

**19 Armour Road
Tilehurst
Berkshire
RG31 6EX**

Daylight Bat Survey

Ref: R1697/b

August 2017



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1	INTRODUCTION	3
1.1	Background.....	3
1.2	Legislative Background.....	3
1.3	Site Location and Context.....	5
2	SURVEY METHOD.....	6
2.1	Building Inspection.....	6
2.2	Survey Constraints.....	7
3	SURVEY FINDINGS	8
3.1	Building Inspection.....	8
3.2	External Survey.....	8
3.3	Internal Survey.....	9
4	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	10
5	REFERENCES	11
	APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS.....	12
	APPENDIX 2 - DAYLIGHT BAT SURVEY FINDINGS	14
	APPENDIX 3 – EXISTING FLOORPLANS AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS	15

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Betts to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the house at 19 Armour Road Tilehurst, Berkshire.

1.1.2 The survey was commissioned in connection with planning proposals submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a two-storey side extension (Planning application reference: 171105) (refer to existing floorplans and proposed elevations in **Appendix 3**).

1.2 Legislative Background

1.2.1 All British bat species are fully protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 ('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 53(9)(a)** - there is "no satisfactory alternative" to the derogation, and;
- **Regulation 53(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;

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- **Regulation 53(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 9(5) 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 house is situated on the southern side of Armour Road in Tilehurst on the western side of Reading, Berkshire (OS Grid Reference: SU 66964 74072).
- 1.3.2** The house is a semi-detached property surrounded by further residential properties and their associated gardens to the northwest, southeast and southwest. Directly to the northeast of the property is a recreational ground, with managed amenity grassland and mature hedgerow of trees surrounding the field. A further 176 metres towards the northeast is a large allotment providing foraging opportunities for bats adapted to urban environments. The Arthur Newbury Park is approximately 476 metres to the north of the property and McIlroy Park is approximately 800 metres to the northeast; both large areas of open greenspace with wooded areas ideal for foraging bats. Within the wider area, the River Thames is 1.25 kilometres north of the semi-detached property - a known commuting and foraging route for bats.

2 SURVEY METHOD

2.1 Building Inspection

2.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the house was undertaken on the 1st August 2017 by an ecologist registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 and an assistant ecologist.

2.1.2 The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars and a high power (1 million candle power). Signs of occupation by bats and features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines were looked for (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 Residential, pitched roofed buildings may offer potential roosting sites in a number of locations, favoured locations include:

- At the gable ends – access is typically gained at the roof apex via gaps in the soffits or under roof tiles;
- Gaps and cracks in brick or block work, which provide access to a wall cavity or sheltered crevice;
- At the eaves behind barge boards and soffits;
- Under timber cladding, hanging tiles or roof tiles;
- Under lead flashing, roof and ridge tiles;
- Within an enclosed roof space – species such as brown long eared bat for example will typically cluster around the ridge beam or at gable ends.

2.2 Survey Constraints

- 2.2.1** Full access was available to the exterior of the house. However, much of the roof space was converted for living accommodation restricting the internal inspection. There was a small loft space at the rear of the property and access was available to the eaves, although much of this space was blocked off by plasterboard.

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 Building Inspection

3.1.1 The external and internal bat survey findings are detailed on a plan with target notes in **Appendix 2** and photographs of the site are shown in **Appendix 1**. There follows a description of the external and internal survey findings:

3.2 External Survey

3.2.1 The semi-detached house was of brick construction with white rendered walls (**Photographs 1 & 2**). The pitched roof was covered with slate tiles and a two-storey extension had been added to the rear of the property. The roof tiles of the property were tightly fitted and were all in place apart from one loose tile at the rear close to the junction with the neighbouring roof (**Photograph 3; Target Notes 1 & 2**).

3.2.2 The extension had a sloped roof and was also covered with slate tiles that were also tightly fitted (**Target Note 3**) and showed no signs of missing mortar under the verges (**Photograph 4; Target Note 4**). At the rear of the house the UPVC soffit box was tightly fitted to the rendered wall of the house (**Photograph 5; Target Note 5**). The western end of the soffit box was open and there was evidence of birds using the open space to nest in the form of bird droppings stuck to the gable end wall (**Photograph 6; Target note 6**). There was no evidence of bat occupancy around this soffit and it was concluded that the gap was too open and large for crevice-dwelling bat species to use the space. At the northwest-facing gable end of the house the eaves were open and sealed tightly providing no obvious roosting opportunities for bats (**Photograph 7; Target Note 7**).

3.2.3 At the front of the house (northeast-facing) the eaves were tightly sealed with a timber soffit box (**Photograph 8; Target Note 8**). The roof of the porch at the front of the house was flat and lined with felt and the lead flashing was tight to the outside wall, although there was a small gap at the north-eastern corner behind the barge board (**Photograph 9; Target notes 9 & 10**). On closer inspection the gap was heavily cobwebbed and no evidence of use by roosting bats was found during the survey.

3.2.4 No evidence of bat activity was found on the exterior of the house during the survey.

3.3 Internal Survey

- 3.3.1** Much of the internal roof space of the property had been converted into living space and so internal inspection was restricted. There was a small opening to the remaining roof space to the southwest of the property, however further access was prevented due to the presence of plasterboard either side of the hatch (**Photograph 10**). There was no evidence of bat activity in the accessible eaves space.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1.1** In the absence of any evidence of roosting bats in the eaves space of the property at 19 Armour Road and the restricted size of the roof space, it is highly unlikely that the property supports void-dwelling bat species such as the long-eared bat (*Plecotus sp.*). Furthermore, the semi-detached house had limited external opportunities suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bat species. The open soffit at the rear of the property was too large to be used by crevice-dwelling species such as the common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) or soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygamaeus*) and all aspects of the roof to be impacted by the proposed extension was tightly fitted.
- 4.1.2** In summary, the house showed no evidence of roosting bats and had limited roosting opportunities, and as such it is considered highly unlikely that the proposed extension will lead to the loss of a bat roost or disturbance of bats.
- 4.1.3** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the building work, the work should stop immediately and a licensed ecologist called to site to attend to the bat and provide advice on how to proceed; work should not continue until further written advice has been received. At this point, a European Protected Species licence may be required to permit the work to continue lawfully

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.

Richardson, P. (2000). *Distribution Atlas of Bats in Britain and Ireland 1980 – 1999*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



1. Rear view of the property.



2. Front view of the property.



3. Tightly fitted tiles with one slipped tile close to the junction with the neighbouring property.



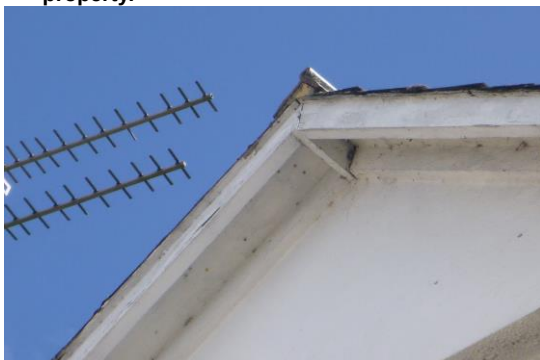
4. Sealed mortar at the verge of the rear extension.



5. The tight UPVC soffit box on the rear of the property.



6. Open end of the soffit box.



7. Tightly sealed eaves on the western gable end.



8. Tight soffit box at the front of the house.

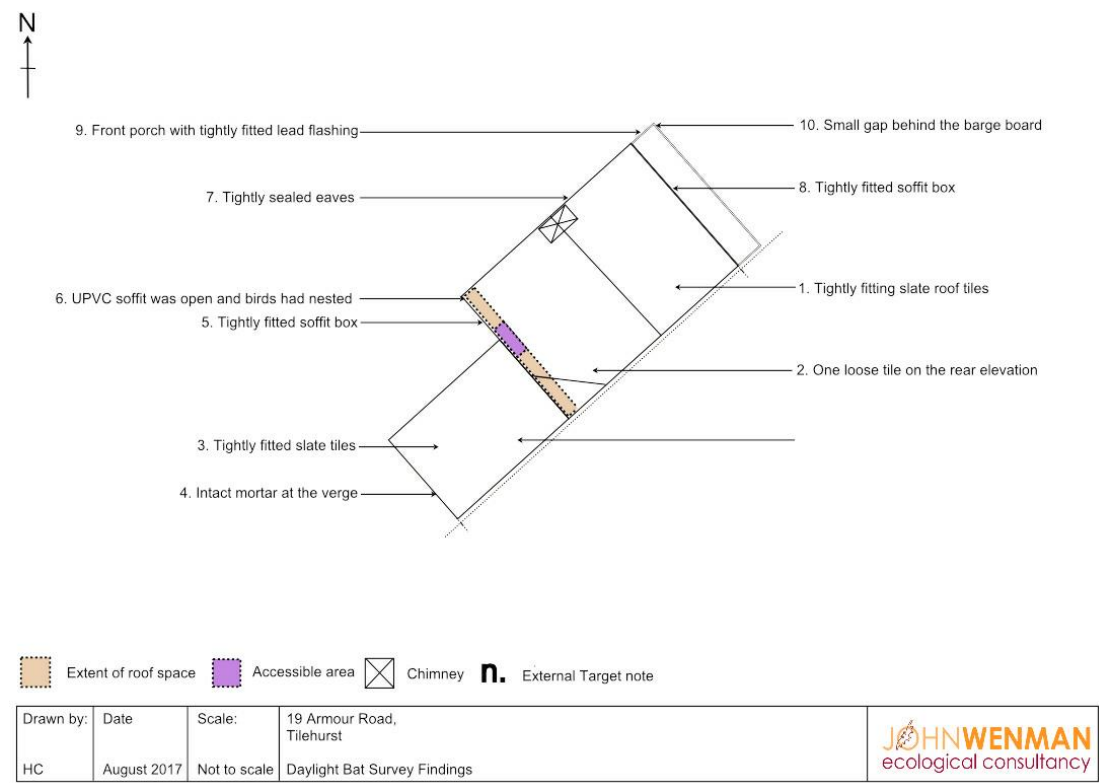


9. Cobwebbed gap at the corner of the porch.



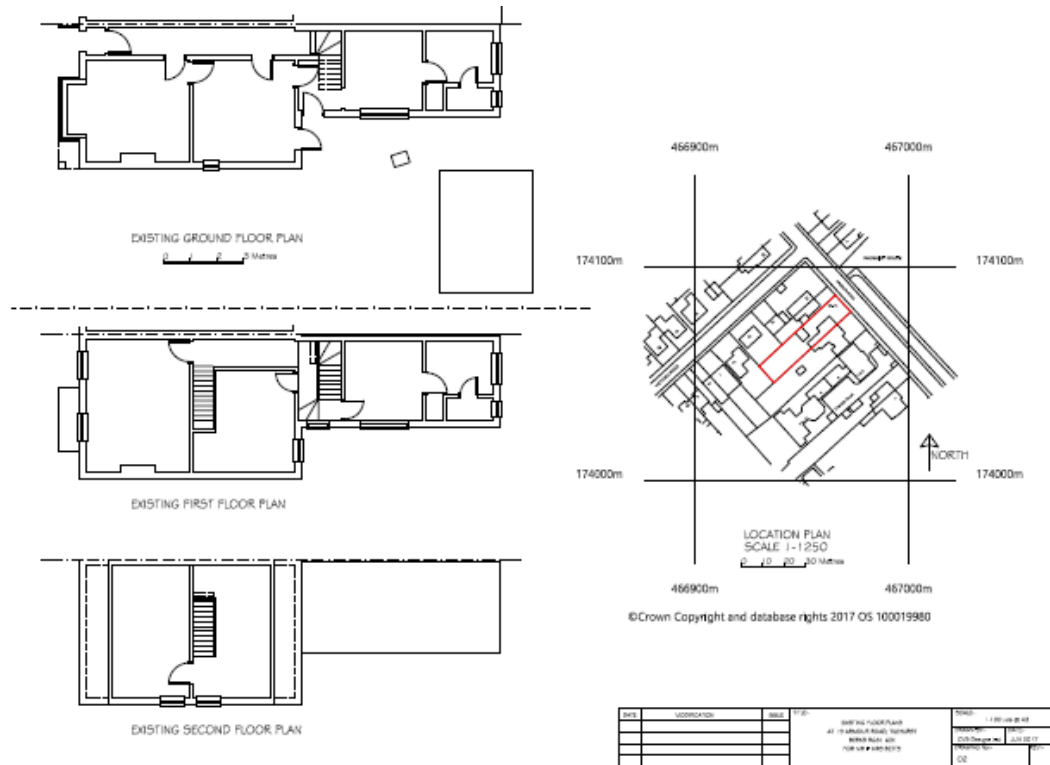
10. The plasterboard in the roof space.

APPENDIX 2 - DAYLIGHT BAT SURVEY FINDINGS



APPENDIX 3 – EXISTING FLOORPLANS AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS

Existing floorplans



Proposed elevations

