offering no visible ingress opportunities for roosting bats (**Photographs 3 & 4; Target note 1**). The ridge and hip tiles were securely mortared except for one missing piece of mortar on the southern elevation, which was closely inspected from a nearby roof light and showed no evidence of use by roosting bats (**Photographs 5 & 6; Target notes 2 & 3**). A slight gap under lead flashing around the chimney also lacked any signs of bats after close-inspection from the roof light (**Photograph 7; Target note 4**). The roof lights were all lined with tightly fitted lead flashing and had gaps under adjacent roof tiles that were deemed too open to provide optimal conditions for crevice-roosting bats (**Photograph 8; Target note 5**). The rear gable ends, including the extension, had intact verge mortar with undercloaking sitting tightly on top of the wall plates (**Photographs 9 & 10; Target notes 6 & 7**). The front gable had a narrow gap behind its uPVC soffit box that could be closely inspected from ground-level, which showed no indication of use by roosting bats (**Photograph 11; Target note 8**). Elsewhere, the uPVC soffit boxes were flush against the bungalow walls (**Photograph 12; Target note 9**).
- 3.2.3** The southern side extension (utility room) had sealed bitumen roofing felt covering its flat roof with uPVC barge boards sitting flush against the walls (**Photograph 13; Target note 10**). The northern side extension (utility and garage) had a sealed bitumen flat roof and walls tightly clad with timber feather boards (**Photograph 14; Target note 11**). The timber around the garage door had weathered (**Photograph 15; Target note 12**). No evidence

of roosting bats was observed during the external inspection of the chalet bungalow.

3.3 Internal Survey

- 3.3.1** The roof void had been converted into living space (bedroom and en suite) but an eaves space remained and was accessible through a storage cupboard (**Photograph 16**). The space could not be fully explored because it was small (approximately 0.5-0.75 metres in height) and had pipework and cables running along the floor (**Photograph 17**). The roof was lined with bitumen-based roof lining but a small hole revealed baton and roof tile behind (**Photograph 18; Target note 13**). The floor was insulated with fibreglass that extended down the eaves to the soffits (**Photographs 19; Target note 14**). The internal walls had been insulated with foam insulation boards and the roof above was filled with fibreglass (**Photograph 20**). A breezeblock wall was visible at the start of the rear extension (**Photograph 21; Target note 15**).
- 3.3.2** No signs of roosting bats were observed during the internal inspection of the property.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential

4.1.1 The chalet bungalow showed no evidence of the presence of roosting bats. The majority of the roof void had been converted into living space; leaving small eaves spaces where bat droppings were absent indicating that void-dwelling species such as long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.) are highly unlikely to be present.

4.1.2 Externally, the property had limited features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling species such as pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus* spp.), including: a piece of missing hip mortar, slightly raised chimney lead flashing and a narrow gap behind the uPVC soffit on the front gable end. The presence of bats in these few potential roost features identified during the survey could be ruled out by close inspection, which found no roosting bats present or evidence of past use (i.e. droppings).

4.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

4.2.1 In the absence of any evidence of bats, it is considered highly unlikely that a bat roost will be affected by the proposals (i.e. a single-storey rear extension, roof extension and reconfiguration, garage conversion and new garage). However, bats are highly mobile and it remains possible that they may utilise the potential roost features in the future, and as such precautionary measures should be adopted as set out in **Section 4.3** below.

4.3 Precautionary Measures

4.3.1 In order to confirm the continued absence of bats, the potential bat roost features identified will be re-inspected by a licensed ecologist before the building work begins. Work to remove tiles will begin only once the licensed ecologist has confirmed there continues to be no signs of bats being present.

4.3.2 The licensed ecologist will brief the building contractors on bats, their roosting sites and the legislation protecting bats and their roosts, signs indicating the presence of bats, and what to do in the unlikely event that bats are found during the course of the work. Specifically, if bats are discovered, the building contractors will be advised to stop work immediately, and a licensed ecologist will visit site, attend to any bats discovered, and provide further advice on how to proceed; work will 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 east.



2. Rear of property viewed from west.



3. Tight interlocking roof tiles (front elevation).



4. Tight interlocking roof tiles on rear extension (northern elevation).



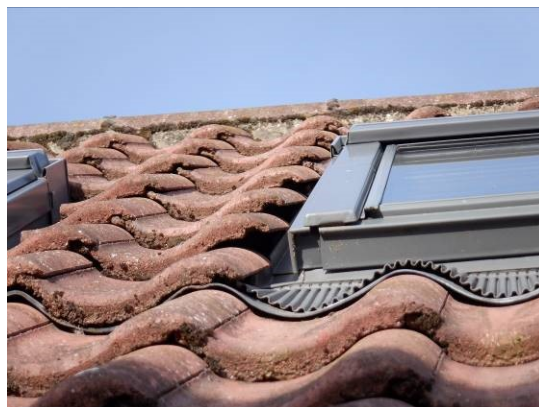
5. Securely mortared ridge tiles on rear gable end (southern elevation).



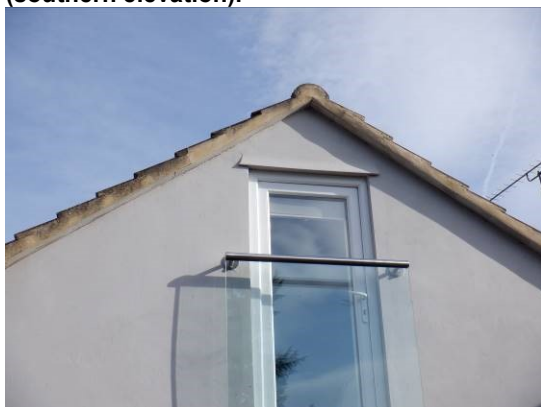
6. Missing piece of hip mortar (southern elevation).



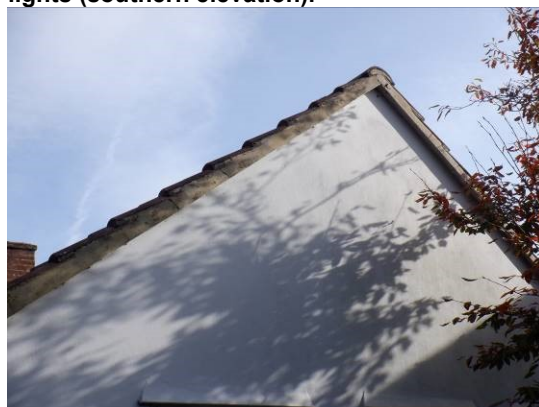
7. Slightly raised lead flashing around chimney (southern elevation).



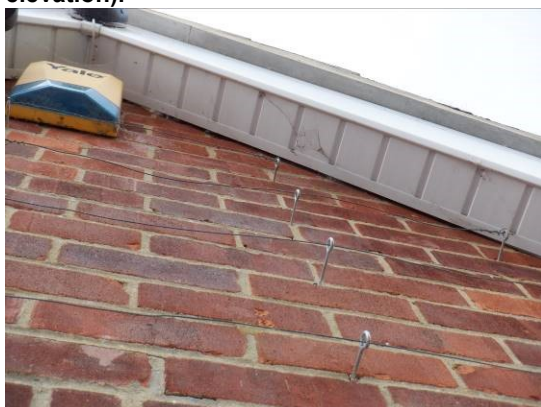
8. Open gaps under roof tiles adjacent to roof lights (southern elevation).



9. Intact verge mortar on rear gable end (rear elevation).



10. Intact verge mortar on rear extension (rear elevation).



11. Narrow gap behind uPVC soffit on front gable end (front elevation).



12. Flush uPVC soffit boxes (southern/rear elevations).



13. Flush uPVC barge board on side extension (southern elevation).



14. Northern side extension (rear/southern elevations).



15. Weathered timbers on front of garage (front elevation).



16. Access into eaves space through storage cupboard.



17. Cables and pipework running through eaves space.



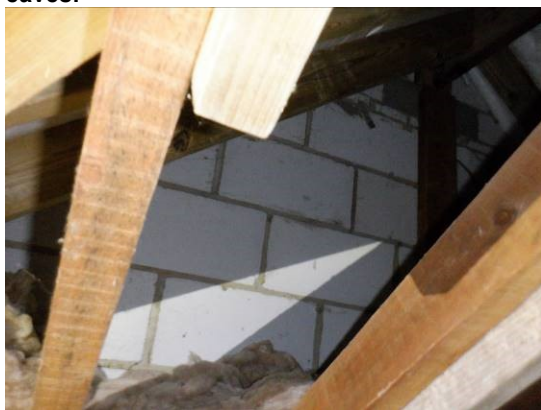
18. Small hole in bitumen roof lining.



19. Fibreglass insulation leading down into eaves.

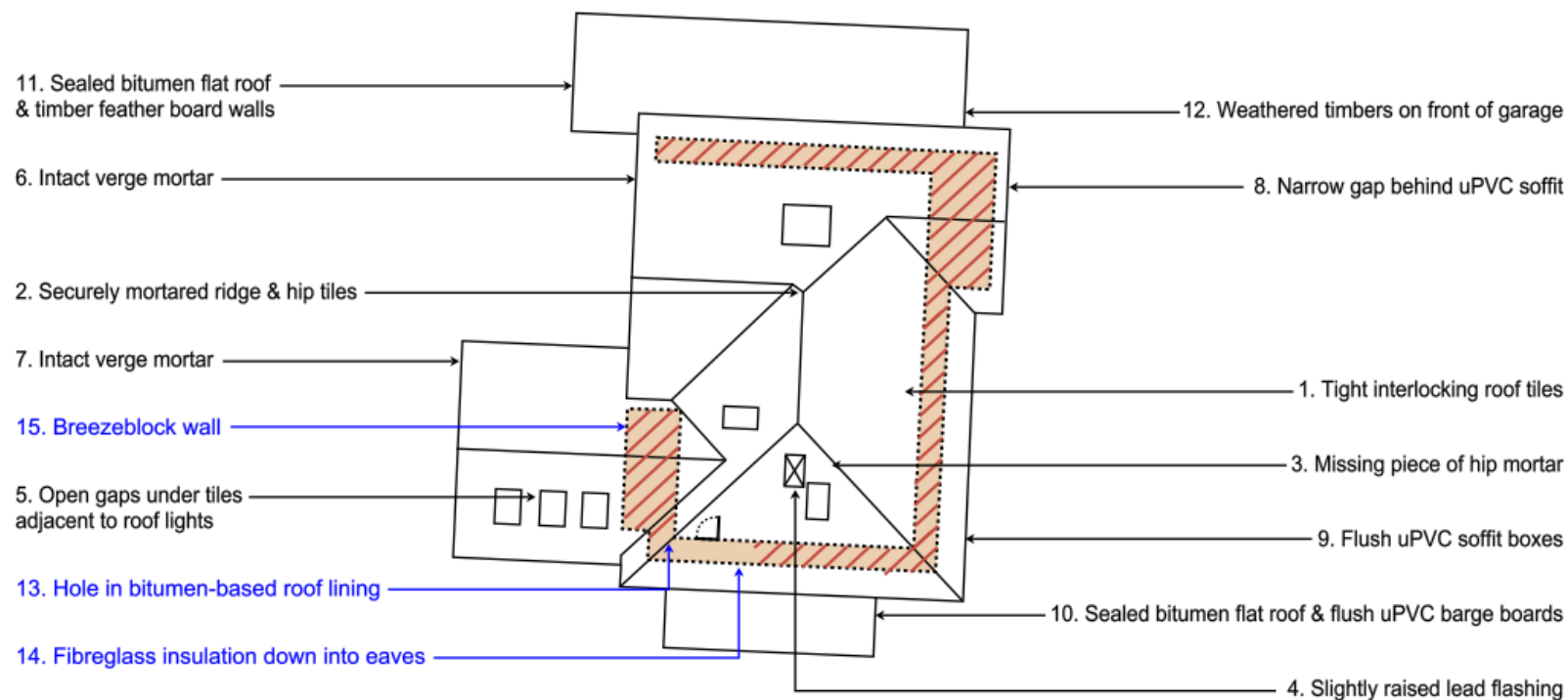


20. Foam insulation boards.



21. Breezeblock wall at start of rear extension.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



Chimney



Roof void



Not accessed



External target note



Internal target note

Drawn by:	Date:	Scale:	2 Hewett Avenue Caversham	
CW	November 2020	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

John Wenman Ecological Consultancy
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