

**378 Gosbrook Road
Caversham
Reading
Berkshire
RG4 8EG**

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Ref: R2433/a

December 2019



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Brown to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the detached house at 378 Gosbrook Road in Caversham.

1.1.2 The survey was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Reading Borough Council seeking consent to construct a two-storey extension to the rear of the house.

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 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 bat species may fall under the remit of the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (WML-CL21). The Class Licence permits ‘Registered Consultants’ 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 on the northern side of Gosbrook Road in Caversham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 72340 74566).

1.3.2 The house is in a residential area with residential properties on all sides and a small commercial property to the southwest. The River Thames is only 270 metres to the south of the site and Caversham Lakes are 430 metres to the southeast of the site; both offering high quality foraging and commuting

habitat for bats within close proximity to the house.

2 SURVEY METHOD

2.1 Bat Survey

2.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the building was undertaken by an ecologist registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 and an assistant ecologist on 12th December 2019.

2.1.2 The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars, and a high power (1 million candle power) torch and looked for any signs of occupation by bats, and 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:

- 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 properties may offer potential roosting sites in a number of locations, favoured locations include:

- Under roof and ridge tiles, especially when loose or missing tiles are present or sections of mortar are missing;
- At the eaves – gaining access via gaps between the soffits and wall;
- At the gable ends – access is typically gained at the roof apex via gaps in the soffits or under roof tiles;
- 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 was full access available to the interior and exterior of the property and therefore there were no significant constraints to the survey findings.

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 Building Inspection

- 3.1.1** Photographs of the site 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 building are described as follows:

3.2 External Survey

- 3.2.1** The house was of brick, cavity wall construction with a hipped roof covered in flat roof tiles; a conservatory was attached to the rear elevation (**Photographs 1 & 2**). The roof tiles were all tightly fitted offering no visible roosting opportunities for bats (**Photograph 3; Target Note 1**) apart from one missing tile on the western side elevation (**Photograph 4; Target Note 2**) and tiles were slightly raised around the vent on the northern rear elevation (**Photograph 5; Target Note 3**). The mortar under the hip tiles was all intact (**Photograph 6; Target Note 4**) and there were some superficial gaps under small tile cuts beneath the hip unsuitable for bats (**Photograph 6; Target Note 5**). There were two chimneys on the western side elevation and gaps above the chimneys that could be used by crevice roosting bats (**Photograph 7; Target Note 6**). The soffits were tight to the walls around the eaves (**Photograph 8; Target Note 7**). The lead flashing between the conservatory and the rear external wall was fitted tightly (**Photograph 9; Target Note 8**).

- 3.2.2** No evidence of roosting bats was found on the exterior of the building.

3.3 Internal Survey

- 3.3.1** The roof space was accessed through a loft hatch in the southwestern corner of the void and had an estimated floor-to-ridge height of two metres (**Photograph 10**). The roof was lined with bitumen and hessian style roofing felt, which was intact, apart from around the plastic vents on each of the roof elevations (**Photograph 11; Target Note 9**). The floor was well insulated with hard foam panels and boarding and also foil-covered fibreglass insulation on one side and in the front gable end; the insulation did not fill the fibreglass insulation (**Photograph 12; Target Note 10**). The ridge beam was mostly cobwebbed, which can indicate there has been little or no bat activity at the ridge (**Photograph 13; Target Note 11**).

- 3.3.2** No evidence of roosting bats was found in the roof space of the house during the survey.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1.1** No evidence of roosting bats was found inside the roof space of the property; and the property only had limited external features offering crevice roosting opportunities. The features identified included: gaps under tiles behind the chimneys and a missing tile. The tiles around the vents, including on the rear elevation, were slightly raised but these led directly into the plastic vents visible internally and were therefore unsuitable for and showed no evidence of use by bats. The features with bat roost potential are to be retained unaffected by the extension to the rear of the house. Therefore it is considered highly unlikely that the planned building work will have any impact on bats or their roosts.
- 4.1.2** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the building work, the work should stop immediately and a licensed ecologist called to site to attend to the bat and provide advice on how to proceed; work should not continue until further written advice has been received. At this point, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence 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.

Richardson, P. (2000). *Distribution Atlas of Bats in Britain and Ireland 1980 – 1999*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



1. Front of the house viewed from the south.



2. Rear of the building viewed from the north.



3. The tightly fitted roof tiles.



4. The one missing roof tile on the western side elevation.



5. The slightly raised tiles around the vent on the rear elevation.



6. The superficial gaps under the tile cuts on the hip.



7. Gaps under roof tiles behind the chimneys.



8. The tight soffit boxes at the eaves of the house.



9. The tight lead flashing at the junction between the conservatory and the external wall of the house.



10. The roof space.



11. The gaps cut into the felt for the vents.

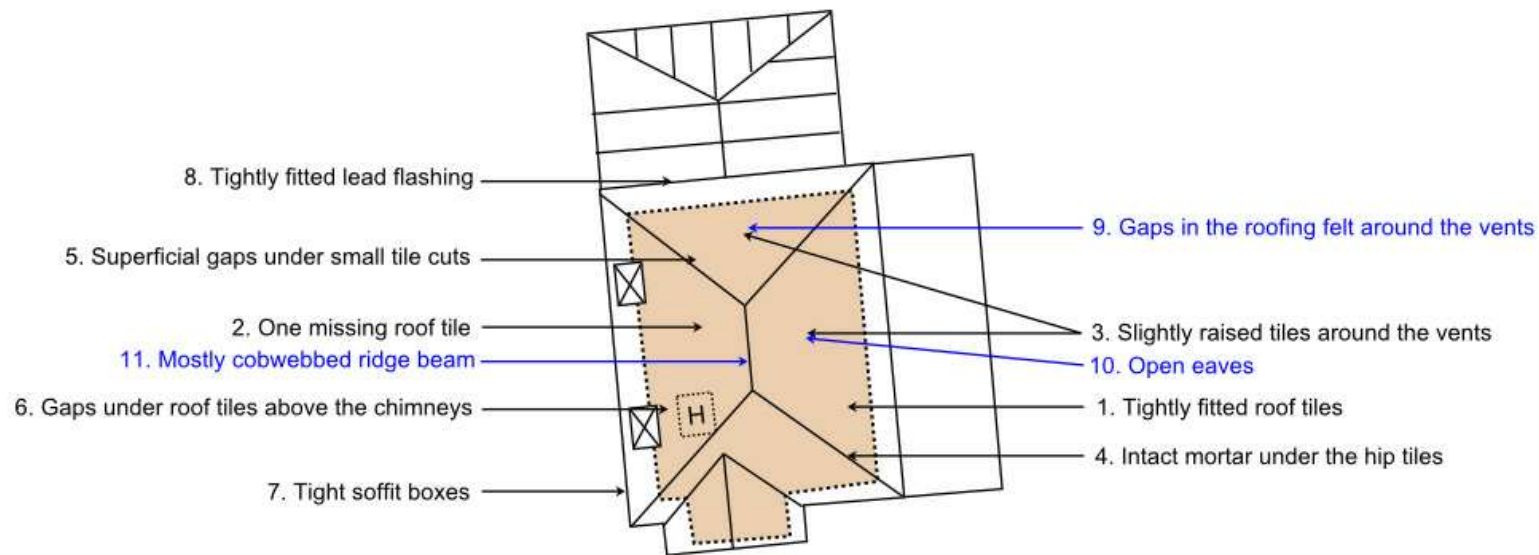


12. The open eaves.



13. The cobwebbed ridge beam.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



 Chimney

 Roof void

 Loft hatch

 External target note

 Internal target note

Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	378 Gosbrook Road Caversham	
SF	December 2019	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	