



PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST APPRAISAL

201 READING ROAD
WOKINGHAM RG41 1LH

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1. INTRODUCTION

Location

1.1 The site is located at 201 Reading Road, Wokingham RG41 1LH. National Grid Reference: **SU 79381 69784**.

Site description

1.2 The site is a detached, double storey house. Immediate habitats are of low quality for bats and are suburban and adjacent to a busy Road. Habitats include modified grassland lawns with lines of mature oak and scattered shrubs. These, connect to better habitat¹ such as patches of deciduous woodland and Windmill Pool, a significant body of standing fresh water.

Scope of Survey

1.3 In support of a planning application a Preliminary Bat Roost Appraisal (PBRA) was requested by the LPA in 2024 to try to assess whether or not the proposals would impact bats and find out whether or not a European Protected Species License (EPSL) would be required for the proposals to go ahead. It is now understood that a planning application is being prepared to renovate the house and this will result in the removal of the existing roof and demolition of the detached garage (plans reviewed: 1656_0018). The LPA has requested that an updated PBRA be undertaken in support of this application. The survey would also look for the presence of and potential for breeding birds to assess potential impacts.

Legislative context-bats

1.4 All species of bats are protected under *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*), *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017* and it is an offence to:

- deliberately kill, injure, recklessly disturb or take bats;
- obstruct access to their roosts (or place of rest);
- damage or destroy bat roosts;
- Possess or sell bats unless acquired legally

1.4.1 Bats commonly use man-made structures to roost within and when undertaking building work in houses or other structures such as remedial work, extension, renovation or demolition there is potential to contravene the legislation outlined in 1.4.

Planning context

1.5 According to planning policy, prior to planning permission being determined it is expected that all survey work pertaining to protected species (and mitigation scheme if required) should be completed and reported.

1.5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that development should enhance the environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

Licensing

1.6 The presence of bat roosts that will be affected by proposals that would trigger the above legislation (such as removal of a roof / roof tiles or demolition of a building)

¹ Source: <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> checked 1/6/2024.

necessitates the application for EPSL from Natural England. Such licences permit activities that would otherwise be unlawful. Licences are only issued if three tests are satisfied, and these are:

- there is no satisfactory alternative
- there are overriding reasons of public interest and,
- the favourable conservation status of bat populations is maintained.

Legislative context-birds

1.7 All species of wild bird and their nests and eggs are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*). This makes it illegal to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; and
- Intentionally take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

1.7.1 Schedule 1 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* gives some bird species greater protection against disturbance whilst breeding (including barn owl).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Building inspection

2.1.1 A daytime visit was made to the Site and the interior of the building was searched for bats and evidence of bats (such as droppings, fur, feeding remains and roost exits). All accessible roof void sections were examined, and the inspection was made using a ladder and with the assistance of a handheld LED 'Luxtrex Nano' torch, which is standard practice for the inspection of potential roost features. Use was kept brief, targeted and disturbance-avoidant throughout the survey in order to minimise the potential for disturbance to bats. Internal inspection of enclosed roof voids and crevice features would not have been possible to an appropriate professional standard without the use of directional lighting. All accessible potential roosting features (PRFs) where bats might roost were inspected for bats, or evidence of bats.

2.1.2 An inspection was made of the exterior of the building for signs of bats such as: staining, grease marks, urine, fur, feeding remains and droppings on windowsills and walls, or PRFs that might offer access for bats into the building (such as cracks and fissures on or around roof and ridge tiles, soffits, barge boards or brickwork). The inspection was aided with the use of a handheld LED 'Luxtrex Nano' torch which is standard practice for the inspection of potential roost features. Use was kept brief, targeted and disturbance-avoidant throughout the survey in order to minimise the potential for disturbance to bats. Internal inspection of enclosed roof voids and crevice features would not have been possible to an appropriate professional standard without the use of directional lighting.

2.1.3 During the visit signs of breeding birds was also looked for at the exterior. A photographic record was made of the site and some photos are included within Table 1.

2.1.4 Dean Martin (MCIEEM) conducted the survey work on 2nd June 2026. Natural England bat licence number: 2025-86856-CL18-BAT.

2.1.5 The building was assessed along with local habitats and their potential for widespread crevice-dwelling and void-seeking bat species was considered. Google maps was used to make a general assessment of the site and local habitats. The government website <https://magic.defra.gov.uk> was checked for European Protected Species (EPS) licences granted by Natural England for bats within 2km of the site which revealed licences issued for common pipistrelle bat, noctule bat and brown long-eared bat. The LPA ecologist reported that a roost was recorded next door but there was no description of the type of roost or species recorded.

2.1.6 Constraints
None were identified.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Building inspection

3.1.1 The house was a two storey rendered brick structure that appeared to have been built during the early twentieth century and included three gables. The roof was covered with concrete interlocking tiles, which were in good condition and showed no PRFs; the tiles were in place the eaves and all mortar at the ridge and lead at the chimney were tightly sealed. The weather boards at the south gable offered opportunities for temporary / opportunistic use by bats, however these PRFs were very shallow and were not considered to offer long-term roosting opportunities. No evidence of bats was encountered at the exterior of the house, including at the weather boards. Typically, when crevice-dwelling bats occupy spaces / cavities behind weather boards, droppings are normally present on the vertical surfaces, particularly in June when the survey was undertaken when bats are highly active.

3.1.2 Inside the loft void it was apparent that the roof was supported by light weight timbers and was lined with traditional bitumen felt. Low levels cobwebbing was present at the ridge, which evidenced that no bats had used this feature in recent times. High levels of cobwebbing were found elsewhere between the rafters and gables, and around the chimney stack / roof intersection. The loft floor was covered with fibreglass insulation, and this supported old dust and debris, although no evidence of bats was encountered. Evidence of mice was present in the form of droppings and bits of chewed material. No evidence of bats was encountered.

3.1.3 The south gable weather boards were found to be covered with plaster and therefore no cavity was present. No evidence of bats was encountered.

3.1.4 The house was considered as having negligible bat suitability due to the lack of features that would offer access or roosting opportunities.

3.1.5 The single storey garage to the rear was a timber structure. The roof was covered with natural slate tiles, which were in good condition and showed no PRFs. Access for bats and birds was possible via the open door.

3.1.6 Inside the garage structure, the roof was unlined and vaulted, with an open and exposed interior. No PRFs were identified other than roof timbers, which may provide limited perching or temporary resting opportunities. No evidence of bats or breeding birds was recorded. The garage was assessed as having negligible bat roosting suitability. While void-seeking species could potentially utilise the structure opportunistically (e.g. for perching while feeding), no evidence of such activity was recorded, and further survey effort is considered unlikely to yield additional roost evidence.



Photo 1 North elevation



Photo 2 South elevation weather boards



Photo 3 Minor gaps beneath weather boards



Photo 4 Sealed verge



Photo 5 Roof void



Photo 6 Cobwebbed gable



Photo 7 Cobwebbed gable



Photo 8 Dust at loft floor – no evidence of bats



Photo 9 Plastered underside of weather boards south gable



Photo 10 Garage weather boards



Photo 11 Garage open front



Photo 21 Garage unlined / vaulted roof

4. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Bats

4.1.1 No evidence of bat presence (including droppings, staining, urine marks, feeding remains, or audible/visual signs) was recorded during either the external or internal inspection of the buildings. The structures were assessed as providing negligible roosting

potential for bats, with only very limited and opportunistic use possible, such as transient perching during commuting or temporary shelter during adverse weather conditions.

4.1.2 On the basis of the survey findings, the buildings are considered to have negligible likelihood of supporting a bat roost at the time of survey or in the foreseeable absence of material structural change. As such, the proposed works are considered unlikely to result in any offence under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). In accordance with current Bat Conservation Trust guidance (BCT, 2023), no further survey effort is recommended and a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) is not considered necessary.

4.1.3 It is recognised that bats are present within the wider local landscape, and that roost suitability of buildings can change over time due to weathering, deterioration, or alterations to fabric. Planning permissions may remain extant for up to three years prior to implementation, during which time changes in condition cannot be ruled out.

4.1.4 To avoid the potential for an offence under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), precautionary measures will be implemented during works to the weatherboarding on the southern elevation, where potential roost features (PRFs) were identified. These works will be undertaken under the supervision of a suitably licensed bat ecologist.

4.1.5 Immediately prior to any intrusive works, all PRFs will be subject to a hand-held torch inspection by the licensed bat ecologist. Removal of materials will then proceed slowly and carefully by hand, under continuous ecological supervision, with works stopped if any features that might suggest higher bat suitability or evidence of bats are identified.

4.1.6 In the unlikely event that a bat is discovered during works, all activity will cease immediately. The bat will not be handled unless undertaken by a licensed bat ecologist under appropriate conditions, and Natural England will be contacted without delay for advice (0300 060 3900). Should evidence of roosting bats be confirmed, works affecting the affected feature will not proceed until an EPSL has been obtained from Natural England.

4.2 Breeding Birds

4.2.1 No evidence of breeding birds was recorded during the survey and no breeding bird habitat was identified. Therefore, no mitigation is required.

4.3 Lifespan of report

4.3.1 This assessment remains valid for a period of 12 months from the date of the survey. If works have not commenced within this period, an updated (or 'top-up') bat inspection should be undertaken to ensure that the findings remain current and to reassess the potential for bat roosts or breeding bird activity at the Site.

5. RELEVANT LITERATURE

Bat Conservation Trust (2023) *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines*.

CIEEM (2023) UK BAT MITIGATION GUIDELINES. A guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats.

Schober, W and Grimmberger, E. (1993) *Bats of Britain and Europe*. Hamlyn.

Mitchell-Jones, A. (2004) *Bat mitigation guidelines*. English Nature.

Wardhaugh, A. A. (1987) *Bats of the British Isles*. Shire Natural History.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee, (2004) *Bat Workers' Manual*, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Stebbing, R. E. (1986) *Bats*. Mammal Society.

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APPENDIX 1

BAT METHODS STATEMENT 201 READING ROAD

The following precautionary measures will be adopted to ensure that bats will not be harmed during destructive works to the south gable weather boarding described above, in the event that a bat is roosting within the structure during this time. A copy of details below will be made available to all workers and visually displayed on Site. A toolbox talk will be given to contractors by a licensed bat worker about where bats may be roosting. The talk will cover:

- bat legislation
- that the risk to bats is low
- bat safeguarding measures
- actions to be taken in the absence of a licensed bat worker
- best working practices

- During removal of the weather boarding, a licensed bat worker will carry out a check for bats beneath the weather boarding gaps. Should any bats be found prior to destructive works, work will immediately stop until the Local Planning Authority and Natural England (0300 060 3900) have been contacted for advice on how to proceed. In such a scenario it is likely that an EPSL application would need to be made to Natural England before works could recommence.

- Should any bats be found during works in the absence of a licensed bat worker, work will immediately stop until the licensed bat worker, the Local Planning and Natural England (0300 060 3900) have been contacted for advice on how to proceed.

- Any bats found during the construction period may cause a significant delay to construction works until a license has been issued by Natural England.

- In the unlikely event a bat is found injured, it will be placed into a ventilated box and taken to a cool, dark place.