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**REPORT OF A SURVEY OF 'JALENS', NINE MILE
RIDE, WOKINGHAM, BERKSHIRE FOR BATS**

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1.0 Background

A planning application has been submitted to Wokingham District Council for permission to construct a first floor side extension to the house 'Jalens' in Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. Before determining the application the Planning Authority has requested that the building be surveyed for the presence of bats. On behalf of the owners, Mr Keen of the Keen Partnership commissioned Dr Paula Cox, a licensed and experienced bat ecologist, to carry out the work necessary to fulfil the requirement.

2.0 Legislation

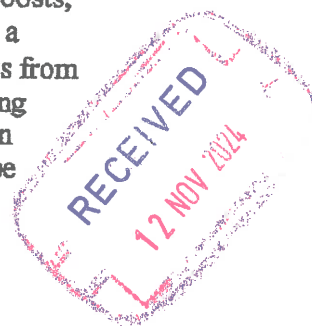
Bats and their roosts are protected by the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* and subsequent Amendments and by the *Habitat & Species Directive (92/43/EC)* enacted in the UK by the *Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994*. The *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 'CROW Act'*, that applies only to England and Wales, makes further minor amendments to the species protection measures provided by the *Wildlife and Countryside Act*. Under the provision of the 1981 Act it is an offence to intentionally kill, take or injure any wild bat. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly (added by the *CROW Act*) destroy, damage or obstruct access to any shelter (roost) used by a bat, or to disturb a bat using such a place. The 1994 Regulations are similar, but use the word 'deliberate' rather than 'intentional'.

If a development is likely to result in the killing or disturbance of a European protected species or the damage or destruction of its breeding site or resting place, then a licence from the Rural Development Service (RDS) will usually be required. Developments involving 'dwelling houses' as defined in 1981 Act above do not require a RDS licence and mitigation should be agreed with English Nature.

3.0 Methodology

A survey of the detached house was carried out on 30 August 2005 following the methodology in *Bat Mitigation Guidelines, 2004 5.6.1*. The exterior was checked on ledges, walls, windows and sills etc where droppings could lie undisturbed. The building was scanned for potential access points such as gaps in the fabric, spaces between roof and walls, missing tiles etc using 10x42 binoculars where necessary. The loft area was examined for bats, and also for signs such as droppings in cobwebs and on surfaces, and staining caused by urine, faeces or fur rubbing.

As the work was carried out in August when bats are occupying their summer roosts, an evening survey with a bat detector was carried out later the same day. Using a Batbox Duet ultrasonic bat detector, the building was checked for emerging bats from shortly before sunset until ninety minutes after, to ensure that both early emerging species such as serotines and late emerging species such as Natterer's and brown long-eared were recorded (*Swift 1998*). The time and direction of flight would be



noted as the earlier a bat is seen after sunset the closer it is likely to be to its roost (*Mitchell-Jones, AJ and McLeish AP ed. 1999*). Before emergence a colony of bats makes a considerable amount of audible noise, and this was listened for.

4.0 Results of the survey

4.1 General description

The detached brick house is thought to have been built in the 1960's and faces south onto Nine Mile Ride to the south of Wokingham and north of Crowthorne. It has a single pitched, tiled roof and a flat roofed single storied extension with garage on the east side. All the soffits, bargeboards and guttering had been recently replaced with upvc and the windows are sealed double glazed units. There is a lawned rear garden that backs onto Gorrick Plantation, an area of coniferous woodland.

4.2 Exterior

4.2.1 Front, south facing

The front of the main house was rendered and painted, with a gable that had upvc 'planked' panels. The new soffits and bargeboards were well fitting and flush to the wall with no visible gaps. The tile ends were cemented. The single storey brick extension on the east side had a flat asphalt roof that was fixed down with no raised sections visible and the garage had a single metal 'up-and-over' door.

No bat droppings were present on the walls, windows or sills.

4.2.2 Rear north facing

Again the new soffits and bargeboards were well fitting and the only gap visible in the roof was a slightly raised ridge tile at the gable apex. There was a slight amount of dark staining on the east side of the gable wall near the top, but no droppings could be seen through binoculars. High-powered security lights near the top of the gable were switched on at dusk. The fascia-board on the extension was new and flush to the wall and no bat droppings were present on the walls, windows or sills.

4.2.3 East side

This is the side that will be affected by development and the soffits were flush and there was no space around the window. The asphalt was fixed down on the single storied extension and no evidence of bats was found.

4.2.4 West side

There were no windows on this side and the brickwork was in good condition and the soffits etc as already described. The ridge was cemented but there was a slightly raised tile at the northern (rear) end.



4.3 Interior

Unless windows or doors were left open there was no access for bats to any of the habitable rooms, which are currently occupied.

4.3.1 The loft area

This was reached via a trap door in the first floor hall ceiling and was rectangular, running south north. It was of trussed rafter construction with a central ridge support. The central ridge board was cobwebbed and held no bats. A thick layer of fibreglass insulation was present extending into the eaves blocking potential access, and there was some floor boarding. Underfelting was present and only torn in one place. There were gaps around the breezeblock gables at both ends with no droppings or staining at the southern end. At the base of the northern gable was a large pile of disintegrated bat droppings that were unidentifiable. There were no recent droppings and no bats were seen or heard anywhere in the loft. There were no bat droppings elsewhere in the loft void.

4.4 Evening survey with a bat detector

Sunset was at 19.51 on 30 August and observations started at 19.45. The weather was fine and dry with no breeze and cloud cover of less than 10%. The temperature was 21.7 degrees Celsius at 19.45. There were a number of insects of various sizes on the wing, and observations were continued until 21.20.

The first bat was a pipistrelle at 20.35 over trees to the north. It did not remain long enough for identification to species level. At 20.46, 20.49 and 20.55 pipistrelles were heard in the distance but no feeding buzzes were recorded. No more bats were heard or seen until observations stopped at 21.20.

No bats emerged from or approached the house and no sounds of a colony were heard. No brown long-eared bats were seen (this species emits ultrasounds that are only picked up by a detector at very close range (*Briggs, B and King D 1998*)).

4.5 Summary of results

An inspection of the house 'Jalens' in Nine Mile Ride was carried out on 30 August 2005. The house was in good structural condition with the only visible gap that would allow potential access to the roof being a raised ridge tile at the northern gable apex. A pile of old, disintegrating bat droppings were found in the loft at the base of the northern gable wall. No bats were present and there was no evidence of recent occupation.

During the evening survey few bats were around and the pipistrelle bats noted did not pause to feed in the area. No bats emerged from or approached the house.



5.0 Discussion

There was evidence that bats had occupied an area of the roof at the northern gable apex at some point in the past. Although the droppings had disintegrated, from the location, number and distribution it is probable that a maternity roost of pipistrelle bats was present for some years. Various studies show that this species of bat is usually found in houses built since 1960 *Wardhaugh, AA (1992), Richardson, P (1985)*. The condition of the droppings is indicative of a colony present at least five years ago and this coincides with replacement of the soffits etc before the current owner moved in four years ago. Access was probably via a gap at the soffits or bargeboards and the slight staining still visible on brickwork near the gable apex bears this out. Now that upvc soffits and bargeboards have been fitted there are no gaps to the wall. However there is still potential access via a raised ridge tile at the apex, although there is no evidence that bats have used it recently.

The proposed extension will not affect either gable wall and will break into the roof along the eastern eaves. There is no access for bats there as insulation material has been laid along the eaves. In view of the fact that bats have used the roof in the past it would be advisable to carry out works to the existing roof during the winter months when bats are hibernating elsewhere. It is not likely that this roof is used as a hibernaculum as it is very hot and dry and unlikely to provide suitable conditions.

The late appearance of bats during the evening survey indicates that the roost is some distance away. No feeding buzzes were recorded and as the bats were present for a short period of time they were probably travelling between the roost and a foraging area, possibly over one of the lakes in the vicinity.

6.0 Impact of proposed development on bats

On current evidence works on the roof to construct a first floor extension at 'Jalens', Nine Mile Ride should have no adverse effects on individual bats or local populations, as no bats are currently resident and the evidence found indicates that no colony has been present for at least five years. The proposed development should not damage the area of the roof previously occupied by bats.

7.0 Precautionary advice

As there is a raised ridge tile above the old roost that would potentially allow access, it is possible that bats could enter in the future. Therefore if planning permission is granted for the extension, contractors should be advised that if a bat is found work in the vicinity should stop immediately until advice has been obtained from a licensed bat ecologist or English Nature. It is recommended that work to the existing roof be carried out during the winter months, between 1 October and 1 May (*Mitchell-Jones 2004*).

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8.0 Summary and conclusions

An inspection of the house 'Jalens' in Nine Mile Ride was carried out on 30 August 2005. The house was in good structural condition with the only visible gap that would allow potential access to the roof being a raised ridge tile at the northern gable apex. A pile of old, disintegrating bat droppings were found in the loft at the base of the northern gable wall. No bats were present and there was no evidence of recent occupation. During the evening survey few bats were around and the pipistrelle bats noted did not pause to feed in the area. No bats emerged from or approached the house.

On current evidence works on the roof to construct a first floor extension at 'Jalens' should have no adverse effects on individual bats or local populations, as no bats are currently present and the droppings of a past colony are about five years old. Precautionary advice is given in case a bat enters the roof in the future, and timing of roof works is recommended.

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