

Initial Bat Assessment

154 St Peters Avenue
Caversham Heights
Reading
RG4 7DR



Dr Stacey Dawn Waring
17-001-IBA
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Signed:



Date: 28/01/2017

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Executive Summary

Eaves Ecology was commissioned by Ms Michelle Nand to carry out an initial bat assessment, at 154 St Peters Avenue, Caversham Heights, Reading RG4 7DR. The site is located a grid reference SU 70196 75662. This was to support a planning application submitted to Reading Borough Council.

The bat survey and report have been conducted and prepared by a qualified licensed bat ecologist Stacey Dawn Waring. This report provides results of an initial bat assessment conducted on 23rd January 2017 during daylight hours.

An inspection of the property took place to look for signs of bats. There was no evidence of bats (internally or externally). The condition of the buildings results in poor conditions and thus, very few areas that could be utilised by bats for roosting. Consequently the potential for roosting bats is deemed to be very low (based on the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines). As a result no further survey effort is recommend and an EPS Licence will not be required for works to proceed.

1 Introduction

Eaves Ecology was commissioned by Ms Michelle Nand to carry out an initial bat assessment, at 154 St Peters Avenue, Caversham Heights, Reading RG4 7DR.

The initial bat assessment and report have been conducted and prepared by a qualified Natural England licensed bat ecologist Dr Stacey Dawn Waring. This report gives details of the day time assessment survey conducted on the 23rd January 2017.

1.1 Objectives of the Survey and Report

The initial bat assessment is designed to provide information to:

- Identify the presence/likely absence of bats within the house and extension
- Provide information on the status of bats using the building (currently or previously)
- Establish whether further surveys, mitigation or an EPS licence is required.

The survey and report writing were carried out in accordance with Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines (Bat Conservation Trust, 2012).

1.2 Surveyor Information

The initial bat assessment survey and report were completed by Dr Stacey Dawn Waring who holds a Class II Bat Licence (No. 2015-6768-CLS-CLS) and is an associate member of CIEEM. She has 8 years' experience of carrying out research for the Bat Conservation Trust and has worked with several ecological consultancies conducting bat surveys for the past decade.

2 Legislation

All bats in the UK are protected under law and therefore thought must be given when demolition and/or planning is to be considered. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended), forms the key legislation protecting habitats and species in the UK. All UK bat species are fully protected under the 1981 Act through inclusion on Schedule 5. All bats are also listed under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, which transcribes the EC Habitats Directive into UK law. In combination, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately or recklessly take, injure or kill a bat;
- Deliberately or recklessly damage or destroy a place or structure used by bats for shelter or protection;
- Deliberately or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost; or
- Deliberately or recklessly disturb bats while occupying a roost.

Bat roosts are protected under these laws whether the animals are present at the time of survey or not. A roost is defined as 'any structure or place which [a bat] uses for shelter or protection'. As bats tend to reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the

time of survey. The above is a summary of the relevant legislation and the original Acts and Schedules should be referred to for the precise wording.

Barbastelle Bats *Barbastella barbastellus*, Bechstein's Bat *Myotis bechsteinii*, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus*, Greater Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* and Lesser Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* are also listed as being species of principle importance to the conservation of biodiversity in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

3 Background

3.1 Site Description

154 St Peters Avenue is located approximately 1km to the south-east of Reading town centre (Figure 1). The site is located a grid reference SU 70196 75662.

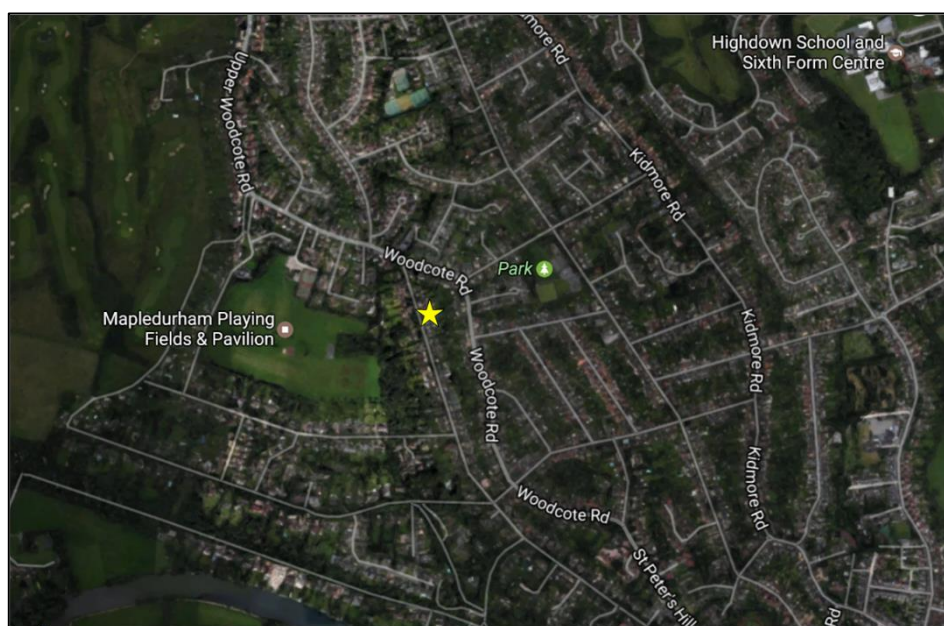


Figure 1 – Showing site location of 154 St Peters Avenue (courtesy of Google Earth)

The site is in a suburban area and is surrounded by residential dwellings, gardens, industrial premises, amenity grassland and roads (Figure 1). The site has large areas of recreational green space to the west (within 200m) in the form of playing fields and Caversham golf course. These areas also contain small patches of Deciduous Woodland (Priority Habitat), however connectivity is low between these areas. To the south of the property is the River Thames (500m), which provides access to water and an increase in feeding opportunities. Whilst the habitats provide some opportunities for feeding bats the connectivity is low, however, these habitat areas combined with the waterbodies in the vicinity of the site provide a relatively suitable habitat to support bats and their insect prey.

The site consists of a 20th Century, 1920's semi-detached, two storey building of cavity wall, brick construction (Figure 2) with a pitched roof, consisting of timber rafters resting on the walls and a clay/concrete tile covering. The property has a more recent first and second floor extensions to the side of the property and a further extension to the rear of the building. All of which are brick construction with flat roofs(Figures 2 & 3). The property is in good condition and currently occupied.



Figure 2 - Front elevation of 154 St Peters Avenue



Figure 3 – Rear elevation of 154 St Peters Road

3.2 Development proposals

The plans for works to be conducted at 154 St Peters Avenue include a part single, part 2-storey extensions at the rear of property to be submitted to Reading Borough Council. The survey was required to identify if any bats are present/using the building and how they may be impacted by any proposed development of the building.

4 Methods

4.1 Daytime assessment

The buildings' suitability for bat roosting was assessed by examining structural features. Structural features that may influence the suitability of a building to support roosting bats include the presence of a roof void, the presence of access points into the building (including gaps beneath barge boards, weatherboarding, soffits and fascias, gaps under lead flashing, gaps within masonry and under loose roof coverings, gaps between tenon and mortise joints), the complexity and size of any roof void and daytime light levels in the roof void.

The buildings' suitability for roosting bats was also assessed by examining the surrounding habitat. Important habitat features surrounding the structure which may influence roost potential include whether the structure is in a semi-rural or parkland location, its proximity to a significant linear habitat features such as a watercourse, mature hedgerow, wooded lane or an area of woodland.

Taking account of these architectural and habitat features, the buildings were then assigned a level of roost suitability based the criteria given in the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines (Hundt, 2012) and professional judgement. The primary objective of this exercise was to identify the need for further detailed bat surveys later in the year, or alternatively to obtain sufficient information that would dismiss the need for further assessment.

A detailed initial bat assessment was undertaken by Dr Stacey Dawn Waring (NE licensed ecologist) on the 23rd January 2017. A systematic internal inspection of the building was conducted using a high-powered torch to illuminate all areas thought to be suitable for roosting bats. All surfaces were also surveyed for signs of bat presence. An external search around the perimeter of the buildings was conducted and any possible access points i.e. gaps and crevices were noted and surveyed with the high powered torch and ladder as required.

Features of potential value to bats surveyed for included:

- Construction of the Building – Soffits, loft space, tiles/slates, lead flashings etc;
- Building Condition – structure of roof and walls;
- Internal conditions – Microclimate stability, drafts 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 also searched for. These included:

- Bat droppings that are dry and do not putrefy, but can crumble away to dust;
- 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.

5 Results

All accessible areas were examined around the building for droppings and evidence of bats. It should be noted however that it is not always possible to identify bat presence by examining externally around buildings as poor weather conditions may have washed away droppings which were deposited on exposed surfaces.

5.1 Daytime assessment

5.1.1 *Internal inspection*

The property had a single roof void accessible through a hatch in the ceiling. The roof void was simple in shape and approx. 2.8m high (at the ridge) throughout the length of the roof (Figure 4). There was a smaller section of roof behind the pediment on the front of the property. This was open to the main roof void. There was no underlay fitted throughout the roof and this resulted in the void being very draughty (Figure 5). The lack of underlay also resulted in numerous visible gaps in the roof tiles throughout the roof void. The roof void had a single chimney stack located along the dividing wall between 154 St Peters Avenue and the neighbouring property, which was in good condition. There was a very high level of cob-webbing throughout the roof (Figure 6), suggesting bats had not been flying around or recently using the area.

The roof had also been recently insulated and the inspection looked for evidence of droppings both on top of and below the new insulation. No evidence of bats was found during the internal inspection.



Figure 4 – showing interior of roof void at 154 St Peters Road



Figure 5 – showing lack of underlay interior of roof void at 154 St Peters Road



Figure 6 – showing high level of cobwebbing at 154 St Peters Road

5.1.2 External Inspection

The external features of 154 St Peters Road were also examined for signs described in section 4.1. The roof, windowsills, exposed features around the windows and walls were inspected for any evidence of bat droppings or staining.

The primary roof covering consisted of machine-made clay/concrete tiles over the whole of the property (Figure 7). The primary roof covering was in good condition and had been maintained over the years. The tiles were tightly fitting and there were very few missing or broken tiles (Figures 6&7), which could provide access to roosting bats. The ridge consisted of half round tiles (Figure 2 &7) which were all present and the mortar along the ridge and verges was in good condition (Figure 8) with no missing sections that could be utilised by bats. Around the chimney the lead flashing was in good condition with no areas missing or lifted (Figure 7). The eaves were sealed the barge-boards well-fitting and good condition (Figure 8).

The hanging tiles on the front elevation of the property (Figures 2 & 8) are machine-made and so tightly fitting. Combined with the good condition of the tiles they provided negligible opportunity for roosting bats at this time.

The flat roof on the modern single storey extension to the rear of the property was well sealed and good condition (Figure 3) providing no roosting potential for bats.



Figure 7 – roof showing clay tiles and ridge section on the rear elevation



Figure 8 – roof showing verges, soffits and hanging tiles on front elevation

During the internal and external inspections of 154 St Peters Road no evidence of bats was found. The potential for roosting bats to utilise the site is deemed to be very low for the reasons specified in this report.

5.2 Constraints/limitations

Bats are difficult to locate in large structures, with many potential roosting areas, particularly in inaccessible areas such as large buildings, finding the exact roosting site can be difficult, especially male/single bat roosting sites.

Bats can have seasonal use of buildings and being so mobile may arrive and start using a site after it has been surveyed, or roost somewhere else during the period it was surveyed. For this reason bats may potentially be present but remain undetected, particularly during day time assessment.

Prior to the initial bat assessment seasonal weather conditions may have washed away external droppings.

6 Conclusions

Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation contravening (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 2010, (which make it illegal to intentionally kill, injure or otherwise disturb bats, or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to a bat roost, whether bats are present or not). In some cases, if the proposed work will have a detrimental effect on bats or disturb or damage their roost then an EPS licence from Natural England has to be applied for.

Initial observations consider the local area to be suitable for bats and their insect prey. The proximity of the site to a parkland, waterbodies and gardens increases the likelihood that the site may support roosting bats.

The initial bat assessment at 154 St Peters Avenue found no evidence of bats during the internal and external inspections. The condition of the building results in very few areas that could be utilised by bats for roosting. Whilst gaps are present and allow access to the internal roof void, the lack of underlay provides an unstable microclimate reducing its suitability as a roost; consequently, the potential for roosting bats is deemed to be very low (based on the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines). As a result no further survey effort is recommend and an EPS Licence will not be required for works to proceed.

7 References

Bat Surveys Good practice Guidelines – Bat Conservation Trust 2012

Bat Workers Manual – Mitchell-Jones & McLeish 2004

Bat Mitigation Guidelines – Natural England 2006

The Conservation and Habitat Regulations 2010