

155 Barkham Road
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG41 2RS

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Report prepared by Vicky Potts; reviewed by John Wenman
Ref: R3337/b

January 2023



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1	SUMMARY.....	3
2	INTRODUCTION.....	4
2.1	Background	4
2.2	Legislative Background	4
2.3	Site Location and Context	5
3	SURVEY METHODOLOGY.....	7
3.1	Building Inspection	7
3.2	Survey Constraints	8
4	SURVEY FINDINGS	9
4.1	Introduction.....	9
4.2	External Survey	9
4.3	Internal Survey	10
5	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	11
5.1	Assessment of Bat Roost Potential	11
5.2	Impact of Proposals and Recommendations	11
6	INDICATIVE MITIGATION AND COMPENSATION REQUIREMENTS	13
7	REFERENCES.....	14
	APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS.....	15
	APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS	20

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Claire Elliott to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the detached house at 155 Barkham Road in Wokingham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 79852 68114). The assessment was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for a two storey roof extension, which includes the removal of the dormer windows and also includes demolition of the existing garage.
- 1.1.2** All British bat species are fully protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitat Regulations') (as amended). A survey of the interior and exterior of the property, was undertaken on the 11th January 2023 by an ecologist registered under the Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 and an assistant ecologist.
- 1.1.3** A few small sized bat droppings typical of the crevice dwelling pipistrelle bat species (*Pipistrellus* spp.) were found within the roof void. Externally, the house had potential roost features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bats, such as gaps behind hanging tiles, under lifted roof tiles and where mortar was missing under hip tiles. The proposed works will directly impact the roof void and the external features, and therefore the works could result in the permanent damage of bat roosts, and may disturb and/or harm any bats present at the time of works. Therefore, further survey is required to confirm the presence or likely absence of bat roosts within the house.
- 1.1.4** Subject to the survey findings i.e. if bats are shown to be present, a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) or if applicable, registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) may be required to allow the planned works to go ahead lawfully.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Claire Elliott to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the detached house at 155 Barkham Road in Wokingham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 79852 68114).

2.1.2 The assessment was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for a two storey roof extension which includes the removal of the dormer windows and also includes demolition of the existing garage.

2.2 Legislative Background

2.2.1 All British bat species are fully protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitat Regulations') (as amended). In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:

- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat;
- Deliberately, 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; or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species;
- Deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

2.2.2 The government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations. A licence can be issued if the following three tests have been met:

- **Regulation 55(9)(a)** - there is "no satisfactory alternative" to the derogation, and;
- **Regulation 55(9)(b)** - the derogation "will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range" and;

- **Regulation 55(2)(e)** - 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”.

2.2.3 Local authorities have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3e) of the Habitat Regulations to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive in the exercise of their functions. They must therefore consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by planning proposals affecting European Protected Species before granting planning permission.

2.2.4 If a European Protected Species 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.

2.2.5 Licensable projects affecting small numbers of seven commonly occurring species occupying roosts of low conservation importance may fall under the remit of the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (Low Impact) (WML-CL21), which would enable consultants registered by Natural England, or accredited agents appointed by them, to carry licensable work under the Class Licence once sites have been registered in advance with Natural England. Registration forms must be submitted at least three weeks before work is due to start, and if acceptable, Natural England aims to register sites within two weeks.

2.2.6 Survey data supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or the registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (WML-CL21) must be up to date i.e. have been conducted within the current or most recent optimal survey season i.e. May to August. Therefore, if surveys show bats are present and licensable work is delayed until during or after the next survey season, updated surveys will be required to support an application or site registration.

2.3 Site Location and Context

2.3.1 The detached house is situated on the northern side of Barkham Road in Wokingham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 79852 68114).

- 2.3.2** The house is situated to the southwest of Wokingham town centre, with further residential properties and their associated gardens on all sides. In the wider area, there is countryside, which consists of pasture and woodland, approximately 320 metres to the southwest of the property,. A patch of woodland and recreational ground, which links to the Emm Brook, is present at Woosehill approximately 500 metres to the north. Patches of semi-ancient natural woodland are situated 420 metres to the southwest and 660 metres to the west at Fox Hill.
- 2.3.3** Overall, the habitats nearby offer high quality habitat suitable for commuting and foraging bats adapted to urban environments.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Building Inspection

- 3.1.1** A survey of the exterior and interior of the house was undertaken on the 11th January 2023 by Vicky Potts - an ecologist registered under Natural England bat survey Class Licence CL18 (Registration no. CL18 2016-27162-CLS-CLS) - and Meghan Porter - an assistant ecologist.
- 3.1.2** The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars, a high power (1 million candle power) torch and looked for features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines (Collins 2016; Mitchell-Jones 2004; Mitchell-Jones & McLeish 2004).
- 3.1.3** The following may indicate the presence of a bat roost within a building:
- Bat droppings (these can be found externally, especially in sheltered areas such as window sills, underneath roost entrances or internally within a roof space);
 - Piles of insect remains e.g. moth wings (these may be indicative of regular feeding sites used by species such as brown long eared bat);
 - Staining at roost entrances or within the roost (urine and oil from fur can leave stains on timbers when bats are gathered for long periods);
 - Bats (live or dead).
- 3.1.4** Residential buildings may offer potential roosting sites in a number of locations, favoured locations include:
- Under roof, ridge and hip tiles, especially when loose or lifted tiles are present, or sections of mortar are missing;
 - Under sections of raised lead flashing;
 - Beneath lifted barge boards;
 - At the gable ends – access is typically gained at the roof apex via gaps in the soffits or under roof tiles;
 - At the eaves – gaining access via gaps between the soffits and wall;
 - Within an enclosed roof space – long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.) for example, will often cluster at the ridge beam.

3.2 Survey Constraints

- 3.2.1** There were no significant constraints to the survey as full access was available to the exterior and interior of the property and weather conditions were sunny with a gentle breeze and an air temperature of 9°C. It must be noted that due to the roosting behaviour of crevice-dwelling bats in particular, it is possible that evidence of roosting bats may not be visible during the survey and could be hidden in crevices, such as wall cavities and in the space between roof coverings and lining; an absence of evidence does not necessarily mean an absence of roosting bats.

4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1** Photographs of the house are presented in **Appendix 1** and a plan of the external and internal survey findings with associated target notes is shown in **Appendix 2**. The survey findings from the exterior and interior of the house are described as follows:

4.2 External Survey

- 4.2.1** The detached house had a partly pitched, hipped and half-hipped roof, with a flat roofed dormer windows to the front and rear of the property and three pitched roofed dormer windows all sides of the property and a pitched roofed garage attached to the eastern side (**Photograph 1**). A flat roofed extension and conservatory were attached to the rear of the house (**Photograph 2**).
- 4.2.2** The flat roof tiles were mostly all in place with occasionally lifted tiles including on the verges towards the western side of the house, on the hipped roof to the front of the house, at the joins of the dormer windows with the main roof and on the dormer window at the eastern side of the house, providing potential roosting opportunities for bats (**Photographs 3, 4 & 5; Target notes 1, 2 & 3**). The ridge and hip tiles were all in place and mostly fully mortared in place, apart from a few gaps where the hip tiles were loose on the front dormer window (**Photograph 6; Target notes 4 & 5**). The lead flashing was tightly fitted around the chimney on the western side of the house (**Photograph 7; Target note 6**). The overhanging uPVC soffits were sealed to the rendered walls at the eaves (**Photograph 8; Target note 7**). The verge mortar was tight to the brickwork on the half-hipped roof to the front of the house (**Photograph 9; Target note 8**). The walls of the flat roofed dormer windows were clad with hanging tiles that were mostly tight apart from on the corner (**Photograph 10; Target note 9**). The pitched roof dormer windows were also clad with hanging tiles that had numerous gaps including at the eaves and where the tiles were lifted in particularly at the corners (**Photographs 11 & 12; Target note 10**).
- 4.2.3** The roof and ridge tiles on the pitched roofed garage were in place and mostly tightly fitted, although a few were lifted along the verge to the front of the garage (**Photograph 13; Target note 11**). The soffits were tight to the rendered walls along

the eastern side of the garage (**Target note 12**). The verge mortar was intact and tight to the rendered walls at the eaves (**Photograph 14; Target note 13**).

4.2.4 No evidence of roosting bats was found on the exterior of the house.

4.3 Internal Survey

4.3.1 The house had a roof void accessible via a loft hatch. The void had an estimated roof to floor height of 1.25 metres and the pitched and hipped roof was of 'cut and pitch' construction (**Photograph 15**). Two covered water tanks were present towards the northern and eastern ends of the void. The main section of the roof was lined with paper backed bitumen roofing felt that had a number of large tears exposing the undersides of the roofing tiles (**Photographs 16 & 17; Target note 14**). The roofs of the two pitched roofed dormer windows were tightly lined with bitumen roofing felt (**Photograph 18; Target notes 15 & 16**). The ridge was heavily cobwebbed (**Photograph 19; Target note 17**). The floor was insulated with a few layers of fibreglass, which went up to the eaves (**Photograph 20; Target notes 18**). A group of four small sized bat droppings were found under a large tear in the felt towards the front (southern side) of the roof void and a couple of fragments of droppings were found underneath the top layer of fibreglass, which had been installed in 2009, by the east facing gable end (**Photographs 21 & 22**).

4.3.2 The interior of the garage comprised of a single skin brickwork wall to the external eastern side and a block work wall to the western side (**Photograph 23; Target notes 19 & 20**). The roof was lined with bitumen felt, which was loose in places (**Photograph 24; Target note 21**). The ridge was cobwebbed (**Photograph 25; Target note 22**).

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential

5.1.1 A few small-sized droppings - of a size and shape most typical of *Pipistrellus* species were present in the roof void. The house also had potential roost features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bat species, including gaps under hanging tiles, uneven roof tiles and missing mortar below a few hip tiles and hip tiles. Small crevice-dwelling species that typically occupy such features include the widespread pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and small *Myotis* species. Roosts supporting pipistrelle (*Pipistrelle* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* bat species are considered to be of low to moderate conservation importance (subject to the type of roost present i.e. non-breeding roosts supporting individual or small numbers of bats through to maternity roosts supporting large numbers of female bats) (Mitchell-Jones 2004).

5.1.2 Considering the evidence within the void, and number/type of potential crevice roost features and surrounding habitats, the property is considered to have high bat roost potential.

5.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

5.2.1 The proposals will have an impact on the features across the roof with bat roost potential i.e. gaps behind hanging tiles, under uneven roof tiles and where the mortar was missing from under the hip tiles. If roosting bats are present, the changes to the property could therefore result in the permanent damage of bat roosts and may disturb and/or harm any bats present at the time of works.

5.2.2 Further survey is required to determine if bats roosts are present or are likely absent. The surveys should comprise of three evening emergence or dawn re-entry surveys completed in the period between May and September with at least one survey between May and August (Collins 2016).

5.2.3 If bats are shown to be present, a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (ESPML) or if applicable, the registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) may be required to permit the lawful damage of a bat roost(s), and to permit the disturbance of any bats present at the time of the work. A licence can

be issued by Natural England if the three licensing tests (detailed in **Paragraph 2.2.2**) have been met by the proposals.

- 5.2.4** To meet one of the licensing tests, it is necessary to demonstrate that the 'favourable conservation status' of bats using the property is maintained throughout and after the completion of the work by employing mitigation measures during the work, by providing compensatory roosts in the short-term and ensuring that roosting sites are retained on site in the long-term, as indicatively summarised in **Section 6** below **(please note that the preparation of a full mitigation strategy should be based on the findings of full survey data as set out in 5.2.2 above).**

6 INDICATIVE MITIGATION AND COMPENSATION REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1.1** If a mitigation licence is required, under the terms of the EPSML or BMCL (if applicable), the commencement of work affecting bat roost(s) would be timed to avoid the periods when bats are most susceptible to disturbance i.e., winter hibernation season where there is potential for hibernating bats (mid-November to February) to avoid disturbing torpid bats, and to take place outside of the peak summer breeding season (May to mid-September) where evidence of a maternity roost is recorded.
- 6.1.2** Replacement roosting opportunities would be provided so that they are available to bats in the short-term, i.e. before and during the work by erecting at least one woodcrete bat box on a mature tree or a purposeful erected pole in the garden before the work starts.
- 6.1.3** A 'soft strip' approach to the work affecting identified roosts would be adopted, i.e. the careful removal of hanging tiles, roof tiles and roof coverings associated with the roost(s), by gloved hands and with hand-held tools under the supervision of a licensed ecologist or the Registered Consultant if working under the BMCL. In the event that bats are discovered during the course of the work, the licensed ecologist or Registered Consultant would capture the bat(s) and transfer it/them directly to one of the bat boxes erected in advance of the works.
- 6.1.4** In the long-term, compensatory roosting locations may need to be incorporated into the newly renovated property e.g. by installing bat access tiles. Bitumen and hessian (Type 1F) roofing felt or breathable membranes that have been certified to meet the snagging propensity tests set by Natural England should be used; other breathable membranes, which are harmful to bats, must be avoided.

7 REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

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

Richardson, P. (2000). *Distribution Atlas of Bats in Britain and Ireland 1980 – 1999*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



1. Front of the house viewed from the house.



2. Rear of the house viewed from the north.



3. Lifted tiles on the verge at the rear of the house.



4. Gaps under some uneven roof tiles on the hipped roof to the front of the house.



5. Lifted roof tiles on the dormer window to the eastern side of the house.



6. A few gaps under the hip tiles to the front of the house.



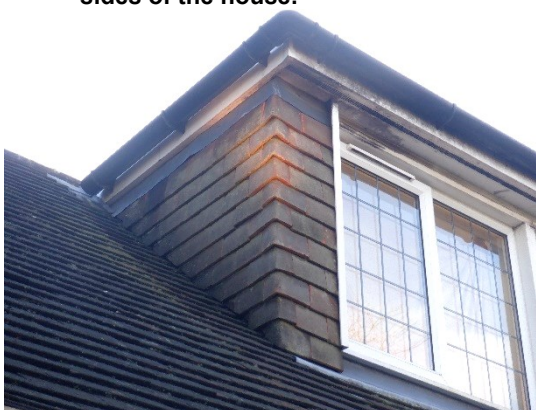
7. Lead flashing tight around the chimney.



8. Upvc soffits tight at the eaves to the sides of the house.



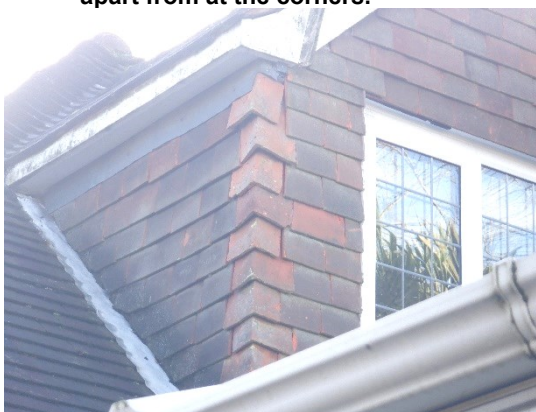
9. Verge mortar tight to the brickwork at the front of the house.



10. Flat roof dormer windows clad with hanging tiles that were mostly tight apart from at the corners.



11. Numerous gaps behind the hanging tiles on the pitched roof dormer windows.



12. Numerous gaps behind the hanging tiles on the pitched roof dormer windows.



13. Roof and ridge tiles tight in place and tightly fitted, with a few gaps along the verge of the garage.



14. Verge mortar intact and tight to the rendered walls at the eaves of the garage



15. Internal view of the roof space viewing north.



16. Internal view of the roof space lined with paper backed felt, which had numerous large tears.



17. Large tear in roofing felt exposing the undersides of the roof tile.



18. One of the dormer windows tightly lined with bitumen roofing felt.



19. The heavily cobwebbed ridge.



20. Eaves filled with fibreglass.



21. Pile of small bat droppings towards the front southern end of the roof.



22. Fragments of bat droppings found towards the loft hatch and the eastern facing gable end.



23. Interior of the garage.

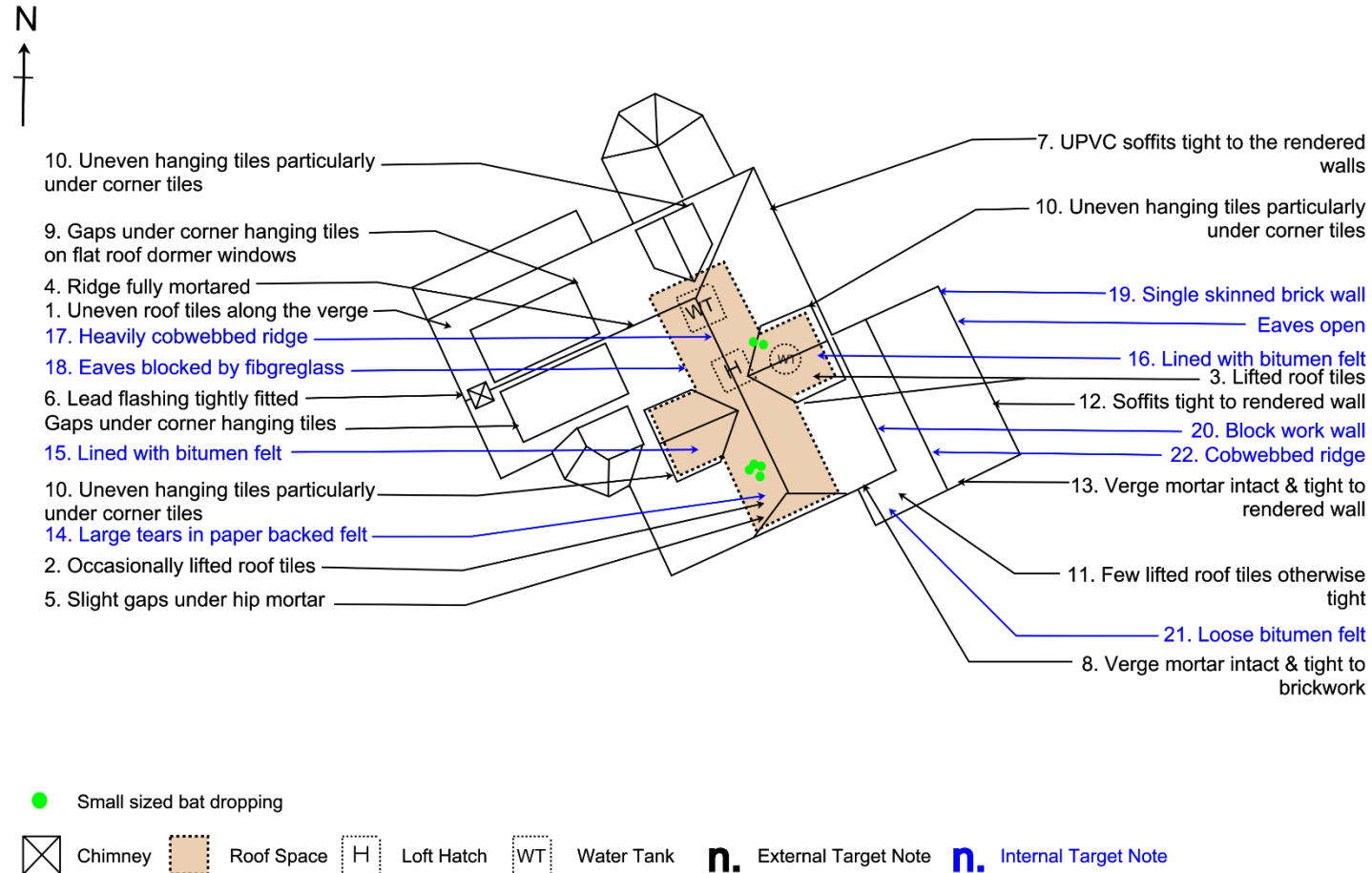


24. Roof of the garage with loose felt in places.



25. Cobwebbed ridge of the garage.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	155 Barkham Road Wokingham	
VP	January 2023	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	