

Memo

To: Gary Miles

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 10 June 2024

Re: Application ref: 240682

Address: 208 Henley Road Reading RG4 6LR

Description: Double storey rear extension, single storey rear extension, loft Conversion, rear garden fence and removal of existing trees

The application site is a detached dwelling in a residential area of Caversham. Proposals include a two storey rear extension, loft conversion and removal of a number of trees. The house is located within habitat that matches that where bat roosts have already been discovered in the borough (including three roosts within 50 metres of the property) and is surrounded by habitat of good suitability for use by foraging and commuting bats. The proposed works will lead to extensive changes to the roof and the plans appear to show removal of a chimney.

As such, given the location of the house, and the extent of the works, there is a risk that the proposals may affect roosting bats and a bat survey report will need to be provided before this application can be determined. The Further details are given below:

Legislation

All species of bats receive protection under UK law and it is a criminal offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (The Habitat Regulations), deliberately or recklessly to destroy or damage their roosts, or to disturb, kill or injure them without first having obtained the relevant licence for derogation from the regulations from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (the SNCO - Natural England in England).

Planning policy

Paragraph 99 of the government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within The Planning System (this document was not revoked by the National Planning Policy Framework) states that:

“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. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted.”

Survey requirements

A presence / absence bat survey is normally undertaken in two stages, firstly a preliminary roost assessment (or bat roost potential survey), whereby the inside and outside (from ground level) of the building and all trees to be removed are thoroughly searched for bats and signs of bats, this survey can be undertaken at any time of year. If no signs of bats and few features such as cracks and crevices in which bats could roost are found and the building and/or trees have negligible potential to host roosting bats then further surveys will not be required. However, if bats are found or the buildings and/or trees have features suitable for use by roosting bats, further emergence and or dawn surveys during the bat active season (i.e. between May and the end of August/ sub optimally until mid-October) may need to be carried out to confirm the presence or absence of bats and, if bats are present, to characterise the roost and establish mitigation requirements.

The applicant would then need to submit the results of the survey(s) along with any associated mitigation strategy prior to determination of any application.

Surveys should be carried out by suitably experienced ecologists who are a member of a professional organisation such as the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and / or are licensed or accredited by Natural England to survey bats.

Summary

The house and trees may host roosting bats and to confirm whether this is the case, and if so, how bats will be affected by the proposals to convert the loft, a bat survey will need to be carried out. The survey will need to be provided prior to the application being determined.