



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (BATS) AT 4 HIGHDOWN AVENUE EMMER GREEN



**Prepared for:
Mr and Mrs R Huggins
4 Highdown Avenue
Emmer Green
Reading
RG4 8QS**

9th April 2018

Ref: BCP/PEA-01/09.04



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Unit H Bridge Farm
Reading Road
Arborfield
Reading
Berkshire RG2 9HT
Tel: 0118 976 2904
Mobile: 07557 982091
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Instruction
- 1.2 Aims and Objectives
- 1.3 Proposed works
- 1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

- 2.1 Legislative Background

3. Site Location and Description

- 3.1 Site Location
- 3.2 Site Description

4. Survey Methodology

- 4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search
- 4.2 Daylight Survey
- 4.3 Constraints

5. Survey Findings

- 5.1 External Inspection
- 5.2 Internal Inspection

6. Evaluation

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 Interpretation
- 7.2 Contingency plan

8. References

9. Queries

Appendix 1

©2018 Urban Tree Experts

All rights in this report are reserved. No part of it may be reproduced, edited or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature, without our written permission. Its content and format are for the exclusive use of Mr and Mrs R Huggins and their agents in dealing with this site. It may not be sold, lent, hired out or divulged to any third party not directly involved in this site without the written consent of Urban Tree Experts. It may be reproduced as part of a planning application.

The validity of this report ceases at the prescribed time limit or after two years from the site inspection, or if the site conditions change due to unspecified works that affect the site whichever is the sooner.



Executive Summary

Urban Tree Experts was commissioned by Mr and Mrs R Huggins to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of 4 Highdown Avenue, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8QS. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Reading Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Monday 9th April 2018, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property took place to look for signs of bats.

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the property for bats, signs of bats and features suitable for use by roosting bats. This includes droppings, internally or externally, scratch marks, rubbing and staining at exit holes, live or dead bats and other features such as missing tiles, this list is not exhaustive.

Internally and externally, there was no evidence of bats (current or historically) within the property. Externally the building is in a good condition and has no roosting opportunities or access points which could be utilised by bats. Internally the house is also in a good condition with no roosting opportunities for bats.

Due to the absence of roosting potential and lack of evidence of bats found during the detailed external and internal inspection of the buildings, it is concluded that there is very low potential for roosting bats to be present at the site. Based on the recommendations in the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines prior to works, no further surveys are required and the future works should proceed.



1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr and Mrs R Huggins to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of 4 Highdown Avenue, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8QS to support a forthcoming planning application to Reading Borough Council.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) is designed to:

- Identify the presence/likely absence of bats within the building.
- Provide information on the status of bats using the building (currently or previously).
- To add confidence where no bats are found, or to categorise the nature of a roost where evidence of bats are found.
- To establish whether further surveys, mitigation or a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) is required.

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) and report writing were carried out in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition) (Bat Conservation Trust, 2016).

1.3 Proposed Works

The survey was commissioned in connection with a forthcoming planning application to Reading Borough Council for an extension to the rear of the property.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats and report was completed by Bridget Parslow. She holds a Class 2 Bat (CL18) License (No. 2015-10391-CLS-CLS) and a Science and Education license (2015-10324-CLS-CLS). Bridget has nearly 30 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work and has attended training courses on bat surveys, bat call analysis and bat identification run by the Bat Conservation Trust and local bat groups.

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

2.1 Legislative Background

All species of British bat are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Under this legislation it is an offence to kill or injure a bat or interfere with any roosting or resting site. A bat roost is interpreted as "*any structure or place used for shelter or protection*" whether or not bats are present at the time. A summary of the main legislation and planning considerations are included at Appendix 1.

Seven species of bat are also Species of Principal Importance for nature conservation in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This places a duty on all government departments to have regard for the conservation of these species and on the Secretary of State to further, or promote others to further, the conservation of these species.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

3. Site Location and Description

3.1 Site Location

The property is located at Grid Reference SU 71183 76893, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Google Earth.

Figure 1. 4 Highdown Avenue, Emmer Green, highlighted.

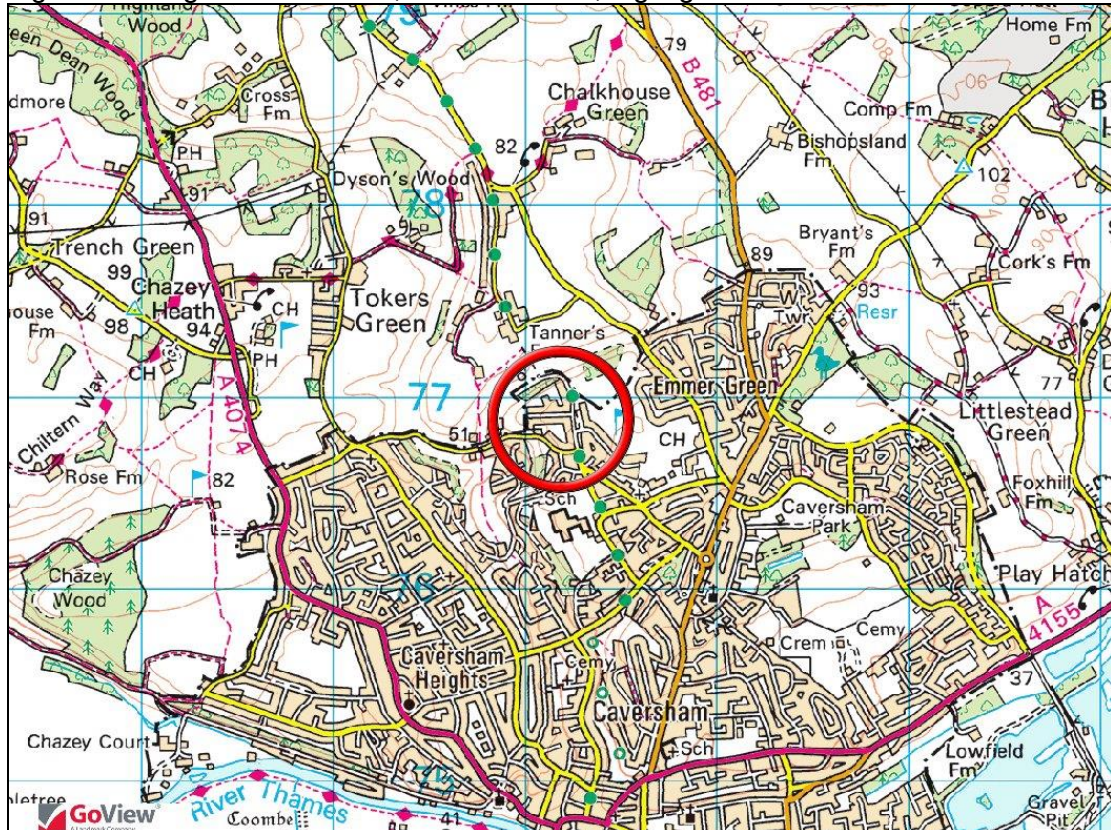
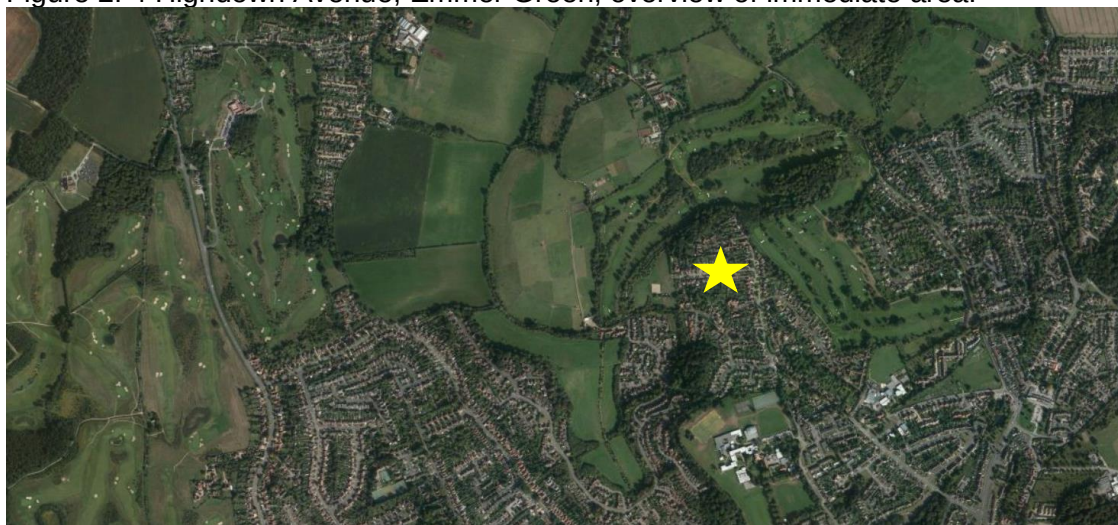
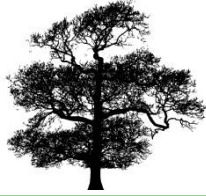


Figure 2. 4 Highdown Avenue, Emmer Green, overview of immediate area.





3.2 Site Description

The application site is set in a semi-urban location at the northern edge of the Caversham conurbation and the western edge of the village of Emmer Green. The site comprises a detached bungalow. The rest of the application site comprises a front driveway and a front and large rear garden laid mainly to lawn, with a few mature trees at the far end of the rear garden. The site itself offers limited foraging and commuting habitat for bats but is close to two golf courses which offer slightly more in the way of habitat.

4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

Due to the urbanised area, the small size of the development and the very local impact that will occur, no data was sought from local records centres. Google Earth and MAGIC maps (magic.defra.gov.uk) were used prior to the survey to determine the suitability of the surrounding habitat to support roosting bats and to identify any statutory designated sites within 2km of the site.

The site is situated at the northern edge of the Caversham conurbation and the western edge of the village of Emmer Green, with two golf courses within 200m (to the north and the north west) with substantial areas of woodland in Clayfield Copse LNR just over 1km to the east and Caversham Park (registered gardens) a similar distance to the south east, which are likely to provide good roosting, foraging and commuting habitats for bats, however, these are not connected to the site by ecological corridors.

A search of the Magic interactive website indicated only two current EPSL's for bats granted within 2km of the proposed development site, listed below.

Reference number	Start date	End date	Species
2014-3600-EPS-MIT	29/9/2014	01/10/2019	Common pip
2015-18560-EPS-MIT	25/1/2016	31/1/2021	BLE, Soprano pip



4.2 Daylight Survey

A preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of 4 Highdown Avenue, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8QS was carried out by Bridget Parslow on Monday 9th April 2018 at 3pm. The weather conditions for the survey were drizzly, with no wind and a temperature of 11 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital and pole camera and a ladder.

During the preliminary ecological appraisal (bats), an internal and external inspection of the building was carried out to identify any signs of occupation by bats and features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines. Features investigated included:

- Construction of the building – soffits, loft space, tiles/slates, lead flashings etc.
- Building condition – structure of roof and walls.
- Internal conditions – microclimate stability, draughts etc.
- Access points – potential entry and exit points for bats.
- Roosting points – cracks and crevices, between underlay and roofing tiles/slates.

Field signs that would indicate the presence of bats were searched for. These included:

- Bat droppings on the floor and walls of the building.
- Feeding remains (particularly butterfly and moth wings).
- Evidence of urine and/or oily staining around possible roost entrances.
- Presence of areas cleared of cobwebs.
- Where a breathable roofing membrane has been fitted staining on the membrane may suggest use by bats.
- Odour can sometimes suggest the present of bats.
- Squeaking and chattering can reveal bats roosting between the tiles and roofing underlay.

Buildings or structures with no bat roosting potential and that were unsuitable for roosting bats were not inspected in detail.

4.3 Constraints

There were no constraints to the survey. Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client.



5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the buildings were examined for signs described in section 4.2. Windowsills, exposed features around the windows, fascia's and walls were inspected for any evidence of bat droppings or staining.

The main property is a detached, brick-built bungalow, with a lean-to extension to east side, and is in a good condition externally. The roof of the house is pitched and covered in close fitting composite tiles, none of which are missing or damaged, see Figure 3. The verges are all sealed with only one gap (Figure 4 on page 9) and the ridge tiles and flashing around the chimney are all close fitting with no gaps for bats to exploit, see Figure 5 on page 9. The fascias and soffits are all in a good condition, with no holes, see Figure 6 on page 10.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the external survey of the property and garage and externally the buildings had no features that could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species.

Figure 3. Example of roof tiles, 4 Highdown Avenue, Emmer Green 09.04.18





Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Figure 4. Example of verges, 4 Highdown Avenue, Emmer Green 09.04.18



Figure 5. Ridge tiles and chimney flashing, 4 Highdown Avenue, Emmer Green 09.04.18





Figure 6. Example of soffits, 4 Highdown Avenue, Emmer Green 09.04.18



5.2 Internal Inspection

An internal inspection of the roof void within the property was undertaken and examined for any signs of bats (as described in section 4.2).

The loft of the property was accessed via a hatch in the hallway using a fitted loft ladder. The loft was lit, well insulated and partially boarded. The tiles were lined with breathable membrane which was in a good condition with no tears, see Figures 7 and 8 on page 11.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal survey of the house and garage and internally the buildings had very low potential for roosting bats.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Figure 7. Example of loft space showing membrane (chimney breast at left of image), 4 Highdown Avenue, Emmer Green 09.04.18



Figure 8. Example of loft insulation, 4 Highdown Avenue, Emmer Green 09.04.18





6. Evaluation

The bat roost potential of the features within the site has been assessed with reference to the criteria laid out in the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Mitchell-Jones, 2004). These criteria are listed on page 15 with the features **highlighted in bold**.

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be higher where structures:

- are of a pre-20th Century construction;
- **are in a lowland rural setting;**
- have woodland, mature trees, species-rich grassland and/or water nearby;
- have large dimension roof timbers with cracks, joints and holes;
- have numerous crevices in stonework and structures;
- have an uneven roof covering with gaps, though not too draughty;
- have hanging tiles or roof cladding, especially on south-facing walls;
- **have a roof warmed by the sun;**
- are disused or **little used**; largely undisturbed;
- provide appropriate hibernation conditions, such as abandoned mines, tunnels, kilns, or fortifications; or
- Recent or historical records of bats on the site, or bat roosts in the general area.

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be lower where structures:

- are in an urban setting with little green space;
- are subject to heavy disturbance (constant movement due to draughts and noise, also unstable microclimate);
- have a small, cluttered roof void (particularly for brown long-eared);
- **are of a modern construction with few gaps or crevices that bats can fly or crawl through (though pipistrelle bats may still be present);**
- are comprised of prefabricated steel or sheet materials; (some sections);
- are active industrial premises.

Please note that the above list provides generic screening criteria only and there are exceptions to consider.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Interpretation

From the internal and external inspections, it can be concluded that there is no evidence of current or prior use of the property by bats and the building is in a good condition. Informed by the results of the detailed preliminary bat survey and the factors highlighted in Section 6, it is concluded that there is a very low potential for roosting bats at this site. Based on recommendations in the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, no further survey effort is required.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

7.2 Contingency Plan

In the unlikely event that bats are found during the proposed works, all work must stop and advice sought from Urban Tree Experts or another licensed bat ecologist.

If, for whatever reason, there is a time delay of greater than 24 months between this survey and the commencement of work, then the survey should be repeated as the condition of the building may have changed and become more suitable to support roosting bats.

8. References

Collins, J (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edition). Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), London.

HM Government (2017) Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations.

HM Government (1981) The Wildlife and Countryside Act.

HM Government (2006) Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (1999). Bat Workers' Manual (2nd Edition). Joint Nature Conservancy Committee, Peterborough.

9. Queries

Any queries regarding this report should be addressed, in the first instance, to Urban Tree Experts:

Telephone: 01189 762904
Fax: 01189 761168
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

Urban Tree Experts
Unit H, Bridge Farm
Reading Road
Arborfield
Berkshire RG2 9HT



Pp Bridget Parslow
Consultant, Urban Tree Experts
Natural England Licence 2015-10391-CLS-CLS



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

APPENDIX 1

In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat.
- 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.
- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

Planning Considerations:

Government guidance to Local Planning Authorities stipulates the need to consider biodiversity and protected species during the consideration of planning applications. The NPPF makes clear that the planning system should help minimise the impacts that development can have on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. In addition, the ODPM Circular 04/2005 states *“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision”*.

Policy CS36 of the Reading Borough Core Strategy states *“Development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest (including protected species and their habitats) found within the application site into their schemes. On sites with recognised biodiversity or geological value, development will not be permitted where there would be a direct or indirect adverse impact on the site, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that: -*

- i. The need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and*
- ii. Appropriate compensation, impact minimisation, mitigation and compensation are provided”*.

Developments that compromise the protection afforded to bats or roosts under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 will require a European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England (NE).

NE, the government’s statutory conservation advisory organisation, is responsible for issuing EPS licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations.

Three tests must be satisfied before this licence (to permit otherwise prohibited acts) can be issued:

- Reg 44(2)(e) – the derogation is “in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment”.
- Reg 44(3)(a) – there is “no satisfactory alternative” to the derogation.
- Reg 44(3)(b) –the derogation is “not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range”.

Tests (a) and (e) can be met with the issue of planning permission for the proposed works. Test (b) is determined by NE’s ecology department that requires the development of a suitable mitigation strategy that would ensure that any bats present on site, are retained at the same population level or better.