



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT 8 AVEBURY SQUARE READING



**Prepared for:
Mr & Mrs Lyon
8 Avebury Square
Reading
RG1 5JH**

27 February 2024

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This report is valid for 12 months from the site inspection. The lifespan of this report may be subject to change if the site conditions change due to unspecified works that affect the site.



Executive Summary

Urban Tree Experts was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Lyon to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]), of 8 Avebury Square, Reading, RG1 5JH. This is to support a current planning application to Reading Borough Council (reference: 240091).

The site visit was carried out on Tuesday 13 February 2024 at 12.00 noon, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property and took place to look for signs of bats.

The preliminary ecological appraisal consists of a desk top study prior to the survey to review existing information about the site and its surroundings and to inform the design of subsequent bat surveys, if required. The desk top study was conducted based upon a minimum 2km search radius and it revealed one statutory designated site is located within, and no current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bat have been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The immediate surrounding habitat does not provide suitable habitat for roosting, commuting or foraging bats, due to the suburban built-up nature.

The DBW comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the building for bats, signs of bats and features suitable for use by roosting bats. This includes droppings, scratch marks, rubbing and staining at exit holes, live or dead bats and other features such as missing tiles, this list is not exhaustive.

The buildings suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and potential roost features were identified during the preliminary inspection. When combined these features, along with the data from the desk top study, results in the building being characterised as having a negligible potential¹ to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines², no further survey effort is required.

¹ Table 4.1 Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition.

² Collins, J. (ed) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition).



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1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr & Mrs Lyon to conduct a DBW of 8 Avebury Square, Reading, RG1 5JH to support a current planning application to Reading Borough Council.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The DBW is designed to:

- Identify the presence/likely absence of bats within the building.
- Provide information on previous bat ecological surveys/reports.
- Provide information on the status of bats using the buildings currently or previously).
- To add confidence where no bats are found, or to categorise the nature of a roost where evidence of bats are found.
- To establish whether further surveys, mitigation or an EPSL is required.

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) and report writing were carried out in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 4th edition.

1.3 Proposed Works

The survey was commissioned in connection with a current planning application to Reading Borough Council (reference: 240091) that is seeking to construct a single and double storey extension to the existing property.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats was undertaken by Nick Powell and the report written by Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv.

Nick Powell. Nick commenced surveying bats in 2022 and holds a Class 2 Bat License (CLS-11742) and has received training in bat ecology and surveying, bat detector use, acoustic monitoring/sonogram analysis, architectural terms for bat workers, bats and development, H & S awareness for bat workers, legislation for bat workers, British bats their ecology and conservation, surveying trees for bats, Bat ID and handling, bat biology.

Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI-64844). He has 35 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work.

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

2.1 Legislative Background

All species of British bat are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Under this legislation 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. A summary of the main legislation and planning considerations are included at Appendix 1.



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Seven species of bat are also Species of Principal Importance for nature conservation in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This places a duty on all government departments to have regard for the conservation of these species and on the Secretary of State to further, or promote others to further, the conservation of these species.

3. Site Location and Description

3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU 7286 7243, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 8 Avebury Square, Reading, highlighted.

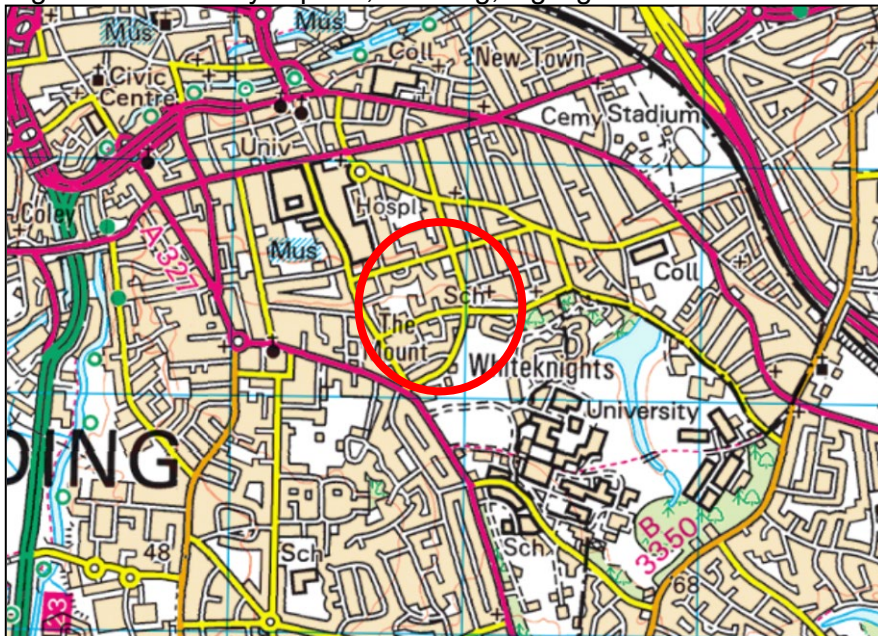
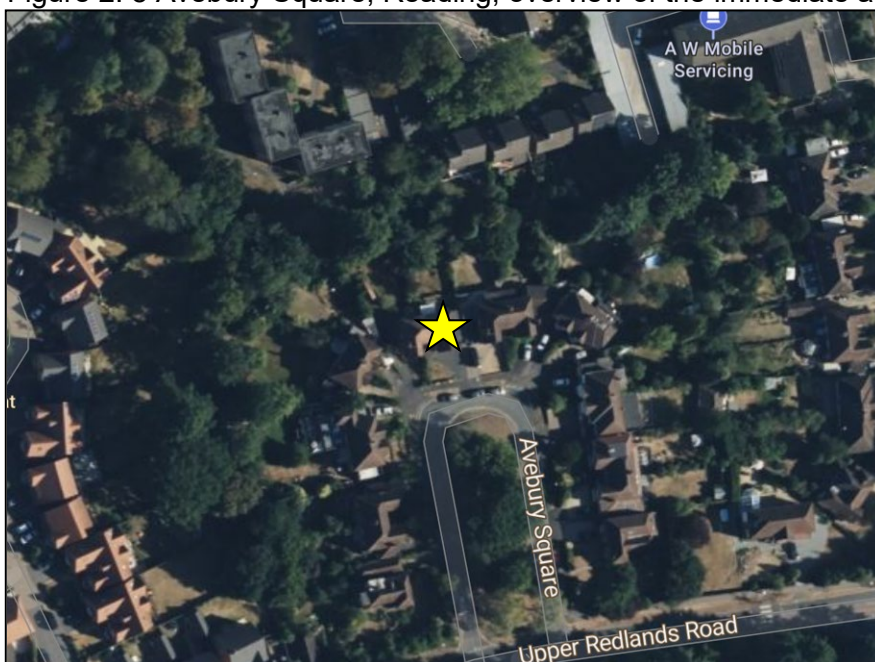


Figure 2. 8 Avebury Square, Reading, overview of the immediate area.





3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a semi-detached, brick-built dwelling with a single storey side extension connected to the detached single garage. The remainder of the site comprises a tarmac driveway and a rear garden, which has an area of concrete patio and an area of lawn with some shrubs throughout, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers limited foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is poor ecological connectivity to the wider landscape.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

The client has advised that, to their knowledge, no previous bat surveys have been undertaken on this property. Google Earth and MAGIC maps (magic.defra.gov.uk) websites were used prior to the survey to determine the suitability of the surrounding habitat to support roosting bats and to identify any statutory designated sites or EPSLs within 2km of the site. Due to the scale of the proposed development, and the very local impact that may occur, no data was sought from the local records centre at this time.

The site is situated in an urban area of Reading and is surrounded by properties and gardens of similar sizes and styles. To the south and south-east, in close proximity to the site lies the University of Reading, which comprises areas of woodland, grassland and waterbodies. The University grounds are known to provide good habitat to support roosting, commuting and foraging bats and is within travelling distance for bats. Small areas of parkland lie in close proximity to the site, which are likely to provide good habitat to support bats, although housing developments and roads separate these areas from the site. The River Kennett runs to the north and west of the site and, although known to support commuting and foraging bats, there is no ecological connectivity from the river to the site.



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Further afield lie areas of woodland, farmland and wetland, all of which provide good habitat for bats, although there are no ecological corridors connecting the site to these areas.

Highwood Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies within 2km of the site, although there is no ecological connectivity from the site to this statutory designated area. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed no current EPSLs for bats have been granted within 2km of the site, although 12 historical EPSLs for bats have been granted within the search area.

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of 8 Avebury Square, Reading, RG1 5JH was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 13 February 2024 at 12.00 noon. The weather conditions for the survey were overcast with rain and a temperature of 10 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, endoscope and a ladder.

During the DBW an external inspection of the property was carried out to identify any signs of occupation by bats and features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines. Features investigated included:

- Construction of the building– soffits, loft space, tiles/slates, lead flashings etc.
- Building condition – structure of roof and walls.
- Internal conditions – microclimate stability, draughts 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 searched for. These included:

- Bat droppings on the floor and walls of the building.
- 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.

Buildings or structures that were not to be affected by the current proposals or with no bat roosting potential were not inspected. This includes the rear uPVC and glass conservatory as, due to the construction materials and light ingress, it offers no roosting potential.

4.3 Constraints

Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client and there were no constraints to the survey.



5 Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

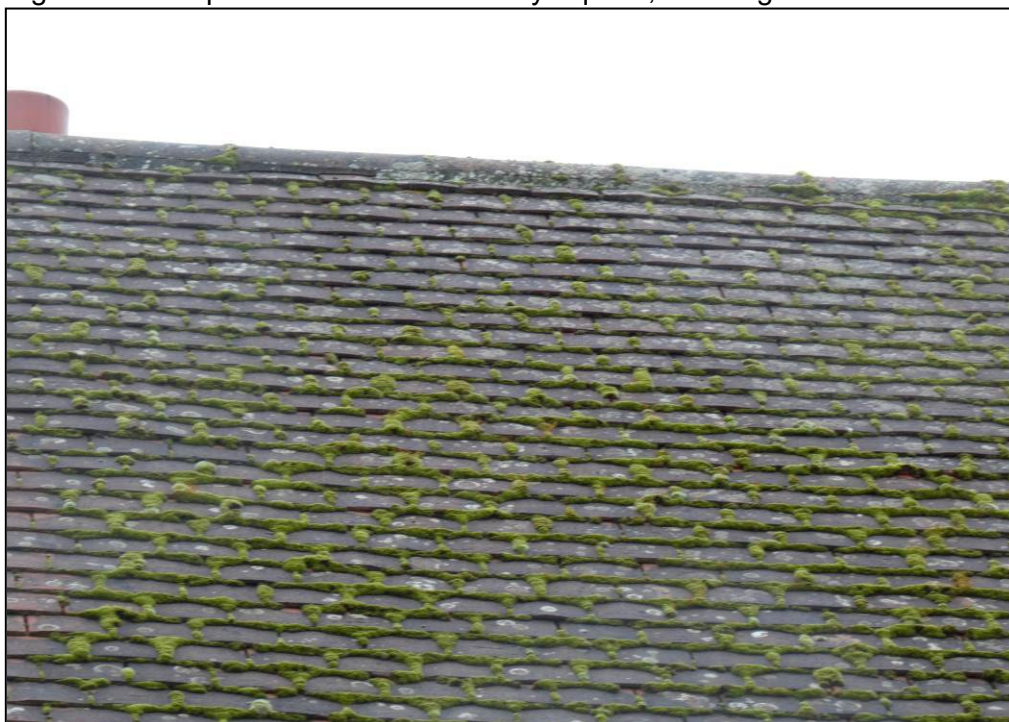
The external features of the property were examined for signs described in section 4.2. Windowsills, exposed features around the windows, fascias and walls were inspected for any evidence of bat droppings or staining.

The property is a semi-detached, brick-built building, with cavity walls that is in a good condition externally. The roof is pitched and covered in close fitting tiles, none of which are missing or broken, see Figure 4 below. The ridge and hip tiles were all in a good condition with no gaps in which roosting bats could exploit, see Figure 5 on page 9. The verges are all well cemented and had no visible cracks or splits in the mortar which could be used by roosting bats (see Figure 6 on page 9) and the lead flashing around the chimney is all tightly fitted with no gaps in which crevice dwelling bats could utilise for roosting. There are Velux windows on the rear elevation of the property, the windows are all tightly fitted to the roof tiles and had no gaps in which crevice dwelling bats could exploit, see Figure 7 on page 10. There is an area of hanging tiles on the front of the property, which are all tightly fitted, overlapping and had no gaps in which roosting bats could utilise, see Figure 8 on page 10. The soffits and fascias on the building are all fully sealed, tight to the walls and although there is peeling paint, had no visible splits or openings, see Figure 9 on page 11.

On the side elevation is a single storey side extension connected to the detached single garage, see Figure 10 on page 11. The roof of the garage and single storey section of the property is flat and covered in bitumen felt, all of which is in a good condition with no rips or tears which could be used by roosting bats, see Figure 11 on page 12.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the external inspection of the property and there were no visible roosting opportunities for bats or access into the building for roosting bats.

Figure 4. Example of roof tiles. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24





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Figure 5. Example of ridge and hip tiles. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24



Figure 6. Example of verges. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24





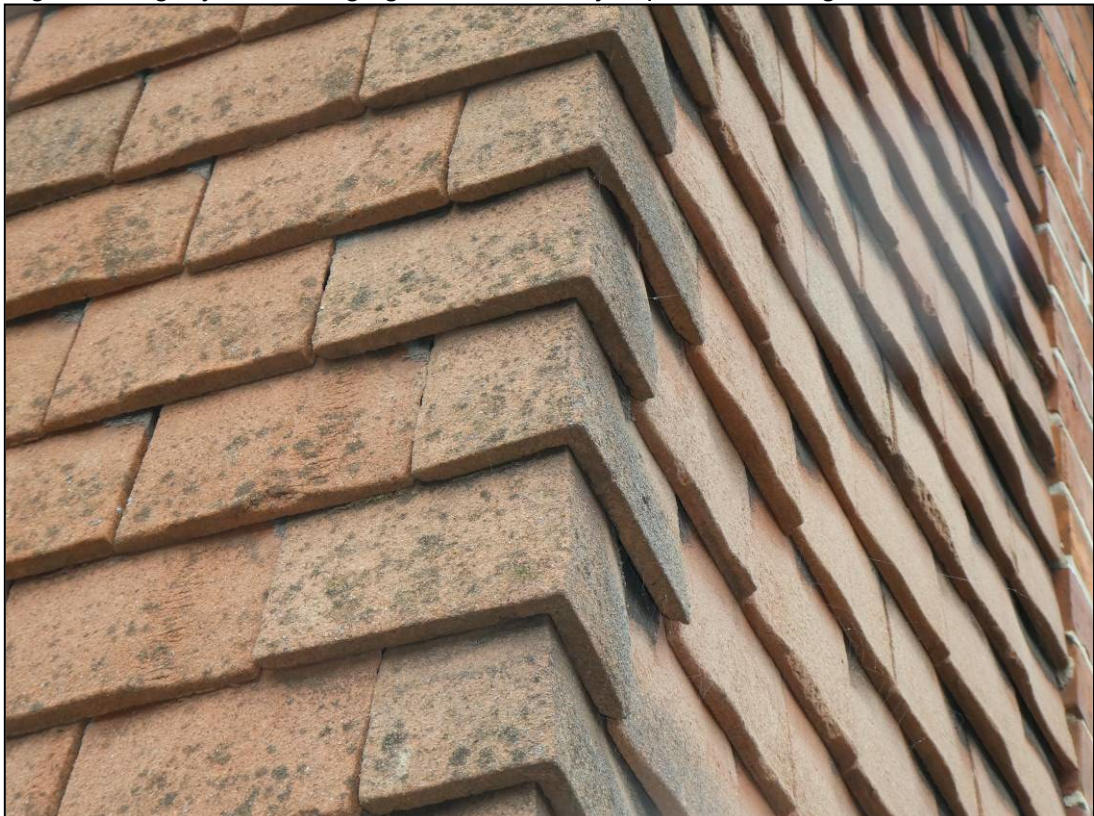
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Figure 7. Velux windows. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24



Figure 8. Tightly fitted hanging tiles. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24





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Figure 9. Soffits and fascias. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24



Figure 10. Single storey side extension connected to the detached single garage. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24





Figure 11. Rooves of attached single storey side extension and garage. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24



5.2 Internal Inspection

An internal inspection of the property was undertaken and was examined for any signs of bats (as described in section 4.2).

The loft was accessed through a hatch, via an integral ladder and is in a good condition. The loft is not cluttered, lit, boarded and insulated, see Figure 12 on page 13. The roof tiles are lined with bitumen felt, some of which is ripped or torn in places, see Figure 13 on page 13.

The single storey side extension and detached single garage were also inspected internally. The ceiling of the single storey side extension is boarded, plastered and painted, with no gaps suitable for bats, see Figure 14 on page 14. The garage ceiling also had no cracks or splits in which roosting bats could utilise, see Figure 15 on page 14.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of various sections of the building and although some of the bitumen lining of the loft is torn, there were no access points externally into the loft space for bats.



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Figure 12. Example of loft space. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24



Figure 13. Example of ripped bitumen lining in loft. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24





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Figure 14. Boarded/plastered/painted ceiling of single storey side extension. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24



Figure 15. Boarded ceiling of garage. 8 Avebury Square, Reading. 13.02.24





6. Evaluation

The bat roost potential of the features within the site have been assessed with reference to the following criteria and include seasonal variation where increased or decreased probability may arise. Where features are present, they are **highlighted in bold**.

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be higher where structures:

- are of a pre-20th Century construction;
- are in a lowland rural setting;
- **have woodland, mature trees, species-rich grassland and/or water nearby;**
- have large dimension roof timbers with cracks, joints and holes;
- have numerous crevices in stonework and structures;
- have an uneven roof covering with gaps, though not too draughty;
- **have hanging tiles or roof cladding, especially on south-facing walls;**
- **have a roof warmed by the sun;**
- are disused or little used; largely undisturbed;
- provide appropriate hibernation conditions, such as abandoned mines, tunnels, kilns, or fortifications; or
- Recent and **historical records of bat roosts in the general area.**

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be lower where structures:

- **are in an urban setting with little green space;**
- are subject to heavy disturbance (constant movement due to draughts and noise, also unstable microclimate);
- **have a small, cluttered roof void (particularly for brown long-eared);**
- **are of a modern construction with few gaps or crevices that bats can fly or crawl through (though pipistrelle bats may still be present);**
- are comprised of prefabricated steel or sheet materials; (some sections);
- are active industrial premises.

Please note that the above list provides generic screening criteria only and there are exceptions to consider.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Interpretation

The combined evidence from the desktop study and the internal and external inspection of the property provides a high level of confidence in support of the opinions set out in this report. There are no visible features externally on the building which could be utilised by roosting bats or in which bats could access the building to roost.

Informed by the results of the survey and the factors highlighted in Section 6, it is concluded that there is negligible potential for roosting bats within the property. Based on recommendations in the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, no further survey effort is required.

7.2 Contingency Plan

In the unlikely event that bats are found during the proposed works, all work must stop, and advice sought from Urban Tree Experts or another licensed bat ecologist.



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If, for whatever reason, there is a time delay of greater than 12 months between this survey and the commencement of work, then the survey should be repeated as the condition of the building may change and bats may start roosting at the site.

8. References

Collins, J (ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

HM Government (2017) Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations as (amended).

HM Government (1981) The Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended).

HM Government (2006) Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004). Bat Workers' Manual (3rd Edition). Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

9. Queries

Any queries regarding this report should be addressed, in the first instance, to Urban Tree Experts:

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APPENDIX 1

In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat.
- 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.
- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

Planning Considerations:

Government guidance to Local Planning Authorities stipulates the need to consider biodiversity and protected species during the consideration of planning applications. The NPPF makes clear that the planning system should help minimise the impacts that development can have on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. In addition, the ODPM Circular 04/2005 states *“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”*.

Policy CS36 of the Reading Borough Core Strategy states *“Development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest (including protected species and their habitats) found within the application site into their schemes. On sites with recognised biodiversity or geological value, development will not be permitted where there would be a direct or indirect adverse impact on the site, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that: -*

- i. The need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and*
- ii. Appropriate compensation, impact minimisation, mitigation and compensation are provided”*.

Developments that compromise the protection afforded to bats or roosts under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 will require a European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England (NE).

NE, the government’s statutory conservation advisory organisation, is responsible for issuing EPS licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations.

Three tests must be satisfied before this licence (to permit otherwise prohibited acts) can be issued:

- Reg 44(2)(e) – the derogation is “in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment”.
- Reg 44(3)(a) – there is “no satisfactory alternative” to the derogation.
- Reg 44(3)(b) –the derogation is “not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range”.

Tests (a) and (e) can be met with the issue of planning permission for the proposed works. Test (b) is determined by NE’s ecology department that requires the development of a suitable mitigation strategy that would ensure that any bats present on site, are retained at the same population level or better.