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Bat Scoping Assessment

**No.2 Elsley Road, Tilehurst,
Reading**

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Reviewed by: Paul Whitby

8th February 2016

The Ecology Co-operation Ltd

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Report Summary

- 1. The Ecology Co-op was instructed to undertake a bat scoping assessment at the No 2 property on Elsley Road in Reading, where it is proposed to extend the property outwards and upwards creating a larger single storey property.**
- 2. This assessment was undertaken on the 4th February 2016 by Paul Whitby, MCIEEM, CEng (Natural England license holder: WML A34 - Bat Survey Level 2) and Sam Lunn, ACIEEM, MSc, BSc, following best practice survey techniques as outlined by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT).**
- 3. The No 2 property is a brick built bungalow situated within the semi-rural suburb of Tilehurst in Reading.**
- 4. The survey focused upon both the external and internal features of the property that would be affected by the development proposal, with features such as loft voids and broken tiles which can act as suitable habitat that may be used by roosting bats.**
- 5. No physical evidence was identified such as droppings or wing cases inside the loft void. Externally the clay tiles sit flush on all faces of the property with the exception of two gaps on the south facing roof.**
- 6. Under Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines the property as a whole could be considered to have 'Low' potential for roosting bats, owing to two small gaps on the south facing roof that will be disturbed by the development.**
- 7. This report therefore recommends a precautionary soft strip of the tiles around the two holes identified with a suitably qualified ecologist present.**

This report has been prepared by The Ecology Co-operation, with all reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the Contract with the client.

We disclaim responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the scope of the above.

This report is confidential to the client and we accept no responsibility of whatsoever nature to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Report

The Ecology Co-op was instructed to undertake a bat scoping assessment at the No 2 property on Elsley Road in Reading, where it is proposed to extend the property outwards and upwards creating a larger single storey property. This extension would impact on the entire roof and the survey has focused upon both external and internal features with the potential for bats to roost in.

1.2 Background

This survey has been commissioned to re-assess the potential for this development to impact upon roosting bats further to a previous report by Azure Ecology in August 2012, which is now too old to be used for planning purposes. A full Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for this development was not deemed to be necessary, due to the small scale of the proposed development, and the perceived lack of potential for a significant impact upon other protected species in this locality.

1.3 Site Description

The No 2 property is a brick built bungalow situated within the semi-rural suburb of Tilehurst in Reading. Located to the north-east end of a residential area, the property is bordered by roads and neighbouring residential plots on all sides, whilst the river Thames lies approximately 100 metres to the northeast. The residential area is intersected by hedgerows and trees creating a series of habitat corridors throughout the area which are the most notable features of ecological value within close proximity of this property.

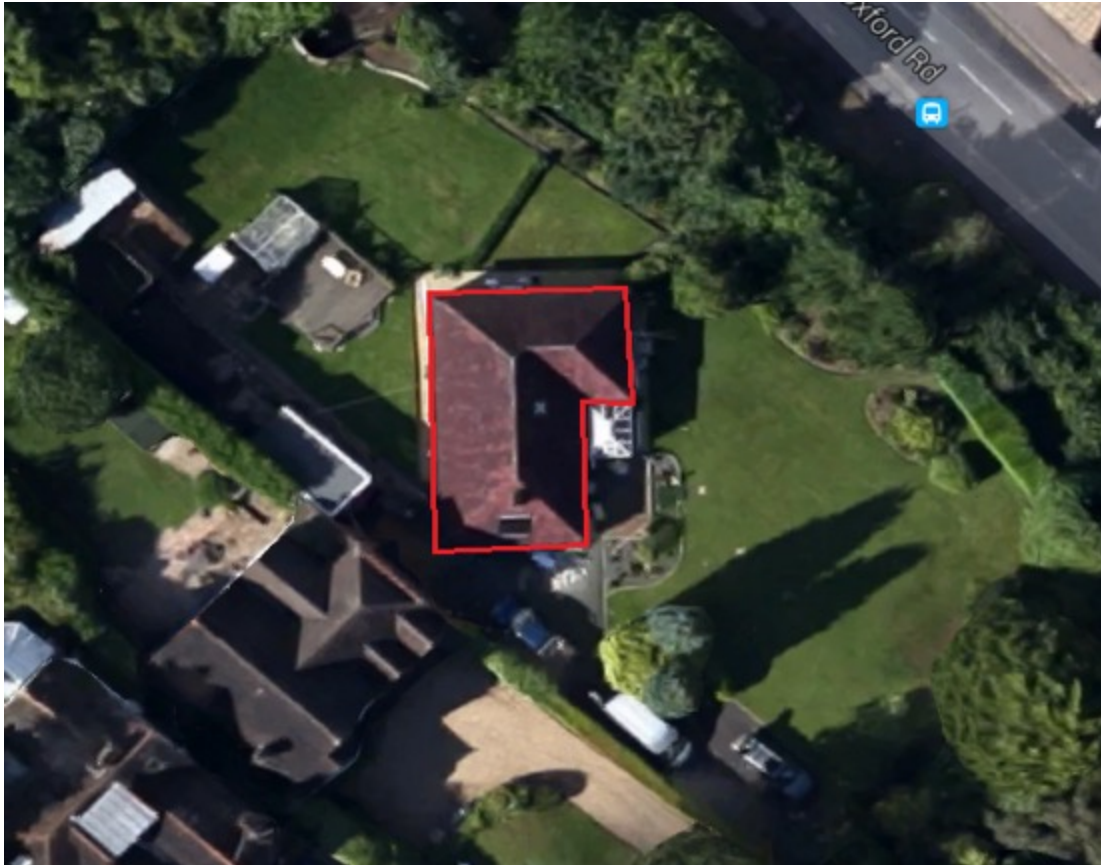


Figure 1. Aerial photograph of the site being surveyed

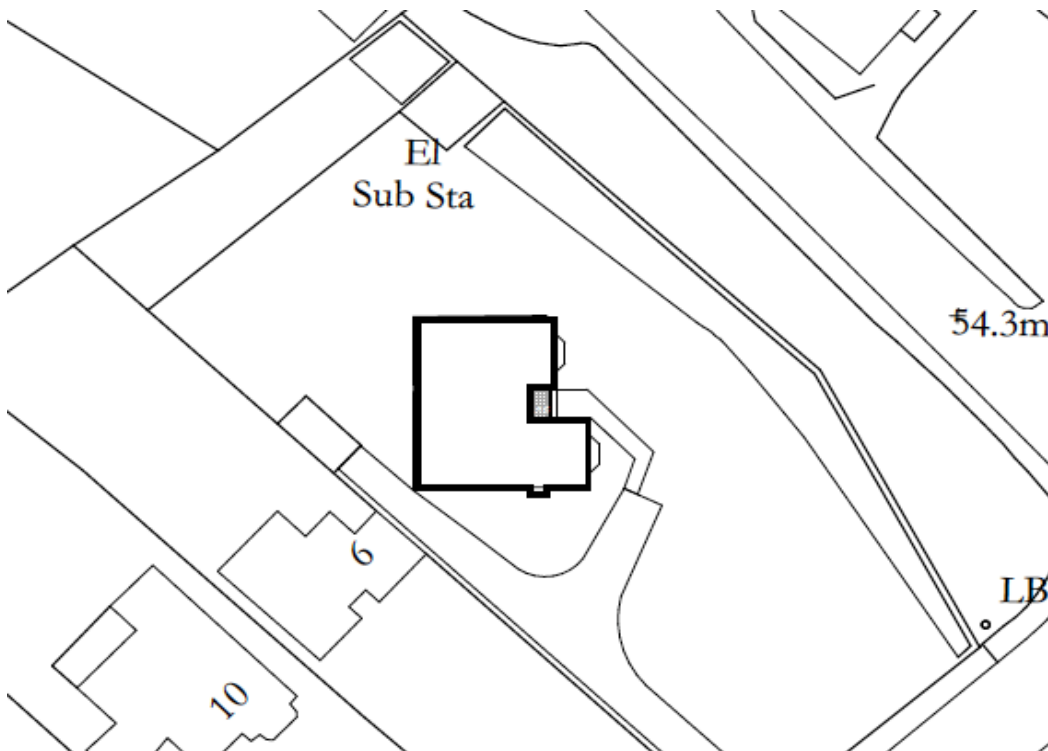


Figure 2. The layout of the property with new extensions on the eastern side.



1.4 Legal protection

All species of bats within the UK are protected via The Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations (2010) and also the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), as amended. Therefore, 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 by bats" whether or not bats are present at the time. Details of legislation and legal protection afforded to all species of British bats are given in Appendix 1.

The results of this survey will guide any necessary mitigation to ensure that no individuals or populations of bats and their roosting habitat are negatively affected by the proposed works, and therefore no offence is committed under UK and EU wildlife legislation.

2. METHODOLOGY

Bat Scoping Survey

This assessment was undertaken on the 4th February 2016 by Paul Whitby, MCIEEM, CEcol (Natural England license holder: WML A34 - Bat Survey Level 2) and Sam Lunn, ACIEEM, MSc, BSc, following best practice survey techniques as outlined by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT)¹.

The survey focused upon both the external and internal features of the property that would be affected by the development proposal, with features such as loft voids and broken tiles which can act as suitable habitat that may be used by roosting bats.

3. RESULTS

The loft space follows the footprint of the main property in the shape of an 'L' and measures 3.5metres in height. The main loft area is approximately 17m x 9m in area, with the smaller adjoining area approximately 7m x 3m. Wooden framed, the loft is lined with bitumen although there are a few tears in places and lightly covered in cobwebs (See figs 3&5). A skylight on the eastern facing roof keeps the loft well-lit during the day (See fig. 3). No physical evidence was identified such as droppings or wing cases inside the loft void.

Externally the clay tiles sit flush on all faces of the property with the exception of two gaps on the south facing roof (See fig. 6). The ridge and hip tiles are flush and fully plugged and the soffit boards show no gaps or crevices (See figs 7,8 & 9).

4. CONCLUSIONS

There is no physical evidence within the loft void to suggest that any bats have been or are currently roosting within it and the presence of the skylight bringing constant day light into the void means it is unlikely to support roosting bats in the near future.

¹ Hundt, L (2012) *Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines, 2nd edition*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.



Bat Scoping Assessment, No.2 Elsley Road

Externally, the majority of the roof tiles sit flush including the ridge and hip tiles. Two small gaps were identified on the south facing roof, but it is unclear if these gaps have any depth, leaving space available for bats to roost in these locations.

Given the low suitability of the rest of the roof to support crevice dwelling bats and the many other houses and mature trees in the vicinity with similar or better suited roof tops for bats, it seems unlikely that any bats could be found roosting in these small gaps on a regular basis. Under Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines the property as a whole could be considered to have 'Low' potential for roosting bats, owing to two small gaps on the south facing roof that will be disturbed by the development.

Given the context of the site and the very low potential of the identified features to support roosting bats, the conclusion of this assessment is that a precautionary soft strip of the tiles around the two holes identified should be undertaken prior to the commencement of construction, with a licensed bat handler in attendance.

Should you need any further advice on the information provided above, please do not hesitate to contact us.

APPENDIX 1 - LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Bats

All species of British bat are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended through inclusion in Schedule V. All bat species in the UK are also included in Schedule II of the Habitats Regulations 2010 which transpose Annex II of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora ("EC Habitats Directive") which defines European protected species of animals.

Bat species are afforded further protection by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000; and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Under the above legislation it is an offence to:

- kill, injure or take an individual;
- possess any part of an individual either alive or dead;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place or structure used by these species for shelter, rest, protection or breeding;
- intentionally or recklessly disturb these species whilst using any place of shelter or protection; or
- deliberate disturbance in such a way as to be likely to impair their ability to:
 - survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
 - in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
 - to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
- keep (possess), transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange, any live or dead bat, or any part of, or anything derived from a bat.

It is also an offence to set and use articles capable of catching, injuring or killing bats (for example a trap or poison), or knowingly cause or permit such an action. In the case all species of British bat there is also protection under *Schedule 6 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) relating specifically to trapping and direct pursuit of these species.

A European Protected Species License (EPSL) in relation to bats is required from Natural England for any work that would result in an otherwise unlawful activity (e.g. damage to a bat roost). A license can only be issued to permit otherwise prohibited acts if Natural England are satisfied that all of the following three tests are met:

- The proposal is 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';
- There is no satisfactory alternative; and
- The action authorised by the license will not be detrimental to the maintenance of bat populations at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

A bat roost is defined by the Bat Conservation Trust publication *Bat Surveys—Good Practice Guidelines 2nd Edition* as "*the resting place of a bat*"¹. Generally however, the word roost is interpreted as "*any structure or place, which any wild bat uses for shelter or protection.*"

Bats tend to re-use the same roosts; therefore legal opinion is guided by recent case law precedents, that a roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time. This can include for summer roosts, used for breeding; or winter roosts, used for hibernating.



APPENDIX 2 – PHOTO EVIDENCE



Figure 3. Bitumen lined loft void with occasional tear.



Figure 4. Loft void with sky light providing constant light.



Figure 5. Loft void is lightly covered in cobwebs



Figure 6. South facing roof with two gaps potentially suitable for crevice dwelling bats.



Figure 7. Soffit boards completely sealed.



Figure 8. Clay tiles sitting flush on roof top at the northern end.



Figure 9. Clay tiles sitting flush on the east-facing roof.