

PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT

1A NORTH STREET & 3 PROSPECT STREET,
CAVERSHAM, READING RG4 8JA



Commissioned by: **Maverick Property Investments Ltd**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. There were no bats or bat evidence found within the two buildings at 1A North Street and 3 Prospect Street, during this daytime based bat assessment visit.
2. The small bungalow was in a very poor state inside but had no external bat roosting potential.
3. The shop front next to the road also had no bat roosting potential inside or outside the building.
4. The roofs of both buildings were in a very good condition, with no interest for bats.
5. There are no follow-up surveys required, based on this investigation, but current best practice guidelines must be followed at all times during all future site works.

1. INTRODUCTION

- A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was undertaken at 1A North Street & 3 Prospect Street, Caversham, Reading RG4 8JA, during April 2023, for: Maverick Property Investments Ltd.
- The national grid reference for this site is: SU715748.
- This assessment was required due to the proposed demolition and building related works at the structures present at this site.
- The main method used for bat assessment, as well as the full results and the recommendations can be found within this report.
- Both this bat assessment and the report were undertaken and compiled by Mr Andrew S. Waller, Consultant Ecologist, ASW Ecology Ltd, with the help from an assistant ecologist.
- Mr Andrew S. Waller MSc BSc (Hons) MCIEEM, Director of ASW Ecology Ltd - has been a Consultant Ecologist since 1997, and has very extensive experience/knowledge of protected wildlife species/issues including bats, for which he is fully licensed to survey throughout England by Natural England for consultancy purposes (Bat Class 2 Licence Registration Number: 2015-15703-CLS-CLS). He also has Natural England survey licences for great crested newts and barn owls. He has been studying bats for 30 years and wildlife in general for 41 years. He is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and meets the requirements of being a Suitably Qualified Ecologist.

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2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Bat assessment

- On the 24th April 2023, a daytime based bat assessment was undertaken at the buildings at the application site at 1A North Street & 3 Prospect Street.
- A licensed bat consultant, with an assistant, using appropriate equipment, such as torches, an endoscope and binoculars, conducted a comprehensive search of the existing two buildings for any possible features or evidence which could suggest the presence of a bat roost.
- Weather conditions and visibility were very good at the time of the visit, with it being mild, quite clear (5/8CC), calm and dry.
- Indications of bats roosting at any site during a bat inspection can include the presence of actual bats, crumbly bat droppings, insect prey remains and the staining of any timbers/wooden beams by natural oils in the bats fur or by urine.
- All results from this bat assessment can be found in the next chapter of this report. And a map can be found in Appendix 2, showing the site plan.

2.2 Constraints

- Due to the timing of this bat assessment, only the early Spring period could be covered. This is a standard constraint for any assessment which can only investigate part of any year.
- The Spring period is critical for bats, with April being a key time to check buildings and other structures for the presence or absence of these legally protected mammals. Since bats will be active after emerging from winter hibernation. This assessment was hence undertaken at the optimum time for undertaking a daytime bat assessment.
- As always though, without taking into account any further active surveying or monitoring, this study can only provide a “snapshot” of the presence of bats at the site during the period of this study.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

3.1 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Building description:	• Bungalow: This is a small, brick bungalow, with cavity walls and a tiled pitched roof. Roof tiles, ridge tiles and soffit boxes all present • Shop front: This is a brick, two storey building, with a slate roof and lead flashing. Shop with flats above and a basement below. Cavity walls present
External bat survey	• Bungalow: No crevices present • Shop front: No crevices present
Internal bat survey	• Bungalow: Very open inside, exposed and too illuminated by natural daylight to be of value to bats • Shop front: Very open inside, exposed and too illuminated by natural daylight to be of value to bats
Bat evidence present	• Bungalow: None • Shop front: None
Other wildlife evidence present	• Bungalow: None present • Shop front: None present
Overall bat roost grading for buildings	• Bungalow: NIL • Shop front: NIL

3.2 Desk study

- A 2km radius online data search was undertaken by us for bats records near to the application site.
- This does not replace a formal biological records search but does contain some of the same information and helps support this report.
- The NBN Gateway (with strict permission), the web and the MAGIC website were all used. The ASW Ecology database was also used for a data trawl for wildlife records as this has collated records in the UK for 41 years.
- The key summary findings are below:

Magic lists 7x **Protected Species Licences** within 2km:

- Bat EPSM Licence – Brown long-eared bat, common pipistrelle – 2017
- Bat EPSM Licence – Soprano pipistrelle – 2014
- Bat EPSM Licence – Common pipistrelle – 2011 to 2012
- Bat EPSM Licence – Serotine – 2018 to 2023
- Bat EPSM Licence – Daubenton's bat – 2017 to 2022
- Bat EPSM Licence – Common pipistrelle – 2013 to 2015
- Bat EPSM Licence – Soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelle – 2020

Bat records:

- Daubenton's bat
- Common pipistrelle
- Soprano pipistrelle

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Significance of the Bat Assessment results

- In summary, there were no bats or bat evidence found within the two buildings at 1A North Street & 3 Prospect Street, during this daytime based bat assessment.
- The small bungalow present was in a very poor state inside but had no external bat roosting potential.
- The shop front next to the road also had no bat roosting potential inside or outside the building.
- The roofs of both buildings were in a very good condition, with no interest for bats.
- The desk study for this assessment showed that a total of five bat species are already known to be present in the wider area. However, due to the lack of bat roost potential at the existing buildings, there is no reason for these species to roost at this site.
- Bats would be expected to forage and commute at night over the adjacent gardens as per most properties.
- Clearly, far better structures and trees will be present in the wider area for bats such as local houses, where high quality crevices will be present under roof and ridge tiles especially.
- Please see the next chapter of this report for the formal recommendations, so that the client adheres to current best practice guidance and to UK wildlife legislation.

4.2 Impact assessment

In the absence of any mitigation measures or precautions, the following direct or indirect impacts from the proposed development works at the stated application site on bats would be predicted as:

- **DIRECT:** There would be no negative impact to bats by the potential development works if no mitigation was undertaken at all. There is no risk that without mitigation, that bats could be disturbed, injured or killed and a bat roost damaged or destroyed during the demolition and building works. **Impact magnitude predicted: NIL**
- **INDIRECT:** Given that no notable bat related habitat is to be lost, without mitigation, there is no impact by the loss of bat related features or fragmentation of the local bat populations due to the proposed development works. **Impact magnitude predicted: NIL**

4.3 Summary of the legal protection of bats in the UK (please see other texts for full details of the legislation)

4.3.1 THE LEGAL PROTECTION OF BATS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Introduction

All species of bats in England and Wales are protected by law. Their legal protection derives from two sources:

- the strict species protection provisions of the EU Habitats Directive as implemented in England and Wales by Part 3 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the **“2017 Regulations, amended by the 2019 Regulations due to Britain leaving the EU”**); and
- Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (“2017 Regulations, as amended by the 2019 Regulations”)

The 2017 Regulations came into force on 30th November 2017. They replace the previously applicable regulations (Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 and the 2010 Regulations) in relation to England and Wales. The 2017 Regulations are the principal means by which the EU Habitats Directive is transposed in England and Wales.

The Regulations contain a number of Parts which set out the protection to be afforded to “European Protected Species” (“EPS”), which includes all species of British bats. The list also includes other species which are rare on a European scale, such as great crested newts, otters and dormice.

Under the 2017 Regulations both bats themselves and their “breeding sites and resting places” (most commonly their roosts) are protected.

It is a criminal offence to do the following (note that this is not an exhaustive list of all offences but rather a list of offences which will be of most relevance to developers):

- a. to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat (even if bats are not present at the time);
- b. to deliberately capture, injure or kill a wild bat;
- c. to intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or to deliberately disturb a group of bats, in particular:
 - i. any disturbance of bats which is likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
 - ii. any disturbance of bats which is likely to impair their ability to hibernate or migrate; or

- iii. any disturbance of bats which is likely to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
- d. to have in one's possession or to control or to transport or to sell or exchange or offer to sell or exchange any live or dead bat or part of a bat which has been taken from the wild; or any part of, or anything derived from, a bat or any part of a bat; and
- e. to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

The maximum penalty that can be imposed for the above offences is (as at May 2010) a fine of up to £5,000, and/or up to six months imprisonment. The offences can be committed by individuals or by bodies corporate. Where a body corporate has committed the offence, the directors or officers of the company may also be prosecuted if the offence has been committed with their consent or connivance, or is attributable to their neglect.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (“WCA 1981”)

The WCA 1981 protects a wide range of animals, plants and habitats in the UK. All British bat species are afforded protection under Part 1 of the WCA 1981, in addition to the protection they have under the 2017 Regulations (as amended by the 2019 Regulations).

As regards England and Wales the following offences apply to protect bats under the W&CA 1981:

- a. to intentionally or recklessly disturb any bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection (s9(4)(b) WCA 1981);
- b. to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place which any bat uses for shelter or protection (s9(4)© WCA 1981);
- c. attempting either of the above (s18(1) WCA 1981).

The maximum penalty that can be imposed for the above offences is (as at May 2010) a fine of up to £5,000, and/or up to six months imprisonment. The offences can be committed by individuals or by bodies corporate. Where a body corporate has committed the offence, the directors or officers of that company may also be prosecuted if the offence has been committed with their consent or connivance or is attributable to their neglect (s69(1) WCA 1981).

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Best practice guidance – bats and development works

- **FOR AWARENESS PURPOSES:** As a standard precaution only as per any development related site, the future contractors should be fully aware of the legal protection of bats and what to do if an unexpected bat is found or suspected at the site during all works at the two structures
- Bats and their evidence such as droppings can unexpectedly be present under such features and be completely hidden until accidentally uncovered.
- If any new bat evidence such as crumbly droppings composed of insect remains or an actual bat is seen, during the works, then such work must stop and a licensed bat consultant contacted immediately for urgent advice.
- Usually, late summer/early autumn e.g. late August/September/October or early spring e.g. April/early May, are ideally the best times to work on such structures, as this avoids both the main bat breeding season and the winter hibernation period.
- **However, since no bat evidence and no bat roosts have been found at the two buildings at this site, there are no bat related constraints in regards to when the demolition and building works can commence.**

5.2 Best practice guidance – nesting birds and development works

- **FOR AWARENESS PURPOSES:** As per any development related site, the general advice is that no vegetation eg trees, bushes, shrubs, hedges, bramble scrub or dense ivy cover should be removed during the bird nesting season as all bird nests are fully protected by law, and this includes whilst a nest is being built by the adult birds. This also includes buildings and bird boxes that have been proved to have active bird nests present.
- If any nests are present within the building during the future demolition/building works phase, then these must be left alone until the young birds have fully fledged from the nest and no further breeding attempts are to take place.
- The bird nesting season in the UK, currently runs mainly from early-January to September, but sometimes birds can start breeding before or after this period e.g. some resident birds can start building nests during the end of December, including crows, magpies, feral pigeons and woodpigeons. This early start of the nesting building phase for some bird species is due to human derived climate change.
- Therefore, September to mid-December can be the best months for such works, although with a bird watching brief for any early or late nesters as stated above.
- An experienced ecologist can be present though on a site during the nesting bird season, if applicable, to search the structures for any active bird nests.

5.3 Ecological enhancements for bats at the application site

5.3.1 Bat boxes

- As an ecological enhancement option for the client, it is recommended for them to install 2-3 bat boxes at the site for local bats to use.
- The bat box model proposed would be the 2F Schwegler Bat Box and this is a high quality bat box which will be used by a number of different bat species, including for the bat species recorded flying here. This box is made of woodcrete and is a long lasting box.
- The bat boxes can be located on separate trees eg one per tree ideally, so there is a better chance of them being used by bats, or onto buildings.
- Bat boxes should be installed at least six metres up a tree trunk, facing mainly South-east or South-west and with enough space for bats to fly under the box easily. Although at least one bat box should be facing North or West so this will provide additional microclimates for bats. No artificial lighting must illuminate any of the installed bat boxes as this would deter bats from using the boxes.
- The NHBS is a good ecological equipment supplier and this bat box model can be purchased from them. The web link for this bat box is:

<http://www.nhbs.com/title/158629/2f-schwegler-bat-box-general-purpose>

5.3.2 Bat friendly planting

- It would also be advantageous if any bat friendly planting can be introduced to any new landscaping scheme, if applicable, by the use of night scented plants, which will attract insects which bats prey on.
- Native plants should always be chosen ideally since these species will have the most benefits to wildlife. But the occasional non-invasive hybrid or exotic would be fine.
- Suitable border plant species can include corn flower, field poppies, mallow, evening primrose, cherry pie, soapwort, sweet rocket, bladder campion, Nottingham catchfly, night-scented catchfly, ox-eye daisy, primrose and yarrow.
- Herbs can also be very good for insects and include borage, coriander, fennel, lavender, rosemary, chives and thyme.
- Trees, shrubs and climbers suitable for insects, so to benefit bats, include dog rose, elder, gorse, guelder rose, English oak, goat willow, silver birch, blackthorn, hawthorn, hazel, honeysuckle, ivy and jasmine.
- Further information can be provided on the above if needed.

5.3.3 Bats and lighting

- It will be important that dark corridors are allowed for bats at night, especially along the site boundaries. This will mean that bats, can use the local gardens and other green spaces, especially whilst commuting between sites. This can be ensured by the use of dark buffer zones.
- Artificial lighting can cause a vacuum effect at greenspaces and at other sites, where such artificial light will pull flying insects at night away from areas where bats feed. So adjacent darker areas will have less insects for bats to survive on and that negatively affects the life cycles of the insect species present (BCT, 2018).
- The future lighting scheme must be bat friendly and adhere to best practice on this aspect. There must be no UV elements to the new lighting and no metal halide or fluorescent sources used (BCT, 2018).
- Additionally, a warm white spectrum should be used, with no blue light components. LED luminaires should also be used, as this has a reduced impact on bats.
- In regards to any future lighting, it would be beneficial for both insect populations and for bats, any new security lighting is set on motion sensors and with short timers (1 minute).
- Light spillage must also be curtailed, with reduced glare and light spillage with lighting near to windows.
- Such lighting within dwellings can be recessed. Lighting must be directed to where it is required only and baffles or hoods should be used to achieve this.
- Screening by vegetation such as new trees, bushes and shrubs can also be used to mitigate the effects of any new lighting scheme.
- The following latest best practice guidance note must be read and followed, in regards to how lighting affects bats and how to mitigate this at a site:

<https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

6. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1:
PHOTOGRAPHS A-J
(All photos are dated 24/4/2023)



Photograph A

The small bungalow had no bat roosting potential



Photograph B

The roof of the bungalow was in a very good condition, with no crevices present



Photograph C

Road side of bungalow roof, with tight fitted roof tiles



Photograph D

The bungalow had no bat evidence inside



Photograph E

Thae shop front building interior, is clearly too illuminated by daylight to be of any use to bats



Photograph F

The shop front building had no bat evidence or bats within



Photograph G

Basement of the shop front building, with no bat evidence



Photograph H

The shop front building upstairs was too illuminated by daylight to be of value to bats and the roof voids were unlined



Photograph I

No crevices present on the shop front roof



Photograph J

This shop front building has no interest for bats

APPENDIX 2:

MAP A: SITE PLAN

