96 Wentworth Avenue
Reading
Berkshire
RG2 8JL

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Ref: R2164/b

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Toni Edmonds to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the semi-detached house at 96 Wentworth Avenue in Reading, Berkshire.

1.1.2 The survey was commissioned in connection with a planning application to be lodged with Reading Borough Council seeking consent to add a two-storey side extension and single-storey rear extension (Planning application reference: 182176 & refer to existing and 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 property is situated on the northeastern side of 96 Wentworth Avenue in Reading, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 72739 69658).

1.3.2 The semi-detached house is bordered by other residential properties and their associated gardens comprising scattered trees, shrubs and closely-mown lawns. Approximately 150 metres to the south of the property, is a parcel of ancient semi-

natural woodland, and further woodland parcels are situated approximately 130 metres to the north east, 535 metres to the north and 635 metres to the north east. Just 680 metres to the south east is Pearman's Copse – a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and ancient semi-natural woodland.

1.3.3 Overall, the surrounding areas provides habitat suitable for commuting and foraging bats adapted to urban areas.

2 SURVEY METHOD

2.1 Building Inspection

2.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the house was undertaken by an ecologist registered under Natural England bat survey class licence CL18 and an assistant ecologist on the 5th February 2019.

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

- Under roof, ridge and hip tiles, especially when loose or lifted tiles are present, or sections of mortar are missing;
- Under sections of raised lead flashing;
- Beneath lifted barge boards;
- 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 most of the interior of the house. The hipped section of roof on the front elevation beyond the chimney was not

accessible, however it could be viewed from around the chimney, and therefore it was considered that there were no significant constraints to the survey.

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Photographs of the site 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 house are described as follows:

3.2 External Survey

3.2.1 The semi-detached house was of modern, cavity wall construction with a hipped roof and a single-storey extension to the side and a sloping roofed conservatory to the rear (**Photographs 1 & 2**).

3.2.2 The main hipped roof was covered in interlocking roof tiles that were flat and fitted tightly (**Photograph 3; Target note 1**). The ridge tiles were all in place and mostly mortared, apart from a few gaps visible to the rear; these were too small to offer roosting opportunities for bats (**Photograph 4; Target note 2**). The hip tiles were intact and mostly mortared, apart from under a few tiles to the rear where the mortar was crumbling away; these were superficial and did not offer crevices suitable for roosting bats (**Photograph 5; Target note 3**). The lead flashing was fitted tightly around the chimney (**Photograph 6; Target note 4**) andthe timber soffits on the front, rear and side elevations were tight to the external walls (**Photograph 7; Target note 5**).

3.2.3 The roofs of the single-storey side extension and conservatory were lined tightly with intact bitumen roofing felt offering no roosting opportunities for bats (**Photographs 8 & 9; Target notes 6 & 7**).

3.2.4 No evidence of bats was visible on the exterior of the house at the time of the survey.

3.3 Internal Survey

3.3.1 The main roof space was accessed via a loft hatch and the void was approximately 2 metres from the floor to the ridge (**Photograph 10**). There was a low blockwork wall along the front elevation (**Photograph 11**). The roof was lined with paper-backed bitumen felt, which was loose and damaged in a number of places, exposing the undersides of the roof tiles (**Photograph 12; Target note 8**).

3.3.2 The ridge was cobwebbed showing little recent disturbance (**Photograph 13; Target note 9**). The floor was lined with loose boards and mostly insulated with

fiberglass which was installed in 2008. The eaves were mostly filled with fibreglass insulation (**Photograph 14; Target note 10**). The party end wall was of breezeblock and brickwork construction which was tightly fitted to the roof and rafters (**Photograph 15**). The chimney was rendered and no daylight was visible at the junction with the roof (**Photograph 16**). Rat droppings were scattered in the roof space.

3.3.3 No signs of roosting bats were found in the roof space during the internal inspection of the property.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Status/Potential

4.1.1 Externally, the house lacked features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bat species such as the pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* species. The gaps in the mortar under the ridge and hip tiles were superficial and considered unsuitable for use by crevice-dwelling bats. No evidence of roosting bats was found externally during the survey or internally, inside the void, showing it is highly unlikely that it is used by bats that primarily make use of roof spaces such as the long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.). Overall, the house was considered to be have negligible bat roost potential.

4.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

4.2.1 The proposed works involve the addition of a two-storey side extension and single-storey rear extension (refer to plans in **Appendix 3**). The planned works will not have any impact on any external features with potential access and/or roosting opportunities for crevice-dwelling bats. Therefore, the proposed work will have no impact on the long-term availability of roosting features and is considered unlikely to lead to disturbance of bats.

4.2.2 In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the building work, the work must stop immediately, and a licensed ecologist called to site to attend to the bat(s) and provide further advice on how to proceed; work must continue only once further written advice has been received. At this point, a European Protected Species 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 property viewed from the north.

2. Rear of the property viewed from the south.

3. Interlocking roof tiles in place and tightly fitted.

4. Superficial gaps visible under the ridge tiles to the rear of the house.

5. Mortar crumbling away from the hip tiles to the rear of the house.

6. Lead flashing tightly fitted around the chimney.

7. Timber soffits tightly fitted around the eaves of the house.

8. The bitumen roofing felt tightly fitted on the single-storey side extension.

9. The bitumen roofing felt tightly fitted on the conservatory to the rear of the house.

10. internal view of the roof space.

11. Blockwork wall along the front of the roof space.

12. The roof with lots of large gaps in the roofing felt.

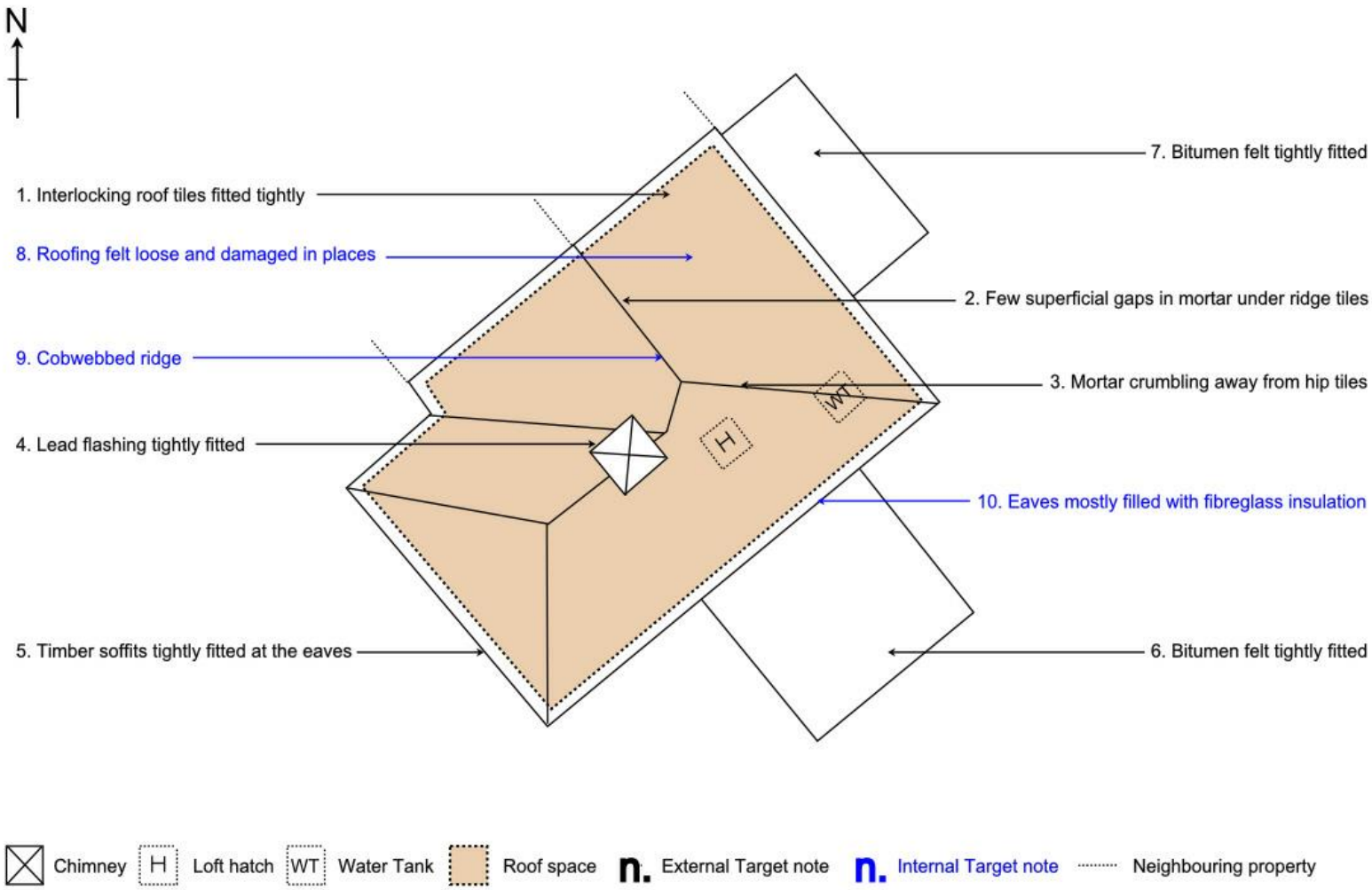
13. The cobwebbed ridge.

14. The eaves mostly filled with fibreglass insulation.

15. The brick and blockwork party wall.

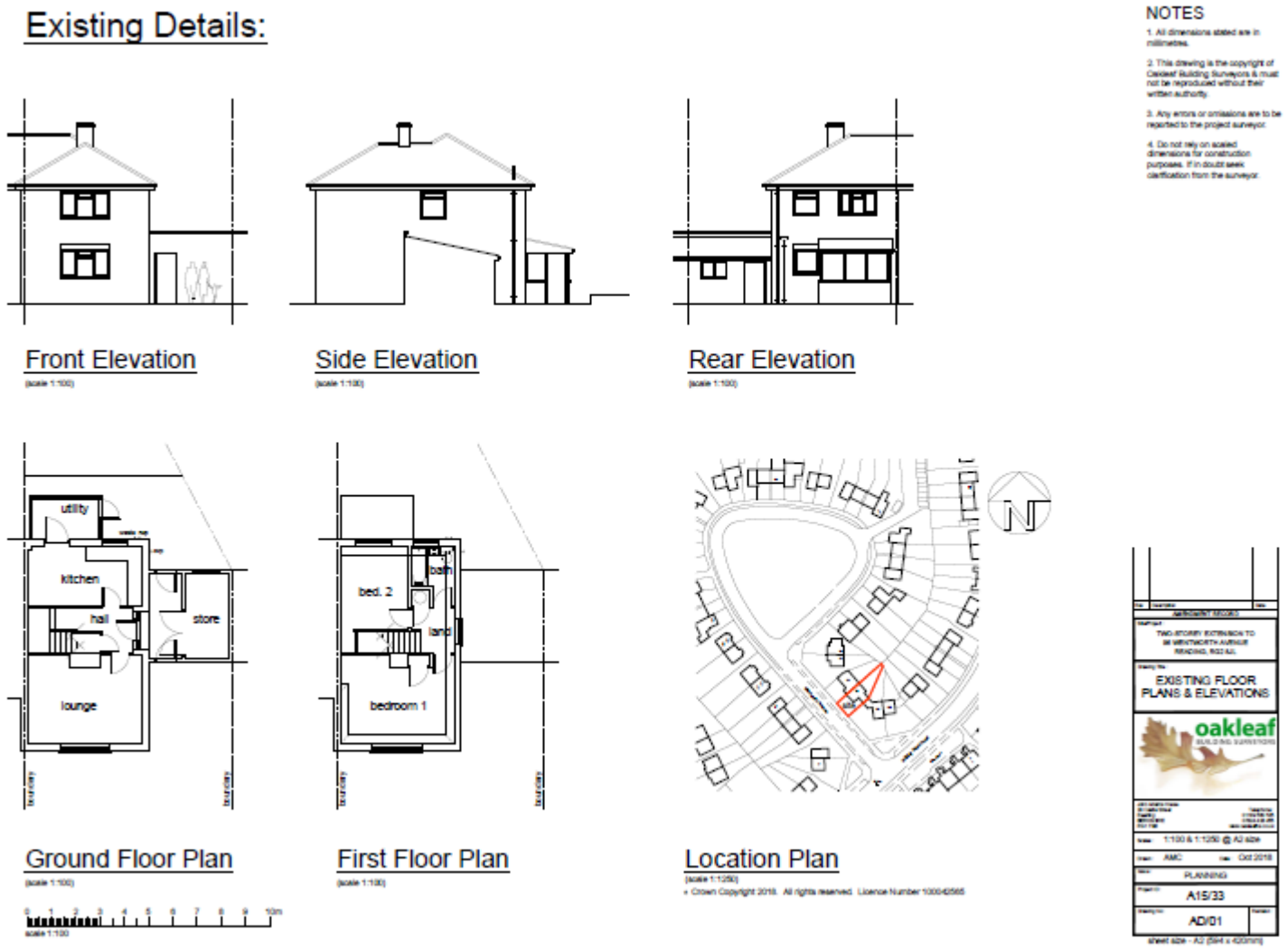
16. The rendered chimney and roof space visible beyond.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	96 Wentworth Avenue Reading	JOHNWENMAN ecological consultancy
VP	Feb 2019	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment	

APPENDIX 3 – PROPOSED AND EXISTING ELEVATIONS



Proposed Details:

NOTES

1. All dimensions stated are in millimetres.

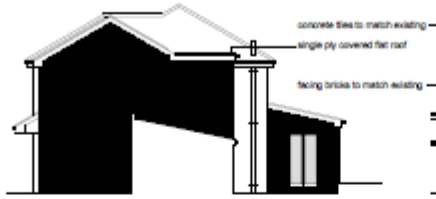
2. This drawing is the copyright of Oakleaf Building Surveyors & must not be reproduced without their written authority.

3. Any errors or omissions are to be reported to the project surveyor.

4. Do not rely on scaled dimensions for construction purposes. If in doubt seek clarification from the surveyor.

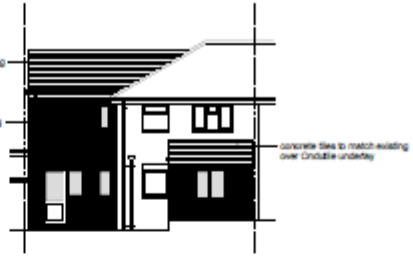
Front Elevation

(scale 1:100)



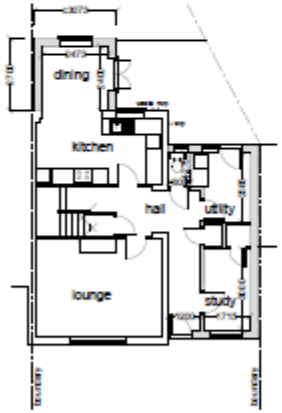
Side Elevation

(scale 1:100)



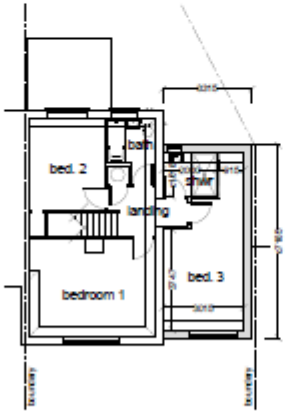
Rear Elevation

(scale 1:100)



Ground Floor Plan

(scale 1:100)



First Floor Plan

(scale 1:100)

Block Plan

(scale 1:1500)

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