

**35 Northcourt Avenue  
Reading  
Berkshire  
RG2 7HE**

## **Daylight Bat Survey**

Ref: R1682/a

**July 2017**



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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background**

**1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Chapman to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the house at 35 Northcourt Avenue, Reading.

**1.1.2** The survey was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a two-storey extension to the rear of the dwelling (refer to existing 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 northern side of Northcourt Avenue towards the south of Reading town centre (OS Grid Reference: SU 72814 71754).

- 1.3.2** The house is a detached property surrounded by further residential properties and their associated gardens. Northcourt Avenue is located eastwards off Christchurch Road and southwestern of the University of Reading. The garden is northeast facing with dense shrubbery towards the very end of the garden.
- 1.3.3** Towards the northeast of the property are large fields, approximately 240m away, belonging to the University of Reading. On the University grounds is Whitenights Lake, a large lake about 960m east of the dwelling, providing extensive foraging opportunities for bats. At the tip of the lake, towards the south, is a large area of woodland also providing foraging opportunities for bats. Towards the northwest are further open green spaces, approximately 309m to the west is Cintra Park with mature hedgerows of trees and shrubs. Further to the east is the Kennet and Avon Canal also, with thick hedgerows as such another potential habitat for bats. The network of garden habitats and more open rural and riparian habitats in the wider area are likely to provide habitats of moderate value to 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 12<sup>th</sup> July by an ecologist registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 and an assisting ecologist.

**2.1.2** The search was undertaken with the aid of binoculars and a high power (1 million candle power) torch. 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 around the interior and exterior to the house, and therefore the survey had no significant constraints.

### **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 detached house was of brick, cavity wall construction with a pitched roof facing southwest. The south eastern side of the house was partly covered with concrete roof tiles, which had been recently installed as part of the renovation of the house. The roof tiles toward the overhanging eaves were not laid with tiles and there were tiles removed in preparation for skylights. Above these gaps were newly installed skylights with no lead flashing in place (**Photograph 3; Target Note 7 & 14**). Where the roof tiles were in place these were tightly fitted providing no opportunities for roosting bats.
- 3.2.2** The north western side was completely stripped of roof tiles and two new dormers were under construction (**Photograph 4 & 5; Target Note 4**). This side, being bare of roof tiles, offered no opportunities for roosting bats. There was a chimney on the south eastern side of the house, the lead flashing around the base was loosely fitted and the corner closed to the front of the house was lifted giving way to a large gap (**Photograph 3; Target Note 6**).
- 3.2.3** Towards the front of the house timber cladding had been removed from above the first-floor window and was newly lined with felt; this was also mirrored at the rear of the property (**Photograph 1 & 2; Target Note 2**). There were timber soffit boxes, which fitted tightly to the brick work providing no access points for crevice dwelling bat species (**Photograph 5 & 6**).
- 3.2.4** No evidence of bat activity was found on the exterior of the house.

### **3.3 Internal Survey**

- 3.3.1** The roof space was accessed from the outside of the property at the rear through a large gap in the wall above the first floor (**Photograph 2**). The roof was lined with newly laid breathable felt that was all intact (**Photograph 7**). At the eaves hard foam insulation panels had been installed (**Target Note 8**), daylight was visible in the southwestern corner of the roof space due to the large gap in the wall at the front of the property. The floor was insulated with fibreglass and was not boarded (**Photograph 7; Target Note 10**). The eaves spaces were largely open with fibreglass occasionally meeting the eaves (**Photograph 9; Target Note 11**). The ridge was lightly cobwebbed and mouse droppings were scattered around the roof space (**Photograph 8**).
- 3.3.2** There was no evidence of bat activity within the loft.

## **4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1.1** The absence of any evidence of roosting bats in the roof space of the house at 35 Northcourt Avenue, which has undergone recent renovation, suggests that it is unlikely that the property supports bat species that typically occupy roof voids. Furthermore, the property had limited features suitable for use as roosts by crevice-dwelling bat species; lifted lead flashing around the base of the chimney and a large gap at the front of the property giving way to the roof space, showed no evidence of bat activity and were of negligible potential for use by bats. Overall, the house showed no evidence of their presence, and as such it is considered unlikely to support roosting bats.
- 4.1.2** Taking all factors into account, i.e. the lack of roosting opportunities and lack of evidence of bats found internally or externally, it is considered that the house is of negligible potential for bats and therefore that the planned extension to the rear of the property is highly unlikely to 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 (3<sup>rd</sup> 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. Front view of the house showing the removed timber cladding at the front of the property.



2. Rear views of the house showing the newly constructed dormers and access point to the roof space.



3. Missing areas of tiles to the side of the property and lifted lead flashing around the base of the chimney.



4. Newly constructed dormers to the side of the property and the removed roof tiles.



5. Tightly fitted soffits below the new dormers.



6. Tightly fitted soffits around the ground floor dormer window to the front of the house.



7. Roof space showing fibreglass floor insulation and newly fitted felt.

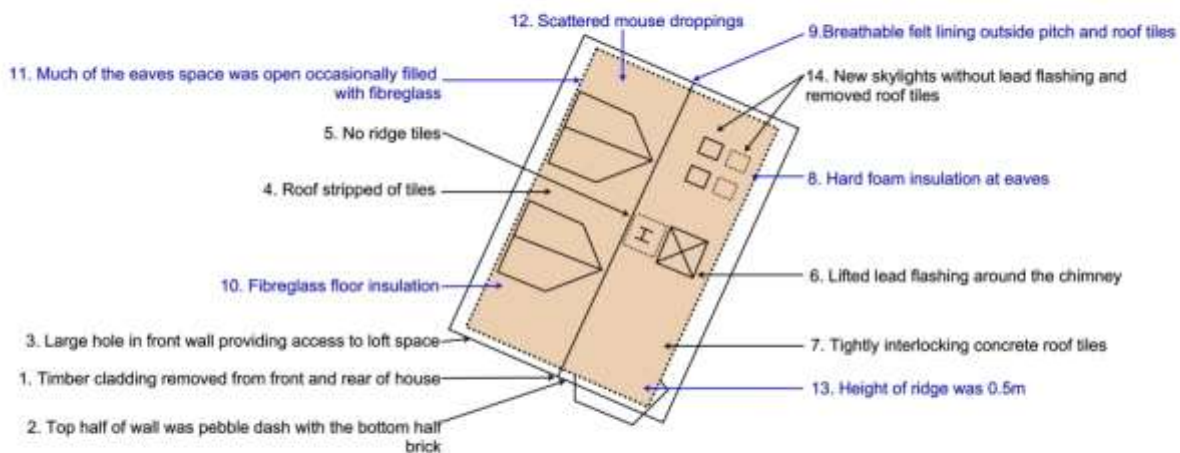


8. Ridge with limited cobwebbs.



9. Gaps at eaves where the fibreglass does not fit tightly.

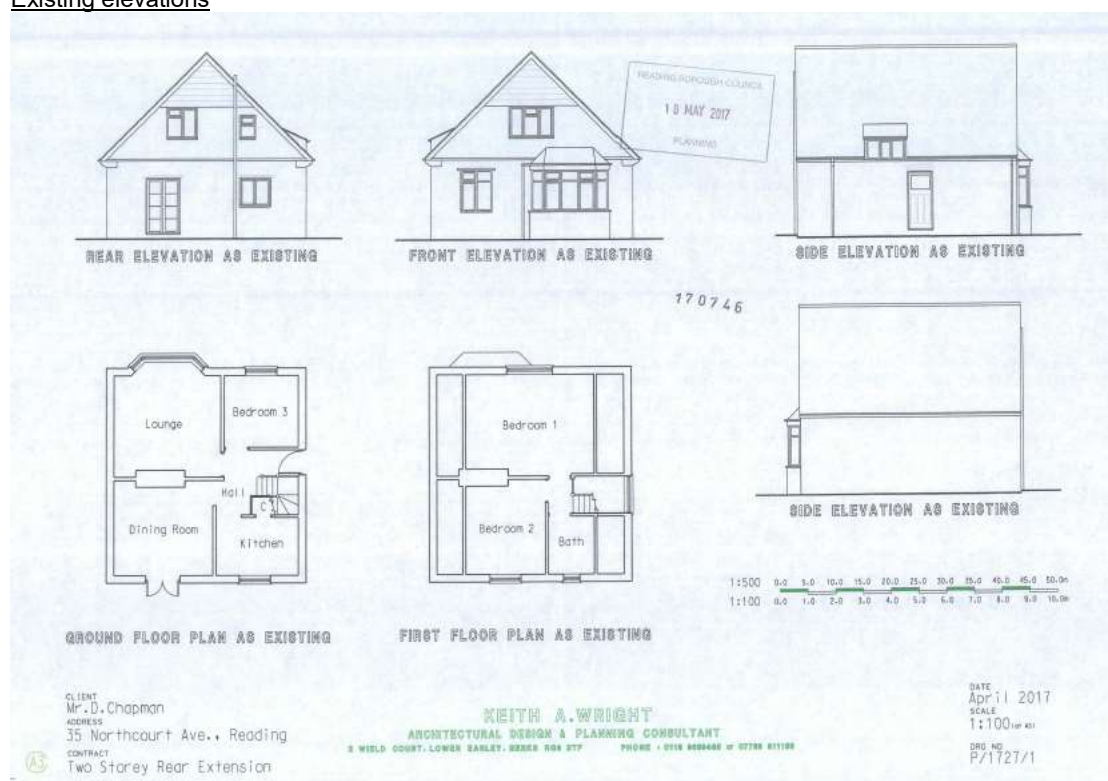
## APPENDIX 2 - DAYLIGHT BAT SURVEY FINDINGS



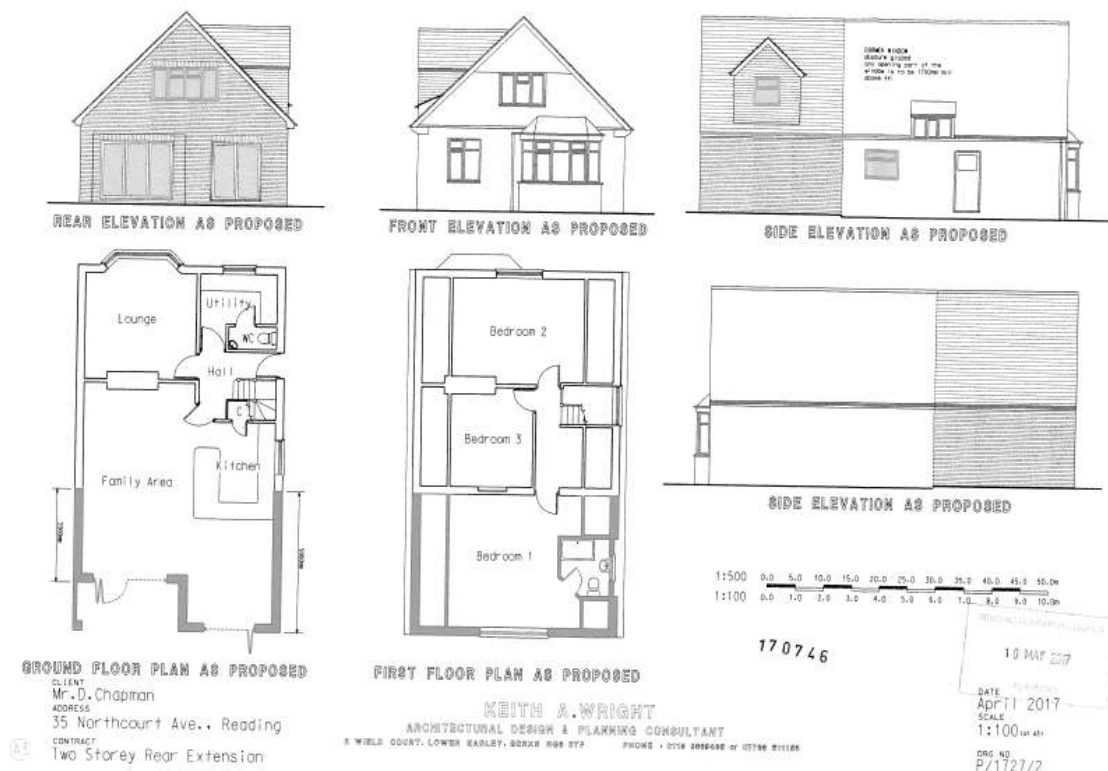
|           |           |              |                               |  |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Drawn by: | Date      | Scale:       | 33 Northcourt Avenue, Reading |  |
| HC        | July 2017 | Not to scale | Daylight Bat Survey Findings  |  |

## APPENDIX 3 – EXISTING AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS

### Existing elevations



### Proposed elevations



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