

19 St Peter's Hill
Preliminary Bat Roost
Assessment
May 2018

COMMISSIONED BY
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Derek Finnie Associates Limited was commissioned by Louise Sandell to undertake a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of a property known as 19 St Peter's Hill, Caverham. There is currently a proposal to add a side extension to the building after the demolition of the existing garage, which may have a minimal impact upon the roof tiles and void space. Therefore, in line with current legislation and policy, the level of bat activity, if any, within the building needs to be assessed as it is a material consideration in the planning process.
- 1.1.2 To this end, a preliminary bat roost assessment was undertaken during April 2018. The following report describes the methodology employed throughout the assessment, presents the results and evaluates the likely impact based on the information gained to date.

1.2 Legislation

- 1.2.1 All species of British bat are afforded full protection under UK legislation, specifically under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which states:

9. Protection of certain wild animals.

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Part, if any person intentionally or recklessly kills, injures or takes any wild animal included in Schedule 5, he shall be guilty of an offence.

(4) Subject to the provisions of this Part, a person is guilty of an offence if intentionally or recklessly

(a) he damages or destroys any structure or place which any wild animal specified in Schedule 5 uses for shelter or protection;

(b) he disturbs any such animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; or

(c) he obstructs access to any structure or place which any such animal uses for shelter or protection.

- 1.2.2 As all species of British bat are included on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the above Section applies.
- 1.2.3 Further protection is given under Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which states:

Protection of certain wild animals: offences

43.—(1) A person who—

(a) deliberately captures, injures or kills any wild animal of a European protected species,

(b) deliberately disturbs wild animals of any such species,

(c) deliberately takes or destroys the eggs of such an animal, or

*(d) damages or destroys a breeding site or resting place of such an animal,
is guilty of an offence.*

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 A review of aerial photography and the Government's Multi-Access Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) was undertaken to assess the extent and quality of potential roosting and foraging habitat within 1km of the property.

2.2 Field Survey

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

- 2.2.1 An external inspection of the building was undertaken on the 30th April 2018 during good weather, with access being available to all aspects of the buildings. Leica 10 x 32 BGA binoculars, a CluLite 1 million candlepower torch and a 4m telescopic ladder were used to assist in the search as necessary. The external features of the building, particularly the roof and ridge lines were inspected for potential ingress/egress points.
- 2.2.2 After the external inspection, a detailed inspection of the internal void space of the building was undertaken. Evidence of droppings, scratch marks, staining, feeding remains, urine stains and bats themselves were sought throughout the void space. Particular attention was paid to the areas underneath the ridge and joists, especially where the two meet. Evidence of gaps in the roof, indicating access to the outside, was sought, as well as gaps into any cavities that may be present. Again a CluLite 1 million candlepower torch was used to assist in the search.
- 2.2.3 The assessment was undertaken in line with the Bat Conservation Trust — *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (2016), as well as BS 42020: 2013 *Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development*.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Desk Study

- 3.1.1 The MAGIC website identifies several areas of broad-leaved woodland, which have been classified as a Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat, near to the property, with the nearest being some 200m to the south.

3.2 Field Survey

External Features

- 3.2.1 The property is a brick built, detached, two storey dwelling set back off St Peter's Hill in Caversham. The property, which is reportedly constructed in the 1920s, is currently occupied and in sound condition throughout.
- 3.2.2 The roof of the main house is of basic hip design with the ridge line running more or less north west to south east; a cross gable extends to the front, with a second extending to the rear. Chimney breast are present on the front, rear and north west aspect of the roof. Hanging tiles are present on both the front and rear cross gables. (Plates 1 – 4).
- 3.2.3 A detached garage is located to the south east of the main house (Plate 5). The garage supports a tiled, pitched gable roof. The front (north east) gable end wall is finished with hanging tiles with a grilled opening into the internal void space; a similar grilled opening is present on the rear gable end wall also.
- 3.2.4 The roof of the house is finished with flat, interlocking clay tiles. All the tiles are good condition throughout with no broken or loose tiles were noted; there is the occasional uneven tile towards the north west of the roof, but none of the resulting gaps were of sufficient size to allow bat ingress. The ridge lines are intact.
- 3.2.5 The hanging tiles on both the front and rear aspect are in good condition, with all tiles present and tight with one another. No gaps were noted. These features would not be affected by the current proposal.
- 3.2.6 The soffit and fascia are in good condition, with no gaps apparent. Polymer sealant is absent, but any resulting gap is minimal, due to the upper storey of the wall being finished with render (Plate 6). The lead flashing around the chimney breast is also tight to the surrounding tiles.
- 3.2.7 Externally, no potential ingress points were noted into the main dwelling.
- 3.2.8 The garage roof also supports similar flat, interlocking clay tiles which are all intact and tight with one another. As are the hanging tiles on the gable end. The vents on either gable end, however, do offer potential ingress points into the internal void (Plates 7 and 8).

Internal Conditions

- 3.2.9 Internally, the joists and rafters within the void of the house are of a simple design, with the trusses being of a King post style. Nail plates are absent at the major junctions, but any resulting gap is minimal. A very heavy build-up of cobwebs was present around the junctions and throughout the void space in general, suggesting a lack of bat activity (Plates 9 - 12). No staining or scratch marks were noted along any of the beams, and there was no evidence of feeding remains. No droppings were noted despite a thorough inspection and the distinct smell often associated with bat roosts was absent.
- 3.2.10 The roof lining is formed of wooden boarding and is intact throughout.

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- 3.2.11 No evidence if bat activity was encountered within the roof void of the main house.
- 3.2.12 The void space within the garage is of a similar construction, although no roof lining is present, with the underside of the tiles visible (Plates 13 – 14). Again, a heavy build-up of cobwebs was present around the junctions. No staining or scratch marks were noted along any of the beams, and there was no evidence of feeding remains. No droppings were noted despite a thorough inspection and the distinct smell often associated with bat roosts was absent.

Summary

- 3.2.13 In summary, no ingress /egress points were found into the roof void of the house, and no physical evidence of bat presence within the building in the form of scratch marks, stains or droppings was encountered. Overall, the building was assessed as having a negligible potential to support roosting bats. Neither was there any evidence of bat occupation within the garage void despite potential ingress points being noted. Due to the lack of a roof lining, it is reasonable to assume that if bats were exploiting the ingress points, evidence in the form of droppings would have been detected within the void space.

4 EVALUATION

4.1 Bat Potential

- 4.1.1 The property was assessed as having negligible potential to support bats and, as no evidence of bats, or of current or past bat occupancy, was encountered throughout the preliminary roost assessment, additional surveys are not deemed necessary. Due to the presumed absence of bats, it is highly unlikely that the proposed development would result in any infringement of either the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) or the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017* in so far as either piece of legislation relates to bats.
- 4.1.2 However, in the highly unlikely situation a bat is encountered throughout the construction process, all works should stop immediately and advice sought from Natural England.

PLATES



Plate 1. General view of the front of the property



Plate 2. General view of the rear of the property



Plate 3. General view of the front cross gable.



Plate 4. General view of the rear cross gable.



Plate 5. View of the detached garage.



Plate 6. General view of the soffit and fascia.



Plate 7. General view of the rear of the garage showing pitched roof.



Plate 8. General view of the grilled vents on the garage gable ends.



Plate 9. General view of the internal void space of the house.



Plate 10. General view of the internal void space of the house.



Plate 11. General view of the internal void space of the house.



Plate 12. General view of the internal void space of the house.



Plate 13. General view of the internal void space of the garage.



Plate 14. General view of the internal void space of the garage.

