



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (BATS) AT GREENWOOD COTTAGE READING



**Prepared for:
Mr N Smith
Greenwood Cottage
Bath Road
Reading
RG30 2HL**

9th December 2018

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Bramley House
Newnham Bridge
Tenbury Wells
Worcestershire
WR15 8NX
Tel: 0118 976 2902
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

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The validity of this report ceases at the prescribed time limit or after 24 months from the site inspection, or if the site conditions change due to unspecified works that affect the site whichever is the sooner.



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Executive Summary

Urban Tree Experts was commissioned by Mr N Smith to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of the buildings at Greenwood Cottage, Bath Road, Reading, RG30 2HL. This is to support a current planning application to Reading Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Wednesday 5th December 2018 at 3.15pm, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property took place, where possible, to look for signs of bats.

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the building 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.

The desk top study revealed four statutory designated sites and four European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) for bats within a 2km search radius.

Externally, there was no evidence of bats (current or historically) within the building. The property is in a good condition and has no visible roosting opportunities which could be utilised by bats. Internally, there was also no bats or evidence of bats and the building had no roosting opportunities in which bats could exploit.

Due to the absence of roosting potential and lack of evidence of bats found during the detailed external and internal inspections, it is concluded that there is no potential for roosting bats to be present within the building. 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 proposed works should proceed.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr N Smith to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of Greenwood Cottage, Bath Road, Reading, RG30 2HL to support a current planning application to Reading Borough Council (reference 181692).

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 an 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 current planning application to Reading Borough Council (reference 181692), which includes the construction of a first-floor front extension, external alterations and the widening of a dropped kerb.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats and report was completed by Simon Holmes CEnv. Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI29096). He has 27 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, Wildwood Ecology 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.



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3 Site Location and Description

3.1 Site Location

The property is located at Grid Reference SU 6780 7217, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. Greenwood Cottage, Reading, highlighted.

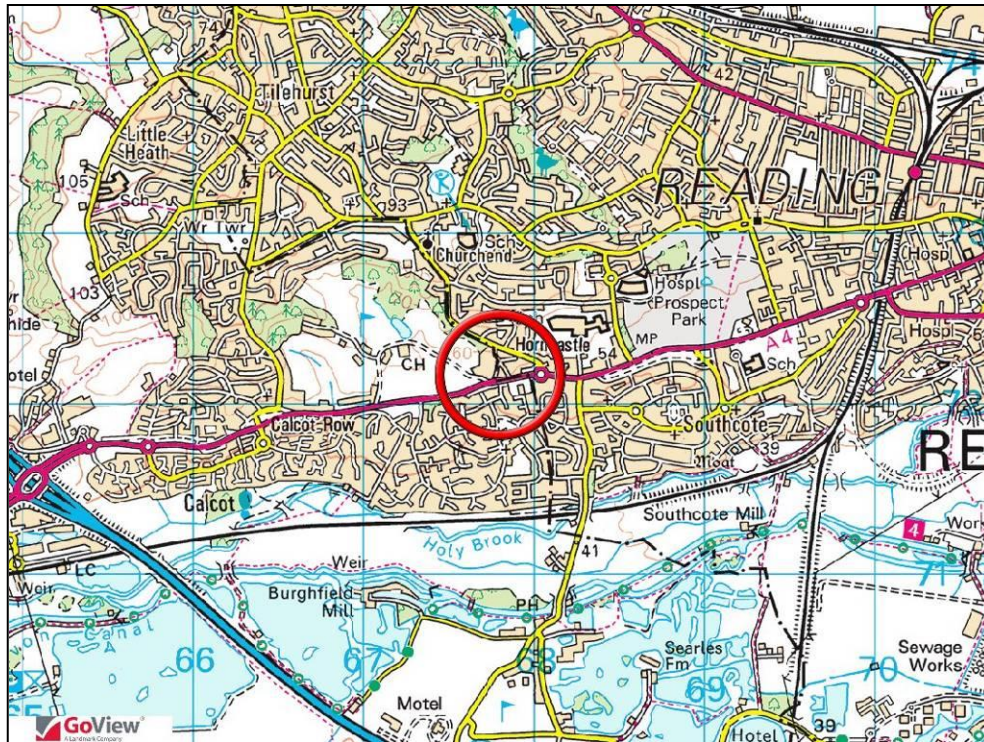
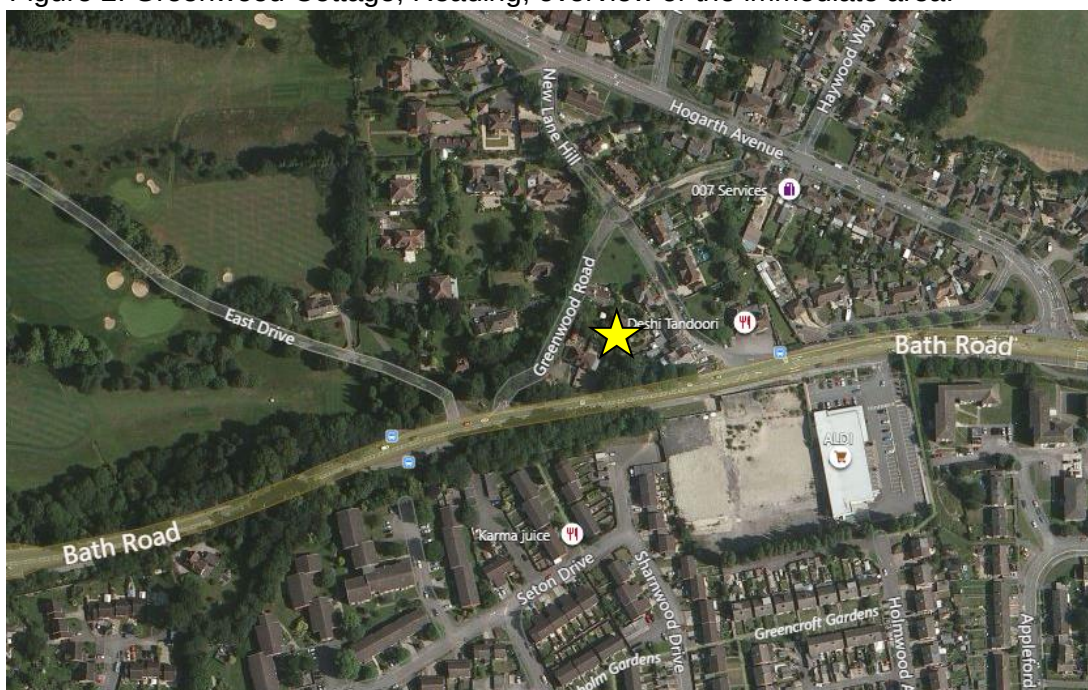


Figure 2. Greenwood Cottage, Reading, overview of the immediate area.





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3.2 Site Description

The application site is set in an urban area of Reading and comprises a detached, brick-built property. The rest of the site comprises a gravel driveway and a rear garden, which contains lawn with some small trees and shrubs, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers some foraging and commuting habitat for bats.

Figure 3. Rear Garden, Greenwood Cottage, Reading. 05.12.18



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

Due to the nature of the proposed development and the very local impact that is likely to occur, no data was sought from local records centres. Google Earth and MAGIC maps (magic.defra.gov.uk) website 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 and granted EPSLs for bats within 2km of the site.

The site is situated within an urban area of Reading, between Calcot and Southcote, surrounded by other residential and commercial properties of differing styles and sizes. Calcot Park Golf Course lies just to the west of the site, which is likely to contain good roosting, foraging and commuting habitat for bats and is connected to the site via ecological corridors. Prospect Park lies to the east of the site, which is also likely to contain good habitat for bats, but does not have ecological connectivity to the site.



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Lousehill Copse Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Blundells Copse LNR, Round Copse LNR and McIlroy Park LNR, which contain good roosting, foraging and commuting habitat for bats, lie within 2km of the site, although there are no ecological corridors connecting the site to these areas. A search of the Magic interactive website indicated that four EPSLs for bats have been granted within 2km of the proposed development site, the details of which are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. EPSLs for bats within 2km of the site

EPSL reference	Licence start date	Species on licence
EPSM2010-2341	2010	Brown-long-eared and common pipistrelle bat
EPSM2011-3499	2011	Brown-long-eared, common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle bat
EPSM2011-3384	2011	Common pipistrelle bat
EPSM2010-2590	2011	Soprano pipistrelle bat

4.2 Daylight Survey

A preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of Greenwood Cottage, Bath Road, Reading, RG30 2HL was carried out by Simon Holmes on Wednesday 5th December 2018 at 3.15pm. The weather conditions for the survey were dry and bright with a temperature of 12 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 property 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.



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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 building were examined for signs described in section 4.2. Windowsills, exposed features around the windows, fascias and walls were inspected for any evidence of bat droppings or staining.

The property is a detached, brick-built building, which had been empty for approximately 1 year. The building is rendered and painted and is in a satisfactory condition externally. The roof of the property is pitched and covered in close fitting tiles, some of which are fractured but do not provide roosting opportunities, see Figure 4 below. The ridge tiles are all tightly fitted with no gaps (Figure 5 on page 9) and the verges are all sealed and in a good condition with no gaps in which roosting bats could exploit, see Figure 6 on page 9. The fascias and soffits are in a good condition with no roosting opportunities for bats (Figure 7 on page 10) and the uPVC windows and guttering are all tight to the wall with no gaps in which roosting bats could utilise. The roof of the single storey front extension is also pitched and covered in close fitting tiles which are all in a good condition, Figure 8 on page 10. No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the external inspection of the property, and externally the building has no potential to support roosting bats.

Figure 4. Example of roof tiles, Greenwood Cottage, Reading. 05.12.18





Figure 5. Example of the ridge tiles. Greenwood Cottage, Reading. 05.12.18



Figure 6. Example of the verges, Greenwood Cottage, Reading. 05.12.18





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Figure 7. Facsia's and soffits. Greenwood Cottage, Reading. 05.12.18



Figure 8. Roof of single-storey extension. Greenwood Cottage, Reading. 05.12.18





5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The loft of the main property was accessed from the first-floor landing and the loft of the single storey extension via a hatch by the front door. The lofts were uncluttered, not lit, not boarded but were insulated, see Figures 9 and 10 on page 11 and 12. The roof was lined with bitumen felt which was all in a good condition with no rips or tears, see Figure 11 on page 12. There was no light spill into the loft spaces when the loft hatches were closed. No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the property and internally there were no roosting opportunities for bats.

Figure 9. The loft space of main property. Greenwood Cottage, Reading. 05.12.18





Figure 10. Loft space of single storey extension. Greenwood Cottage, Reading. 05.12.18



Figure 11. Example of bitumen lining. Greenwood Cottage, Reading. 05.12.18





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 13 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 of the property, it can be concluded that there is no evidence of current or prior use of the building by bats. The property was found to be in a good condition with no visible features in which crevice dwelling bats could roost. Informed by the results of the preliminary bat survey and the factors highlighted in Section 6, it is concluded that there is no potential for roosting bats within the building. Based on recommendations in the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, no further survey effort is required.



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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 licenced 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 property may have changed and bats may start to roost within the building.

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

Simon Holmes CEnv
Consultant, Urban Tree Experts
Natural England Licence C137073



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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.