Bat Survey of Cherrylands, New Mill Road, Finchampstead

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NATURAL SOLUTIONS

Written by Alex Crossman

Crossman Associates
Ecological Consultants
Fire Engine House
Oakhill, Bath BA3 5BJ
01761 233414
info@crossmanassociates.co.uk

www.crossmanassociates.co.uk

crossman ASSOCIATES

Non-technical Summary

Background

In July 2025, Crossman Associates was commissioned to undertake a bat survey of Cherrylands, New Mill Road, Finchampstead, RG40 4QU.

Methods

The scoping survey was undertaken by Miguel Canovas, an experienced ecologist and licenced bat worker. The building was inspected both externally and internally for any evidence of bat / bird presence, such as droppings, food remains, staining or actual bats / birds.

Results

The property is in a semi-rural location with the village of Eversley to the west and the towns of Reading to the north-west and Finchamsptead to the east.

The survey identified droppings within the roof void and at least four long-eared bats within the loft. The number of bats is indicative of a small maternity roost of this species.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the following be undertaken as part of the development:

- Further bat surveys of the dwelling.
- Install a house sparrow nest terrace.

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1. Background

1.1. In July 2025, Crossman Associates was commissioned to undertake a bat survey of Cherrylands, New Mill Road, Finchampstead, RG40 4QU.

1.2. Figure 1 under Appendix II provides a site location map.

1.3. The objectives of the survey were to:

- Make an assessment of the likely presence or absence of bats
- Identify any legislative or planning policy constraints relevant to the site
- Determine the need for further surveys, compensation or mitigation

Site Description

1.4. The property is in a semi-rural location with the village of Eversley to the west and the towns of Reading to the north-west and Finchamsptead to the east.

1.5. There are residential dwellings to the south and east and grassland fields and woodland to the north and west. Fields tend to be divided by hedgerows.

Legislation

1.6. In the UK all species of bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations. Under this legislation it is a strict liability offence to injure or destroy a bat or to disturb damage or destroy the resting place of a bat. Under this legislation the UK is obliged to fully take into account bats within the planning process and the level of bat activity on-site must be fully assessed prior to the assessment the planning application.

1.7. In Britain all wild birds are granted legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended). This legislation protects the birds, their eggs and nests whilst being built or in use.

2. Methodology

Desktop Study

Data search

2.1. The MAGIC website was accessed to gain information on any statutory site designations within 4 km of the site that are designated for bats.

National Planning Policy

2.2. National Planning Policy has been reviewed for policies that relate to nature conservation relevant to the site.

Field Survey

Bat scoping survey

2.3. A bat scoping survey was carried out on the 24th July 2025 by Miguel Canovas, an experienced ecologist and licenced bat worker.

2.4. The building was methodically inspected internally and externally for any evidence of roosting bats, including actual bats, droppings, urine staining and evidence of feeding activity such as discarded insect wings and cases.

2.5. The building was also assessed for its suitability to support roosting bats by considering several factors including whether bats can access internal and external voids within the building and whether these voids provide adequate protection and shelter for roosting bats. If the building is not confirmed as a roost, it is assessed from High to Negligible Suitability as follows;

- **High Suitability** – many roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be old, large and rural
- **Moderate Suitability** – some roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be old, rural with some recent maintenance
- **Low Suitability** – few roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be modern, urban and well maintained
- **Negligible Suitability** – insignificant roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be small, modern, urban and very well maintained.

Birds

2.6. The building was also inspected for the presence of birds including house sparrow *Passer domesticus.* The building was checked for field signs including nesting material, accumulations of droppings and/or pellets.

3. Results

Desktop Study

Data Search

3.1. The MAGIC website informed that there are no statutory sites within 4 km of the site designated for bats.

Planning Policy

3.2. National policy guidance is provided by National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the Government' planning policies for England and how they should be applied to planning applications;

<u>Conserving and enhancing the natural environment</u>

Planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Habitats and Biodiversity

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

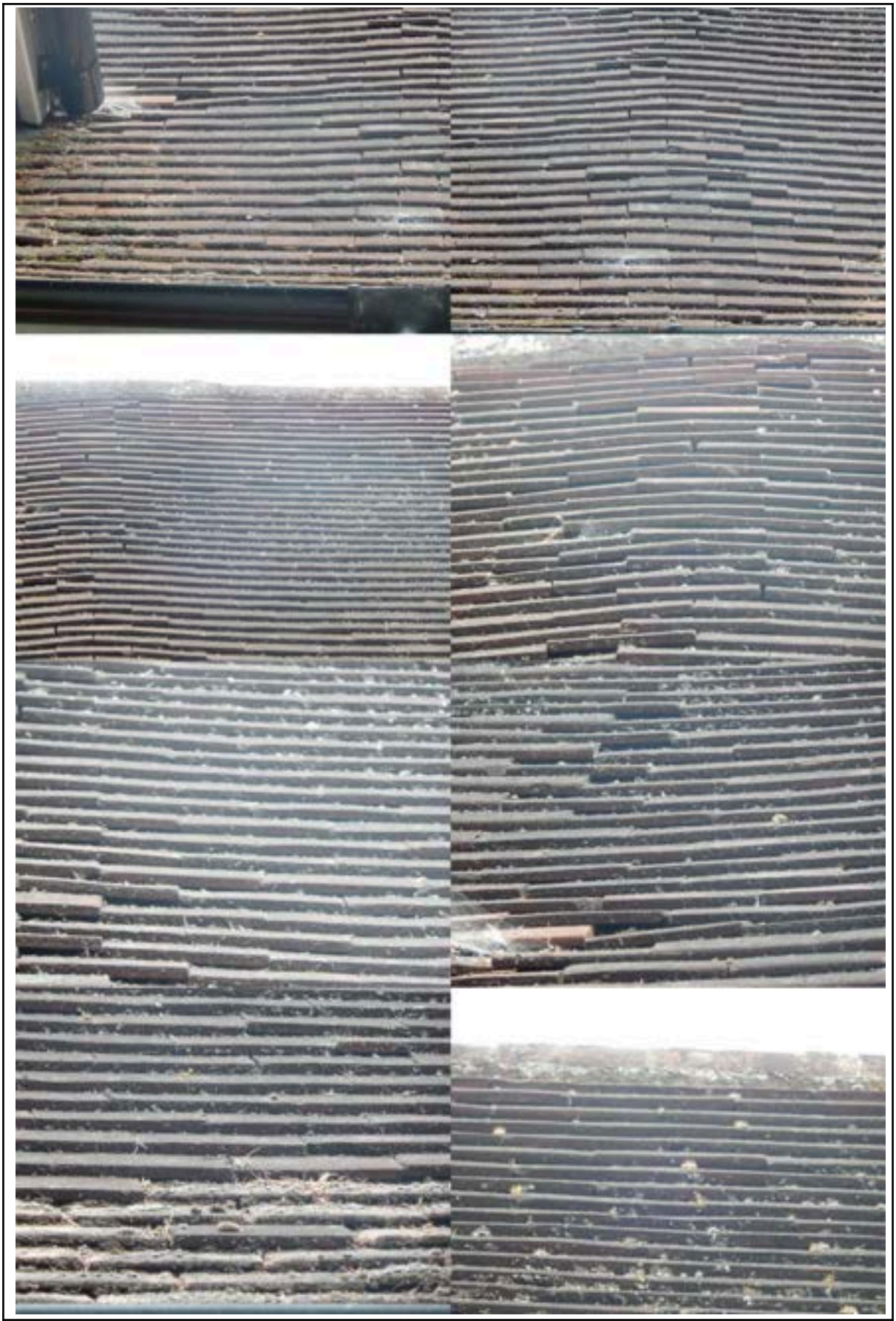
d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Field Survey

Site Address	Cherrylands, New Mill Road, Finchampstead, RG404QU
Survey Date	24/07/2025
Evidence of bats	Around 200-300 bat droppings found accumulated and scattered under the ridge of the loft. Four brown long-eared bats found under the ridge of the north-eastern part of the loft
Restriction	Full access provided

Image description: Front elevation of the house	Direction: South-east

Image description: Roof condition of the front elevation of the house	Direction: SE



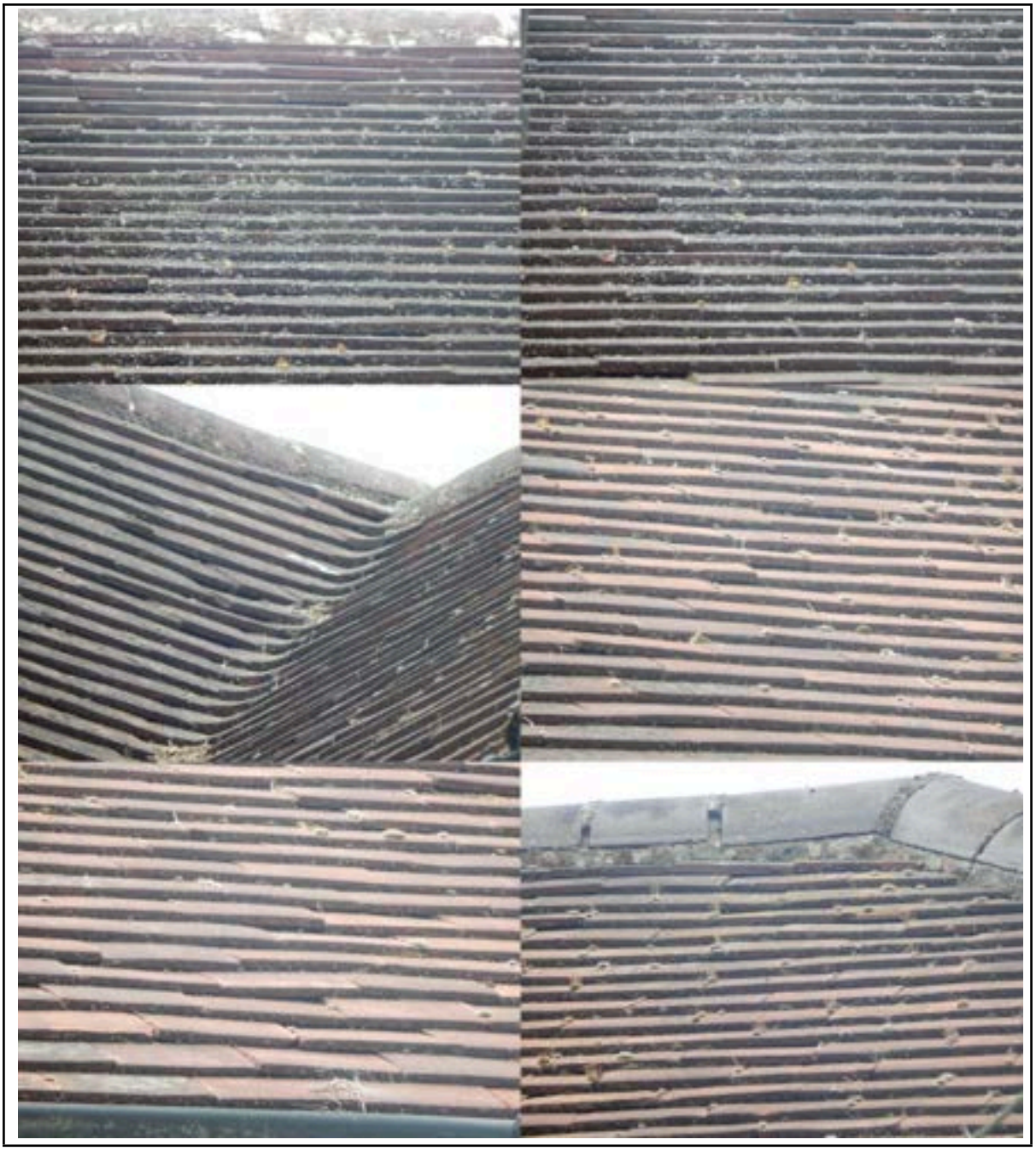


Image description: Hanging wall tiles of the front elevation of the house	Direction: SE

Image description: Rear elevation of the house	Direction: North-west

Image description: Roof condition of the rear elevation of the house	Direction: NW

Image description: North-east elevation of the house	Direction: NE

Image description: Roof condition of the NE elevation of the house	Direction: NE

Image description: South-west elevation of the house	Direction: SW

Image description: Roof condition of the SW elevation of the house	Direction: SW

Image description: Hanging tiles of the dormers of the rear elevation	Direction:

Image description: Eaves coverings and verge of the house	Direction:

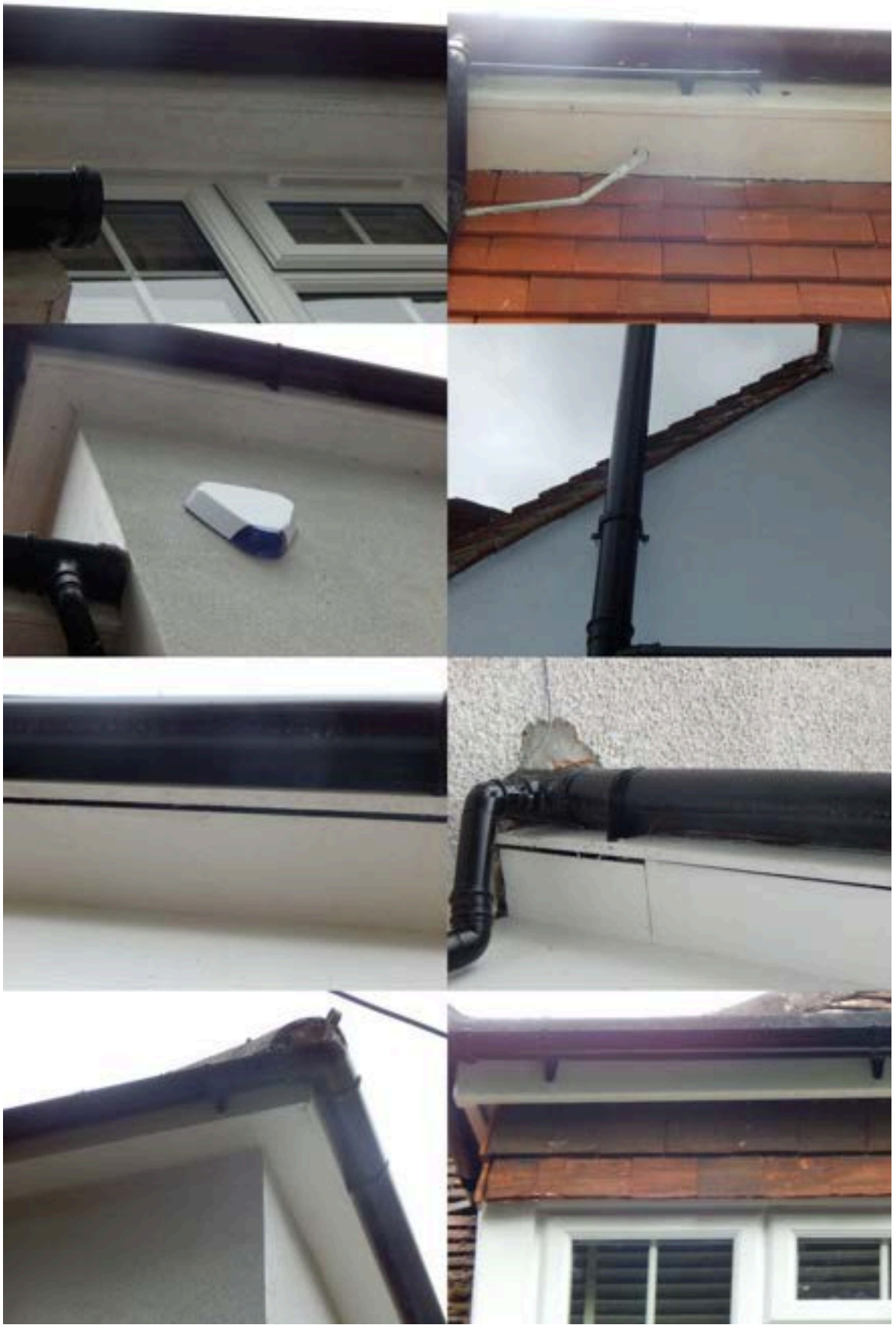


Image description: Internal view of the loft of the house	Direction:

Image description: Loft below the ridge covered with felt membrane	Direction:

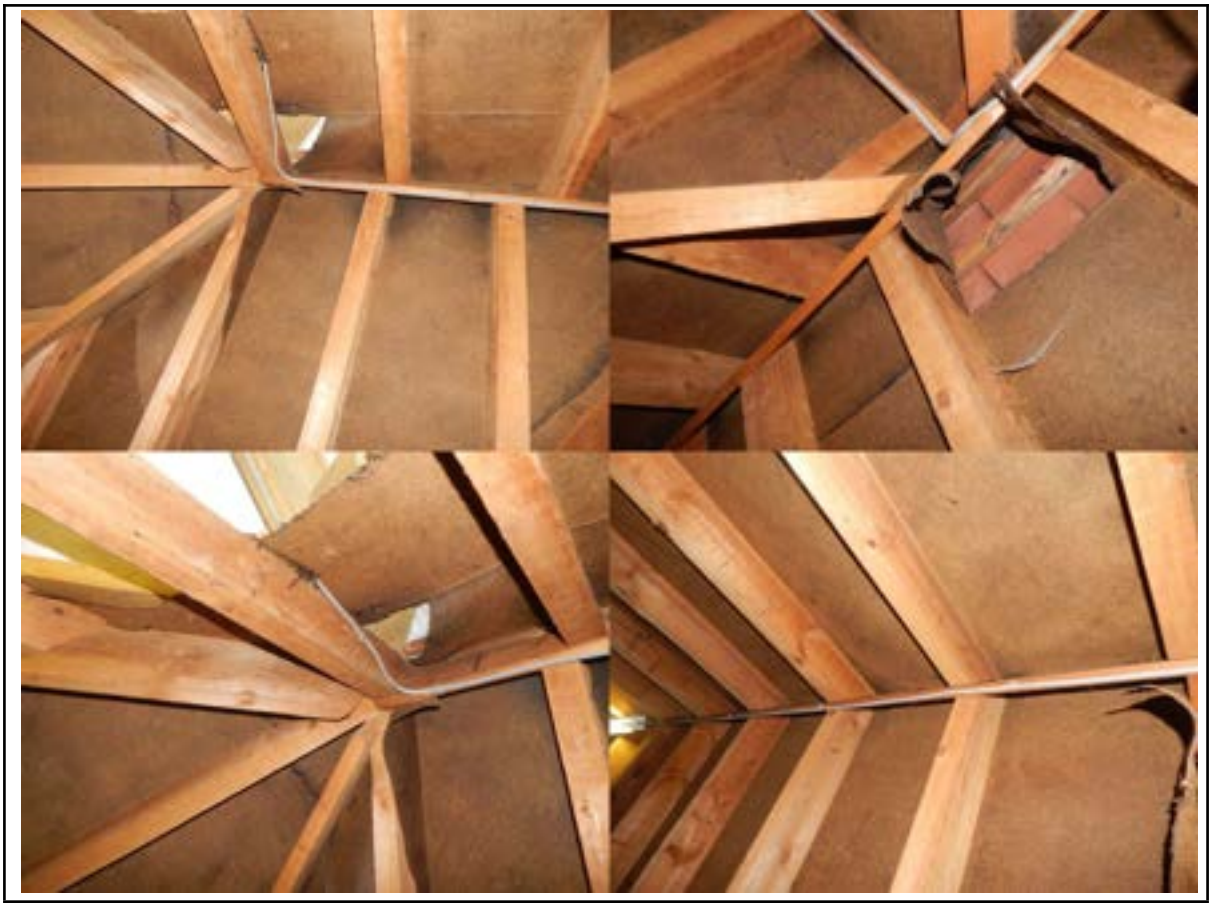


Image description: Around 200-300 bat droppings found accumulated and scattered under the ridge of the loft. Four BLE found under the ridge around NE section of the loft.	Direction:

Image description: Barn 1 (wooden structure for storage) and Barn 2 (corrugated metal sheets structure for storage)	Direction: Positioned at the rear garden of the house

Elevations of barn 1 (B1)- front (NE), rear (SW), south-east and north-west

Internal view of B1

Elevations of barn 2 (B2)- front (SW), rear (NE), north-west and south-east

Internal view of B2

Image description: Rear and front garden of the site	Direction:

Image description: Map of site buildings	Direction:

Birds

3.3. No birds or bird nesting activity was recorded in any aspect of the dwelling.

Evaluation

Bats

3.4. This site is in a residential area; however, there is optimal bat habitat with nearby woodland, fields and hedgerows

3.5. The survey identified droppings within the roof void and at least four long-eared bats within the loft. The number of bats is indicative of a small maternity roost of this species.

3.6. Long-eared bats in Britain occur as two species: the brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), which is reasonably widespread and often recorded in houses and churches, and the grey long-eared (*Plecotus austriacus*), which is much rarer and more localised in southern England. In the UK both species are afforded full legal protection: *all* bats and their roosts are protected, and it is an offence to deliberately kill, injure or disturb bats, or to damage or destroy a roost (this protection applies whether or not bats are present at the time). Because roosts (including small summer roosts and maternity sites) are important for population persistence, finding four long-eared bats in a roof void is a noteworthy roost.

4. Recommendations

4.1. The recommendations in the paragraphs below are provided to help ensure that wildlife and important ecological features are protected during the course of works. Recommendations also set out mitigation measures to minimise harm where this cannot be avoided and provide compensation measures to allow the proposals to meet current legislative and planning policy objectives.

4.2. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) states that a public authority must 'in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity; Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'.

4.3. The NPPF states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

Bats

4.4. To fully characterise the type of roost, quantity and species of bat, pattern and usage of the loft and access points, further surveys will be necessary.

4.5. At least two activity surveys will be undertaken for standard European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) and Low Impact Licences (subject to the two surveys returning similar findings). Any discrepancies may require a **third** survey to fully characterise the roost. Surveys are undertaken during the main bat activity period (May – September) with at least two of these surveys carried out between May – August and spread three weeks apart.

4.6. Surveys will involve appropriately experienced personnel observing all aspects of the building to watch where bats emerge (evening emergence surveys).

4.7. Evening emergence surveys commence approximately 20 minutes prior to sunset and continue for approximately 1.5 hours.

4.8. The results of the surveys will inform an appropriate mitigation / compensation strategy that will ensure that bats are safe-guarded during works and that bats are maintained at a favourable conservation status locally.

Licencing

4.9. The property has been identified as a bat roost and is legally protected and depending on the outcome of the survey findings the proposed works would need to be carried out under a European Protected Species Licence – A standard European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) for bat roosts including breeding and hibernation roosts. The licence requires full planning permission and takes approximately 30 working days to be processed.

4.10. Long-eared maternity roosts will require the provision of a bat loft on site, which can be within the roof void of a dwelling or other suitable building.

4.11. It will also be a requirement of licencing that the works are preceded by a toolbox talk and key works, including roof removal are overseen by a licenced ecologist.

Ecology enhancements

4.12. During the construction phase of the new building, there is an opportunity to incorporate inexpensive ecological enhancements that aim to increase the biodiversity of the site.

4.13. New nesting opportunities will be provided for the local bird population with a particular emphasis on house sparrows (which have suffered significant decline) and it is recommended that a sparrow nest box is installed within the development.

4.14. Sparrow nest boxes are ideally fitted below eaves. Suitable models include the Vivara Woodstone Sparrow Nest Box, which is suitable for integral and surface mounting. This model is strong, durable, long lasting and available in brown or stone colour. Models can be found on vivira.co.uk.

5. Limitations

5.1. This report records wildlife found during the survey and anecdotal evidence of sightings. It does not record any plants or animals that may appear at other times of the year and were therefore not evident at the time of visit.

5.2. The advice contained in this report relate primarily to factual survey results and general guidance only. On all legal matters you are advised to take legal advice.

6. References

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HMSO (1981) *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and subsequent amendments).* HMSO

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Stace, C. (1997) *New Flora of the British Isles 2nd Edition.* Cambridge University Press

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