



Bat Survey Letter of report: 71 Woodcote Road, Caversham, RG4 7EX

26th January 2016

Dear Mr & Mrs Ferguson

Wychwood Environmental Ltd was instructed to undertake a bat scoping survey to assess the protected species potential of the site. The survey was necessary to collect information relating to the possible presence of roosting bats and to provide any necessary guidance and mitigation advice to ensure that no bats or roosts are adversely affected by the proposed development. Proposed works include the redevelopment/extension of the dwelling to the rear (western) and side (northern) elevations and into the loft space.

Bats are European protected species, protected via The Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations (2010) and also the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Therefore, 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.

Details of legislation and legal protection afforded to all species of British bats are given in Appendix 1.

Survey Methods

The building inspection was conducted by Alison Johnson, BSc MSc MCIEEM CEnv (Natural England license holder: WML CL18 - Bat Survey Level 2) on the 22nd January 2016 following best practice survey techniques as outlined by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT)¹ and Mitchell-Jones and McLeish (2004)².

All floors, walls and exposed surfaces of the buildings were checked, both internally and externally, for signs of use by bats including:

- Bat droppings (size of droppings grouped into small, medium or large to signify type of bat that may be present);
- Feeding remains (certain bat species often eat the bodies and leave the wings of invertebrate prey including moths, butterflies and larger flies such as lace wings);
- Oil (from fur) and urine stains;
- Scratch marks;
- Presence of 'clean' gaps and crevices in the fabric of buildings which could indicate regular movement of bats;
- Bat corpses; and
- Actual sightings.

¹ Bat Conservation Trust (2012) *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

² Mitchell-Jones A J (2004). *Bat mitigation guidelines*. English Nature.

The building was examined using direct observation with the aid of close focusing binoculars, a high power torch and ladders where necessary to enable closer inspection of suitable features. All roof voids present were accessed.

Results

The site is set in an area of high housing density, immediately off the A4074 which is a busy, well-lit residential street. Suitable habitat for bats within the immediate area is limited and consists of small manicured gardens and a nearby playing field with a small area of broadleaved plantation woodland. The habitats within and immediately surrounding the site are of low suitability for commuting/foraging bats. The nearest optimal habitat for bats is located 500 m to the south along the River Thames. This area has no linkages with the proposed site.

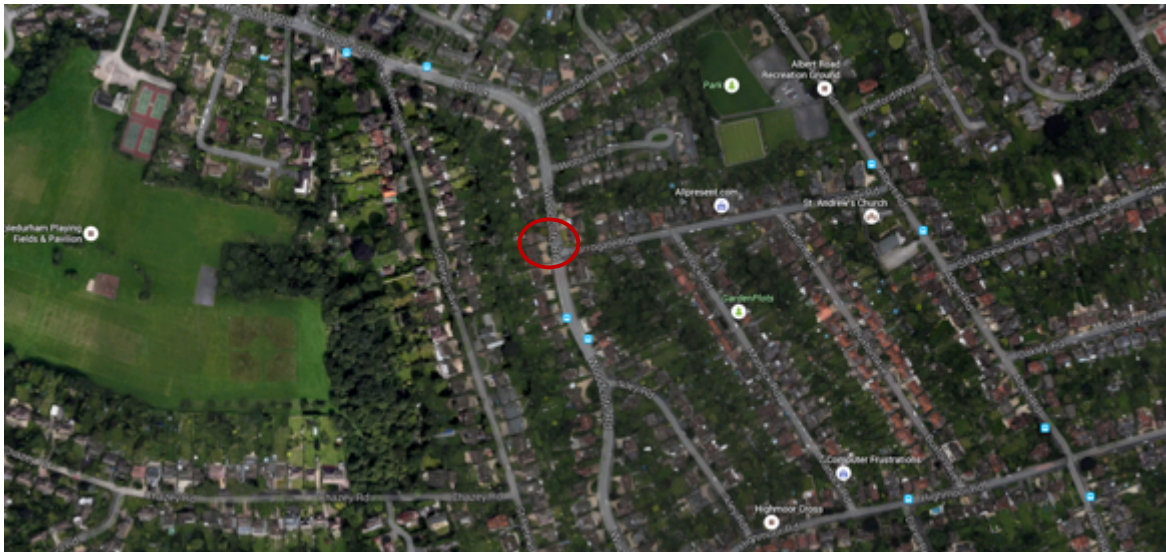


Figure 1. Google screen grab of the location of the property proposed for development at 71 Woodcote Road, Caversham



Figure 2. Google screen grab of the location of the property proposed for development at 71 Woodcote Road, Caversham

Building survey

The existing property is a semi-detached dwelling constructed of red brick with pebbledash render on the upper storey and a clay tiled roof. Two roof spaces are present, one is a roof void over the original house. A second roof void is present over the existing first floor extension, which is above the garage.

Externally, the roof was inspected. No significant gaps that would support a bat roost were observed. The tiles were generally tight fitting with no slipped or broken tiles. Small gaps were present towards the ridge but otherwise ridge and roof tiles were in good condition with no gaps observed. Wooden soffits were present around the building. These were tightly sealed with the exception of a small gap above the door at the front of the building. Underneath the bay window on the first floor there are some gaps under the lead flashing.

Internally the roof voids are timber framed. The roof void above the original house had no lining present over the majority of the roof, however bitumen felt was present on the section of roof adjacent to the existing extension. The roof void over the existing extension is lined with bitumen felt. Fibreglass loft insulation is present in both roof spaces. No evidence of bats (past or present) was recorded during the survey.

Overall the property is assessed as having LOW suitability for bats and the site's unfavourable location (in terms of suitable habitat for bats) reduces this suitability further. No further surveys are required.



Figure 3. Front (eastern) elevation



Figure 4. Rear (western) elevation



Figure 5 – Side (northern) elevation



Figure 6 – Internal loft space of main roof void



Figure 7 – Internal loft space over existing extension

Discussion and Recommendations

In summary, no roosting bats or evidence of bats were found in association with the building and the overall potential is assessed as LOW. Whilst no further surveys are recommended the following precautionary measures are proposed:

Builder awareness of bats

Builders should be made aware of the possible presence of bats, and the legal protection afforded to them (Appendix 1). The work will involve the removal of sections of roof tiles at the locations where the dorma and velux windows are installed and where the roof is extended. No loose tiles were observed at these locations but it is recommended that tiles be removed with care during the works.

In the unlikely event that any bats or bat droppings be found once works commence, workers must cease work immediately and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified and licensed ecologist.

Lighting

Bats may occasionally use the site for commuting and foraging. Therefore outdoor lighting used within the development should be 'bat friendly'. Lights should be at a low level and angled down or have baffles to prevent unnecessary light spilling into the surrounding area which could disturb bats, especially along tree lines. Security and timed lights should be at a low level and set to be on for as short a time as possible.

This precautionary advice is given to ensure compliance with the legal protection afforded to bats (Appendix 1).

Enhancements

In line with local and national policy (NPPF, 2012), the new development should seek to provide biodiversity enhancements. Opportunities to incorporate enhancements for bats within the proposals include:

- Bat access tiles or bricks could be incorporated;
- If hanging tiles are proposed for the dormer windows in the loft conversion, some of these could be designed to be slightly lifted, allowing potential roosting sites for bats.
- providing foraging opportunities for bats with the inclusion of bat friendly planting in areas that will be landscaped by incorporating a variety of plants flowering or fruiting throughout the year. This type of planting increases the number of insects visiting a garden and is therefore beneficial to bats, birds and amphibians, as well as aiding the pollination of fruit trees and vegetables.

Conclusion

No evidence or significant potential for roosting bats was observed for the property. Overall potential was assessed as LOW. No further surveys are recommended, although precautionary mitigation and enhancements are proposed for the development of the site, to avoid committing an offence and to increase the biodiversity value of the site as a whole. In the unlikely event that any bats be found once work commences, work must cease immediately and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified and licensed ecologist.

Should you need any further advice on the information provided above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,



Dr. Craig Turner MSc MCIEEM FRGS FLS

Appendix 1 - Legislation and Policy

Bats

All species of British bat are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended through inclusion in Schedule V. All bat species in the UK are also included in Schedule II of the Habitats Regulations 2010 which transpose Annex II of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora ("EC Habitats Directive") which defines European protected species of animals.

Bat species are afforded further protection by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000; and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Under the above legislation it is an offence to:

- kill, injure or take an individual;
 - possess any part of an individual either alive or dead;
 - intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place or structure used by these species for shelter, rest, protection or breeding;
 - intentionally or recklessly disturb these species whilst using any place of shelter or protection;
- or
- deliberate disturbance in such a way as to be likely to impair their ability to:
 - survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
 - in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
 - to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
 - keep (possess), transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange, any live or dead bat, or any part of, or anything derived from a bat.

It is also an offence to set and use articles capable of catching, injuring or killing bats (for example a trap or poison), or knowingly cause or permit such an action. In the case all species of British bat there is also protection under *Schedule 6 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) relating specifically to trapping and direct pursuit of these species.

A European Protected Species License (EPSL) in relation to bats is required from Natural England for any work that would result in an otherwise unlawful activity (e.g. damage to a bat roost). A license can only be issued to permit otherwise prohibited acts if Natural England are satisfied that all of the following three tests are met:

- The proposal is for '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';
- There is no satisfactory alternative; and
- The action authorised by the license will not be detrimental to the maintenance of bat populations at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

A bat roost is defined by the Bat Conservation Trust publication *Bat Surveys—Good Practice Guidelines* 2nd Edition as "*the resting place of a bat*"³. Generally however, the word roost is interpreted as "*any structure or place, which any wild bat uses for shelter or protection.*"

Bats tend to re-use the same roosts; therefore legal opinion is guided by recent case law precedents, that a roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time. This can include for summer roosts, used for breeding; or winter roosts, used for hibernating.

³ Bat Conservation Trust (2012) *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.