

18 Goldsmid Road, Reading

Preliminary Bat Survey

On Behalf of:
Matthew Ashworth

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Eighteen Goldsmid Road is a detached house with small front and rear gardens located in the Unitary Borough of Reading (Central Grid Reference SU 70697333).
- 1.2 The building is having a single storey extension, but there are plans to convert the attic and change the two hipped ends to gable ends. Therefore, the local planning authority have requested a Preliminary Bat Survey to help inform the planning decision.
- 1.3 The Preliminary Bat Survey aims to provide an assessment of the building and its roof space in order to identify the presence or absence of bats or whether further surveys are required to do so.
- 1.4 The field survey was undertaken on 23rd January 2019 by an experienced Ecologist with a Natural England bat survey class licence (Class Licence Registration Number 2015-13769-CLS-CLS). The building was assessed for roost potential and evidence of bats.
- 1.5 The building is generally well-sealed with rendered upper walls and wooden soffits. There were no signs of bats found within the unlined roof space. The location is within a built-up area of central Reading with limited foraging habitat, but many other potential buildings for roosts, therefore the building was assessed as having negligible potential for roosting bats.
- 1.6 No further bat surveys are required.
- 1.7 Recommendations for enhancements have been made to help fulfil some of the aims of the NPPF.

2. Introduction

Background

- 2.1 Eighteen Goldsmid Road, Reading is a detached Victorian house set in the unitary authority of Reading (Central Grid Reference SU 70697333).
- 2.2 The site is set in an urban environment with mainly terraced housing on all sides. These are mainly high density houses with limited front and rear gardens, but with some shops to the north. The Inner Distribution Road lies 300m to the east of the site.
- 2.3 There is current permission for the house to have a side and rear single-storey extension, but there are now plans to convert the roof space and alter the roof alignment from hipped to gable. Therefore, the local planning authority have requested a Preliminary Bat Survey to help inform the planning decision.
- 2.4 Matthew Ashworth commissioned 4 Acre Ecology Limited on the 22nd January 2019 to undertake a Preliminary Bat Survey of the building to allow this report to be written.

Aims and Objectives

- 2.5 The aim of the survey was to determine whether bats used or were likely to use the building to roost in, or if further surveys were required to do so. The objective was to support a successful application for planning permission whilst maintaining the conservation status of bats within the local area.

About the Author

- 2.1 Mark Satinet has been working in the field of Wildlife Conservation and Ecology since 1992. 13 years at the Wildlife Trusts working on wider countryside habitat and species projects provided a good background in habitat surveys, species identification, habitat management advice to landowners and dealing with the public and media. He became the County Mammal Recorder for Wiltshire in 2000 and set up the Wiltshire Mammal Group in 2005. He is also a voluntary Bat Warden for Natural England and has been an active member of the Wiltshire Bat Group since 2001.
- 2.2 Since 2005 he has been a consultant ecologist, first as a senior ecologist at a multi-disciplinary company for a year and then the principle ecologist running the ecology team in a specialised ecological firm for a further four years. He is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and a Chartered Environmentalist. He now owns and runs his own company, 4 Acre Ecology Limited. He holds disturbance licences for bats, Great Crested Newts, Dormice, Barn Owls and Shrews and has held development licences for Great Crested Newts, bats, Badgers and Dormice and a Bat Mitigation Class Licence and Great Crested Newt Low Impact Class Licence.

3. Methodology

Desk Study

- 3.1 The NBN Gateway was consulted to ascertain the number of bat records held for bats within 5km of the site.
- 3.2 The Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was consulted to determine if there were any sites designated for bats within 5 km of the site and the number of licence applications for bats in the area.

Field Survey

- 3.3 An external and internal inspection of the building was made by a Natural England Licensed bat surveyor (Class Licence Registration number 2015-13769-CLS-CLS). The exterior of the building was searched for evidence of bats, looking for grease stains in external crevices and searching for droppings on windows sills, windows, walls and ledges and on the ground below potential entrance/exit areas to the roof or walls.
- 3.4 The interior roof space of the building was searched using high powered torches for evidence of bats. This evidence includes sightings, dead bats, feeding remains, smell, droppings and grease marks at entry/exit points. The potential of the building as a bat roost was judged and any signs of bats or features offering roost potential were noted.

4. Legislation and Planning Policy

- 4.1 There are a number of tiers of legislation protecting wildlife in England and Wales. The highest tier is for those species protected by European Legislation, such as the Dormouse, Great Crested Newt, Otter and all species of bat. These are known as European Protected Species (EPS), which gain their protection from the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017, whereby under section 43 it is an offence to;
- deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat
 - damage or destroy a bat roost
- 4.2 Nationally protected species are either fully protected (e.g. Water Vole) or partially protected (e.g. Adder or Smooth Newt) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 and amendments, including the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000. Under the WCA it is an offence to:
- intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take from the wild or possess all or any part of a bat
 - intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy any structure or place which a bat uses for shelter or protection, or disturb a bat while it is occupying such a place
 - obstruct access to any structure or place which a bat uses for shelter or protection
- 4.3 The CRoW Act 2000 added the term recklessly after intentionally in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and introduced a maximum custodial sentence of 6 months for offences.
- 4.4 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) made provision about bodies concerned with the natural environment and rural communities and in connection with wildlife, sites of special scientific interest, National Parks and the Broads. Section 41 established a list of the living organisms and types of habitat which in the Secretary of State's opinion are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. This is known as the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) list.
- 4.5 Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 it is an offence to wilfully kill, injure or take a Badger and damage, destroy or obstruct a badger sett, cause a dog to enter a Badger sett or disturb a badger while it is occupying a sett.
- 4.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) updated in July 2018 states that Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

4.7 To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

5. Results

Desk Study

- 5.1 No protected sites designated for bats were identified within 5 km of the site, with no designate sites within 2km. Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) were not consulted due to the results of the site survey.
- 5.2 There were thirty-five European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) for bats issued within 5km of the site. Of these, seven licences were issued within 2km of the site with the closest licence 700 south for a non-maternity roost of Common Pipistrelle bats. The remaining licences were over 1.2km from the site (Magic 2019). These covered Natterer's, Brown Long-eared Daubenton's, Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle bat species.

Preliminary Bat Survey

- 5.3 The survey was undertaken on 23rd January 2019. This was dry, cold day, with no cloud cover, a light wind and an air temperature of 2 degrees centigrade.

Local Context

- 5.4 Eighteen Goldsmid Road is a detached brick house set near the centre of Reading. There is housing, mainly terrace, on all sides, with a small high street shopping centre to the north. The IDR lies 300m to the east.
- 5.5 In the wider area rail lines pass less than 500m to the north and west, with the River Thames flowing past 1.3km to the north and the Holy Brook, a tributary of the River Kennet, flowing past 1.4km to the south. Green corridors of the floodplains for both these rivers provide natural habitats in this otherwise built-up area.

18 Goldsmid Road

- 5.6 This is a detached two-storey brick building with the upper half rendered to the eaves. There is a clay tile roof, which is hipped at the east and west ends, but with a lower northern extension ending in a gable end. On the western side of the building there are two brick chimneys and there is a curved two-storey bay window on the western half of the southern (front) aspect. This is topped by a flat roof covered in mineral felt, with a course of hanging clay tiles beneath the first floor window (See Figures 1 & 2).
- 5.7 The roof overhangs the eaves by 200mm sealed with wooden soffits that are rendered up to them, leaving no gaps. There are a couple of holes in the wall where vents have recently been removed, but a ground floor extension is currently being built on the east and north sides, so these will be made good before the end of the winter. There are two gaps beneath the ridge tiles, one either end of the hipped roof on the southern aspect.

- 5.8 Internally there is one single roof space accessed through a loft hatch. The roof structure is low collar with a ridge board and no lining beneath the clay tiles. There is 100mm of fibreglass insulation contained in foil bags laid on the ceiling. There are no water tanks in the roof space, but a few scattered sheet boards for storage.
- 5.9 The main section of the roof is 2.5m from ceiling to roof apex, but the smaller northern extension is only 1.5m high. There are cobwebs throughout the apex area, particularly at the top of the hips.
- 5.10 No evidence of bats was found inside or around the building.

6. Discussion

- 6.1 There are no sites designated for bats within 5km of the site. At least five bat species are recorded within 2km, giving a reflection of the species likely to be present, although some additional *Myotis* species are also likely and the larger bats, such as *Serotine* and *Noctule*. The closest record of a licenced bat roost was 700m to the south, with all other licences beyond 1.2km from the site, none of which were maternity roosts. Therefore these roosts are unlikely to be associated with the site.
- 6.2 The immediate structure of the surrounding area provide good commuting and roosting habitat for bats, but poor foraging habitat, with little natural vegetation and many street lights.
- 6.3 There were no signs of bats found within the roof space. This indicates that light testing bats, such as *Brown Long-eared bats*, are not present as they fly within the roof space before emerging and therefore any droppings would be found scattered around the roof internally (Entwistle and Swift, 2008).
- 6.4 Therefore, only crevice dwelling bats could be present in the buildings, such as *Pipistrelles*. However, the well-sealed soffits with render going up to them on the walls limits access to the clay tiles on the roof. Internally there is an absence of a roof lining, which often traps droppings so that they cannot be found during internal inspections. In this case there is no roof lining, so if roosting bats were present their droppings would have fallen through and have been found in the roof space. Therefore roosting bats are believed to be absent from the building.
- 6.5 The site context means that there are less likely to be bats in the area, due to the lack of natural vegetation and the high amount of artificial lighting at night. Coupled with the many other properties in the area that could provide roosting potential for the small number of bats within central Reading, the building is considered to have negligible potential for roosting bats.

7. Further Surveys and Enhancements

Further Surveys

- 7.1 No further surveys are required on the site.

Enhancements

- 7.2 Any planting could should be of native species and include night-flowering species to attract insects for bats to feed on.
- 7.3 If close-board fencing is to be used around the site, hedgehog holes could be created to keep the porosity of the site, allowing hedgehogs to move freely. The hole should be 13cm² or 5 inches square and so will be too small for most pets.
- 7.4 Two bird nest boxes could be installed on the building to enhance the site for nesting birds.

8. Figures

Figure 1: Roof Plan

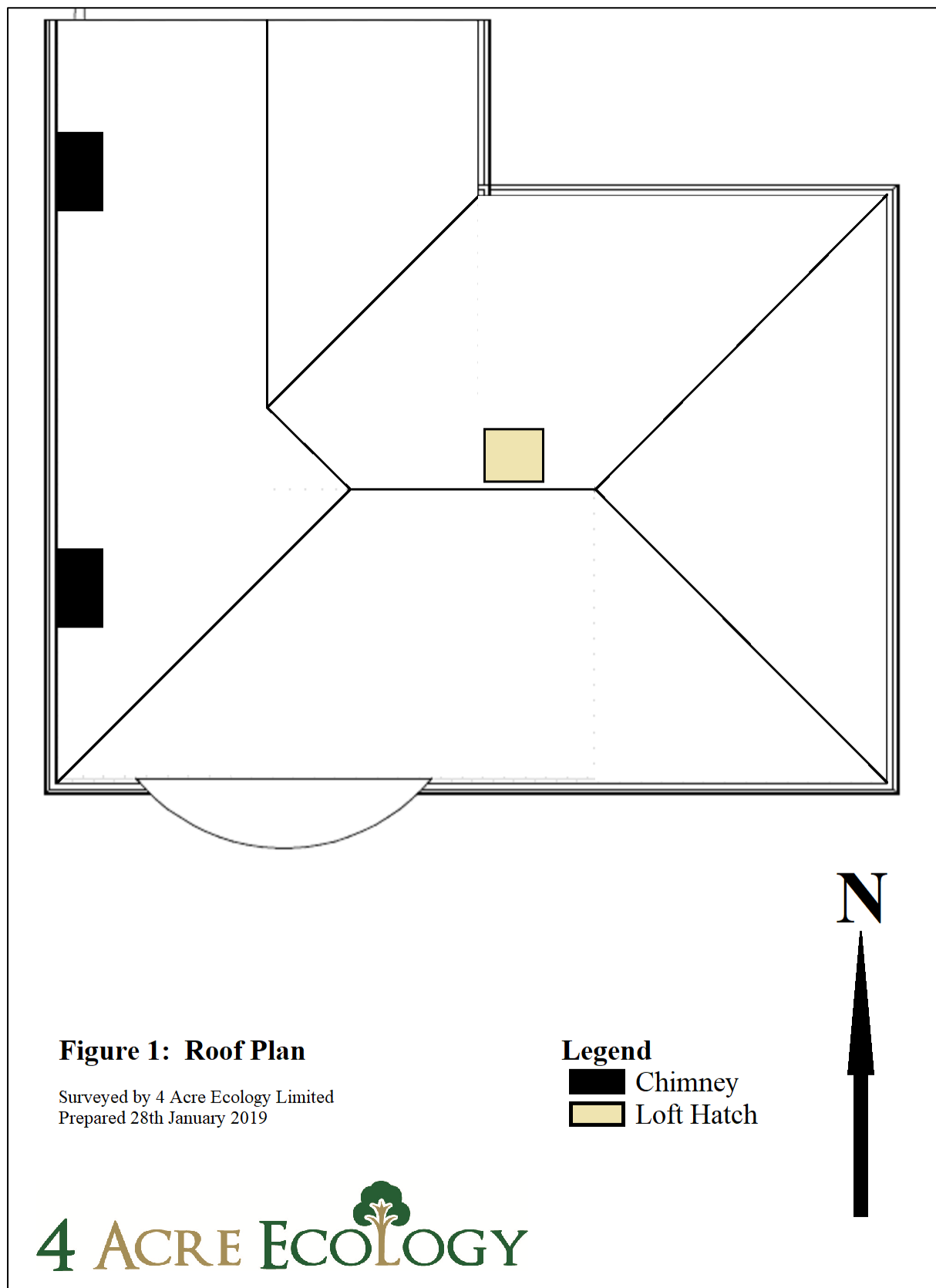


Figure 2: Images



1. 18 Goldsmid Road from the south-east



2. 18 Goldsmid Road from the south-west



3. Rear of building



4. Well-sealed soffits and render



5. Main roof space looking north-east



6. Main roof space looking north-west



7. Lower northern extension



8. Cobwebs at hipped apex

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Appendix 1: Information on British Bats

There are 18 species of bat in the UK (17 of which are known to be breeding here). They range from the tiny **Pipistrelle**, weighing in at around 5g (less than a £1 coin), to our biggest bat, the **Noctule**, which is still smaller than the palm of your hand.

All British bats eat insects exclusively, a **Pipistrelle** bat eating as many as 3,000 midges in one night, while **Long-eared** bats eat moths and **Noctule** or **Greater Horseshoes** also eat larger beetles.

The **Alcothoe** bat is the latest addition to the UK bat family, only being confirmed as a resident species in 2010 due to its similarity to the **Whiskered** and **Brandt's** bat species.

The **Daubenton's** bat is known as the 'water bat', as they fish insects from the water's surface with their large feet or tail. In England and Wales the majority of known summer colonies are in humid, more or less underground sites near water. These may be tunnels or bridges over canals and rivers, or in caves, mines and cellars. They are only occasionally found in buildings, usually old stone structures such as moated castles and waterworks.

Bats do not build nests, but use small spaces to shelter and rest in during the day, or hibernate in during winter. These places are known as roosts. There are a variety of different types of roost, from winter hibernation roosts, spring and autumn transitory roosts to summer maternity roosts. However, not all bats will roost within buildings, with the following being those most likely to:

Pipistrelle bats (both Common and Soprano species) are the most common bats in this country. They prefer to roost in very confined spaces around the outside of buildings, typically behind hanging tiles, soffits and barge boards, under roofing felt or in cavity walls. They do not usually enter roof spaces, although well-established large colonies in older buildings may do so.

Brown Long-eared bats are the third most commonly occurring species, after the two **Pipistrelle** species. They roost singly or in small groups among the roof timbers at the apex, particularly around ridge ends and chimneys, and in crevices in ridge tiles. These medium sized bats spend more time inside the roof space than many other bats, and are generally very quiet inside the roost, not leaving until after dark.

The **Serotine** bat, one of the largest bat species in the UK, is almost exclusively found roosting in houses across southern England and Wales. Rarer than **Pipistrelles** and **Brown Long-eared** bats, **Serotines** usually roost in crevices around chimneys and in cavity walls. Their favoured prey is large beetles, which they find over farmland and grassland.

Horseshoe bats, probably the most unusual looking of the UK's bats, are sometimes found roosting in houses in south-western England and Wales. **Greater** and **Lesser Horseshoe** bats hang free in the roost from their feet.

(Find further details from the Bat Conservation Trust Website at: www.bats.org.uk)