

Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (BATS) AT 6 COURTENAY DRIVE CAVERSHAM



**Prepared for:
Mr and Mrs D Spooner
6 Courtenay Drive
Caversham
RG4 8XH**

29th July 2018

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The validity of this report ceases at the prescribed time limit or after 12 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 and Mrs D Spooner to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham, RG4 8XH. This is to support a current planning application to Reading Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Thursday 26th July 2018, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property and garage took place to look for signs of bats.

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the buildings 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 European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) within a 2km search radius including brown long-eared bats.

Internally and externally, there was no evidence of bats (current or historically) within the property or garage. Externally the buildings are in a good condition and have no roosting opportunities or access points which could be utilised by bats. Internally the buildings are 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 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 future works should proceed.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr and Mrs D Spooner to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham, RG4 8XH. This is to support a current 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 buildings.
- Provide information on the status of bats using the buildings (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 (reference 181048) to Reading Borough Council, which seeks to extend the existing property with a part-single, part-double storey to the rear and a replacement garage to the side.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

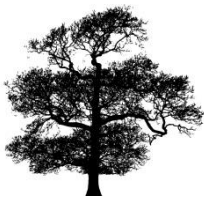
The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats and report was completed by Simon Holmes CEnv. He holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI29096). He has 27 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work and has 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

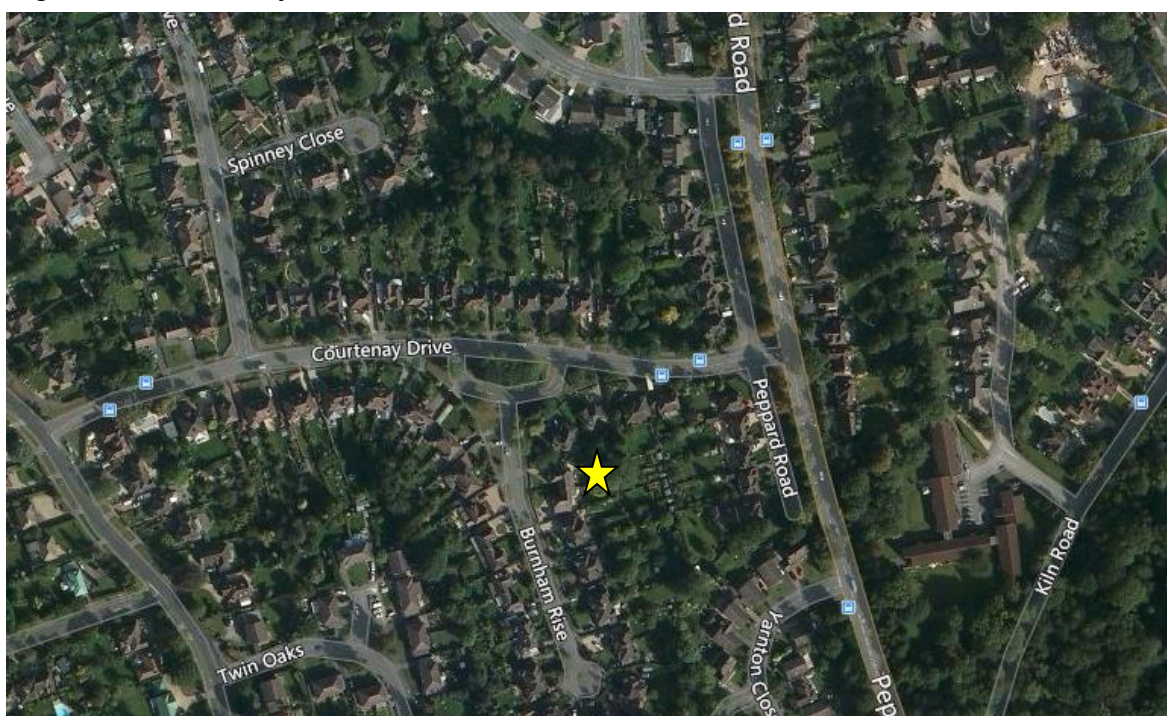
3.1 Site Location

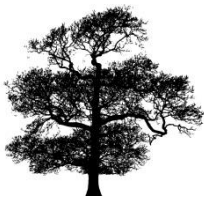
The site is located at Grid Reference SU 7203 7711, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham, highlighted.



Figure 2. 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham, overview of immediate area.





3.2 Site Description

The application site, which is set in an urban area of Emmer Green, just to the north of Caversham, comprises a detached, brick-built property, with detached garage. The rest of the application site comprises a gravel driveway with a small front garden and a large rear garden, which is mainly laid to lawn, with a number of trees and shrubs throughout, see Figure 3 below. The garden provides good foraging and commuting habitat for bats.

Figure 3. The rear garden, 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

Due to the sub-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 in an urban area of Emmer Green in Caversham and is surrounded by other residential properties of similar sizes and styles. Reading Golf Club, which comprises areas of grassland, woodland and mature trees, areas of woodland and parkland lie in close proximity to the site which are likely to provide excellent roosting, foraging and commuting habitat for bats. However, there is no ecological connectivity from the site to these areas. Further afield lie areas of woodland, parkland, farmland and wetland, which provide good habitat for bats, although again these areas are not connected to the site via ecological corridors.



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Clayfield Copse Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies within 2km of the proposed development site (Magic Maps 2017) although there is no ecological connectivity from this LNR to the site. A search of the Magic interactive website indicated that four EPSL's for bats were granted within 2km of the proposed development site, the details of which are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. EPSL's for bats within 2km of the site

EPSL reference	Licence start date	Species on licence
EPSM2012-4078	2012	Brown long-eared, daubenton's and natterers bat.
EPSM2013-6025	2013	Brown long-eared bat
EPSM2012-4292	2012	Common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat
EPSM2012-4727	2012	Common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat

4.2 Daylight Survey

A preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham, RG4 8XH was carried out by Simon Holmes on Thursday 26th 2018 at 14.30pm. The weather conditions for the survey were dry and bright with a temperature of 31 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital and pole camera and a ladder.

During the preliminary ecological appraisal (bats), internal and external inspections of the buildings were 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 buildings – 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

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 property and garage 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 circa 1920's, detached, residential building with cavity walls. The building is constructed of rough pebbled render over red brick and is in a good condition externally. There is a single storey existing extension at the rear of the property which is also in a good condition.

The roof of the main house and extension is pitched and covered in close fitting composite tiles, none of which are missing or broken, see Figure 4 below. The ridge tiles are all close fitting with no gaps for bats to exploit and the verges are all sealed with no gaps, see Figure 5 on page 9. The soffits and fascias are all painted with no visible cracks or splits in which bats could utilise (Figure 6 on page 9) and the uPVC cladding on the rear extension is all sealed with no gaps, see Figure 7 on page 10.

The site also houses a large brick built garage / workshop (Figure 8 on page 10) with a high pitched roof covered in composite tiles, which are all tight fitting with no gaps. The garage was found to be in a good condition externally with no features which could be exploited by bats. There is also a double length car port which is of timber and plastic construction to the side of the house (Figure 9 on page 11), which had no features which could be used by roosting bats.

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

Figure 4. Example of roof tiles, 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18





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Figure 5. Example of verges, 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18



Figure 6. Soffits and fascias, 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18





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Figure 7. Example of uPVC cladding, 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18

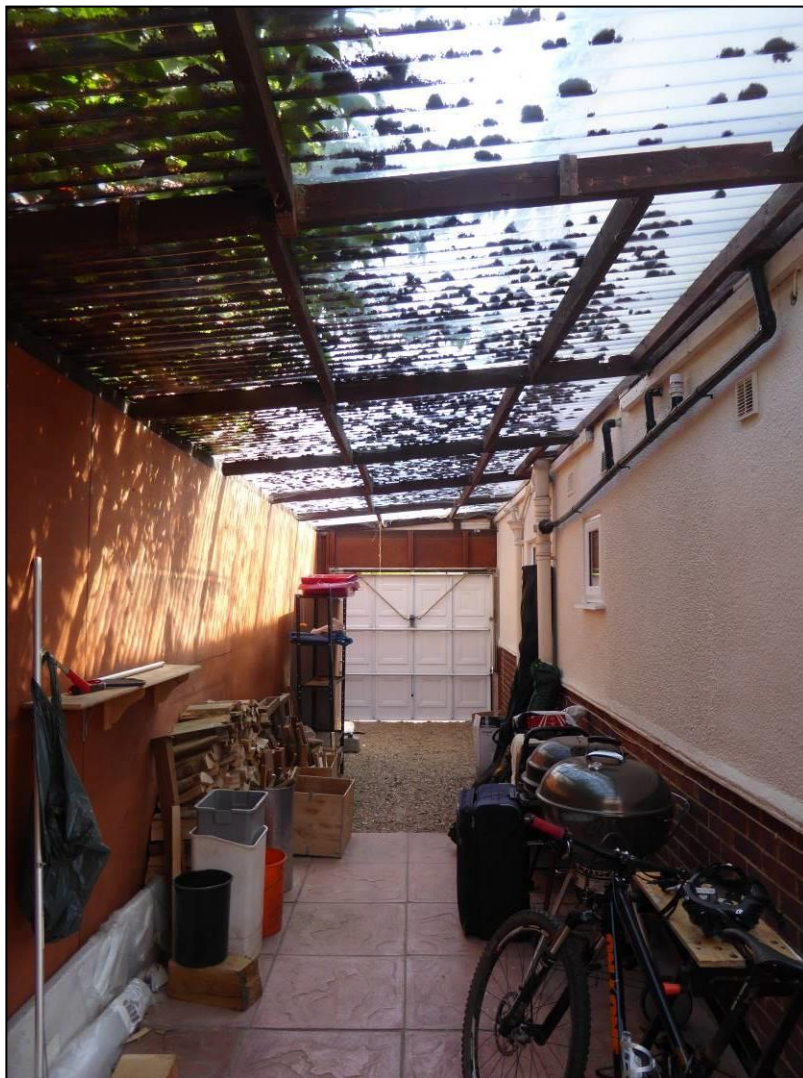


Figure 8. Garage, 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18





Figure 9. The carport, 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18



5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The loft space of the main property was accessed via a hatch on the first-floor landing, see Figure 10 on page 12. The loft had been converted into habitable space which is currently being used for storage, see Figure 11 on page 12. The loft area was lit, fully boarded, insulated and lined with plasterboard, see Figure 12 on page 13. No bats or evidence of bats was recorded within the loft space and internally the property had very low potential to support roosting bats.

The garage did not have a loft space but the building was inspected internally for bats. The garage was cluttered (Figure 13 on page 13) and the ceiling was lined with bitumen felt which was in a very good condition, with no visible tears (Figure 14 on page 14). No bats or evidence of bats was recorded and internally the garage had low potential to support roosting bats.



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Figure 10. Example of loft hatch, 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18

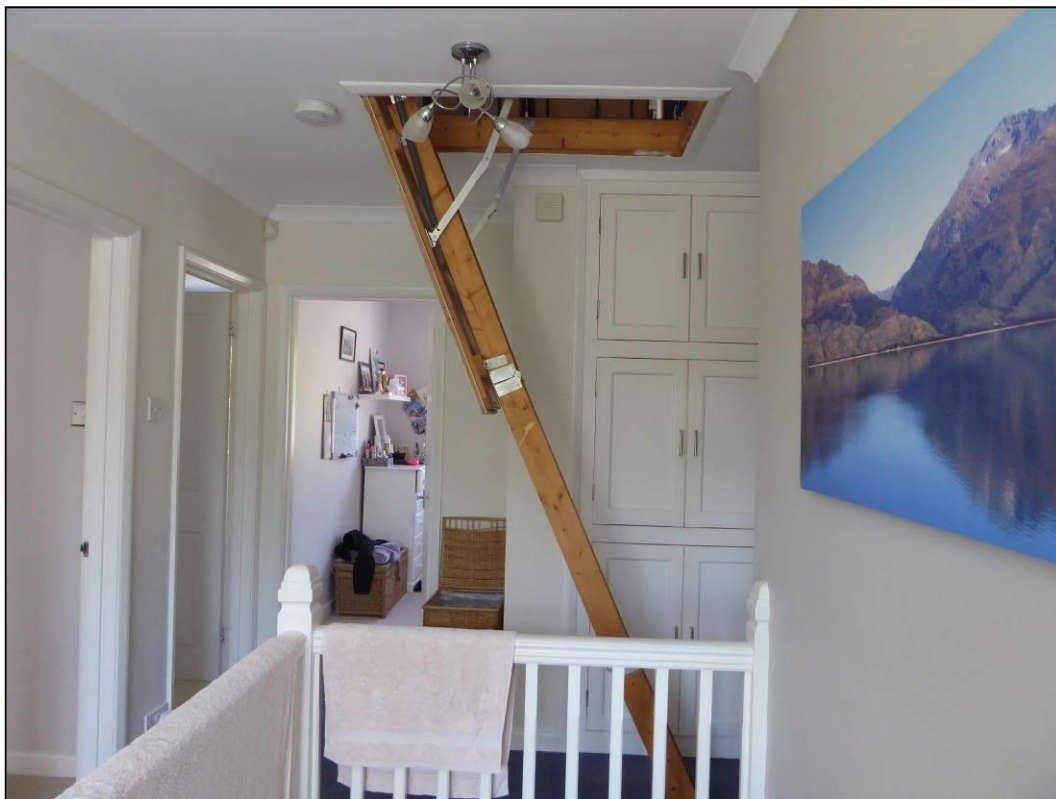
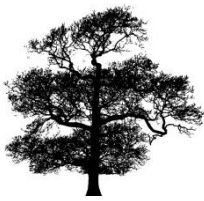


Figure 11. Example of converted loft space, 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18





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Figure 12. Loft space boarding and lining. 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18



Figure 13. Internal space of garage. 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18



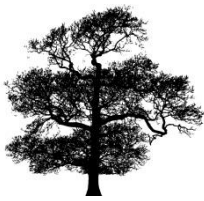


Figure 14. Example of garage lining. 6 Courtenay Drive, Caversham. 26.07.18



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 14 and 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 or garage by bats. The buildings were found to be in a good condition with no visible features in which crevice dwelling bats could roost or access the building for roosting. Informed by the results of the 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.

7.2 Contingency Plan

If, for whatever reason, there is a time delay of greater than twelve 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 bats may return to the building to roost.

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.



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9. Queries

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

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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.