



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

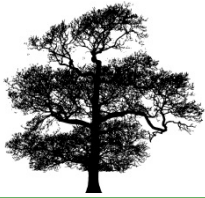
PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT 1 BRIAR CLOSE CAVERSHAM



**Prepared for:
Mr & Mrs Robson
1 Briar Close
Caversham
Reading
RG4 7QH**

12 August 2024

Ref: SPH/NP/PEA-24/31.07



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Bramley House
Newnham Bridge
Tenbury Wells
Worcestershire
WR15 8NX

Tel: 0118 976 2902

Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Instruction
- 1.2 Aims and Objectives
- 1.3 Proposed works
- 1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

- 2.1 Legislative Background

3. Site Location and Description

- 3.1 Site Location
- 3.2 Site Description

4. Survey Methodology

- 4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search
- 4.2 Daylight Survey
- 4.3 Constraints

5. Survey Findings

- 5.1 External Inspection
- 5.2 Internal Inspection

6. Evaluation

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 Interpretation
- 7.2 Contingency plan

8. References

9. Queries

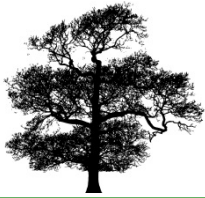
Appendix 1

Appendix 2

©2024 Urban Tree Experts

All rights in this report are reserved. No part of it may be reproduced, edited or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature, without our written permission. Its content and format are for the exclusive use of Mr & Mrs Robson and their agents in dealing with this site. It may not be sold, lent, hired out or divulged to any third party not directly involved in this site without the written consent of Urban Tree Experts. It may be reproduced as part of a planning application.

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 Robson to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]), of 1 Briar Close, Caversham, Reading RG4 7QH. This is to support a current planning application to Reading Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Wednesday 31 July 2024 at 5.30pm, during daylight hours. An external and internal inspection of the property and attached garage 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 that the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is just within 2km of the site, and that one other statutory designed site is situated within, and one current European Protected Species Licence (EPSLs) for bats has 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 dense urban environment however, there is good ecological connectivity to woodland and agricultural land via the garden network.

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 no potential roost features were identified during the preliminary inspection. When combined with the data from the desk top study, this resulted 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).



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr & Mrs Robson to conduct a DBW of 1 Briar Close, Caversham, Reading RG4 7QH 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 building 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 (no 240870) for “New two storey side extension to existing detached house. Replacement of existing single storey attached garage in poor condition”.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

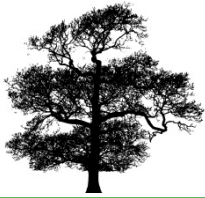
The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats was completed by Nick Powell and the report was written by Simon Holmes MSc CEnv.

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 (SCI64844). 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.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

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

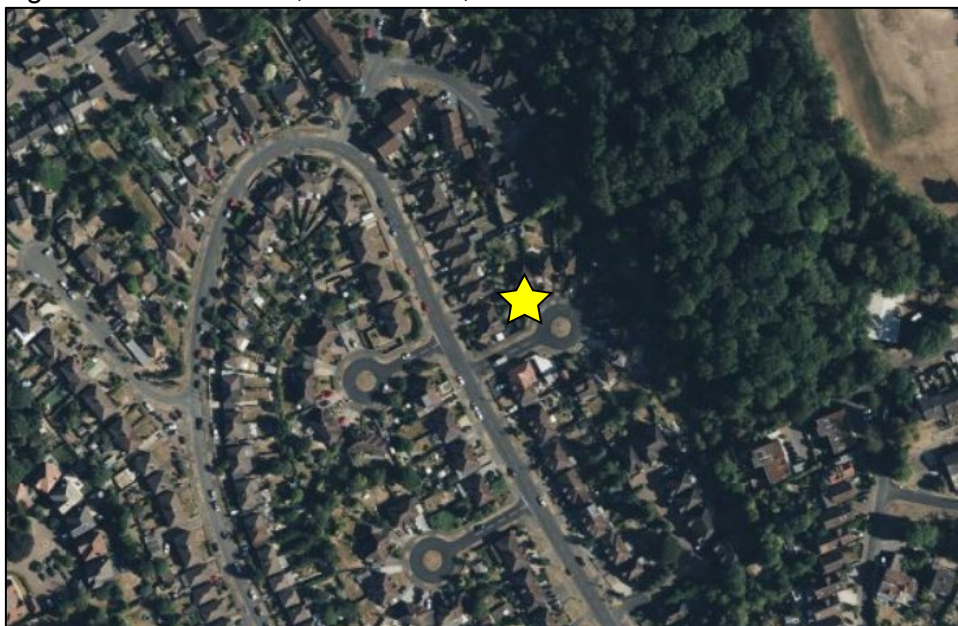
3.1 Site Location

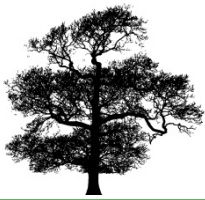
The building is located at Grid Reference SU 7110 7603, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 1 Briar Close, Caversham, highlighted.



Figure 2. 1 Briar Close, Caversham, overview of the immediate area.





Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached, brick-built and part rendered two storey property with attached garage and rear single storey 'lean-to' style extension. The remainder of the site comprises a driveway/parking area with flower beds/shrubs, see cover photograph. To the rear of the property is a mature garden containing a patio seating area, wild area and lawn with shrubs throughout, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers good foraging and commuting habitat for bats and, via back gardens, there is good ecological connectivity to the wider landscape.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 1 Briar Close, Caversham. 31.07.24

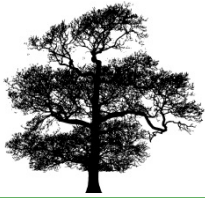


4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

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 urban area, 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 property is situated in the urban conurbation of Caversham, in Reading, and is adjacent to properties and gardens of varying size and style. Some 40 metres to the east is Beech Wood and the open fields associated with Highdown School and Sixth Form College. To the north, south and west is dense housing and infrastructure and although most have gardens and vegetation, are unlikely to provide optimum habitat for foraging bats. To the south lies the public open space (POS) of Balmore Walk park and gardens, to the north Bugs Bottom POS and to the west Albert Road park POS and Caversham bowling club, all of which provide good habitat for bats and are within commuting distance for bats. Further afield, lie a golf course and areas of farmland, parkland and woodland, all of which are likely to provide good habitat for bats, although there is limited ecological connectivity to these areas from the site.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Clayfield Copse Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies to the northeast within 2km of the proposed development site although there is limited ecological connectivity to this LNR due to the intervening built environment. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed that one current EPSL for bats has been granted within 2km of the site, the details of which are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Current EPSLs for bats within 2km of the site

EPSL reference	Licence end date	Species on licence
2017- 29064-EPS-MIT	09/2027	Soprano pipistrelle bat

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of 1 Briar Close, Caversham, Reading RG4 7QH was carried out by Nick Powell on Wednesday 31 July 2024 at 5.30pm. The weather conditions for the survey were sunny and a temperature of 29 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, endoscope and a ladder.

During the DBW an internal and external inspection of the property and attached garage 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.

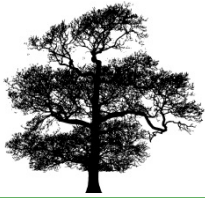
Field signs that would indicate the presence of bats were searched for. These included:

- 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.

4.3 Constraints

Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client. A thorough inspection of the loft space could not be conducted as it was not boarded however, given the good condition of the roof externally this was not thought to be a significant constraint to the survey.



5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property and attached garage 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.

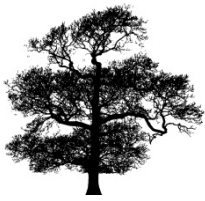
The property is a detached, brick-built and part rendered two storey building with attached garage and rear single storey rear extension (see Figure 4 below), all of which are in a good condition. The hipped roof and gable end over the front bay window are covered in composite tiles, none of which are missing or broken, see Figure 5 on page 9. The ridge and hip tiles are sealed with no missing mortar or gaps which roosting bats could exploit, as are the valleys (see Figure 6 on page 9), and the lead flashing around the chimney stack is well sealed, see Figure 7 on page 10. The fascias and soffits are tightly fitted to the wall with no gaps, see Figure 8 on page 10. The extension on the rear elevation is also covered in close fitting tiles, none of which were broken or missing and the lead flashing affixing it to the main property is sealed with no gaps, as are the verges, see Figure 9 on page 11.

The flat roof of the garage is covered in corrugated sheeting, none of which was broken or missing, and there was no missing mortar affixing it to the main property, see Figure 10 on page 11.

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

Figure 4. Rear view of property. 1 Briar Close, Caversham. 31.07.24





Urban Tree Experts

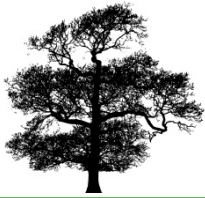
BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Figure 5. Example of roof tiles. 1 Briar Close, Caversham. 31.07.24



Figure 6. Example ridge and hip tiles. 1 Briar Close, Caversham. 31.07.24





Urban Tree Experts

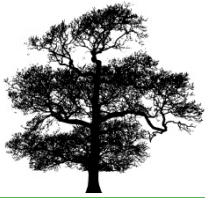
BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Figure 7. Tightly fitted lead flashing. 1 Briar Close, Caversham. 31.07.24



Figure 8. Example sealed soffits and fascias. 1 Briar Close, Caversham. 31.07.24





Urban Tree Experts

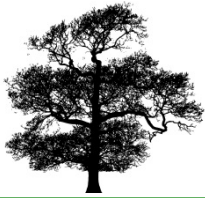
BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Figure 9. Rear 'lean-to' style roof covering/sealed verges and lead flashing. 1 Briar Close, Caversham. 31.07.24



Figure 10. Corrugated sheeting on garage roof. 1 Briar Close, Caversham. 31.07.24





5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The loft of the property was accessed via a ladder and was in a fair condition internally. The loft was lit, not boarded and insulated, see Figure 11 below. The roof tiles are lined with tar paper, some of which was ripped, see Figure 11 below.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the property and internally there appeared to be no roosting opportunities for bats within the loft.

The attached garage was also inspected internally. The garage is used for storage and cluttered and in a poor condition, see Figure 12 on page 13. The ceiling is open to the corrugated sheeting and, due to the construction materials, light ingress and poor thermal properties the garage offers negligible roosting potential for bats.

Figure 11. Example loft space and torn tar paper. 1 Briar Close, Caversham. 31.07.24



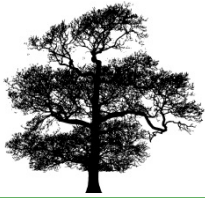


Figure 12. Internal view of garage. 1 Briar Close, Caversham. 31.07.24



6. Evaluation

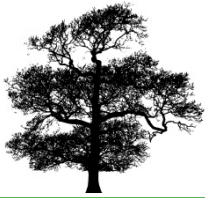
The bat roost potential of the features within the site have been assessed with reference to the following criteria and include seasonal variation where increased or decreased probability may arise. Where features are present, they are **highlighted in bold**.

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.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Please note that the list on the previous page 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 and attached garage provides a high level of confidence in support of the opinions set out in this report. There were no bats or evidence to indicate bats have roosted at the property or garage and no visible features externally or internally on the building 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 or garage. 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.

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 buildings 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:

Telephone: 01189 762902
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

Urban Tree Experts
Bramley House
Newnham Bridge
Tenbury Wells
WR15 8NX

Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv.
Consultant, Urban Tree Experts
Natural England Licence CLS-CLS-17637, CLS-CLS-17638



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

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.