



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (BATS) AT 63 ALLCROFT ROAD READING



**Prepared for:
Mr & Mrs D S Mann
63 Allcroft Road
Reading
RG1 5HN**

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The validity of this report ceases at the prescribed time limit or after two years from the site inspection, or if the site conditions change due to unspecified works that affect the site whichever is the sooner.



Executive Summary

Urban Tree Experts was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Mann to carry out a preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) at 63 Allcroft Road, Reading RG1 5HN. This is to support a current planning application to Reading Borough Council that seeks to demolish the garage and erect a part one and part two storey extension to the side and rear of the property.

The site visit was carried out on Friday 21st July 2017 at 13:00, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the premises 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.

Internally and externally there was no evidence of bats (current or historical). Externally both the main building and the garage were in a very good condition with low potential for roosting bats. Internally both buildings were in a very good condition with low potential for bats.

A search of the Magic interactive web site revealed no statutory sites or ancient woodlands within a 2km radius of the site, however there are a large number of listed buildings and conservation areas in the local and the Rivers Thames and Kennet and Whiteknights Lake are nearby. There are nine European Protected Species Licenses for pipistrelle species within a 2km radius of the site.

Due to the limited roosting potential and lack of evidence of bats found during the survey, it is concluded that there is low potential for roosting bats within the buildings on site. Based on recommendations in the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines prior to works, no further surveys are required and the planned works should proceed.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr & Mrs Mann to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of 63 Allcroft Road, Reading RG1 5HN, 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 at the property.
- Provide information on the status of bats using the building (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 a European Protected Species (EPS) licence 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 to Reading Borough Council, ref 170807, that seeks to demolish the existing garage and build a part one and part two storey extension to the side and rear of the property.

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). He has 27 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work and has attended training courses on bat surveys and mitigation, bat call analysis, bat identification and others 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 Species and Habitats Regulations (2010) 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 property is located at Grid Reference SU 7255 7233, see Ordnance Survey (OS) extract on Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2.

Figure 1. 63 Allcroft Road, highlighted.

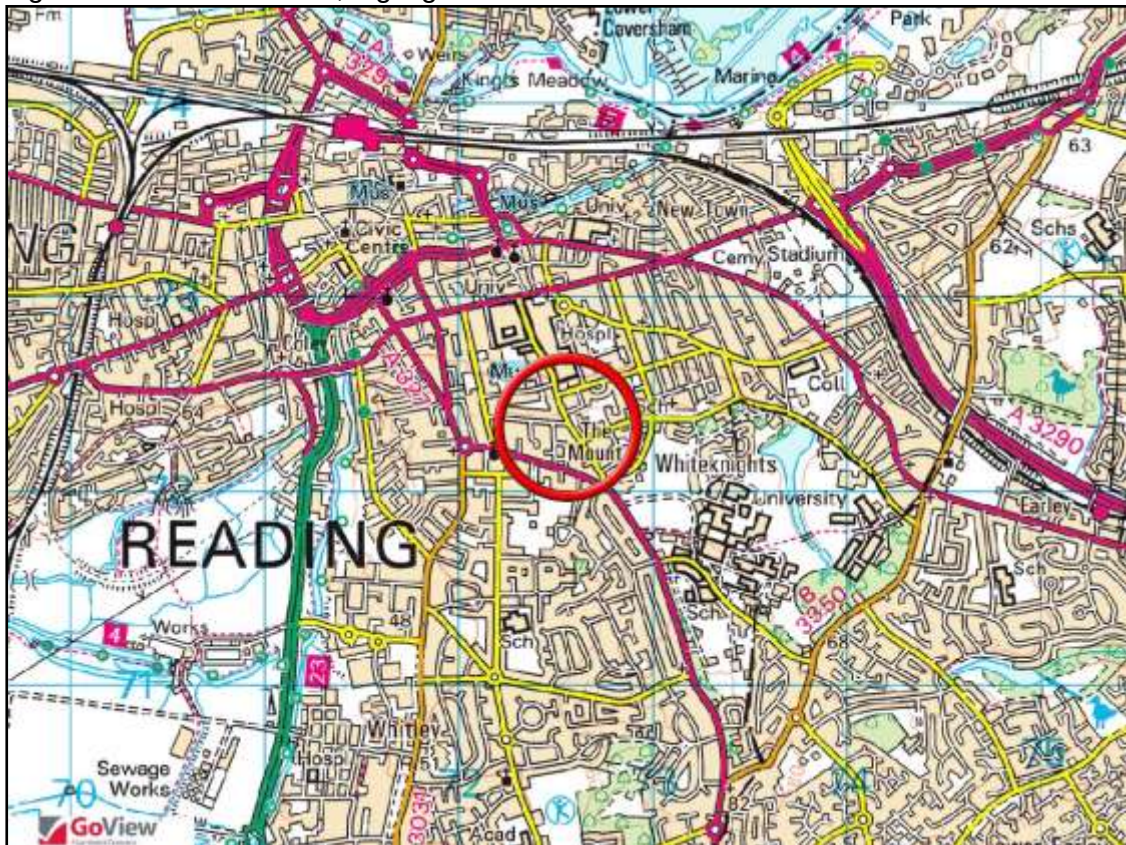


Figure 2. 63 Allcroft Road, overview of immediate area.





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3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a two storey detached, brick property with a complex pitched roof design together with a detached brick built garage on the west of the house. The property is set close to central Reading. The garden and surrounding habitat consists of lawns and mature trees and bushes, see Figure 3.

Figure 3. Rear garden at 63 Allcroft Road.



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

Due to the urban area, the proposed development and the very local impact that may occur, no data was sought from local records centres. The Magic interactive web site was interrogated for historical information on protected species and Google Earth was used to determine the suitability of the surrounding habitat to support roosting bats.

A search of the Magic interactive web site revealed no statutory sites or ancient woodlands within a 2km radius of the site, however there are a large number of listed buildings and conservation areas nearby and the Rivers Thames and Kennet and Whiteknights Lake are nearby. There are nine European Protected Species Licenses for pipistrelle species within a 2km radius of the site.

The property is situated in Reading near to the University and surrounded by dwellings varying in size and design. The Kennet and Avon Canal is 1km to the west, Whiteknights Lake 1km to the east and the River Thames 2km to the north.



4.2 Daylight Survey

A preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of 63 Allcroft Road, Reading RG1 5HN was carried out by Simon Holmes on Friday 21st July 2017 at 13:00. Equipment used included a high powered torch, a digital camera, endoscope and binoculars.

During the preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) an internal and external inspection of the building was 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 building – 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

There were no external constraints to the survey. Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client. The loft is lined with timber sarking and this limited the internal inspection of the tiles covering the roof.

5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the building 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 of a standard brick construction with a traditional pitched roof which is in good condition. The house roof is covered with close fitting clay tiles with only one broken tile and the ridges and hips are in good condition with no gaps along the verges, see Figure 4. The garage roof has some gaps in tiles towards the front of the building, see Figure 5, which were examined using the endoscope. The roof line comprises several parts, see Figure 6.

The wooden fascias and soffits on both rooves are close fitting with no gaps for bats to access, see Figure 7. No evidence of bats was recorded during the external inspection of the building.



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Figure 4. Example of roof verges and ridge at 63 Allcroft Road. 21.7.17



Figure 5. Gaps at front of garage roof at 63 Allcroft Road. 21.7.17





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Figure 6. Rear view of house showing complexity of roof, 63 Allcroft Road. 21.7.17.



Figure 7. Example of soffits at 63 Allcroft Road. 21.7.17.





5.2 Internal Inspection

An internal inspection of the roof void within the house was undertaken and examined for any signs of bats (as described in section 4.2).

The loft is large, partly boarded and partly lit, see Figures 8 & 9. The tiles are lined with sarking boards and are in good condition.

There was no evidence of bat droppings on the brick work on the beams, wall plate or on the flooring and no bats were observed.

Figure 8. Loft space at 63 Allcroft Road. 21.7.17





Figure 9. Tile lining (sarking) at 63 Allcroft Road. 21.7.17



An internal inspection of the garage was also undertaken and examined for any signs of bats (as described in section 4.2).

The garage is in good condition and well lit, see Figures 10 & 11. The tiles are lined with bitumen felt which is in good condition. The gaps in the tiles were inspected with an endoscope but no evidence of bats was found, see Figure 12.

There was no evidence of bat droppings on the brick work on the beams, wall plate or on the flooring and no bats were observed.



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Figure 10. Interior of garage at 63 Allcroft Road. 21.7.17



Figure 11. Bitumen felt lining in the garage at 63 Allcroft Road. 21.7.17





Figure 12. Endoscope image between the tiles of the garage at 63 Allcroft Road.
21.7.17



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 12 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.



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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

Internally there were no bats live or dead and the combination of internal and external inspections provide a high level of confidence that bats have not used and are not using the building to roost. 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 and the plans to extend the property should proceed.

7.2 Contingency Plan

In the unlikely event that bats are found during the proposed works, all work must stop and advice sought from a licenced bat ecologist or Natural England.

8. References

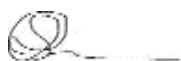
Collins, J (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edition). Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), London.
HM Government (2010) The Conservation and Habitat Regulations.
HM Government (2006) Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.
Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (1999). Bat Workers' Manual (2nd Edition). Joint Nature Conservancy Committee, Peterborough.
Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004) Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature (now Natural England), Peterborough.

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 Species and Habitats Regulations (2010) 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.