

**Pavilion at Mapledurham Playing Fields
Upper Woodcote Road
Caversham
Reading
Berkshire
RG4 7LB**

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Ref: R2416/a

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Reading Borough Council to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the pavilion at Mapledurham Playing Fields in Caversham, Berkshire.

1.1.2 The survey was commissioned in connection with a planning application lodged with Reading Borough Council (planning reference 191677) seeking consent for a single storey side and rear extensions to include improved changing facilities, provide a new entrance and lobby, and new referee changing area and toilets. The works will include refurbishments including changing a flat roof into a pitched roof, replacing existing cladding and covering the bitumen pitched roof with cladding (refer to proposed elevations in **Appendix 3**).

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. They must therefore consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by planning proposals affecting European Protected Species before granting planning permission.
- 1.2.4** If a European Protected Species mitigation licence is necessary, a licence can be sought once all the necessary planning consents have been granted. Natural England aims to issue a decision on licence applications within 30 working days of submission.
- 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), which would enable consultants registered by Natural England, or accredited agents appointed by them, to carry licensable work under the Class Licence once sites have been registered in advance with Natural England. Registration forms must be submitted at least three weeks before work is due to start, and if acceptable, Natural England aims to register sites within two weeks.
- 1.2.6** Survey data supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or the registration of the site under the Low Impact 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 building is situated off the access road to the playing fields on the southern side of Upper Woodcote Road in Caversham, Reading in Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 69854 75801).

- 1.3.1** The pavilion is bordered by Mapledurham Playing Fields to the south, east and west. The site consists of tennis courts to the east and large playing fields to the south and west with parcels of broadleaved woodland, wildflower meadows and scattered trees. The boundaries of the playing fields are composed of thin strips of woodland and scattered trees. The Pavilion is bordered by residential properties to the north. In the wider area, the open space of Caversham Heath Golf Course is just over 200 metres to the west and the River Thames flows approximately 780 metres to the south.
- 1.3.2** The surrounding areas provides habitat suitable 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 pavilion was undertaken by an ecologist registered under Natural England bat survey Class Licence CL18 on the 21st November 2019. A further close endoscopic inspection of features behind the timber cladding that had potential to offer roosting sites for bats was undertaken from the flat roof on the 22nd November by an ecologist registered under Class Licence CL18 using a video endoscope.

2.1.2 The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars, a high power (1 million candle power) torch and Ridgid Seesnake CA100 video endoscope 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 Commercial buildings may offer potential roosting sites in a number of locations, favoured locations include:

- Under roof and ridge coverings, especially when loose or lifted tiles are present;
- Under sections of raised lead flashing;
- Beneath lifted barge boards and cladding;
- 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** Full access was available to the exterior and interior of the pavilion, and therefore there were no significant constraints to the survey.

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1** Photographs of the building 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 pavilion was of simple brick wall construction with a part pitched roof with flat roofed extensions at either end of the building (**Photographs 1 & 2**).
- 3.2.2** The main pitched roof was covered in bitumen felt, which was mostly flat and fitted tightly (**Photograph 3; Target note 1**). The soffits were tight at the eaves to the front and rear of the building (**Photograph 4; Target note 2**). The gable ends were clad with interlocking, flat vertical timber boards, which were tightly fitted at the east facing gable end, apart from superficial gaps behind the soffit which offered limited roosting opportunities for bats as further timber was visible behind (**Photograph 5; Target note 3**). A couple of gaps in the cladding were present at a low level close to the flat roof at the west facing gable end (**Photographs 6 & 7; Target note 4**). On close inspection with an endoscope there was no evidence of use by bats behind the cladding. The soffits fitted to the timber cladding had a very superficial; gap that provided no opportunities suitable for bats. The two flat roofs at either end of the building were lined tightly with bitumen felt with a layer of gravel on the top and a metal trim around the eaves (**Photographs 8, 9 & 10; Target notes 5 & 6**).
- 3.2.3** A couple of sections of the wall were clad with hanging tiles to the front (northern side) of the building and at the eastern end under a corrugated metal canopy (**Photographs 10, 11 & 12**). The hanging tiles were mostly tightly fitted, apart from one gap which was full of leaves to the front of the building, and where the lead flashing was loose or missing, which on close inspection showed no evidence of use by bats (**Target notes 7, 8 & 9**). Some other sections of the walls were covered with wooden boarding which was tightly fitted (**Photograph 13; Target note 10**). A gap was present behind a door frame and the brickwork at the western end of the building, which led into a crevice that on close inspection with an endoscope showed no evidence of use by bats (**Photograph 14; Target note 11**). There was also a small section of roof tiles which had gaps between them, which showed no evidence of use by bats and was also considered unsuitable as it was very open

and did not lead into crevices (**Photograph 15; Target note 12**). Some of the windows had been boarded up, which were mostly tight apart from a couple of gaps to the front of the building where they were loose and between the glass and a section of cladding at the eastern end of the building, which were also checked with an endoscope and showed no evidence of use by bats (**Photographs 16 & 17; Target notes 13 & 14**).

- 3.2.4** No evidence of bats was visible on the exterior of the pavilion at the time of the survey.

3.3 Internal Survey

- 3.3.1** The pavilion had no roof spaces and all of the ceilings were plastered or boarded with no features suitable for roosting bats (**Photographs 18 & 19; Target note 15**). No signs of roosting bats were found in the pavilion during the internal inspection.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential

- 4.1.1** The pavilion had a few features of low potential for use by crevice-dwelling bat species such as the pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* species including gaps behind the timber cladding on the west facing gable end, the gap behind the timber door frame, a gap behind a hanging tile, and gaps behind the boarded windows. On close inspection of all of these features, there was no evidence of use by bats. Furthermore, internally, no bat droppings were found inside the building, and therefore it is considered unlikely that the building supports roosting bats currently.

4.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

- 4.2.1** The proposed works includes a single storey rear extension and side extensions, changing of a flat roof to a pitched roof and external alterations to cladding and roof coverings (Refer to plans in **Appendix 3**). The extension will have an impact on the external features identified as potential access and/or roosting opportunities for crevice-dwelling bats, i.e. gaps behind the timber cladding on the west facing gable end, the gap behind the timber door frame, a gap behind a hanging tile, and gaps behind the boarded windows; however on close inspection of the features there was no evidence of use by bats. Therefore, in the absence of any signs of the presence of bats during the preliminary bat roost assessment, it is considered unlikely that the proposed works will have any impact on bats or their roosts. However, as bats are mobile there is a chance that bats could be present in the future, and therefore the works to extend the building should be subject to precautions as set out in 4.3 as follows.

4.3 Precautionary Measures

- 4.3.1** The building work will be preceded by a repeat endoscopic inspection of the features with bat roost potential including the gaps behind the timber cladding on the west facing gable end, the gap behind the timber door frame, a gap behind a hanging tile, and gaps behind the boarded windows for the presence of bats by a licensed ecologist. In the unlikely event that bats are found, the work will begin only once a licensed ecologist has provided further written advice on how to proceed. At this point, a European Protected Species mitigation 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.

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 pavilion viewed from the north



2. Rear of the pavilion viewed from the south



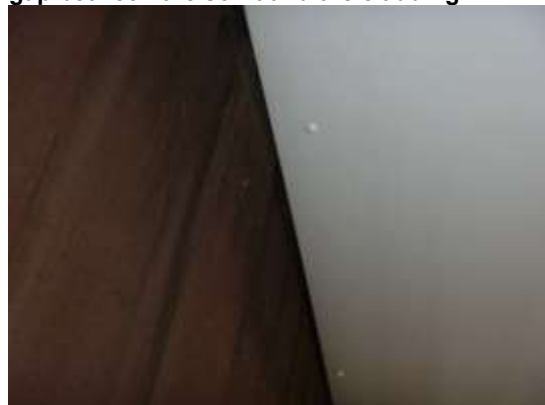
3. The central pitched roof tightly covered with bitumen felt



4. Timber cladding tight at the eastern end of the pavilion. Further timber visible behind a gap between the soffit and the cladding.



5. Gaps where some of the timber cladding was missing at the western end of the pavilion



6. Superficial gap between the cladding and the soffit at the western end of the pavilion



7. Flat roof at eastern end of the building covered tightly with bitumen felt and gravel



8. Flat roof at western end of the building covered tightly with bitumen felt and gravel



9. Metal trim tight around the flat roof



10. Hanging tiles at the western end to the front of the pavilion with vegetation covering some of the tiles



11. Hanging tiles at the eastern end to the front of the pavilion with lead flashing missing and one lifted tile filled with leaves



12. Hanging tiles under the canopy to the eastern side of the pavilion



13. Wooden boards covering parts of the pavilion



14. Gap behind timber door frame at the western end of the pavilion



15. Gaps under a small section of roof tiles at the western end of the pavilion



16. Gap behind boarded window to the front of the pavilion

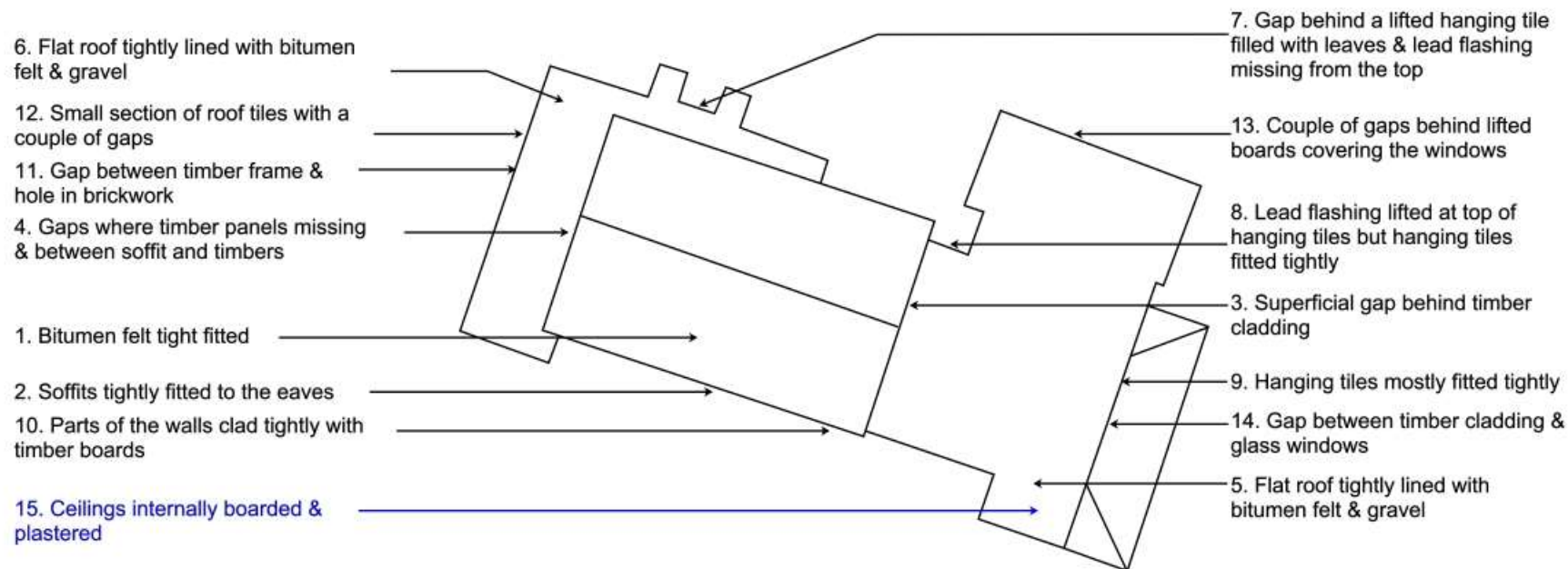


17. Gap between glass and boarding covering the windows to the eastern end of the pavilion



18. Internal view of the main central pitched roofed section of the pavilion with no access to a roof space

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



n. External Target note **n.** Internal Target note

Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	Pavilion at Mapledurham Playing Fields Caversham, Reading	
VP	Nov 2019	Not to scale	Daylight Bat Survey Findings	

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APPENDIX 3 – PROPOSED PLANS

