

**Former Royal Public House
15 Oxford Road
Reading
RG1 7HS**

Daylight Bat Survey
Ref: R1924/a

May 2018



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by JR Properties to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the former Royal Public House in Reading, Berkshire.

1.1.2 The survey was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Reading Borough Council seeking consent to construct flats on the site following the demolition of the former public house.

1.2 Legislative Background

1.2.1 All British bat species are protected fully 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 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 Low Impact Class Licence, which would enable consultants registered by Natural England 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 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 former public house is situated at the junction of Oxford Road and Bedford Road close to Reading town centre (OS grid reference SU70746 73407).
- 1.3.2** The building is in an urban setting with very little open space, surrounded on all sides by a mixture of commercial and residential properties. The gardens

of residential properties approximately 100m to the north and south provide some limited green space. Further afield, the wooded embankments of a railway line are situated just under 500m to the west; extensive open fields to the south of the River Thames are more than 800m to the north.

- 1.3.3** The urban settings of the building with little open space are of low value to foraging bats.

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 on the 17th May 2018.

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 Pitched roofed 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 interior of the former pub and to the majority of the exterior and as such had no significant constraints. The view from the south eastern corner was partly restricted by the proximity of nearby walls

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and buildings; however this was not considered to be a significant constraint to the overall findings.

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 former public house was of painted, solid brick wall construction with a pitched roof covered with slates. The main pitched roof was formed by two sections; one off-set slightly from the other. A two-storey hipped section and single storey roof adjoined the main roof at the south eastern corner (**Photographs 1-4**).
- 3.2.2** The slates covering the main roof were all in place and flat providing no visible opportunities for bats (**Target notes 4 & 7; Photographs 9 & 10**). The flashings around the chimney were fitted closely to the slates also (**Target note 5**). One slate was lifted slightly on the southern side of the hipped section to the front (**Target note 9; Photograph 6**) but the gap created was small and considered to be unsuitable for bats. A slate had slipped on the low level roof adjoining the hipped section at the south eastern corner but this showed no evidence of use by bats when inspected closely.
- 3.2.3** The northern and southern gable ends had no enclosed soffits and the slates were fitted tightly to the walls at both ends (**Target notes 1 & 6; Photograph 8**). The soffits on the western elevation were formed by brickwork, which was intact and lacked any visible gaps (**Target note 8**). Timber soffit boxes formed the roof line of the hipped section in the south eastern corner and these were completed and fitted tightly to the walls (**Target note 2; Photograph 7**).
- 3.2.4** No evidence of bat activity was visible to the exterior of the building during the survey.

3.3 Internal Survey

- 3.3.1** The main roof was accessible via a newly created opening close to the centre and was empty. The floor of the void was covered with relatively new fibre glass insulation above a layer of older fibre glass beneath. The space was

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subdivided into two spaces linked via a small, low level opening in the brickwork (**Target note 12; Photograph 12**). The roof had a floor to ridge height of approximately 1.75m and was lined with bitumen and hessian felt (**Photograph 16**), which was largely intact and cobwebbed lightly at the ridge; a small tear allowed daylight through in the south eastern corner (**Target note 10**). A small, old wasps' nest was situated at the ridge at the northern gable end (**Target note 11; Photograph 13**). Gaps were present between the brickwork and timbers at the northern and southern gables but the gaps were cobwebbed and no daylight was visible. The eaves were filled mostly with fibre glass (**Photograph 15**). Rat droppings were scattered on the new fibre glass insulation and on the older droppings beneath also (**Photograph 14**).

3.3.2 A water tank was situated within an enclosed cupboard in the converted loft space in the south eastern corner of the roof (**Photograph 11**).

3.3.3 No bats or evidence of bats was visible within the roof void or tank cupboard during the survey.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential

4.1.1 There was no evidence of the former public house's roof being used by roosting bats and it is unlikely therefore that the property supports species that primarily occupy roof voids such as long-eared bats (*Plecotus* sp.). On the whole the building lacked features externally suitable for bats that occupy crevice roosts; a gap beneath a slipped tile on the low level roof lacked any evidence of use by bats when inspected closely.

4.1.2 Taking into account the urban setting and very limited availability of features suitable for bats the former public house is considered to be of negligible potential for roosting bats.

4.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

4.2.1 The planned demolition is considered highly unlikely to affect bats or their roosts.

4.2.2 In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the demolition work, work must stop immediately and a licensed ecologist called to site to attend to the bat and provide advice on how to proceed. Work must only recommence once further written advice has been received, and if necessary, a European Protected Species licence has been obtained.

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.

APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



1. Former public house viewed from Oxford Road to the south.



2. Pub viewed from the west.



3. The pub's northern side.



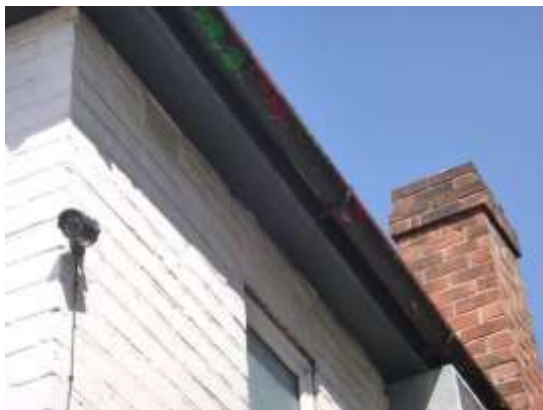
4. The pub viewed from distance to the north western corner



5. The low level roof in the south eastern corner showing slipped slate.



6. Slightly lifted slates on the hipped roof at the south eastern corner.



7. The complete and tightly fitted soffits at the south eastern corner.



8. The slates fitted tightly to the brickwork at the south facing gable end.



9. The flat slates and closely fitted lead around the chimney viewed from the west.



10. The flat slates and closely fitted lead viewed from the east.



11. The enclosed cupboard containing the water tank; remainder of roof space converted to living space.



12. The main roof void showing the opening linking the two halves of the space.



13. A small wasps' nest at the northern gable end.



14. Scattered rat droppings on the fibre glass throughout the void.

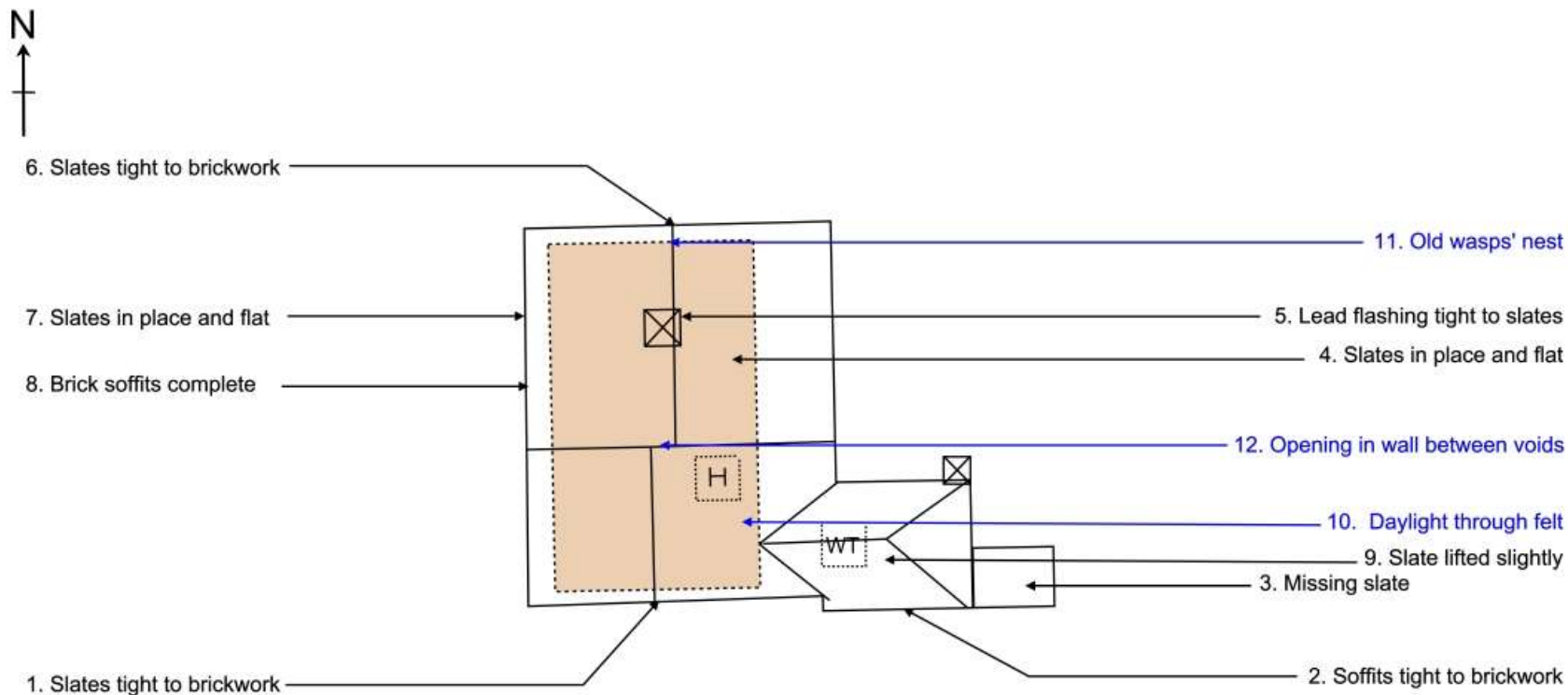


15. The eaves filled with fibre glass.



16. The intact bitumen felt lining the roof and lightly cobwebbed ridge.

APPENDIX 2 – DAYLIGHT BAT SURVEY FINDINGS



 Chimney
  Loft hatch
  Water Tank
  Roof space
  External Target note
  Internal Target note

Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	Former Royal Public House Reading	
JW	May 2018	Not to scale	Daylight Bat Survey Findings	