

**31 Copse Drive
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG41 1NA**

Preliminary Roost Assessment

Report ref.: R2869_PRA_a

Report Quality Control Information	
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Elisha Strachan and David Higgins to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at 31 Copse Drive in Wokingham. 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.
- 1.1.2** The suburban area surrounding the property with gardens, and nearby parcels of woodland and railway line provide habitats that could be used as a flight-path connecting to high-quality foraging habitats for any bat(s) roosting in the property.
- 1.1.3** No evidence of roosting bats was found externally or internally during the building inspection. The absence of bat droppings inside the void spaces indicates that primarily void-dwelling species, such as long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.), are unlikely to be present. Gaps of limited extent were visible in the bungalow comprising slight gaps under the ridge tiles and plastic sheet on the flat roof. However these were ruled out as suitable bat roosts during the inspection for being of sub-optimal condition for crevice-dwelling species, such as the locally recorded common pipistrelle (*P. pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*P. pygmaeus*).
- 1.1.4** The development proposals will not directly impact on any bat roosts or potential roost features. The development proposals are considered highly unlikely to result in the death, injury or disturbance of bats; the damage or destruction of a bat roost; or the obstruction of access to a bat roost. As such, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required for the planned works to go ahead lawfully.
- 1.1.5** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the demolition work, the work will stop immediately and a licensed ecologist will advise how works should proceed; this may require a EPSML to permit the work to continue lawfully.
- 1.1.6** This report contains information regarding a mobile species so it will likely be valid for less than 12 months (CIEEM 2019).

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Elisha Strachan and David Higginsto undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at 31 Copse Drive in Wokingham

2.1.2 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.

2.2 Site Location and Context

2.2.1 The detached bungalow is located on the northern side of Copse Drive in Wokingham, Berkshire (central OS grid reference: SU 80175 69431).

2.2.2 The bungalow is in a suburban setting, with neighbouring residential properties and their respective gardens on all sides. Holt Copse and Joel Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is approximately 210m east of the property and comprises ancient semi-natural woodland that supports a noctule maternity roost (Wokingham Town Council, 2021). A railway line with wooded embankments is approximately 50m to the southwest and the Emm Brook river flows approximately 240m to the northwest.

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)I – 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;
- MAGIC – examined to locate granted European Protected Species licences; and
- Pre-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 exterior and interior of the property was undertaken on the 12th February 2025 by Vicky Potts - registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 (Registration no. 2016-27162-CLS-CLS) - and Jake Morgan – an assistant ecologist - in accordance with good practice guidance (Collins 2023). The equipment used during the inspection comprised binoculars, a high-power (1 million candlepower) LED torch, 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

4.2.2 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.

4.2.3 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.

4.2.4 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.

4.2.5 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

4.2.6 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.

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

4.2.8 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

- 4.2.9** 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.
- 4.2.10** 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.
- 4.2.11** This report contains information regarding a mobile species so it will likely be valid for less than 12 months (CIEEM 2019).

5 SURVEY RESULTS

5.1 Desk Study

5.1.1 The connected private gardens and nearby parcels of woodland, railway line and brook in the suburban setting provides continuous habitat that could be used as bat flight paths and feeding habitat also connecting to additional high-quality foraging habitats in the nearby countryside for any bats roosting locally.

5.1.2 Bat mitigation licences that have been granted 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 Works	Distance (m)
2016-22176-EPS-MIT	Brown long eared	Destruction of a resting place	342 S
2016-24486-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle	Damage and destruction of a resting place	756 N
2015-11806-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle	Damage and destruction of a resting place	1087 SE
2020-48489-EPS-MIT	Brown long eared Common pipistrelle Soprano pipistrelle	Damage and destruction of a resting place	1174 NE
2015-13607-EPS-MIT-1	Common pipistrelle	Destruction of a resting place	1472 NW
2014-2425-EPS-MIT	Brown long eared Common pipistrelle	Destruction of a resting place	1758 SW
2014-964-EPS-MIT	Brown long eared	Damage and destruction of a resting place	1758 SW

5.2 Building Inspection

5.2.1 The findings from the external and internal inspections carried out for the bungalow are described with photographs, and annotated in a plan (see **Figure 1**), as follows:

External Survey

- 5.2.2** The property was a detached brick built residential dwelling with a connecting flat roofed garage (**Photographs 1 - 3**).



Photograph 1. Front of the bungalow viewed from the south.



Photograph 2. Rear of the bungalow viewed from the north.



Photograph 3. Garage towards south eastern corner of the bungalow.

- 5.2.3** The interlocking roof tiles were flat and intact throughout on the main roof (**Photograph 4**). The ridge tiles were all in place and appeared to be lifted at the verge however on close inspection the gap was confirmed to be superficial as mortar was visible behind (**Photograph 5**; **Target note 1**).



Photograph 4. Roof tiles all in place, flat and tightly fitted on the main roof.



Photograph 5. Ridge tile slightly lifted with mortar visible behind.

- 5.2.4** The mortar was visible at the base of the roof tiles (**Photograph 6**). Lead flashing was tight around the chimney and flue pipe on the front roof elevation (**Photograph 7**).



Photograph 6. Gap in mortar at the north western corner of the side.



Photograph 7. Lead flashing tight around the chimney and flue pipe.

- 5.2.5** The timber soffits were tight to the brickwork throughout apart from a superficial gap to the front of the bungalow which was filled with timber and heavily cobwebbed (**Photograph 8**; **Target note 2**). The front of the bungalow was clad with timber which was tight (**Photograph 9**). The verge mortar at the gable end was all intact (**Photograph 10**).



Photograph 7. Superficial gap in soffit to the front of the bungalow.



Photograph 8. Timber cladding tight to the front of the bungalow.



Photograph 10. Verge mortar intact at the gable end.

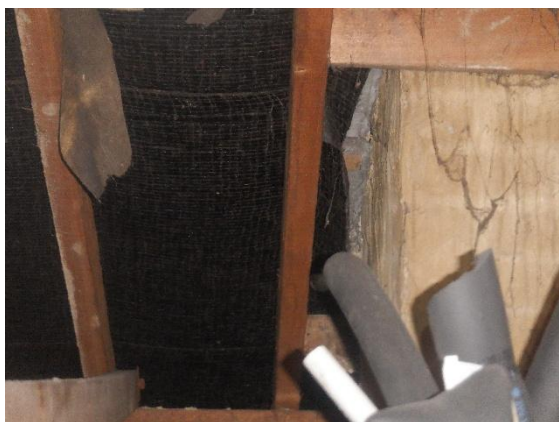
- 5.2.6** The garage was lined with bitumen felt and plastic sheeting, and on close inspection a potential gap behind the sheeting did not lead to any crevices and no evidence of bats was found (**Photograph 11; Target note 3**).



Photograph 11, Slight gap behind plastic on the roof of the garage.

Internal Survey

- 5.2.7** The building had one roof void which covered the two storey footprint of the bungalow and was accessed via a central hatch. The space had a maximum height of approximately 2.5m and was lined with bitumen felt. The felt had a number of gaps including where it was hanging down loose in places exposing the roof tiles, a gap around the chimney which was heavily cobwebbed and a large section missing around a ventilation pipe, which was not suitable for use by bats (**Photographs 12 & 13; Target notes 4 & 5**). The floor was covered in fibreglass insulation. The eaves were open with blockwork visible (**Photograph 14**). The gable ends were tight with blockwork and brickwork with felt around the edges and no daylight visible (**Photograph 15**). Expanding foam was visible at the apex of the internal western gable end wall (**Photograph 16**). The ridge beam was lightly cobwebbed. Overall the void was clear of items and clean. No evidence of bats was found.



Photograph 12. Gap in felt around the side of the chimney.



Photograph 13. Large tear in the roofing felt



Photograph 14. Block work visible at the eaves.



Photograph 15. Blockwork gable ends tight to felt.

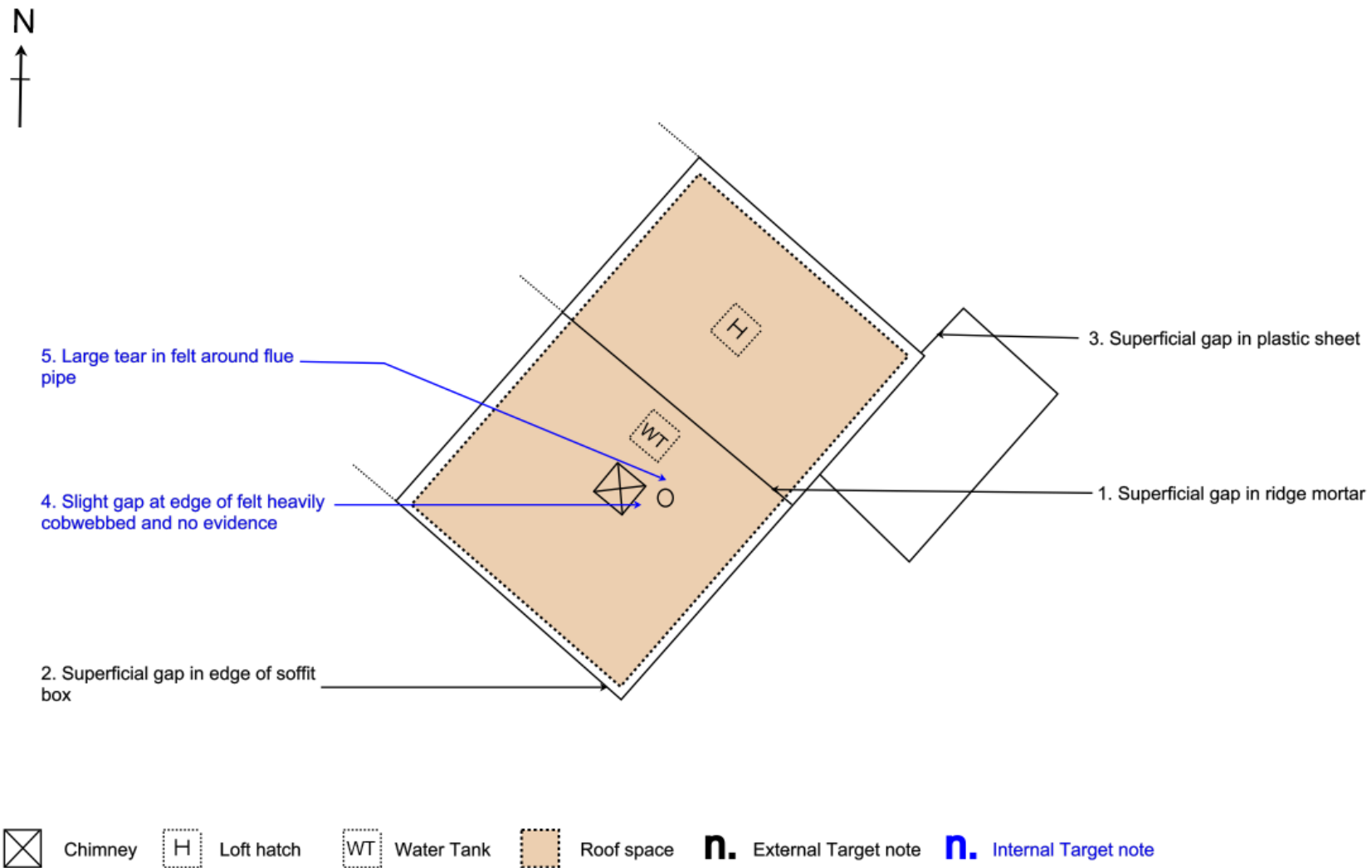


Photograph 16. Expanding foam at the apex of the western internal gable end wall.

5.2.8 The garage was lined with timber boarding and offered no suitable crevices for use by bats (Photograph 17).



Photograph 17. Interior of the garage



Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	31 Copse Drive Wokingham	
VP	February 2025	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

Figure 1. Preliminary Roost Assessment Findings

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Assessment of Potential Roost Suitability

6.1.1 The linked private gardens in the suburban setting provide continuous habitat that could be used as feeding areas and flight paths connecting to higher quality foraging habitats in the nearby woodland and countryside for any bats roosting locally. Furthermore, the search of granted bat mitigation licences identified three species known to be roosting within a 1km radius of the property: common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*pipistrellus pygmaeus*), and brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*).

6.1.1 The property had potential bat access points beneath a ridge tile on the main roof, at the edge of the soffit to the front of the house and behind plastic sheeting on the garage (**Photographs 5, 7 & 11; Target notes 1 , 2 & 3**).

6.1.2 The main roof void had sufficient space for internal flight and suitable conditions for supporting individual or small numbers of void-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*). However, no bat droppings were found internally so the presence of void-dwelling bats is considered highly unlikely.

6.1.3 The potential bat access point at the ridge tile, the edge of the soffit and behind the plastic were inspected with a torch. The gaps were considered to be superficial only and unlikely to lead to potential crevice roost sites, and therefore did not provide sufficient space, shelter, protection and conditions for opportunistic use by individual crevice-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*pipistrellus pygmaeus*) bats. Therefore, the property has been assigned negligible suitability for bats overall (see **Appendix 1** for potential suitability categories).

6.2 Assessment of Impacts and Recommendations

6.2.1 The development proposals seek consent for the addition of a dormer window to the rear of the house and roof lights to the front of the house, and a rear and side extension following the demolition of the existing garage. The survey findings demonstrate that these proposals are highly unlikely to result in the death, injury or disturbance of bats; the damage or destruction of a bat roost; or the obstruction of access to a bat roost. Therefore, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required to allow the development proposals to proceed lawfully.

7 REFERENCES

CIEEM (2019). *Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys*. CIEEM, Winchester.

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

Mathews F., Kubasiewicz L.M., Gurnell J., Harrower C.A., McDonald R.A., Shore R.F. (2018). *A Review of the Population and Conservation Status of British Mammals*. A report by the Mammal Society under contract to Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage. Natural England, Peterborough.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. & McLeish, A. P. (2004). *Bat Workers' Manual (3^d edition)*. JNCC, Peterborough.

Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). *UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats*. CIEEM, Ampfield.

APPENDIX 1 – POTENTIAL SUITABILITY CATEGORIES FOR ROOSTING BATS

The categories detailed in **Table 2** below are derived from the '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*' (Collins 2023) and provide guidance for assessing the potential suitability of buildings (and other structures) for roosting bats. These categories are applied using professional judgement and irrespective of whether the presence of a bat roost has been confirmed during a survey, as additional bat roosts could be present which have not yet been discovered.

Table 2. Categories for potential suitability of buildings (and other structures) for roosting bats.

Potential Suitability	Category Justification
None	A building (or structure) that has no features likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of cracks, crevices or voids that could provide suitable shelter).
Negligible	A building (or structure) that has no obvious features likely to be used by roosting bats, but in this case a small element of uncertainty remains as bats will occasionally use small and apparently unsuitable features. This category may also be used where a bat could potentially roost due to one attribute, but it is considered unlikely due to another attribute (e.g. a feature that is subject to constant illumination from artificial lighting).
Low	A building (or structure) that has one or more potential roost sites suitable for opportunistic use by individual bats at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites for bats do not provide sufficient space, shelter, protection, conditions and/or surrounding suitable habitat to be used regularly or by large numbers (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for a maternity colony and not a classic hibernation site).
Moderate	A building (or structure) that has one or more potential roost sites suitable for regular use by individual bats, or small non-breeding groups, due to sufficient space, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. However, these potential roost sites for bats are unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status with regards to the type of roost only (i.e. maternity colonies and classic hibernation sites).
High	A building (or structure) that has one or more potential roost sites suitable for use by large numbers of bats more regularly and for longer periods of time due to sufficient space, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These potential roost sites for bats are capable of supporting high conservation status roosts (i.e. maternity colonies and classic hibernation sites).

APPENDIX 2 – DEFINITION OF BAT ROOST TYPES

The potential suitability of a building in conjunction with any evidence of bat presence is used to provide an initial assessment of likely roost type and importance. The types of roost considered are based on the following Natural England definitions:

- Day roost – a summer resting place used by individual bats, or small non-breeding groups, during the day;
- Night roost – a resting place used by individual bats on occasion, or by a whole colony regularly, during the night;
- Feeding perch – a resting place used by individual bats, or a few individuals, primarily for short periods of feeding during the night;
- Transitional roost – a place used by a few individual bats, or occasionally small groups, for a short period of time upon waking from hibernation or in the period prior to hibernation;
- Maternity roost – a place used by small to large groups of female bats to give birth and raise their young to independence;
- Hibernation roost – a place used by individual bats, or in groups, during winter where there is a constant cool temperature and high humidity; and
- Satellite roost – a place used by a few individuals to small groups of breeding female bats found in close proximity to the main nursery colony throughout the breeding season.

The importance of a bat roost is underpinned by the conservation status of the suspected species (i.e. the distribution/rarity of a species in a specific geographic location) and the type of roost (i.e. not all roosts have the same level of importance in supporting the local bat population). Further roost characterisation surveys may be required to fully determine the importance of a confirmed roost to allow for a robust impact assessment.

APPENDIX 3 – FURTHER SURVEY RATIONALE

In cases where no evidence of use by bats is found during a building inspection but the possibility of their presence cannot be ruled out, further presence/likely absence survey is likely to be required if the development proposals will impact potential roost sites.

Emergence surveys are carried out to establish the presence or likely absence of roosting bats in buildings (and other structures) and these are designed in accordance with the '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*' (Collins 2023) detailed in **Table 3** below.

Table 3. Recommended further survey for establishing presence/likely absence of roosting bats in buildings (and other structures).

Potential Suitability	Further Survey
None	No further surveys are required.
Negligible	No further surveys are required.
Low	A minimum of one dusk emergence survey visit should be undertaken in the period of May to August. However, if all areas (including cracks, crevices and voids) can be thoroughly inspected and no evidence of use by bats is found, then emergence surveys may not be required. In cases where a complete inspection cannot be carried out, professional judgement and proportionality should be applied when assessing the impacts of the development proposals.
Moderate	A minimum of two dusk emergence survey visits should be undertaken in the period of May to September, with at least one of the surveys between May and August; the survey visits should be spaced at least three weeks apart.
High	A minimum of three separate dusk emergence survey visits should be undertaken in the period of May to September (inclusive), with at least two of the surveys between May and August; the survey visits should be spaced at least three weeks apart.

In cases where the PRA and/or further survey establishes the presence of roosting bats in a building (or structure), this will likely trigger the need for roost characterisation to collect sufficient information to inform the impact assessment and mitigation strategy. The roost characterisation comprises information collected during the PRA, emergence surveys and by other methods, such as DNA analysis of bat droppings, and ultimately aims to determine the bat species roosting; the number of bats the roosts support; the roost access points; the locations of the roosts and the types of roost present. This information is crucial when applying for planning permission and/or a European Protected Species mitigation licence.