

17 Wildcroft Drive
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 3HY

Preliminary Roost Assessment

Report ref.: R2760_PRA_a

<i>Report Quality Control Information</i>	
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CONTENTS PAGE

1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2	INTRODUCTION.....	4
2.1	Project Background.....	4
2.2	Site Location and Context.....	4
2.3	Report Objectives	4
3	LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND.....	5
3.1	Relevant Legislation.....	5
3.2	Planning Policy	5
3.3	Mitigation Licensing	6
4	SURVEY METHODOLOGY.....	7
4.1	Desk Study	7
4.2	Building Inspection.....	7
5	SURVEY RESULTS.....	10
5.1	Desk Study	10
5.2	Building Inspection.....	12
6	DISCUSSION.....	17
6.1	Assessment of Potential Roost Suitability.....	17
6.2	Impact of Proposals and Recommendations	17
7	REFERENCES.....	19

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Lucy Wilson to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at 17 Wildcroft Drive in Wokingham, Berkshire.
- 1.1.2** The aim of the PRA is to determine the actual or potential presence of bats in the property and whether further survey and/or mitigation would be required for future proposed development activities.
- 1.1.3** Whilst no evidence of bats was observed within the roof void, indicating a lack of void-dwelling bat species, external crevice roost features were observed including lifted clay roof tiles on the rear elevation and lifted hanging tiles on the front dormer windows. A thorough endoscopic inspection of the northwest dormer confirmed the associated features as being of limited extent with no evidence of current or past bat occupancy (droppings, staining etc.).
- 1.1.4** The proposals for a two-storey front extension are considered highly unlikely to lead to the damage or loss of a bat roost or to the disturbance of bats and therefore, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required to allow the works to go ahead lawfully.
- 1.1.5** Bats are highly mobile and therefore may utilise the low suitability potential roosting sites in the future. If work should be delayed beyond 12 months after the date of this survey, the potential roosting sites should undergo a follow-up inspection by a suitably licensed ecologist prior to the work commencing.
- 1.1.6** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the work, the work must stop immediately and a licensed ecologist should be called to site to attend to the bat(s) and provide further advice on how to proceed.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

- 2.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Lucy Wilson to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at 17 Wildcroft Drive in Wokingham, Berkshire.
- 2.1.2** The PRA was commissioned to accompany a full planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for a two-storey front extension.

2.2 Site Location and Context

- 2.2.1** The detached property is located at the end of a cul-de-sac west of Wildcroft Drive in Wokingham (central OS grid reference: SU 80058 66285).
- 2.2.2** The property is bordered by neighbouring properties and their associated gardens to the east and west with scattered mature trees and hedgerows. In addition, the rear garden of the property backs onto Sand Martins Golf Club which contains over 50 hectares of mixed priority woodland, grassland and ponds. Further parcels of mixed priority woodland are situated 210 metres south and 430 metres southeast of the property. A network of scattered trees, hedgerows and gardens provides connectivity through the suburban landscape to these high quality habitats.

2.3 Report Objectives

- 2.3.1** The aim of the PRA is to ascertain if there is evidence of the presence of bats and/or potential for roosting bats to be present, and therefore whether further survey and/or mitigation would be required for future proposed development activities.

3 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND

3.1 Relevant Legislation

3.1.1 In England and Wales, all bat species found in the wild are fully protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA) and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); the regulations are commonly referred to as the Habitat Regulations and hereafter referred to as such. The Habitat Regulations refer to European Protected Species (EPS) and all species of bats in the United Kingdom (UK) are EPS. Although the UK left the European Union on the 31st January 2020 and is therefore no longer tied to European legislation, the Habitat Regulations have been retained in their current format.

3.1.2 The legal framework underpinned by the WCA and Habitat Regulations makes these specific actions an offence as follows:

- Deliberately kill, injure, capture or take a wild bat;
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, to rear or nurture their young, to hibernate or migrate, or to significantly affect local distribution or abundance;
- Damage or destroy a place used by a bat for breeding or resting; and
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place used by a bat for shelter or protection.

3.2 Planning Policy

3.2.1 The biodiversity duty imposed through the Environment Act 2021 states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) must consider what action they can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. Government planning policy, such as the ODPM Circular 06/2005, requires LPAs to account for the conservation of protected species when considering and determining planning applications.

3.2.2 The ODPM Circular 06/2005 states that *'the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat.'* This policy means that in instances where there is a reasonable likelihood of bats being present and affected by a development, surveys must be undertaken to inform a mitigation strategy to be agreed prior to granting planning permission.

3.3 Mitigation Licensing

3.3.1 The government's statutory nature conservation body, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations. An EPS mitigation licence can be issued if the following three tests derived from Regulation 55 have been satisfied:

- (2)(e) – the derogation is for the purposes of *'preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.'*
- (9)(a) – there is *'no satisfactory alternative'* to the derogation; and
- (9)(b) – *'the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.'*

3.3.2 LPAs have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3)(e) of the Habitat Regulations to consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by planning proposals affecting EPS before granting planning permission. If an EPS mitigation licence is necessary, a licence can be sought once all the necessary planning consents have been granted. Natural England aims to issue a decision on licence applications within 30 working days of submission.

3.3.3 The Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) scheme allows ecologists to apply to become Registered Consultants to use this licence for low conservation status roosts, i.e. roosts comprising small numbers of seven commonly occurring species. A site registration form must be completed as a condition of the licence and submitted to Natural England at least three weeks before the licensable activities are due to start; Natural England aims to register sites within two weeks of submission.

3.3.4 Baseline survey information supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or BMCL site registrations must be up-to-date and have been completed within the current or most recent optimal season. A suitably experienced ecologist will be required to undertake a site walkover/check within three months prior to application/registration submission to confirm that conditions have not changed since the most recent survey.

4 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

4.1 Desk Study

4.1.1 A desk-based study for bats was undertaken to collate and review existing information about the site and the surrounding land. The study utilised the following open access resources:

- OS maps and Google Earth – maps and satellite imagery were used to identify potential flight-paths and foraging habitats for bats;
- DEFRA Data Services Platform and MAGIC – maps were used to locate relevant designated sites, habitats and granted European Protected Species licences; and
- existing bat survey reports – any available reports were obtained from the client or relevant planning portal.

4.2 Building Inspection

Survey Details

4.2.1 A detailed inspection of the property was undertaken on the 20th August 2024 by Vicky Potts MCIEEM registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 (Registration no.: 2016-27162-CLS-CLS) and assistant ecologist Jake Morgan (a qualifying member of CIEEM) in accordance with good practice guidance (Collins 2023). A detailed endoscopic search of the low potential bat roost features was undertaken on the 23rd August 2024 by Vicky Potts & Jake Morgan.

4.2.2 The equipment used during the inspections comprised binoculars, a high-power (1 million candlepower) LED torch, a Teslong NTS500 endoscope camera, a headtorch, ladder and PPE (facemask, gloves etc.). The inspection involved a systematic search of the exterior and interior of the structure during daylight hours to compile information on potential and actual bat access points; potential and actual bat roost sites; and any evidence of bat presence.

External Survey

4.2.3 Frequently used bat access points and/or roost sites include (but are not limited to) spaces:

- behind hanging tiles, weatherboarding, soffit boxes and barge boards;
- under lead flashing (particularly around chimneys) and roof tiles/slates; and
- in existing bat boxes.

4.2.4 It is important to note that the two most abundant and widespread bat species, common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), typically only require gaps measuring 15mm by 20mm to gain access to a roost inside a building.

4.2.5 The external survey involved a systematic search for evidence of bats including:

- live or dead specimens;
- droppings;
- urine marks;
- fur-oil staining; and
- squeaking noises.

4.2.6 It should be noted that bats can be present in a building while leaving no visible signs externally and wet weather has the potential to wash any evidence away. The search for evidence was focused on (but was not limited to) the ground, windowsills, windowpanes and walls (including cladding and hanging tiles); particularly in places near to potential bat access points and/or roost sites.

Internal Survey

4.2.7 The internal survey comprised a systematic search for evidence of bats on the upper floors of the building (i.e. checking the exterior from windows) and inside the roof and eave spaces. Evidence of bats found during an internal inspection can include:

- live or dead specimens;
- droppings;
- urine marks;
- fur-oil staining;
- feeding remains (i.e. moth wings);
- squeaking noises;
- bat-fly (Nycteribiid) pupal cases; and
- odour.

4.2.8 It should be noted that only specimens or droppings can be relied upon in isolation to confirm the presence of a bat roost.

4.2.9 Frequently used roosting locations within the roof include (but are not limited to):

- the apex of the gable end or dividing walls;
- the top of chimney breasts;
- ridge and hip beams;
- mortise and tenon joints;
- behind purlins; and
- between tiles and roof lining.

Survey Limitations and Validity

4.2.10 There were no significant survey limitations because PRAs can be carried out at any time of year under any weather conditions and the building was fully accessible.

4.2.11 It should be noted that it is not always possible to inspect all potential roost sites during a survey, particularly for bat species which typically roost in hidden crevices. Therefore, an absence of bat evidence found during a survey does not necessarily equate to evidence of bat absence in a building.

4.2.12 This report contains information regarding a mobile species so it will likely be valid for less than 12 months (CIEEM 2019b).

5 SURVEY RESULTS

5.1 Desk Study

5.1.1 Neighbouring gardens within the cul-de-sac and along Wildcroft Drive as well as linear hedgerows, scattered trees and tree lines are present within the local area and provide continuous habitat that could be used as flight paths connecting to high-quality foraging habitats for any bat(s) roosting in the property, such as the golf course to the immediate southwest and the parcels of mixed priority woodland to the south and southeast.

5.1.2 Bat mitigation licences that have been granted within the last 10 years inside a 2-kilometre radius of the property are detailed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Bat mitigation licences granted within a 2km radius of the property (Source: MAGIC).

Case Reference of Granted Licence	Species on the Licence	Licensable Period	Licensable Works	Distance (m)
EPSM2009-561	Common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle & brown long-eared	15/04/2009 – 31/12/2010	Destruction of resting place	920 S
EPSM2012-5339	Common pipistrelle, brown long-eared & Natterer's bat	12/09/2013 – 30/09/2015	Destruction of resting place	1040 W
2015-9568-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle	06/05/2015 – 30/04/2020	Destruction of resting place	1100 SW
2015-9568-EPS-MIT-1	Common pipistrelle	07/10/2016 – 01/04/2020	Destruction of resting place	1100 SW
EPSM2013-6081	Common pipistrelle	09/01/2014 – 31/10/2014	Destruction of resting place	1100 S
EPSM2013-6081-C	Common pipistrelle	09/01/2014 – 31/10/2014	Damage & destruction of resting place	1100 S
2014-3612-EPS-MIT	Soprano pipistrelle	24/10/2014 – 22/10/2019	Destruction of resting place	1190 SE
2014-4890-EPS-MIT	Brown long-eared	23/03/2014 – 31/08/2015	Damage of resting place	1290 S
2014-4890-EPS-MIT-1	Brown long-eared	27/05/2015 – 31/12/2015	Destruction of resting place	1290 S
2014-4890-EPS-MIT-2	Brown long-eared	04/07/2015 – 31/12/2015	Destruction of resting place	1290 S
2015-7982-EPS-MIT	Brown long-eared	14/04/2015 – 14/04/2020	Destruction of resting place	1540 SE
2014-2425-EPS-MIT	Brown long-eared & common pipistrelle	22/07/2014 – 31/10/2015	Destruction of resting place	1700 N

2014-964-EPS-MIT	Brown long-eared	15/04/2014 – 30/09/2014	Damage of breeding site and destruction of resting place	1700 N
2015-7094-EPS-MIT	Brown long-eared & common pipistrelle	06/04/2015 – 31/03/2015	Destruction of resting place	1740 SW
2014-3970-EPS-MIT	Brown long-eared & common pipistrelle	29/10/2014 – 31/10/2019	Damage of resting place	1780 SW
2014-3970-EPS-MIT-1	Brown long-eared & common pipistrelle	29/06/2017 – 29/06/2022	Damage of resting place	1780 SW
EPSM2011-3236	Common pipistrelle	10/08/2011 – 30/09/2013	Destruction of resting place	1960 W
2017-31789-EPS-MIT	Soprano pipistrelle	19/10/2017 – 31/10/2018	Destruction of resting place	2000 SE

5.1.3 The client had no existing bat survey reports in their possession for the property and none had been published on the Local Planning Authority's (LPA) online planning portal.

5.2 Building Inspection

Overview

- 5.2.1** The findings from the external and internal inspections carried out for the property are described with photographs and annotated in a plan, as follows:

External Survey

- 5.2.2** The detached house had a pitched roof with an existing half-hipped side and front extension and four dormer windows on the front elevation (**Photographs 1 & 2**).



Photograph 1. Front of property viewed from the northeast.



Photograph 2. Rear and side of property viewed from the southeast.

- 5.2.3** The pitched roofs of the property were covered by handmade clay tiles that were mostly flat and sealed on all elevations other than a few lifted tiles around the flue pipe on the rear elevation (**Photograph 3; Target note 1**). In addition, the ridge mortar, hip mortar and verge mortar was fully intact on all elevations of the house and front dormer windows (**Photographs 3 & 4**).



Photograph 3. Lifted clay roof tiles around flue pipe with fully intact ridge and verge mortar (rear elevation).



Photograph 4. Hip mortar fully intact (front elevation).

- 5.2.4** The lead flashing situated at the base of the northwest chimney, along the half-hipped roof

extension and the edges of the dormer windows was fully sealed to the clay roof tiles and brickwork (**Photographs 5 & 6**).



Photograph 5. Lead flashing sealed to chimney and roof tiles (rear elevation).



Photograph 6. Lead flashing sealed along the dormer windows and roof of the half-hipped extension (front elevation).

- 5.2.5** The eaves were sealed on all elevations and whilst slight gaps were situated behind the timber fascia along the southeast and northwest gables, the resulting gaps were filled with cement with no crevice available (**Photographs 7 & 8**). In addition, the timber fascia along the central gable was sealed to the brickwork (**Photograph 9**).



Photograph 7. Eaves fully sealed (rear elevation).



Photograph 8. Gaps behind timber fascia sealed with cement (northwest elevation).



Photograph 9. Timber fascia sealed to gable (front elevation).

- 5.2.6** The four dormer windows on the front elevation were clad with hanging tiles that were

occasionally lifted, particularly at the corners where one small-sized bat dropping was observed on the easternmost dormer window above the garage (**Photograph 10; Target note 2**) and under a few lifted hanging tiles on the westernmost dormer window (**Photograph 11; Target note 3**). The gaps under the lifted hanging tiles on the westernmost dormer window were closely inspected with an endoscopic camera; the gaps were found to be of limited extent with cobwebs and filled by wasp nest material and no evidence of roosting bats was observed (**Photograph 12; Target note 4**). The hanging tiles on the two central dormer windows were tight.



Photograph 10. Lifted corner hanging tiles with small-sized dropping on the dormer window above the garage (front elevation).



Photograph 11. Gaps under a few lifted tiles on the northwest dormer window (front elevation).



Photograph 12. Cobwebs behind lifted hanging tiles (front elevation).

Internal Survey

- 5.2.7** The roof void was of trussed construction, accessible via a loft hatch on the first floor and had an approximate floor-to-ridge height of 2.5 metres in which the ridge was lightly cobwebbed throughout (**Photograph 13**). The roof was lined by fully intact bitumen roofing felt which was tight to the roof timbers and sealed along the ridge (**Photograph 14**).



Photograph 13. Roof void of trussed construction.



Photograph 14. Lightly cobwebbed ridge & fully intact bitumen felt (roof void).

5.2.8 The floor was centrally boarded with fibreglass insulation present below the boarding and up to the eaves, which were open in places with daylight visible (**Photograph 15**). The northwest and southeast blockwork gables had cobwebbed gaps along their edges and at the apex, as well as around a pipe passing through the southeast gable (**Photographs 16 & 17; Target notes 5 & 6**).



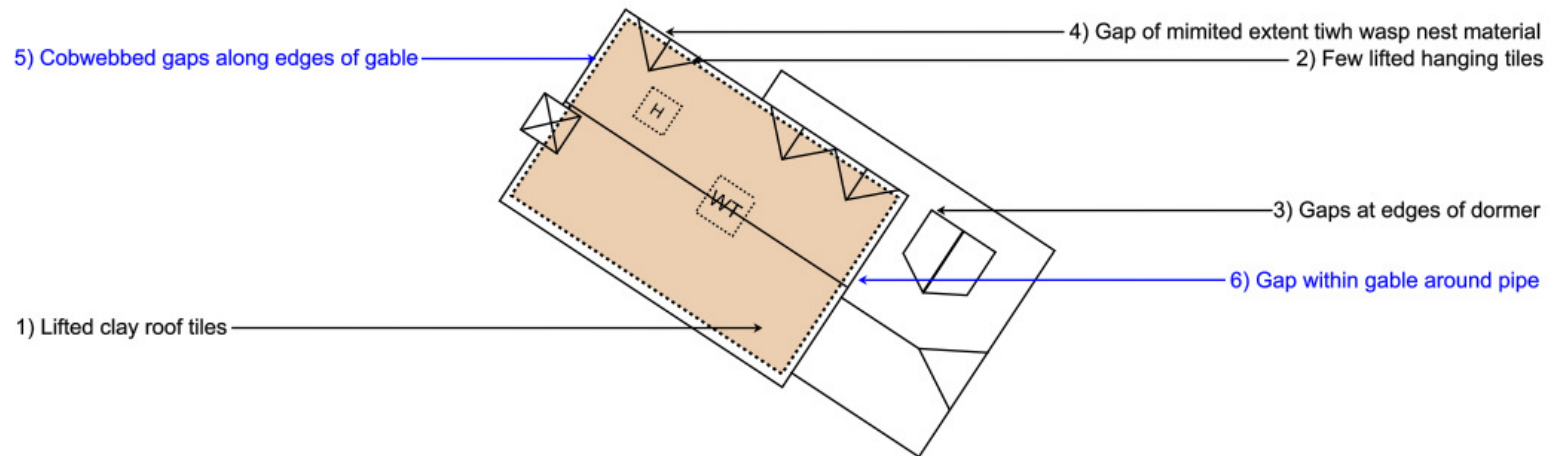
Photograph 15. Open eaves with daylight visible (roof void).



Photograph 16. Gaps around edges of the blockwork gables (roof void).



Photograph 17. Gaps around pipe in southeast blockwork gable (roof void).



n. External target note

n. Internal target note

 Chimney

 Roof void

 Loft hatch

 Water tank

Drawn by:	Date:	Scale:	17 Wildcroft Drive, Wokingham	
JM	September 2024	Not to scale	Preliminary Roost Assessment Plan	

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Assessment of Potential Roost Suitability

6.1.1 The suburban area surrounding the property with gardens, scattered trees and tree lines provides continuous habitat that could be used as flight paths connecting to high-quality foraging habitats for any bat(s) roosting in the property, such as the golf course to the immediate southwest and the parcels of mixed priority woodland to the south and southeast. Furthermore, the search of granted bat mitigation licences identified one breeding roost and four species known to be roosting within a 2km radius of the house: common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pygmaeus pipistrellus*), brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) and Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*).

6.1.1 The property had the following suitable/potential bat access points:

- Lifted clay roof tiles around the flue pipe (**Target note 1**);
- Lifted hanging tiles and gaps around the edges of the front dormers (**Target notes 2 & 3**); and
- Gaps around the edges of the internal blockwork gables and around a pipe passing through the southeast gable (**Target notes 5 & 6**).

6.1.2 With no evidence of roosting identified during the internal survey and the ridge lightly cobwebbed throughout the void, the presence of void-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded long-eared bat species (*Plecotus* spp.), is considered highly unlikely.

6.1.3 The potential access points offer potential roost site for opportunistic use by small crevice-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded *Pipistrellus* species. The thorough endoscopic inspection confirmed the features associated with the westernmost dormer window to be of limited extent with no evidence of current or past bat occupancy (droppings, staining etc.).

6.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

6.2.1 The planning proposals seek consent for a two-storey front extension which includes the removal of the westernmost dormer window. There will be no impact on the roof of the garage at the eastern end of the house or the central two dormer windows. The proposals are considered highly unlikely to lead to the damage or loss of a bat roost or to the disturbance of bats and therefore, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required to allow the works to go ahead lawfully.

- 6.2.2** Bats are highly mobile and therefore may utilise the low suitability potential roosting sites (i.e. slightly raised tiles along the verge) in the future. If work should be delayed beyond 12 months after the date of this survey, the potential roosting sites should undergo a follow-up inspection by a suitably licensed ecologist prior to the work commencing.
- 6.2.3** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the work, the work must stop immediately and a licensed ecologist should be called to site to attend to the bat(s) and provide further advice on how to proceed; work must continue only once further written advice has been received. At this point, an EPS mitigation licence may be required to permit the work to continue lawfully.

7 REFERENCES

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