



114 Southcote
Lane,
Reading,
Berkshire,
RG30 3AF

Preliminary Roost Assessment Report

August 2019



Ref: 19-6061

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	16/08/2019
Prepared by	P.Holden (on behalf of Syntegra Consulting Ltd)
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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 Lloyd Anthony**, 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.

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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 **2019** 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.

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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.

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APPENDIX:

I. PHOTOS FROM INSPECTION

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Syntegra Group was commissioned by Mr Lloyd Anthony to conduct a preliminary roost assessment (PRA) at 114 Southcote Lane, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 3AF (Grid Ref: SU 694 216) in support of a Planning Application.

The site consists of a detached two-storey dwelling set within hard standing grounds and surrounded by garden typical areas.

A daytime bat and nesting bird assessment was undertaken on the 13th August 2019.

The existing building is best described as a red brick-built partially pebble blast with hanging tiled two-storey dwelling under a plain clay tiled roofing with one brick-built chimney. To the rear of the dwelling is a single storey extension consisting of a plain clay tiled roof with brick walls.

The proposals are to subdivide the current dwelling and placement of a two-storey side extension and a rear single storey extension.

The internal survey of the main loft space noted potential access points and limited potential crevice spaces. No signs of bats in the form of droppings, debris, marks and/or stains were found. No evidence of use by birds was found within the loft space.

The external survey of the dwelling noted potential access points and crevice roosting spaces within the tiled roof spaces and rear soffit boards. No evidence of use by nesting birds was noted.

Previous echolocation surveys carried for another application within 150 metres of the site (planning application 151175) in 2015 recorded two common pipistrelle bats roosting within a tree on site. Species recorded on and adjacent to the site during the further echolocation surveys included: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, serotine and noctule. An EPSM for the damage and destruction of a known soprano pipistrelle breeding site is located 350m north-east of the site. Based on the 2015 surveys and known EPSM, it is considered highly likely that crevice dwelling bat species are within the local landscape.

The dwelling was deemed as low roosting potential. It is recommended that in line with BCT Guidelines (2016), buildings with low potential require one further dusk or dawn echolocation survey during the active season (May to August inclusive) to rule out likely presence.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1. Syntegra Group was commissioned Mr Lloyd Anthony to conduct a preliminary roost assessment (PRA) at 114 Southcote Lane, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 3AF. The surveys were carried out on the 13th August 2019.

2.2. The proposals are to subdivide the current dwelling and placement of a two-storey side extension and a rear single storey extension.

2.3. All bat species are protected by European and national legislation. One dusk and one dawn bat survey are therefore required to determine the presence or likely absence of bats at the site. The survey aims 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 mid-August, a transitional period for bats, with adult females dispersing from maternity roosts, and the start of the swarming period for bats with bats move into mating roosts (BCT Guidelines, 2016).

3.2. 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. This includes both internal and external features including but not limited to ridge tiles/spaces, wall spaces, soffits, barge boards and roof tiles.

3.3. 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 1km of the site, it is always recommended that the client commissions a local biological records data search to inform the report.

3.4. All areas and aspects of the building that were accessible were fully surveyed by the assessor. The upper sections of the external roof space, soffit boards and barge boards could not be fully surveyed given their height and limited accessibility to the surveyor, however binocular inspection was considered sufficient to determine potential access points and or crevice spaces.

3.5. 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.

3.6. 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; recognise the wider benefits of ecosystem services; and minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide 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 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 have to be met to satisfy Natural England under the 3 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 13th August 2019, internal and external inspections were carried out. The surveys were carried out by Hetty Wakeford, an experienced ecologist who has undergone training in bat surveying techniques, under the guidance of Patricia Holden MSc MCIEEM, the Director of Ecology Services at Syntegra Group (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, 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. These features were also inspected for signs of use by birds.

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 and lifts to roof tiles. The grounds around the building were searched for evidence of bats and birds such as droppings, nest material 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, that the client commissions a bat records search from the local biological record centre, without this information it is unknown whether know roosts or individual records of species, are within 2km of the site.

6 RESULTS

6.1. Position in the Landscape



Figure 1: Google Map Image of the Site

6.1.1. Grid reference: SU 694 216

6.1.2. The detached building is located off Southcote Lane, an area that is characterised by higher density built form and surrounded by further residential land, school grounds and minor roads.

6.1.3. The detached dwelling is located within hard standing grounds. The surrounding landscape is typical of residential land with areas of hard standing with small pockets of garden typical plantings within both the front and side areas of the property. The adjacent landscapes as viewed on Google Earth, show further residential areas, minor roads and school grounds. The site itself has limited linear vegetation features suitable for traversing bats, however further suitable traversing habitats are located to the north-east of the site. The site is within 250 metres of both priority habitats, deciduous woodland and wood pasture and parkland, providing further suitable foraging and traversing habitats for local bats. The sites area of well-maintained garden typical areas and hard standing are of lower foraging value for local bats.

6.1.4. No part of the site contains, or is within, 2km of statutory sites of nature conservation interest such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The site is within 500 metres of Prospect Park, a registered park and garden and within 1.5km of Lousehill Copse, a Local Nature Reserve.

6.1.5. A MAGIC search for any Granted European Protected Species Applications within 2km of the site returned four known EPSL Applications for bats. The closest application is within 350 metres of the site for the damage and destruction of a known breeding site for soprano pipistrelle bats in 2010. The further three EPSM ranged between 2013 to 2017 for common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats.

6.2. External inspections

6.2.1. The site surveyed consisted of a detached building 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 two storey brick, pebble blast, and hanging tiled walled dwelling under a plain clay tiled with clay ridge roof. On the rear side of the dwelling is a single storey brick and pebble blast wall extension with plain clay tiled roof. The dwelling has one brick chimney to the rear.

6.2.3. The external inspection of the building noted potential crevice spaces and access points within the rear extension soffit boards and plain clay tiled roof. The hanging tiled walls to the front noted some slight gaps but very limited spaces available to potential bats due to the underlay. No signs of bird nesting were noted during the survey.

6.2.4. Table 1 below summarises the external survey of the building 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 Dwellings Features, Confirmed Presence and/ or Potential

Location	Feature	Confirmed Presence or Potential
Roof	Plain clay tiled roof with clay ridge	Typical lifts associated with this type of roof. Gaps noted in ridge tiles (northern side). Rear extension roof noted lifts and gaps. OVERALL: Potential for Access and Crevice Space
Roof – chimney	Red Brick with lead flashing	The red brick is in good order with no noticeable gaps or cracks. Flashing is tight fitting with some areas of lift noted. Overall: Limited Potential for Access and Crevice Space
Walls	Brick, hanging tiles and pebble blast	Brick walls in a good state of repair, as is the pebble blast area. The hanging tiles within the front elevation had some notable gaps, however no stains, droppings or debris noted on closer inspection. The underlay appears tight and intact, reducing overall movement and space available for potential roosting bats OVERALL: Limited Potential for Access and Crevice Space

Soffits/ barge boards	Wooden	The majority of the dwelling has boxed soffits and barge boards that sit tight against the walls. The rear single storey extension is not boxed but rather opened, allowing for potential access and crevice space. OVERALL: Potential for Access and Crevice Space
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6.3. Internal inspections

6.3.1. The internal inspections of the dwelling examined features of interest, potential bat roost sites and bird nesting areas. The dwelling had one main open planned loft space and no loft space present within the rear extension.

6.3.2. The loft space is best described as open planned with a sloped ridge height that varies with the main ridge height of 1.8 metres. A smaller loft space with a height less than 1 metre was located within the eastern roof space. The roof space consists of exposed clay tiles with timber support battens and beams. The loft space had no gable walls and one brick chimney to the rear roof space.

6.3.3. The exposed roof space presented noticeable light with gaps noted within the roof slopes. Wooden beams, supports and battens were in good state of repair, with no signs of rot, cracks, gaps or holes. Notable cobwebs were located though out the roof space including the ridge space. The brick chimney is enclosed by timber boarding and no notable gaps or areas of visible light was noted. The flooring comprised timber boarding and insulation. No signs of roosting bats in the form of marks, stains, droppings and/ or debris were found in the loft space. No signs of active or remnant bird nests or use by birds were found inside the loft space.

7 ASSESSMENT

7.1. The loft space noted areas of potential access within the lifts and gaps within the exposed tiled roof. The internal inspection found no signs of bats in the form of droppings, debris, marks and or stains. No signs of use by nesting birds were noticed during the time of the survey. The external inspection of the building found potential access points and crevice roosting opportunities within the roof space and rear soffit boards. No signs of active or remnant nesting birds were noticed during the time of the survey.

7.2. The external plain clay tiled roof and ridge presented lifts and gaps however, the internal inspection having exposed tiles would have likely presented droppings, but it should be noted that often these signs of crevice species can be missed due to their more discrete roosting locations. The external soffit boards within the single storey rear extension noted areas of potential access and crevice space, providing potential for roosting bats.

7.3. The site is set within the residential area of Southcote Lane, Reading. The grounds are typical of residential grounds with hard standing, garden typical plants, trees and amenity grassland. The site is bordered by residential grounds, school grounds and minor roads.

7.4. The proposed site has residential typical garden plantings and amenity grassland, overall posing lower value for foraging bats. The site is within 250 metres of both priority habitats, deciduous woodland and wood pasture and parkland, providing further suitable foraging and traversing habitats for local bats. The wider landscape with linear features has higher potential for use by local bats for both traversing and foraging grounds.

7.5. The desktop study by use of Natural England's Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC), returned four known EPSL Applications for bats. The closest application is within 350 metres of the site for the damage and destruction of a known breeding site for soprano pipistrelle bats in 2010. The further three EPSM ranged between 2013 to 2017 for common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats. Given the fact that these known roosts and crevice species are within the area, along with the potential features noted during the inspection, a further survey is highly advisable to conclude likely absence.

7.6. In line with Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Survey Guidelines (3rd edition, 2016), buildings with low potential require one dusk or one dawn survey carried out between May – August, refer to Table 1.

7.7. Future enhancements for bats can be achieved by further planting of native and wildlife friendly species within the front and rear gardens that attract insects (such as jasmine, evening primrose, rosemary, ivy, lavender and honeysuckle) to provide good foraging grounds for local bats. Any future lighting within the site should be of hooded design, low lux and ensure low light spill. It is recommended that in line with NPPF, either a bat box or bird box is integrated within one of the dwellings to provide future enhancements for local birds and or bats. The bat box is best placed at a height of 3 metres facing southerly and the nest box on the eastern side, under the eaves.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1. The site is located within the residential area of Southcote Lane and is surrounded by further residential lots, minor roads, and school grounds.
- 8.2. The site consists of a detached building set within hard standing and surrounded by garden typical areas.
- 8.3. The proposals are to subdivide the current dwelling and placement of a two-storey side extension and a rear single storey extension.
- 8.4. The internal survey noted potential access points and crevice spaces within the roof space. No evidence of bats in the form of droppings, debris, marks and or stains were noted.
- 8.5. The external survey of the building noted potential access points and crevice roosting spaces within the plain clay tiled roofs and rear soffit boards of the single storey extension.
- 8.6. The building was deemed as low potential for roosting bats, due to the known population of crevice bats within 500 metres of the site and the potential access points and crevice spaces noted during the inspection, that could provide suitable spaces for a small number of bats.
- 8.7. The surveys noted no signs of remnant or active nesting sites during the internal and external surveys.
- 8.8. To ensure that this site complies with wildlife legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework, the following recommendations are made:
- 8.8.1. In accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Survey Guidelines (3rd edition, 2016) and Natural England's standing advice, buildings that exhibit features of low potential require one further echolocation survey.

References:

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

Department for Communities and Local Government (2018). National Planning Policy Framework.

Available at: www.communities.gov.uk

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

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

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

Appendix I: Photos from Inspection



gaps and lifts within rear single storey extension



hanging tiled wall within front elevation



open soffits on the rear elevation providing potential access and crevice spaces



internal loft space – visible light noted within the exposed tiles