



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) OF AN OUTBUILDING AT BISHMILLAH HOUSE SHINFIELD



**Prepared for:
Qudsia Rukhsar
Bismillah House
Brookers Hill
Shinfield
RG2 9BX**

22 September 2025

Ref: SPH/PEA-25/03.09



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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 Qudsia Rukhsar to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]), of a brick-built outbuilding in the rear garden of Bismillah House, Brookers Hill, Shinfield, Reading, RG2 9BX. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Wednesday 3 September 2025 at 1.00pm, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the building 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 one statutory designated site is located within, and one current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats has been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The immediate surrounding habitat does not provide prime roosting or foraging habitat due to the fragmented nature and dense urban development. However, via the garden network there is some ecological connectivity to bat foraging and roosting habitat in the wider landscape.

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 building's suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and no evidence of bat roosting or potential roost features were identified during the preliminary inspection. When combined, the lack of features along with the data from the desk top study, results in the building being characterised as having 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).



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1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Qudsia Rukhsar to conduct a DBW of the outbuilding at Bismillah House, Brookers Hill, Shinfield, RG2 9BX to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham 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 forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council that is seeking to demolish the existing building and replace it with a new building.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats was undertaken by, and the report written by Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv.

Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI-64844). 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.

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.



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3. Site Location and Description

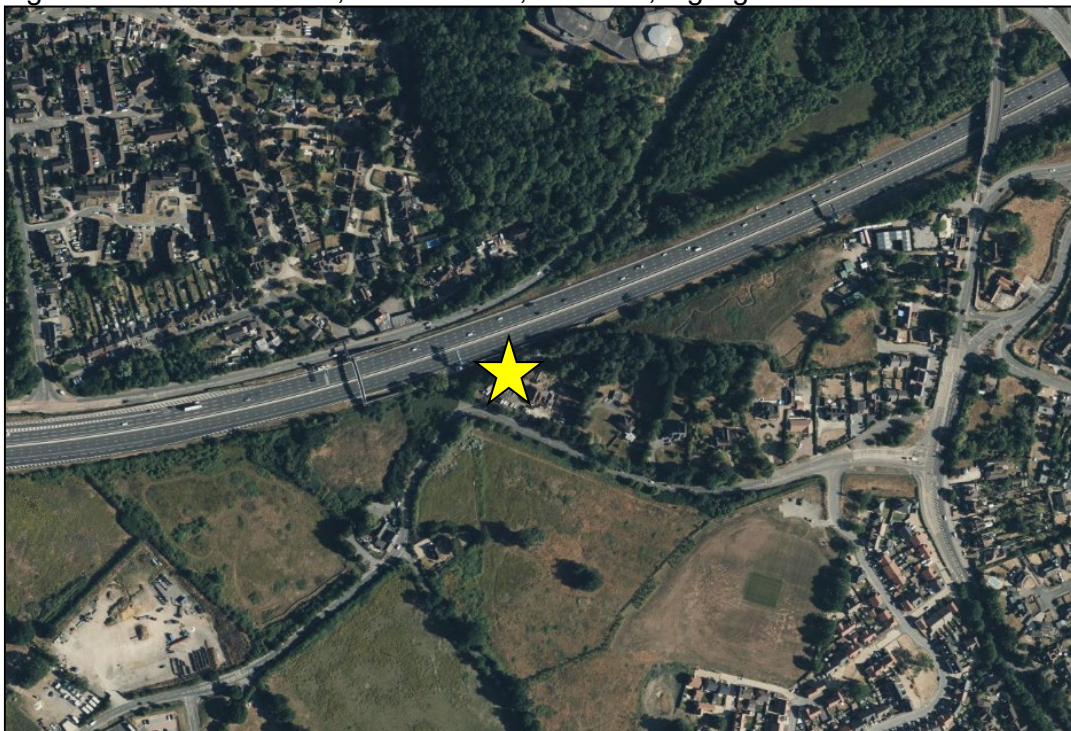
3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU72746867, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. Bismillah House, Brookers Hill, Shinfield, highlighted.



Figure 2. Bismillah House, Brookers Hill, Shinfield, highlighted.





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3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises of a large two storey rendered property and a series of buildings, including a brick-built detached outbuilding, subject of this report. The outbuilding is located at the rear of Bismillah House and is constructed from red brick and painted white. The remainder of the site comprises various areas of hard standing, a lawn to the rear with mature trees, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers limited foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is some ecological connectivity to bat foraging and roosting habitat in the wider landscape.

Figure 3. Rear garden. Bismillah House, Shinfield. 03.09.25



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

The client has advised that, to their knowledge, no previous bat surveys have been undertaken on this outbuilding. 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 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 site is located to the west of the village of Shinfield, and is in a semi-rural location, separated from Whitley Wood and Shinfield Park to the north by the M4 motorway. To the south lie the remnants of agricultural fields linking to new developments at Ryeish Green and Three Mile Cross further west. To the east lies the dense urban village of Shinfield that is characterised by buildings and gardens of varying styles and sizes. Further afield to the east lies Reading University farmland and the flood plain linked to the River Loddon. The remnant farmland, flood plain and river are likely to provide good roosting, commuting and foraging habitat for bats.



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Pearman's Copse Local Nature Reserve is situated within 2km of the proposed development site however there is no ecological connectivity to this statutory designated site due to the intervening-built environment and the M4 motorway. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed one current EPSLs 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
2018-36705-EPS-MIT-1	10/2028	Common pipistrelle and brown long-eared

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of the outbuilding at Bismillah House, Brookers Hill, Shinfield, RG2 9BX was carried out by Simon Holmes on Wednesday 3 September 2025 at 1.00pm. The weather conditions for the survey were overcast with a temperature of 19 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, endoscope and a ladder.

During the DBW, an external and internal inspection of the outbuilding 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. This includes the main property as it will not be affected by the proposed works.

4.3 Constraints

Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client. There is no access to the roof void over the toilet, and the central room has a vaulted ceiling covered with a fibre board lining but given the good state of the roof externally this was not considered a significant constraint to the survey.



5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the outbuilding 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 outbuilding is covered in closely fitted clay tiles, none of which were missing or broken, see Figure 4 below. All the ridge tiles are secured with no gaps suitable for bats in which to roost (see Figure 5 on page 9) and there is no missing mortar from the verges offering no roosting potential, see Figure 6 on page 9. The lead flashing around the chimney stack is securely fitted and flush to the tiles, a small gap is visible on the right hand side of the stack where a tile has broken, however on closer inspection the remains of the broken tile can be seen providing no gaps that could be exploited by roosting bats (see Figure 7 on page 10), and there are no splits or gaps in the wooden soffits and fascias, see Figure 8 on page 10.

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

Figure 4. Roof over outbuilding at Bismillah House, Shinfield. 03.09.25





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Figure 5. Example sealed ridge tiles. Bismillah House, Shinfield. 03.09.25



Figure 6. Example sealed verge. Bismillah House, Shinfield. 03.09.25





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Figure 7. Example flush lead flashing. Bismillah House, Shinfield. 03.09.25



Figure 8. Example close fitted wooden soffits and fascias. Bismillah House, Shinfield. 03.09.25





5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The outbuilding has been partitioned into 5 separate rooms, at the northern end is a WC with flat ceiling (see Figure 9 below) and tiled floor with a small widow in the gable end. The next room has a vaulted ceiling that is covered in a textured fibre board, see Figure 10 on page 12. It has a concrete floor that was cluttered, and there is a hand basin with a small window in the west facing elevation. The next section has been divided into two small rooms separated by a breeze block wall, one section being accessed from the east facing elevation and the other from the west, both rooms are cluttered however this did not hinder the inspection. Both rooms are identical having vaulted ceilings lined with a bitumen felt that is in good condition with no rips or tears, see Figure 11 on Page 12. The final room, located on the south facing gable end is accessed from a door on the west facing elevation and is also cluttered with personal belongings, see Figure 12 on page 13. The ceiling is vaulted and the tiles lined with a bitumen felt that is in good condition with no rips or tears, natural light spills in through a small window on the gable end.

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

Figure 9. WC northern end of the outbuilding at Bismillah House, Shinfield. 03.09.25





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Figure 10. Internal view of vaulted ceiling, outbuilding. Bismillah House, Shinfield. 03.09.25



Figure 11. Internal view of storeroom, outbuilding. Bismillah House, Shinfield. 03.09.25





Figure 12. Internal view of storeroom, outbuilding. Bismillah House, Shinfield. 03.09.25



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.**



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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.

Please note that the above list 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 outbuilding provides a high level of confidence in support of the opinions set out in this report. There are no visible features externally on the building which could be utilised by roosting bats or in which bats could access the building to roost and internally there are no potential roosting opportunities for bats.

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 building. 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 building 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.



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9. Queries

Any queries regarding this report should be addressed, in the first instance, to Urban Tree Experts:

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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 CP7 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (planning policy relating to the site) states *“Development which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and*

- i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or*
- ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses 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.