



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

ECOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT (BATS) AT BROOK HOUSE SONNING



**Prepared for:
Mr P Benton
Brook House
High Street
Sonning
RG4 6UP**

5 September 2024

Ref: SPH/ESR-24/26.08



Urban Tree Experts

BBS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Bramley House
Newnham Bridge
Tenbury Wells
Worcestershire
WR15 8NX
Tel: 0118 976 2902
Mobile: 07557 982091
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1 Introduction	4
1.1 Instruction	4
1.2 Aims and Objectives	4
1.3 Proposed Works	4
1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience	4
2 Survey Methodology	4
2.1 Constructions/Limitations	4
2.2 Dusk Surveys	4
3 Survey Findings	6
3.1 Dusk Surveys	6
4 Conclusions/Interpretation	8
5 Ecological Watching Brief	9
6 References	9
7 Queries	10

Appendix 1

©2024 Urban Tree Experts

All rights in this report are reserved. No part of it may be reproduced, edited or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature, without our written permission. Its content and format are for the exclusive use of Mr P Benton and his agents in dealing with this site. It may not be sold, lent, hired out or divulged to any third party not directly involved in this site without the written consent of Urban Tree Experts. It may be reproduced as part of a planning application.

The validity of this report ceases at the prescribed time limit or after one year from the survey, or if the site conditions change due to unspecified works that affect the site whichever is the sooner.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Urban Tree Experts was commissioned by Mr P Benton to carry out two dusk emergence surveys at Brook House, High Street, Sonning, RG4 6UP. The surveys were undertaken at the property to provide further evidence to support the initial findings (a negative result) and conclusions from the preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) report ref SPH/NP/PEA-24/25.06, and to inform appropriate mitigation for the proposed works, if required. This report is prepared to support a forthcoming planning application to the Wokingham Borough Council.

The application site comprises 18th century grade II listed, two storey, brick built and painted property with service wing on the northern elevation. The remainder of the site comprises a front parking area with shrubs and a well-maintained large rear garden that is mainly laid to lawn with paved area and trees and shrubs throughout. The site itself offers good foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is good ecological connectivity to the wider landscape that provides good habitat for foraging and roosting bats.

The preliminary ecological appraisal consisted 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 four current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats have been granted within 2km of the proposed development site.

A search of Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire bat group records confirmed 12 different species within the 2-kilometer search radius, including *Myotis sp.*

The dusk emergence surveys were conducted on Wednesday 31 July and Monday 26 August 2024. A number of bats were seen and heard foraging in and around the site throughout the surveys however, none were seen emerging from or re-entering the property to roost.

This report confirms the findings of the survey, completed by an experienced licensed bat ecologist, in accordance with current best practice guidance where possible, and outlines any ecological constraints or issues with the proposed works.

The combined evidence from the preliminary survey and activity survey provides a high level of confidence in support of the opinions set out in this report. No bats or evidence of bats were observed during the PEA and no bats were seen entering or emerging from the property during the activity surveys. This indicates that the property has not been used as a roost by bats and that an EPSL from Natural England (NE) is not required however, due to the acute angles formed between the property and the boundaries and the fact that the subservient section on the northern elevation (servant wing) could not be examined internally or adequately monitored externally, works to this section of the rooves must be carried out under an ecological watching brief, conditioned to any planning consent.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts were commissioned by Mr P Benton to carry out two dusk emergence surveys at Brook House, High Street, Sonning, RG4 6UP.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The dusk emergence surveys are designed to:

- Identify the presence/likely absence of bats using the building to roost.
- Estimate the size and status of any existing bat roost within the building.
- Establish where the bats are accessing the building.
- Determine the potential impacts on any bat roost from the proposed development.
- Determine if an EPSL and ecological method statement is required.

The survey was carried out in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 4th edition.

1.3 Proposed Works

The surveys were commissioned in connection with a forthcoming planning application to the Wokingham Borough Council the full details of which are unknown, but we are informed that the application will seek to replace the roof across the whole of the property.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The activity surveys were conducted by Nick Powell, Simon Holmes and Katie Holmes and the report was compiled by Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv, a Natural England licensed bat ecologist.

Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI64844). He has 34 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work.

Katie Holmes. Katie holds a Class 2 Bat License (CLS-35124) and has been surveying bats for 12 years with various ecological consultancies and has received training in surveying techniques, bat detector use, bat biology, identification, acoustic monitoring, echolocation analysis and netting.

Nick Powell. Nick commenced surveying bats in 2022 and holds a Class 2 Bat License (CLS-11742) and has received training in bat ecology and surveying, bat detector use, acoustic monitoring/sonogram analysis, architectural terms for bat workers, bats and development, H & S awareness for bat workers, legislation for bat workers, British bats their ecology and conservation, surveying trees for bats, Bat ID and handling, bat biology.

2. Survey Methodology

2.1 Constraints/Limitations

An assessment of the building exterior was conducted on 31 July 2024, prior to the first activity survey being undertaken, due to the acute angles formed between the property and the boundaries and the fact that the subservient section on the northern elevation (servant wing) could not be examined internally or adequately monitored externally potential bat activity could not be monitored.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Weather conditions were suitable for the surveys, being conducted during warm weather and a number of bats were heard and seen foraging and in transit during the surveys.

2.2 Dusk Surveys

The dusk emergence surveys were conducted on the evenings of Wednesday 31 July and Monday 26 August 2024. The surveyors and equipment were stationed (as shown in Figure 1 on page 5), to ensure the features identified in the preliminary bat report could be observed.

During the surveys bat activity was monitored using 3 BatLogger M bat detectors together with 4 Sony Handycam night shot video cameras with high intensity IR lamps. A screenshot from the video cameras is included at Appendix 1.

To provide additional evidence and in lieu of the practical constraints an Anabat Express static detector and a Bushnell Trophy Cam HD infrared trail camera were stationed inside the main loft between 31 July and 26 August 2024 to record possible bat activity. Analysis of the data revealed no bat calls or bats recorded flying internally during the survey period.

The detectors and cameras were fitted with SD cards for recording bat activity, allowing for later analysis with Kaleidoscope Pro 3 software and MotionMeerkat.

Figure 1 – Brook House, Sonning, surveyor/equipment locations.



During the survey no bats were seen emerging from and/or returning to the property to roost. In total 4 different species were recorded and identified foraging and commuting around the site. A simple summary of the bats recorded can be seen in Table 2 on page 6. The most frequently used flight paths of soprano pipistrelle bats are shown on Figure 1 above.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

3. Survey Findings

3.1 Dusk Surveys

The weather conditions and surveyor details from the surveys can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Surveyor details and weather conditions for the bat activity surveys conducted at Brook House, Sonning.

Date:	31 July 2024	26 August 2024
Surveyor and location	(A) Simon Holmes (B) Remote camera/batlogger (C) Nick Powell (D) Remote camera	(A) Katie Holmes (B) Remote camera/batlogger (C) Nick Powell (D) Remote camera
Weather Conditions (Start)	Temperature 27°C Cloud cover 30% Humidity 63.6% Dry Wind Beaufort 0-1	Temperature 19.1°C Cloud cover 25% Humidity 69% Dry Wind Beaufort 1-2
Sunset	20:53	20:01
Start time	20:35	19:45
Finish time	22:25	21:35
Duration	01:50	01:50
Weather Conditions (Finish)	Temperature 23°C Cloud cover 50% Humidity 71.1% Dry Wind Beaufort 0-1	Temperature 16.9°C Cloud cover 25% Humidity 79.9% Dry Wind Beaufort 0

Table 2. Summary of bat calls recorded in the vicinity of Brook House, Sonning.

Date	Surveyor Position	Time	Seen	Heard	Species	Comments
31/07/24	A	20:35 – 22:25	Y	Y	Common and soprano pipistrelle, noctule and brown long-eared (BLE)	At 21.11 (18 minutes after sunset) 2 soprano pipistrelle bats were seen and heard 'chasing' around the roof and chimney of The Malt House, the property the surveyor was standing beside. Thereafter soprano pipistrelle foraging activity dominated until survey end with the bats mainly foraging behind the surveyor. A noctule was first heard at 21.23 and seen at 21.27 foraging high to the left of the surveyor. At 21.55 and 22.00 four foraging calls from a common pipistrelle bat were heard, the bat was not seen. Analysis of the data recorded revealed 3 calls from a BLE bat.
31/07/24	B	20:35 – 22:25	Y	Y	Common and soprano pipistrelle and noctule	Calls recorded between 21.12 and survey end were 27 soprano pipistrelle, 13 noctule and 5 common pipistrelle. The remote camera did not record any bat activity.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Table 2. Summary of bat calls continued.

Date	Surveyor Position	Time	Seen	Heard	Species	Comments
31/07/24	C	20:35 – 22:25	Y	Y	Common and soprano pipistrelle, noctule and BLE	At 21.09 (16 minutes after sunset) a soprano pipistrelle was both seen and heard entering the garden from the neighbouring garden to the left of the surveyor and across the rear of the property. The bat was then seen again on another three occasions (at 21.12, 21.17 and 21.41) foraging around the garden to the side and rear of the surveyor. Foraging calls from a noctule was first heard at 21.22 until 21.27 when it was also seen foraging high above the site. Only 4 foraging calls from a common pipistrelle bat were heard, at 22.00, the bat was not seen. Analysis of the data recorded revealed 3 calls from a BLE bat.
31/07/24	D	20:35 – 22:25	Y	N	Remote camera only	The camera recorded did not record any bat activity during the survey period.
26/08/24	A	19:45 – 21:35	Y	Y	Common and soprano pipistrelle, noctule and BLE	At 20.07 (5 minutes after sunset) 2 soprano pipistrelle bats were seen and recorded emerging from The Malt house, the property the surveyor was standing beside, and thereafter for some 30 minutes the bats were seen foraging and 'chasing' around the roof/chimney and rear garden of this property. Sporadic soprano pipistrelle activity was recorded until survey end with bats being seen and heard in transit across the front of and down the side of the property and foraging behind the surveyor. 29 foraging calls from a noctule were heard between 20.17 and 21.29 with the bat being seen foraging high above the site and surrounding area. Common pipistrelle foraging activity was limited with only 7 foraging calls being heard between 21.00 and 21.15, the bat was not seen. A number of BLE calls were recorded between 21.05 and survey end.
26/08/24	B	19:45 – 21:35	Y	Y	Common and soprano pipistrelle, noctule and BLE	Calls recorded between 20.19 and survey were 13 soprano pipistrelle, 35 noctule, 2 common pipistrelle and 5 BLE. The remote camera recorded bats in transit across the front of the property only.
26/08/24	C	19:45 – 21:35	Y	Y	Common and soprano pipistrelle and noctule	At 20.14 (12 minutes after sunset) a soprano pipistrelle bat was both seen and heard entering the site to the left of the surveyor and then foraging amongst the trees. Thereafter soprano pipistrelle foraging and transit activity dominated until survey end with the bat being seen on another hand full of occasions in transit across the back of the property and foraging around the rear garden. Common pipistrelle activity was very limited with a few foraging calls being heard at 21.24, the bat was not seen. 2 noctules were both seen and heard foraging high above the site and surrounding area at 21.18, the bats were heard again on another 4 occasions foraging until 21.29.
26/08/24	D	19:45 – 21:35	Y	N	Remote camera only	On 2 occasions the camera recorded bats in transit across the rear of the property.



4. Conclusions/Interpretation

- 4.1 The calls detected and recorded from the survey provided identification of common pipistrelle, *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle, *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, noctule, *Nyctalus noctule*, and brown long-eared, *Plecotus auritus*, foraging and/or transiting across the site. The longest and most frequent calls were from soprano pipistrelle bats.
- 4.2 The property has features suitable for crevice dwelling bats to roost and the surrounding area provides good habitat for bats in which to forage and roost. However, no bats were seen emerging from or returning to roost from those areas under observation. The surveyor observations provide a high level of confidence in the species detected during the surveys at Brook House and are comparable to those of the records provided by the Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire bat group.
- 4.3 Pipistrelle bats are one of the first emerging bat species after sunset, frequently emerging within 20 minutes after sunset. Noctules are also known to emerge early. As the first soprano pipistrelle bat call were at 5 minutes after sunset (and the bats seen emerging from a neighbouring property) and the noctule call was heard at 15 minutes after sunset (and the bat being seen foraging high above the site), both bats are most probably roosting close by, but did not emerge from the property. Whilst no bats were seen emerging from or returning to the property to roost, this does not mean that they will not be present in the future as bats are known to be transient and use a wide variety of crevice like features opportunistically.
- 4.4 Whilst only a single call from brown long-eared (BLE) bat was heard by the surveyor, this is not unusual as the BLE bat is commonly referred to as the 'silent' bat as the calls are very quiet and difficult to detect as they prefer to hunt using sight and hearing.
- 4.5 The survey conditions were good, with warm weather, a variety of insects flying and the bat calls and field observations were, in our opinion, considered low.

With the good foraging conditions this season (2024) the bat activity encountered during the survey is considered to be low. A number of activity surveys in the county this season have resulted in low levels of bat activity despite favorable foraging conditions. There is no specific evidence to support why the activity was low.

- 4.6 The bat calls and field observations provide a high level of confidence in support of the opinions as set out in this report. Bat activity was dominated by soprano pipistrelle bats, with up to 2 bats being seen foraging in and around the site during the survey.
- 4.7 The cumulative evidence from the PEA, static detector, camera and activity surveys leads me to conclude that bats have not and are not roosting in the main loft of Brook House and the main property has a negligible potential to support roosting bats therefore, an EPSL is not required. The shallow property boundaries and acute roof angle over the subservient northern elevation (servant wing) restricted the visual observation however, the cumulative evidence indicates that bat roosting is unlikely, this does not mean that bats will not be present during the bat activity period (May to August) and therefore an ecological watching brief must be conditioned to any planning consent.
- 4.8 All bats and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

5. Ecological Watching Brief

5.1 Instructions

A bat licenced ecologist must be engaged prior to the removal of any roof tiles to provide advice on avoiding or minimising risk to bats as a protected species should it be required. The watching brief must be adhered to, it provides guidance and project supervision and will ensure that best practice and compliance is adhered to. If there is a delay of greater than one year from the date of this report, further survey effort will be required. Bats are highly mobile wild animals and may be encountered following a negative survey.

5.2 Toolbox talk

A toolbox talk must be given to the contractors prior to commencement of works, which will include background legislation in relation to bats; the most likely areas to expect bats (based on the survey results), good working practice and, details of what to do if a bat or additional evidence of bats is discovered. In the unlikely event that bats, or evidence of other roost locations are found, works must stop immediately and Natural England or the project ecologist contacted immediately, and any requisite license obtained.

5.3 Timing of work

Any works that have the potential to disturb bats during the bat activity period (1 May to 31 August) for example, removing roof or ridge tiles should be conducted outside this period. If the works cannot be undertaken during the period 1 September to 1 May and should bats be encountered during this period or at any time during the work, then all work must stop and an EPSL will be required.

All work must be undertaken in normal working, daylight, hours, which is in accordance with best working practice and allows the project ecologist or their agent to address any issues if bat(s) are found during the roof works.

5.4 Supervision

The project ecologist or their agent must be provided adequate time to provide advice and supervision for the duration of the proposed works. A record of all site visits must be made, and photographic evidence as required.

Prior to works to the roof, one general purpose woodcrete bat box, for example a Schwegler 1FF bat box (see www.NHBS.com) or a similar design must be suitably sited on a tree in the rear garden, the siting to be agreed with the project ecologist. The bat box will provide alternative roosting habitat for bats, should it be required. The box should remain in situ even if it is unused as this will provide an overall increase in ecological features and provide a biodiversity net gain.

The project ecologist/contractor must maintain suitable records whilst the roof tiles are being removed.

6. References

Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition).
Bat Workers Manual – Mitchell-Jones & McLeish 2004.
Bat Mitigation Guidelines – Natural England 2006.
The Conservation and Habitat Regulations – 2017.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

7. Queries

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

Telephone: 01189 762902
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

Urban Tree Experts
Bramley House
Newnham Bridge
Tenbury Wells
WR15 8NX



Simon Holmes, MSc. CEnv.
Consultant, Urban Tree Experts
Bat License CLS-CLS- 17637 & 17638



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

APPENDIX 1

Brook House, High Street, Sonning Rg4 6UP
Example screenshots from night vision cameras – 31.07.24 & 26.08.24

A



B



C



D

