

Bat Survey Report

285 Basingstoke Road, Reading RG2 0JA

Ref: 251124

Client: Mohamed Hoque



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SUMMARY

Planning permission is being sought for works at 285 Basingstoke Road, Reading RG2 0JA. The proposals are for a hip-to-gable conversion, loft conversion, the installation of a dormer window, a single-storey rear extension and the construction of an outbuilding.

As this could impact features typically used by bats as roosting places, a daytime inspection was undertaken on 24th February 2025 to assess the building for signs of bat occupation.

All the external and internal structures, especially those associated with the roof and walls of the building were examined. Features such as cracks in walls, gaps in soffit boards and lifted roof tiles were searched for during the inspection with no bats sighted during the inspection.

The works had already been started prior to the Preliminary Roost Assessment. The survey was therefore completed of the building in its current state. Due to the presence of missing and lifted tiles, gaps in blockwork, gaps above windows and doors and gaps behind soffits, the building has moderate suitability for roosting bats.

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Revision	Description	Date
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1. INTRODUCTION

Indigo Surveys were commissioned by Mohamed Hoque to complete a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) at 285 Basingstoke Road, Reading, RG2 0JA (Grid Reference SU 71834 70971). The proposals are for a hip-to-gable conversion, loft conversion, the installation of a dormer window, a single-storey rear extension and the construction of an outbuilding.

The site is located in the south of Reading, in a built-up area. The site is bordered by residential properties to the north, east and south and the B3031 main road and commercial buildings to the west. There are fragments of woodland in all directions, the River Thames to the north, Fobney Meadows and the River Kennet to the west and the Reading University Whiteknights Campus to the east in the wider landscape.

In England, Scotland and Wales, all bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended), through inclusion in Schedule 5. In England and Wales this Act has been amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC), which adds an extra offence, makes species offences arrestable, increases the time limits for some prosecutions, and increases penalties.

All bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations (the Habitats Regulations), which defines 'European protected species of animals'. In England this is the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, in Scotland the Habitat Regulations 1994 (as amended), and in Northern Ireland the Conservation Regulations 1995.

All bats are also protected under the Bern Convention Appendix II, the Bonn Convention Appendix II, and the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.

The above legislation can be summarised thus (Mitchell-Jones and McLeish, 2004). It is illegal to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) bats;
- Deliberately disturb bats (whether in a roost or not);
- Recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts;
- Damage or destroy roosts;
- Possess or transport a bat or any part of a part of a bat, unless acquired legally; and
- Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats, or parts of bats.

The word ‘roost’ is not used in the legislation but is used here for simplicity. The actual wording is ‘any structure or place which any wild animal...uses for shelter or protection’ (WCA), or ‘breeding site or resting place’ (Habitats Regulations).

As bats generally have both a winter and a summer roost, the legislation is clear that all roosts are protected whether bats are in residence at the time or not.

2. METHODS

To fully assess bat occupation of a particular site, the Bat Conservation Trust (2023) recommends that information gathered from a desk study of known bat records, and a daytime site walkover,

is used to inform the type and extent of future bat survey work, potentially including nocturnal surveys.

The diurnal walkover provides an opportunity to check for signs of occupancy, such as droppings, scratch marks, feeding remains, carcasses, or even animals in residence, whilst nocturnal surveys (if required) allow numbers and species of bats to be confirmed. The latter are also used to determine the presence or absence of bats, where signs of bat activity are indeterminate or absent, but suitability of roosting is considered medium to high. Table 1 below describes the suitability categories used when inspecting structures.

Category	Roosting habitat present	Survey requirements
Negligible	No features that could be used by roosting bats.	No further surveys required.
Low	A structure with one or more features that could be used by opportunistic individual bats. However, the features do not provide suitable conditions or space for larger roosts.	One further survey required (between May to August).
Moderate	A structure with one or more features that could be used by individual bats, but not suitable as a significant roost.	Two further surveys required (between May and September).
High	A structure with features suitable for use by larger numbers of bats or individuals over a prolonged period.	Three further surveys required (between May and September).

Confirmed	Direct evidence of bats, including droppings, previous site records, or presence of individuals.
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Table 1: Structure suitability categories

Roosting places vary depending on the species. Pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus* sp.) usually inhabit narrow cracks or cavities on the exterior of buildings, but they will roost in similar niches inside larger barns. Typical sites include soffit boxes, gaps behind fascia boards and end rafters, crevices around the ends of projecting purlins, under warped or lifted roof and ridge tiles, or in gaps in stone and brickwork where mortar has dropped out.

Larger species such as brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), myotis bats (*Myotis* sp.) including Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), whiskered/Brandt's bat (*M. mystacinus*/*M. brandtii*), and lesser horseshoe (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), like to roost in the roof voids of buildings, and can often be found hanging singly or in small groups from ridge boards or roof timbers, especially where they butt up against gable walls or chimney breasts. They especially favour older structures with timber frames. Here they squeeze into tight crevices making them difficult to observe.

Daytime walkovers can be carried out at any time of the year, but dusk emergence surveys should only be undertaken when bats are out of hibernation and in their summer roosts. The recommended period is from May to September inclusive, with May to August optimum and

September sub-optimum. The season can be extended into October, although particularly cold weather is sub-optimal. The air temperature at the start of each survey must be at least 10°C or above.

Nocturnal survey visits must be a minimum of three weeks apart, and the number of surveys is dependent on the evidence found or the suitability of the site for bats.

Where bats are found, or there is evidence of bat occupation or activity, such as bat use is confirmed, the number and timing of visits will be decided by the ecologist and will be appropriate for the type of roost. In general, at least two nocturnal surveys must be carried out, both of which must be emergence surveys.

Where there is no evidence of bat presence, and no suitability for roosting, no nocturnal surveys will be needed.

For a site with no evidence but low suitability, just one nocturnal survey is required, this to be in the optimum period.

For moderate suitability a minimum of two nocturnal surveys are needed, with high suitability, three nocturnal surveys will be necessary, of which two must be in the optimum period.

For sites < 5 ha in size, and/or regularly shaped structures, at least two surveyors must be present, with more surveyors at larger sites and more complex buildings, e.g., those with multiple elevations and/or roof structures.

On 24th February 2025 a thorough inspection of the house (B1) was made by Beth England BSc (Hons), MSc (licence reference 2023-11760-CL17-BAT), including the exterior and interior walls, roof coverings, eaves, gables, window casements and door frames. 8x32 binoculars and a high-powered torch were used for the inaccessible/unreachable areas.

The results of the survey are detailed in Section 3.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Desk Study

In view of the scale of the proposed works, and in line with current guidance on accessing and using biodiversity data (CIEEM, 2016), a background data search was not carried out in this case.

According to MAGIC, there are ten European Protected Species licences for bats within 2km of the site. Details of the licences are provided in Table 2 below.

Licence number	Species	Date	Location and direction from site
2015-14868-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>) and brown long-eared bat	2015-2018	1.3km W
EPSM2013-6388	Common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat	2013-2018	1.3km W
2014-3941-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>)	2014-2019	1.6km NE
2014-3941-EPS-MIT-1	Common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle	2014-2019	1.6km NE
2014-3941-EPS-MIT-2	Common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle	2015-2019	1.6km NE
EPSM2009-1119	Common pipistrelle	2009-2011	1.7km S

EPSM2010-2266	Common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat	2010-2011	1.8km NE
2015-15933-EPS-BDX	Common pipistrelle	2015	1.9km S
2017-32379-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle	2017-2022	1.9km NW
2016-22301-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle	2016-2021	1.9km N

Table 2: European Protected Species licences for bats within 2km

3.2 Location

The site is located in the south of Reading and is 2km north of the M4 motorway. The Ordnance Survey Grid Reference is SU 71834 70971 (Appendix 1).

3.3 Site Description

The survey site comprises a semi-detached residential property (B1) (Photographs 1-3). To the west of B1 is a driveway and to the east is a vegetated garden with construction refuse and trenches for the proposed new outbuilding (Photographs 4 and 5).



Photograph 1: Western elevation of B1.



Photograph 2: Southern elevation of B1.



Photograph 3: Eastern elevation of B1.



Photograph 4: Driveway to the west of B1.



Photograph 5: Vegetated garden to the east of B1.

The layout of the site is shown in the aerial photograph in Appendix 2. The site is bordered by residential properties to the north, east and south and the B3031 main road and commercial buildings to the west. There are fragments of woodland in all directions, the River Thames to the north, Fobney Meadows and the River Kennet to the west and the Reading University Whiteknights Campus to the east in the wider landscape. The vegetated gardens within the residential properties offer low to moderate foraging opportunities but could provide commuting corridors into good foraging habitats in the wider landscape.

3.4 Building Survey

The daytime inspection was carried out on 24th February 2025, commencing at 10.30am. The weather conditions during the survey were recorded and are presented in Table 3 below.

Parameter	Value
Temperature (°C)	10
Cloud cover (%)	80
Precipitation	No rain
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	1

Table 3: Weather conditions during the survey (24/02/2025)

B1 is a brick-built semi-detached house c. 7-8m in height with a pitched roof (recently converted from hipped) and clay tiles. The building is currently under construction, a dormer window has been installed but not glazed and the render has been removed in places. There is an additional pitched roof on the eastern elevation which appears to have recently been installed. The building has scaffolding on all elevations. The survey has been completed of the building in its current condition, some of the features identified are a result of the ongoing building works.

The loft void of B1 is in the process of being converted (Photograph 6). There is a remaining void at the eaves on the western side which was inspected, no evidence of bats was recorded (Photograph 7). The interior of B1 is under construction and is not currently inhabited

(Photograph 8). Externally there is a missing roof tile on the western elevation (Photograph 9) and gaps in the blockwork adjacent to the soffits on the gable end, including a gap at the apex (Photographs 10 and 11). There is also a hole above a ground floor window (Photograph 12). On the southern elevation there are gaps behind the soffits (Photograph 13) which are currently blocked by scaffolding, a gap at the apex of the gable end (Photograph 14) and a gap above one of the ground floor windows (Photograph 15). On the western elevation there are missing and lifted tiles on the porch roof (Photograph 16) which are blocked by scaffolding and an area of damage above the front door (Photograph 17).



Photograph 6: Converted loft of B1.



Photograph 7: Eaves void on the western side of B1.



Photograph 8: Interior of B1.



Photograph 9: Missing tile on the eastern elevation of B1.



Photograph 10: Gaps in the blockwork on the gable end on the eastern elevation of B1.



Photograph 11: Gap at the apex of the gable end on the eastern elevation of B1.



Photograph 12: Gap above a ground floor window on the eastern elevation of B1.



Photograph 13: Gap behind the soffit on the southern elevation of B1.



Photograph 14: Gap at the apex on the southern elevation of B1.



Photograph 15: Gap above a ground floor window on the southern elevation of B1.



Photograph 16: Missing and lifted tiles on the porch roof on the western elevation of B1.



Photograph 17: Damage above the front door on the western elevation of B1.

Due to the presence of multiple gaps around the building, including gaps that could be suitable for crevice dwelling species of bats and gaps that could lead into cavities, B1 has moderate suitability for roosting bats.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

B1 has a low to moderate suitability for roosting bats although none were sighted during the inspection. The result of this survey reflects the current state of the building, the condition of the building prior to the works commencing is unknown. The nearby residential gardens have low to moderate suitability for foraging bats but could provide a foraging corridor into good foraging habitats in the wider landscape.

Bats tend to be seasonal visitors to properties and are not usually in occupation all year round. The females normally form maternity colonies during May or June and then leave for adjacent trees and/or woodland during July or August once the young bats are able to fly and become independent. Here they will spend the winter months in hibernation before returning to the house or barn the following spring.

Male bats generally live alone and have a number of favoured roosts. During the summer they visit each of these for a few days at a time, before moving to their chosen hibernation site in midlate October. Different species have different habits, but this seasonal movement is common to all.

Bats choose their roosts carefully. During the summer they look for sites which are warmed by the sun, and as a result are most often found on the south and western side of buildings.

Pipistrelles, our smallest and commonest bats, prefer to roost in very confined spaces around the outside of buildings, typical places being behind hanging tiles, weather boarding, soffit, barge and eaves boarding, between roof felt and roof tiles or in cavity walls.

As such they can be difficult to find, so the suitability for roosting is also assessed. Another bat frequently encountered in buildings is the brown long-eared bat. This is also a common species, but unlike pipistrelles, they prefer the dry, warm space of the loft or roof void, and can often be found hanging from roof timbers, especially rafters and the ridge board next to chimney breasts.

5. REFERENCES

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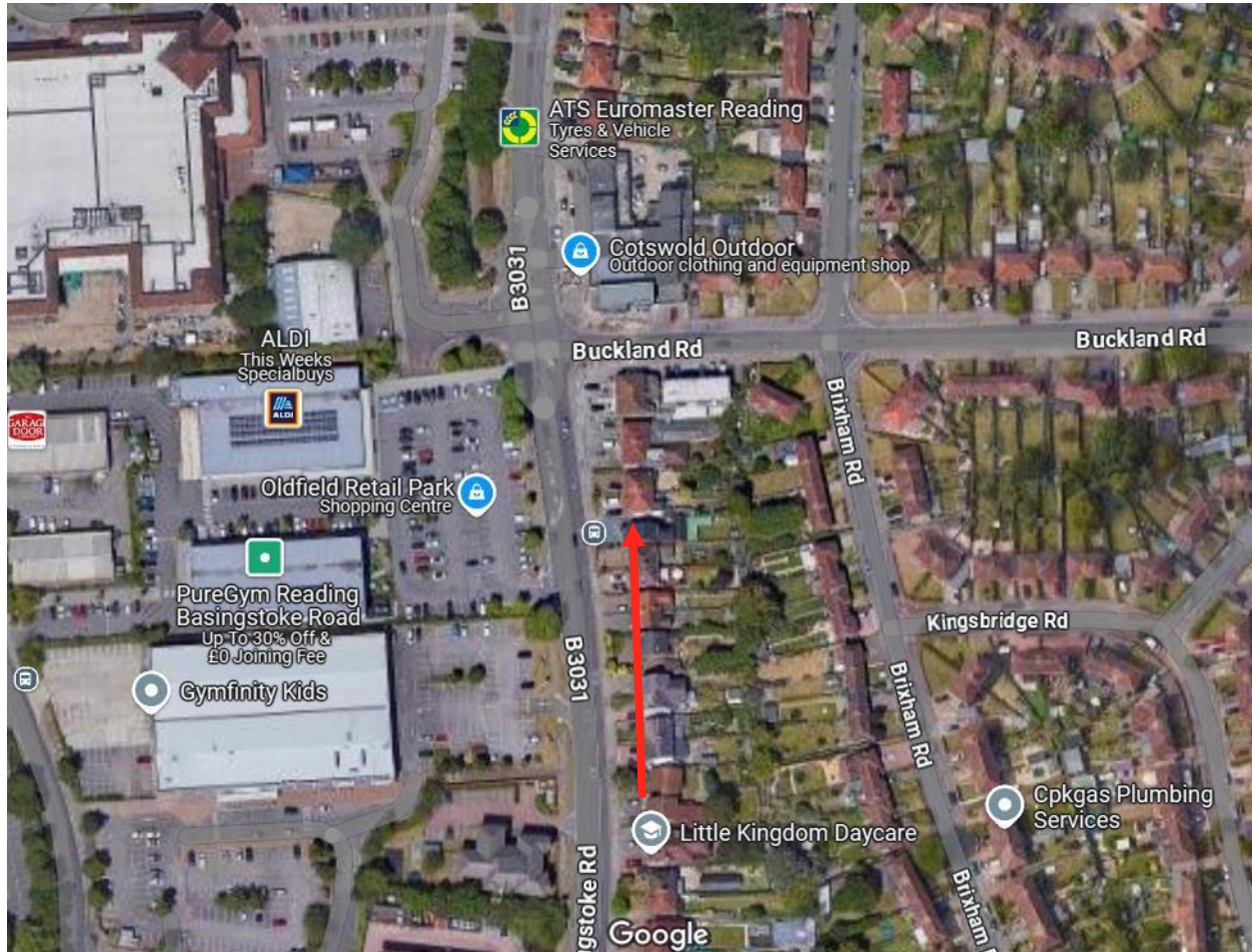
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Location Plan

Appendix 2: Site Layout

APPENDIX 1: LOCATION PLAN



285 Basingstoke Road, Reading, RG2 0JA

APPENDIX 2: SITE LAYOUT



285 Basingstoke Road Layout