



Bat Survey - Preliminary Roost Assessment

13 Highdown Hill Road, Reading, Berkshire RG4 8QR

Mr. and Mrs. Robinson

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Executive summary

Arbtech Consulting Ltd. undertook a Preliminary Roost Assessment at 13 Highdown Hill Road, Reading, Berkshire RG4 8QR on 17th April 2017. The aim of the assessment was to consider the value and suitability of the structures for roosting bats and search for signs of bat activity.

The development proposals are for 'two-storey rear extension'. A planning application is being prepared for submission to Reading Borough Council.

Recommendations - This is work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent.

Survey feature	Recommendations
B1 (Bats)	Two bat presence/likely-absence surveys are required during the optimal survey period mid-May to August inclusive. One of these surveys should be a dawn re-entry survey. Three surveyors are required to provide full coverage of the building. If bat roosts are confirmed one further survey will be required to inform a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence application to Natural England.

For full justification of these recommendations, please go straight to section [4.0 Conclusions, Impacts and Recommendations](#). Otherwise, the full report starts below.

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1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Arbtech were commissioned by Mr. and Mrs. Robinson to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) at 13 Highdown Hill Road, RG4 8QR. The assessment is informed by the Bat Conservation Trust Publication *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, J. (Ed) 2016).

No previous reports have been produced for this site by Arbtech Consulting Ltd.

1.2 Site Context

The site is located at National Grid Reference SU 7128 7684, and comprises an area of approximately 0.1ha. There is one building within the site boundaries. One building was surveyed as these will be effected by the proposed development.

1.3 Scope of the report

This report provides a description of all features suitable for roosting bats, and evaluates those features in the context of the site and wider environment. It further documents any physical evidence collected or recorded during the site survey that establishes the presence of roosting bats. It provides information on constraints to the proposals as a result of roosting bats, and summarises the requirements for any further surveys, to inform subsequent mitigation proposals, achieve Planning or other statutory consent, and to comply with wildlife legislation.

The aim of the assessment was to determine the presence or evaluate the likelihood of the presence of roosting bats, and to gain an understanding of how they could use the site. To achieve this, the following steps have been taken:

- A desk study has been carried out, information will need to be requested from Berkshire and South Bucks Bat Group
- A field survey has been undertaken, including an external survey and internal inspection where possible.
- An outline of likely impacts on any known roosts has been provided, based on current development proposals
- Recommendations for further survey and assessment have been made, along with advice on European Protected Species Mitigation Licensing if appropriate

A survey plan is presented in Appendix 1, the proposed Project Plan is included in Appendix 2 (where available), desk study results are provided in the Appendix 3 and a summary of relevant legislation can be found in Appendix 4.

1.4 Project Description

This report is prepared in support of a planning application that is being prepared for submission to Reading Borough Council. The proposed development is described as: 'two-storey rear extension'. The proposed site plan is included in Appendix 2 (where available).

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desk Study methodology

Existing bat records relating to the site and a surrounding 2km radius (the study area) are required to conform to national guidelines and these will need to be requested from Berkshire and South Bucks Bat Group. The data search is confidential information that is not suitable for public release.

A review of the following information sources has also been undertaken to inform the assessment:

- Landscape structure using aerial images from Google Earth and OS maps
- Designated sites, habitat and granted EPSL records held on Magic.gov.uk.

2.2 Site Survey methodology

The survey was undertaken by Laura McLellan (Accredited agent on Natural England Bat Licence Number: 2016-22119-CLS-CLS) on 17th April 2017.

All features that will be impacted by the project proposals were assessed for their bat roosting and/or commuting habitat. The surveyor systematically surveyed all features suitable for-bats and signs of bat activity.

For any surveyed buildings:

A non-intrusive visual appraisal from the ground using binoculars, inspecting the external features of the building(s) for potential access/egress points, and for signs of bat use. An internal inspection of the building was also made, including the living areas of derelict or abandoned buildings and the accessible roof spaces of all buildings, using an endoscope, torch and ladders. The surveyor paid particular attention to the floor and flat surfaces, window shutters and frames, lintels above doors and windows, and carried out a detailed search of numerous features within the roof space.

For any surveyed trees

A visual inspection from ground level using binoculars and where accessible an internal inspection of suitable roosting features using an endoscope, torch and ladders.

2.3 Breeding birds and other incidental observations

The surveyor also made note of any other ecological constraints observed during the survey, notably the likelihood of presence or signs of breeding birds, and the suitability of the site for barn owls *Tyto alba*.

2.4 Suitability Assessment

All affected survey features on site were categorised according to the likelihood of bats being present, in line with best practice guidelines (Collins, J. (ed) 2016). The features that dictate the likelihood of roosting bats are summarised in Tables 1 and 2 below. Roost suitability is classified as high, moderate, low and negligible and dictates any further surveys required before works can proceed.

Table 1: Features of a building that are correlated with use by bats

Likelihood of bats being present	Feature of building and its context
Higher	Buildings/structures with features of particular significance for roosting bats e.g. mines, caves, tunnels, icehouses and cellars. Habitat on site and surrounding landscape of high quality for foraging bats e.g. broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is connected with the wider landscape by strong linear features that would be used by commuting bats e.g. river and or stream valleys and hedgerows. Site is proximate to known or likely roosts (based on historical data).
Lower	A small number of possible roost sites/features, used sporadically by more widespread species. Habitat suitable for foraging in close proximity, but isolated in the landscape. Or an isolated site not connected by prominent linear features. Few features suitable for roosting, minor foraging or commuting.

Table 2: Features of a tree that are correlated with use by bats

Likelihood of bats being present	Feature of tree and its context
Higher	A tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

Lower	A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roosting features but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
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2.5 Limitations – evaluation of the methodology

It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to describe the features on site in the context of their suitability for roosting bats, this does not provide a complete characterisation of the site. This survey provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of bats being present. This is based on suitability of the habitats on the site and in the local area, the ecology and biology of bats as currently understood, and the known distribution of bats as recovered during the desk study.

A limitation of this survey was a large quantity of storage items in this loft which restricted visibility of the entire floor space.

3.0 Results and Evaluation

3.1 Desk Study Results

A summary of desk study results is provided below; full details are included in Appendix 3.

3.2 Designated sites

There are two statutory designated sites and no known non-statutory sites within the study area. Their location and extent are illustrated in Appendix 3. Table 3 provides details of the designated sites including their reasons for notification.

Table 3: Designated sites within 2km radius of the site

Designated Site Name	Distance from Site (approx.)	Reasons for Notification from Natural England and/or BRD or LPA policy maps
Statutory Sites		
Clayfield Copse Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	1040m north-east	Ancient woodland with service trees and a wild pear tree, bluebells, common orchids and wood anenomes. There are ancient boundary banks and ditches and plough baulks can be seen in the woodland.
The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	1100m north-west	The Chilterns contain an important diversity of habitats ranging from chalk grassland and to the country's most extensive areas of beech woodland, with the finest stretches protected <i>under EU legislation as Special Areas of Conservation</i> . The landscape contains many prehistoric traces including the great dyke of Grim's Ditch and the ancient Ridgeway and Icknield Way.
Non-statutory Sites		
None known		

3.3 Landscape

A review of the designated sites, aerial photographs (Figure 1), the Magic database and OS maps has been undertaken. Collated together, the site's local bat habitat is described below:

The site is located on the northern edge of Reading in a semi-rural area of south Berkshire. The landscape is dominated by the residential town of Reading to the south and large arable fields to the north. There are small, scattered woodland copses and mature tree lines around the area, which could be used for foraging and commuting. One area of ancient woodland is located ~300m to the north that could be an important local habitat for bats. Good quality grassland habitats, including semi-improved grassland ~600m south-west, lowland calcareous grassland

~500m north and lowland dry acid grassland ~1.4km east, all of which could be important foraging habitats for bats. Furthermore, scattered irrigation ditches around the area will provide abundant insect foraging for bats.

Priority habitats within 2km of the site are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Priority Habitat Inventory within 2km (Magic.gov.uk):

Habitat	Closest distance from site
Deciduous Woodland	~280m north
National Forest Inventory	~280m north
Ancient woodland	~280m north
Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat	~1060m south-east
Good quality semi-improved grassland	~630m south-west
Lowland calcareous grassland	~510m north
Lowland dry acid grassland	~1380m east
Traditional Orchards	~1060m south-east



Figure 1: Aerial photo of site, showing landscape structure

3.4 Historical records

The local bat group, Berkshire and South Bucks Bat Group, will need to be commissioned to provide bat records for within 2km of the site. These will be provided on request and will be summarised in Table 5 once this information becomes available.

Table 5: Historical records of bats within 2km of the site

Common name	Scientific binomial	Number of records	Number of roost records	Maternity roost records
Awaiting Data				

A search of the magic database for granted European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSMLs) for bats within a 2km radius found eight licenced site and details are provided in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Granted EPSMLs (bats) within 2km of the site

Case reference of granted application	Approx. distance from site	Bat Species Effected	Licence Start Date:	Licence End Date:	Impacts allowed by licence
EPSM2012-4727	1630m to the north	C-PIP;S-PIP;BLE	16/10/2012	31/10/2012	Destruction of a resting site
EPSM2013-6025	340m to the north-east	BLE	26/07/2013	31/12/2013	Destruction of a resting site
EPSM2012-4078	1070m to the north-east	BLE;DAUB;NATT	05/10/2012	30/01/2014	Not provided – assumed disturbance of bat roost
EPSM2011-3175	1780m to the south-east	C-PIP	10/07/2011	31/08/2012	Not provided – assumed disturbance of bat roost
2014-2980-EPS-MITc	1890m to the south-west	C-PIP,S-PIP	12/09/2014	01/10/2015	Destruction of a resting site
2014-3600-EPS-MIT	1850m to the south-west	C-PIP	29/09/2014	01/10/2019	Destruction of a breeding and resting site
2015-18560-EPS-MIT	1730m to the south-west	BLE,S-PIP	25/01/2016	31/01/2021	Destruction of a resting site
EPSM2012-4292	1440m to the north-west	C-PIP;S-PIP;BLE	18/04/2012	31/10/2014	Destruction of a resting site

These records show that there are summer roosts of both crevice dwelling and void dwelling bat species within 2km of the survey site. The destruction of a brown long-eared bat summer roost which is particularly close to the survey site, within 350m, may have resulted in the bats relocated to the survey site. There is also a maternity roost of a common, crevice dwelling bat species (common pipistrelle) within 2km of this site. This roost was recently destroyed (2014) and as such, bats from this roost may have also relocated to the survey site. There are two records which have unknown impacts to a roost of both crevice dwelling and void dwelling bat species as the record on Magic does not include this information. It is assumed that in these cases the roosts were retained but the bats present were disturbed during the development.

3.5 Field Survey Results

There is one survey building on the site. This building is designated as B1 and is illustrated in the map in Appendix 1. The environmental variables recorded at the time of the survey are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Environmental variables during the survey

Date: 17/04/2017	
Temperature	13°C
Humidity	68°C
Cloud Cover	75%
Wind	0.1km/h
Rain	None

3.6 Site Feature descriptions and photos

Building B1 Description

B1 is a two-storey brick built detached house that is white wash rendered on all elevations of the second-storey. The roof is constructed of clay tiles on the north-west end and a main pitch running from north-west to south-east, and two additional pitches at the front (south-west elevation) and rear (north-east elevation) running north-east to south-west. There is a catslide roof on the north-western end of the building with an integral garage underneath. Windows are UPVC and tight fitting, the front door located on the south-west elevation is wood and tight fitting. Two brick chimneys are located on either side of the main roof (north-west and south-east sides of the building). These chimneys are in good condition and do not appear to have any gaps in the stonework.



Photo 1: 13 Highdown Hill Road (B1). Main pitch running north-west to south-east.



Photo 2: Rear (north-east) elevation of B1.



Photo 3: One of the additional pitched roofs at the rear (north-east elevation).

The roof is in fair condition. However, the roof is sunken on the north-western and south-eastern side of the roof below the chimneys, resulting in several displaced clay tiles creating gaps. Gaps are also visible in the ridge tiles on this elevation. The roof is predominantly covered in moss which may prevent visibility of gaps between the tiles on this roof. There are also gaps in the clay tiles on the small sub-roof above the bay window on the south-west corner of the south-west elevation.



Photo 4: Sunken roof of southeast side of north-east elevation roof creating gaps in tiles below the chimney.



Photo 5: Examples of gaps in slates on south-west elevation roof.



Photo 6: Clay tiles above south-west corner bay window.



Photo 7: Close up photo of gaps in clay tiles above bay window.

There are clay hanging tiles between the ground and first floor bay windows on the north-west corner of the front (south-west) elevation. These hanging tiles are misaligned in several places, creating gaps in the tiles.

All of these gaps provide suitable roosting features for crevice dwelling bat species.



Photo 8: Hanging tiles above first-storey bay window on south-west corner elevation. Location of gaps in tiles circled.



Photo 9: Close up photo of hanging tiles with gaps above first floor bay window on south-west elevation.



Photo 10: Hanging tiles above the first floor bay window on south-west elevation. Location of gaps in tiles circled.



Photo 11: Close up photo of hanging tiles with gaps above first floor bay window on south-west elevation.

Interior

Internally there is one loft space within the roof void of the main house. Loft 1 measures approximately 10m long, 7m wide and 2m in height to the ridge. The roof is lined with bitumen felt that is tight fitting with no tears visible. This loft space is partially boarded and insulation is visible on top of the beams at the peripheries. There are stored items which cover a large area of floor space in this loft, restricting visibility. There are no visible gaps at the eaves and no daylight is visible inside the loft. There are dense cobwebs underneath the ridge, suggesting that no bats have been flying within this loft space recently. The catslide roof measures approximately 6m long, 2.5m wide and 8m in height to the ridge. An internal inspection of garage identified the catslide roof is lined with bitumen felt that is tight fitting with no tears visible.

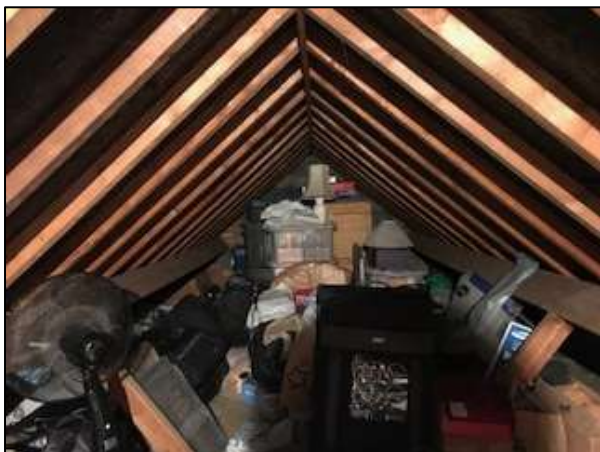


Photo 12: Loft space 1.



Photo 13: Interior of additional pitch within L1.

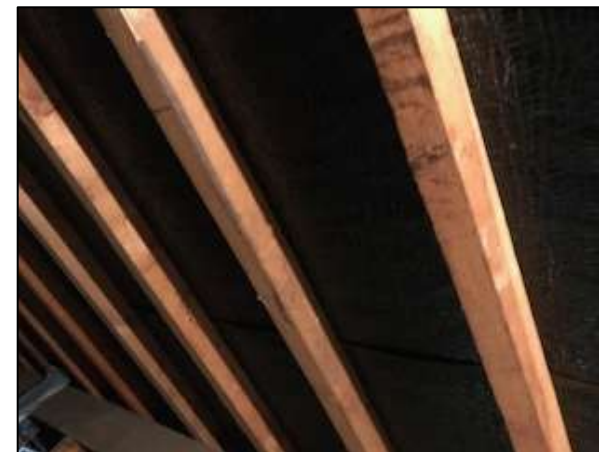


Photo 14: Intact bitumen felt lining in Loft 1.



Photo 15: Integral garage beneath catslide roof. Bitumen lining visible.

Evidence of bats

No evidence of bats was located internally or externally on this building but suitable roosting habitat is present within the clay roof tiles and clay hanging tiles as described above. The features are suitable for crevice dwelling bat species such as pipistrelle and *Myotis* bat species.

Breeding birds and other incidental observations

No evidence of breeding birds was located internally or externally on this building.

4.0 Conclusions, Impacts and Recommendations

4.1 Informative guidelines

Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and Conservation Regulations; see Appendix 4 for a summary of legislation protecting bats in the UK. Legislation protects all wild birds whilst they are breeding, and prohibits the killing, injuring or taking of any wild bird or their nests and eggs. Certain species of bird, including the barn owl, are subject to special provisions; it is an offence to disturb any bird or their young during the breeding season.

There are three possible outcomes of this survey, each with specific recommendations. These are outlined below:

Confirmed bat roost

Best practice survey guidelines (Collins, 2016) recommends additional surveys for confirmed roosts. Three further surveys are required to characterise the bat roost present including species, roost type and access points to inform a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) application with Natural England. Surveys must be completed during the active bat season (May – September). At least two of the surveys should be completed during the optimal survey period mid-May to August, and at least one of the surveys should be a dawn re-entry survey (Collins, J. 2016).

Low, moderate or high likelihood of a bat roost present

Best practice survey guidelines (Collins, 2016) recommends additional surveys for features assessed as having low to high suitability for roosting bats. One, two or three further surveys are required to confirm presence/likely-absence of a bat roost, based on a low, medium or high roost likelihood evaluation. Surveys must be completed during the active bat season (May – September). If more than one survey is recommended, at least one of them should be completed during the optimal survey period mid-May to August, and at least one of the surveys should be a dawn re-entry survey (Collins, J. 2016). The survey effort recommended at this stage is iterative and if bats are recorded emerging from the buildings, a further survey will be required to provide sufficient information to inform an EPSML application to Natural England.

Negligible likelihood of a bat roost present

Buildings assessed as comprising negligible suitability for roosting bats do not normally require further surveys. However, if bats are found during any stage of the development, work should stop immediately and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted to seek further advice.

Appropriate justification for this assessment is provided in Section 3 and Tables 1 and 2 of this report.

4.2 Evaluation

Taking the desk based assessment and site survey results into account, the following value for roosting bats has been placed on each site survey feature.

Table 8: Evaluation of buildings/trees on site

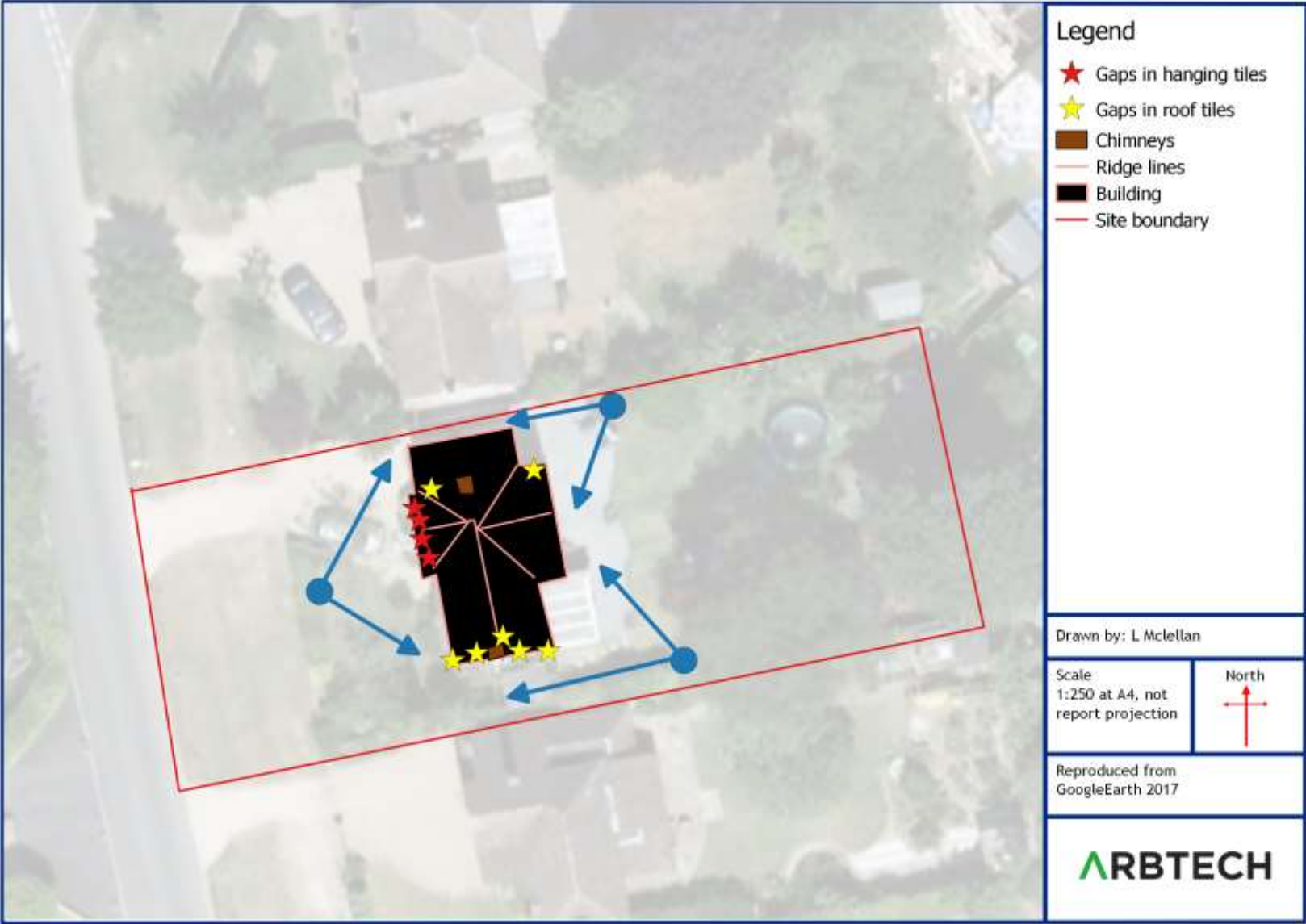
Ref	Survey assessment conclusions (with justification)	Foreseen impacts	Recommendations	Enhancements
				The Local Planning Authority has a duty to ask for enhancements under the NPPF and circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation. Para.99
B1	This building has a moderate likelihood of supporting roosting bats. There are known roosts of crevice and void dwelling bat species within 2km. There are good quality foraging and commuting habitats within 2km, including ancient woodland within 300m. Suitable foraging commuting corridors are located within 30m of this building increasing the likelihood of bat roosts being present.	As the proposals include the extension of this building, any bat roosts located in the area to be extended will be destroyed. This could result in death/injury of bats.	Two bat presence/likely-absence surveys are required during the optimal survey period mid-May to August inclusive. One of these surveys should be a dawn re-entry survey. Three surveyors are required to provide full coverage of the building. If bat roosts are confirmed one further survey will be required to inform a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence application to Natural England.	To be confirmed following further surveys.

B1	The site provides negligible habitat for breeding birds.	None expected. However, any works which affect the vegetation on site may impact breeding birds.	Any vegetation removal should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the trees and shrubs to be removed should be undertaken immediately prior to clearance. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged.	Install three Schwegler bird boxes on retained trees/buildings on site e.g. Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace Schwegler 1B nest boxes Schwegler 2H Robin Boxes Nest boxes should be positioned approximately 3m above ground level where they will be sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight. Small-hole boxes are best placed approximately 1-3m above ground on an area of the tree trunk where foliage will not obscure the entrance hole.
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5.0 Bibliography

- British Trust for Ornithology (2016) www.bto.org/about-birds/nbw/putting-up-a-nest-box
- Collins, J. (ed.) (2012). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists — Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- Garland & Markham (2008) Is important bat foraging and commuting habitat legally protected?
- Google Earth (2017) accessed on 17/04/2017.
- Magic database (2017) <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> accessed on 17/04/2017.
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.

Appendix 1: Survey Plan

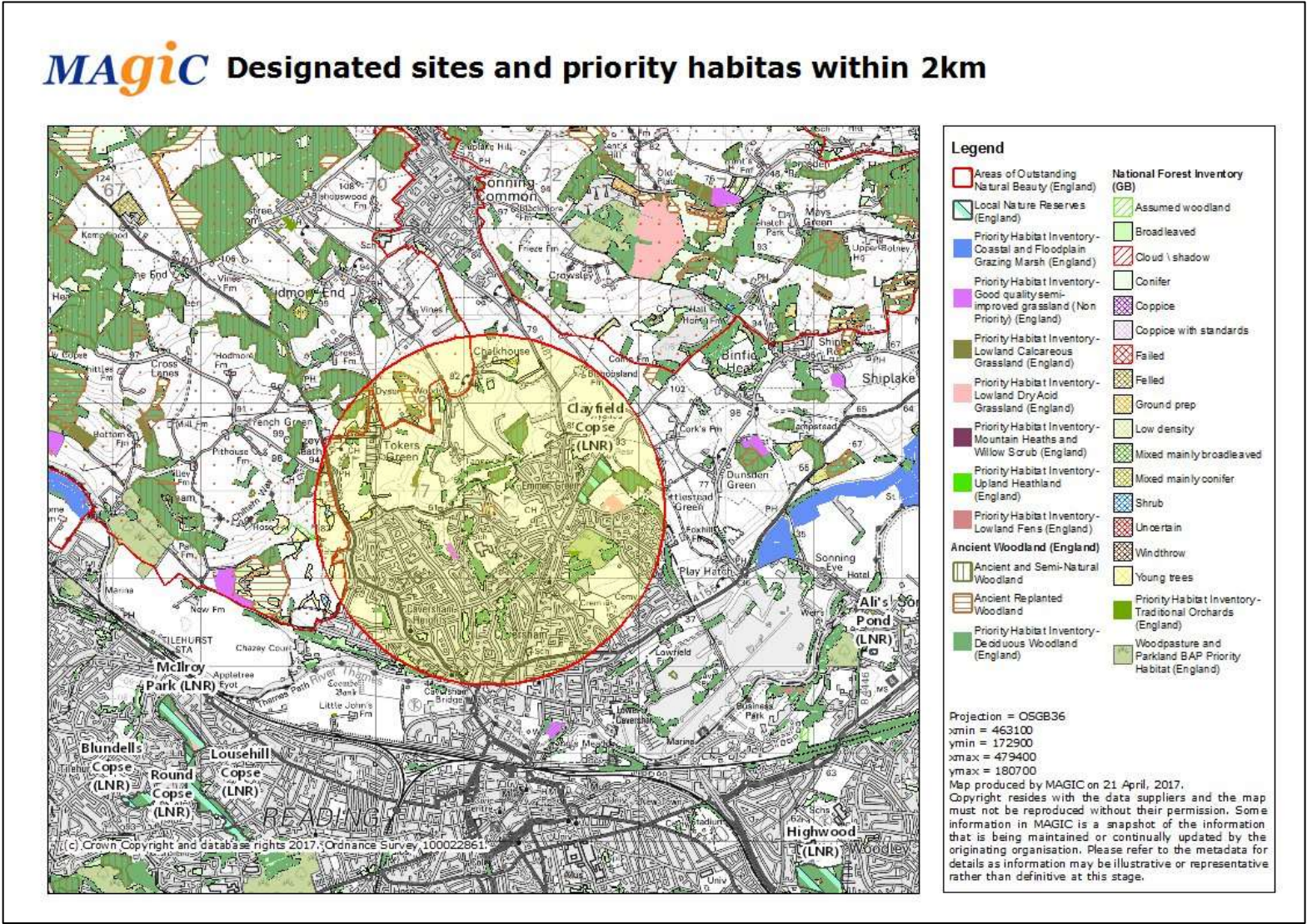


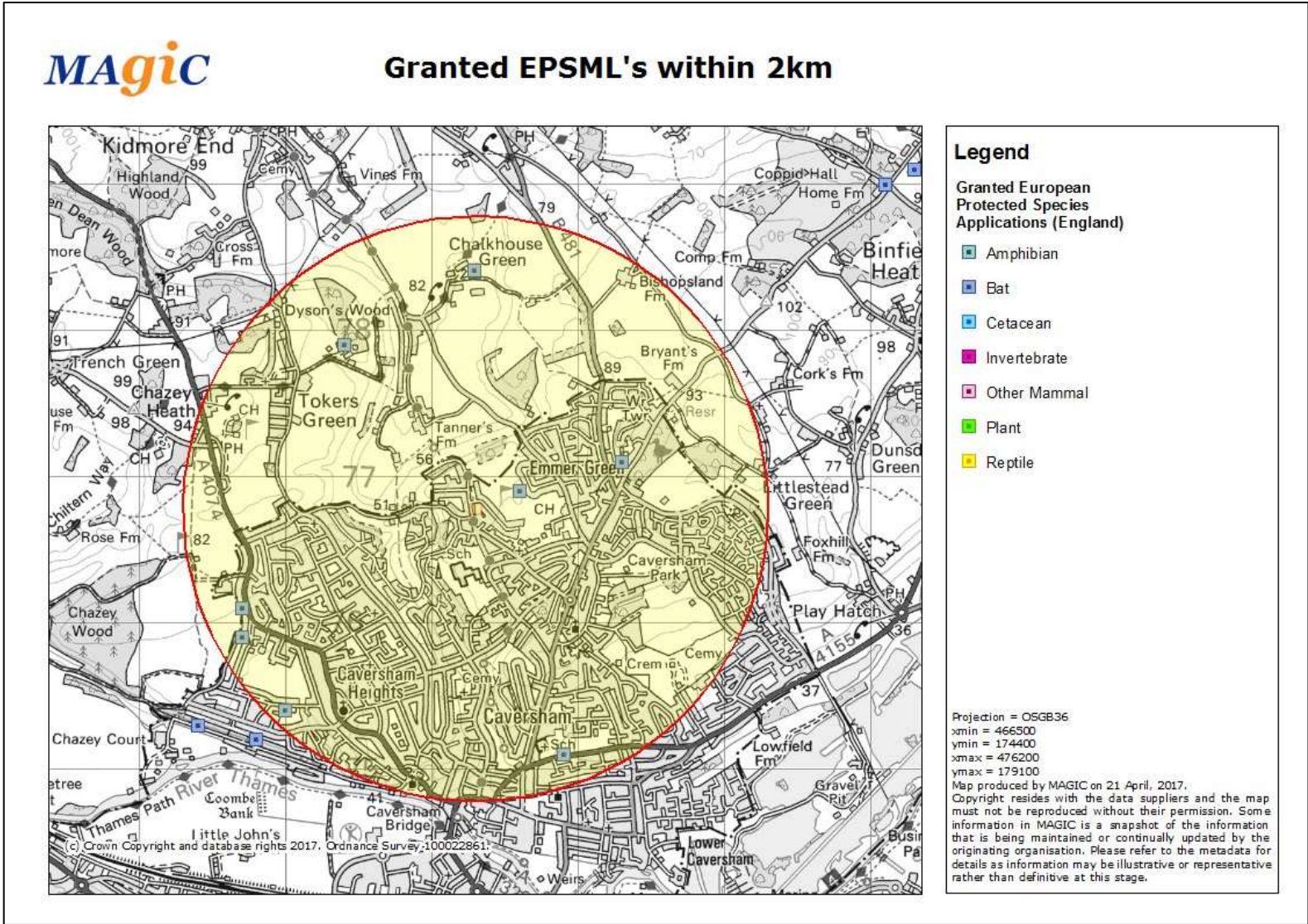
Appendix 2: Proposed Site Plan

None provided

Appendix 3: Desk Study Information

Full historical records can be provided on request.





Appendix 4: Legislation and Planning Policy related to bats

LEGAL PROTECTION

All species of bat are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 2.

Regulation 41 prohibits:

- Deliberate killing, injuring or capturing of Schedule 2 species (e.g. all bats)
- Deliberate disturbance of bat species as:
 - a) to impair their ability:
 - (i) to survive, breed, or reproduce, or to rear or nurture young
 - (ii) to hibernate or migrate
 - b) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place

Bats are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 5. Under this Act, they are additionally protected from:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance (at any level)
- Intentional or reckless obstruction of access to any place of shelter or protection
- Selling, offering or exposing for sale, possession or transporting for purpose of sale

Effect on development works:

A European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence issued by the relevant statutory authority (e.g. Natural England) will be required for works likely to affect a bat roost or for operations likely to result in a level of disturbance which might impair their ability to undertake those activities mentioned above (e.g. survive, breed, rear young and hibernate). The licence is to allow derogation from the relevant legislation but also to enable appropriate mitigation measures to be put in place and their efficiency/success to be monitored.

The legislation may also be interpreted such that, in certain circumstances, important foraging areas and/or commuting routes can be regarded as being afforded *de facto* protection, for example, where it can be proven that the continued usage of such areas is crucial to maintaining the integrity and long-term viability of a bat roost (Garland & Markham, 2008).

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (ENGLAND)

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development. The Framework specifies the need for protection of designated sites and priority habitats and species. An emphasis is also made on the need for ecological infrastructure through protection, restoration and re-creation. The protection and recovery of priority species (considered likely to be those listed as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species) is also listed as a requirement of planning policy.

In determining a planning application, planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by ensuring that: designated sites are protected from harm; there is appropriate mitigation or compensation where significant harm cannot be avoided; opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments are encouraged; and planning permission is refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including aged or veteran trees and also ancient woodland.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Biodiversity Duty

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, 2006, requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. This is commonly referred to as the 'biodiversity duty'.

Section 41 of the Act (Section 42 in Wales) requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of 'principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity.' This list is intended to assist decision makers such as public bodies in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act. Under the Act these habitats and species are regarded as a material consideration in determining planning applications. A developer must show that their protection has been adequately addressed within a development proposal.