



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT 8 SOUTH DRIVE WOKINGHAM



**Prepared for:
Mr & Mrs Plews
8 South Drive
Wokingham
RG40 2DH**

19 July 2024

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

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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 Mr & Mrs Plews to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]), at 8 South Drive, Wokingham, RG40 2DH. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Tuesday 9 July 2024 at 10.10am, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the single storey side extension on the southeast elevation, the only section of the property to be affected by the proposed works, 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 suitable habitat for roosting, commuting or foraging bats, due to the urban environment however, via the back garden, there is good ecological connectivity to the wider landscape which includes a recreational ground, agricultural land/improved grassland, wooded copse and Emm Brook.

The DBW comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the section of the building to be affected by the proposed works 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 section of the building to be affected by the proposed works suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and potential roost features identified during the preliminary inspection. There is missing mortar from the bonnet tiles resulting in gaps which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats or access to the underside of the roof tiles and the presence or absence of bats could not be established. When combined with the data from the desk top study, this resulted in the building being characterised as having a low potential¹ to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines², a single separate dusk emergence survey is required on the section of the building to be affected by the proposed works in order to establish the presence or absence of bats. If bats are recorded roosting during this survey, further survey effort and mitigation will be required in order for the proposed development to proceed legally.

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 Mr & Mrs Plews to conduct a DBW at 8 South Drive, Wokingham, RG40 2DH 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 section of the building to be affected by the proposed works.
- 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 construct a detached garage and a single storey swimming pool room linking to the main property via the single storey side extension on the southeast elevation.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

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

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.

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.



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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.

3. Site Location and Description

3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU 8145 6803, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 8 South Drive, Wokingham, highlighted.

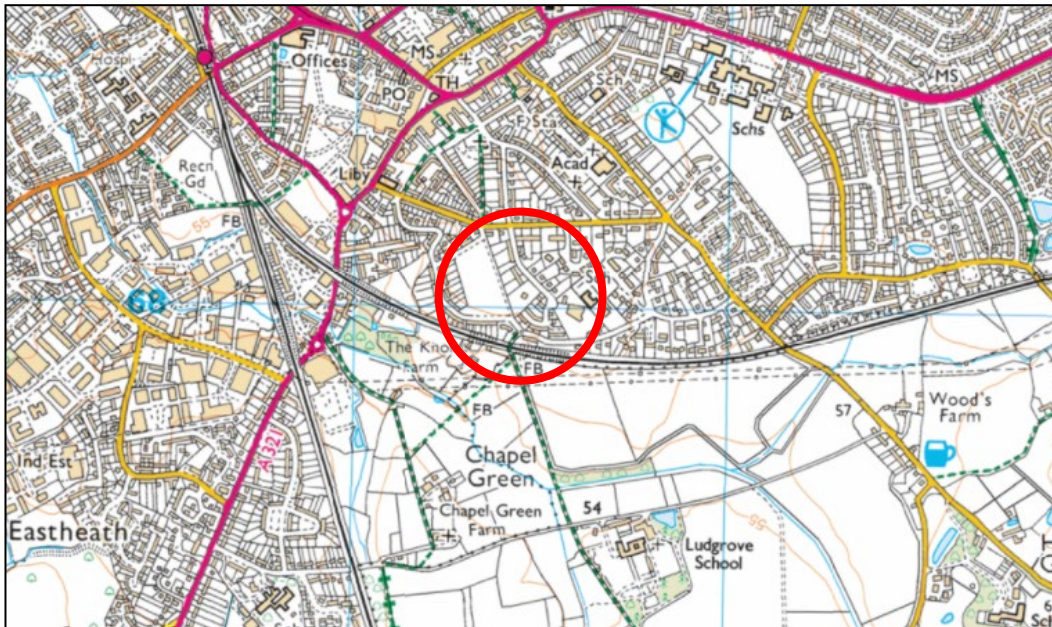


Figure 2. 8 South Drive, Wokingham, overview of the immediate area.





3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a single storey side extension on the southwest elevation of the main detached, brick-built and part rendered dwelling. The dwelling is set within its own extensive grounds that are mainly laid to lawn, with patio area and mature trees and shrubs throughout, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers good foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is direct ecological connectivity to the wider landscape.

Figure 3. Example gardens. 8 South Drive, Wokingham. 09.07.24



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 site. 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 situated in a residential area to the south of the town of Wokingham and is adjacent to properties and gardens of varying sizes and styles. Immediately to the east and connected via the garden is Langborough Recreation Ground which is known to provide good habitat for bats. To the south lies large expanses of agricultural land, pockets of woodland and the Emm Brook, all of which are likely to provide good habitat to support bats and are connected to the site via ecological corridors. To the north lies the town centre, with dense infrastructure, commercial and housing developments, which do not provide suitable habitat for bats. Further afield lie areas of farmland, woodland, parkland and recreational grounds, all of which are likely to provide habitat to support roosting, commuting and foraging bats, although housing developments, industrial estates and main roads separate the majority of these areas from the site, apart from those areas to the south where there is good ecological connectivity.



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Holt Copse and Joel Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies to the northwest, within 2km of the site although there is no ecological connectivity from the site to this LNR. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed one current EPSL 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
2020-48489-EPS-MIT	12/2027	Common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW at 8 South Drive, Wokingham, RG40 2DH was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 9 July 2024 at 10.10am. The weather conditions for the survey were overcast with rain and a temperature of 19.7 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 section of the building to be affected by the proposed works 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 single storey side extension – 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 single storey side extension.
- 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. Internally there is no access to the void beneath the roof/tiles of the single storey side extension.



5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the section of the building to be affected by the proposed works 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 section of the building to be affected by the proposed works is a brick-built single storey side extension on the southeast elevation of the property that is in a good condition externally – see cover photograph. The hipped roof is covered in composite tiles, all of which are tightly fitted with no gaps which crevice dwelling bats could exploit (see Figure 4 below) however, there is missing mortar from the bonnet tiles on both ends of the building providing crevices suitable for crevice dwelling bat species, see Figure 5 on page 9. The wooden patio style doors, soffits and fascias are tight with no splits or gaps (see Figure 6 on page 9), and the lead flashing affixing the structure to the main property is also tight to the walls with no spits or gaps that could be exploited, see Figure 4 below.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded externally on the section of the building to be affected by the proposed works although there is missing mortar for the bonnet tiles at both ends of the single storey side extension which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats externally.

Figure 4. Example sealed tiles and lead flashing on single storey extension. 8 South Drive, Wokingham. 09.07.24





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Figure 5. Missing mortar in bonnet tiles. 8 South Drive, Wokingham. 09.07.24



Figure 6. Example sealed soffits and fascias. 8 South Drive, Wokingham. 09.07.24





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5.2 Internal Inspection

An internal inspection of the section of the building to be affected by the proposed works was undertaken and was examined for any signs of bats (as described in section 4.2).

There is no access into the roof void of this section of the building, see Figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Internal view of ceiling of single storey side extension. 8 South Drive, Wokingham. 09.07.24





6. Evaluation

The bat roost potential of the features within the section of the building to be affected by the proposed works 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.**

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

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the survey of the section of the building to be affected by the proposed works. However, there is missing mortar in the bonnet tiles at both ends of the single storey side extension which provide crevice like features suitable for bats to roost. The building was assessed as having a low potential to support roosting bats.

Based on the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, one dusk emergence survey needs to be undertaken on the section of the building to be affected by the proposed works, between May and August, in order to establish the presence of absence of roosting bats in the section of the building to be affected by the proposed works. The features identified will require one survey position equipped with a bat detector and night vision camera in order to cover the potential bat roosting features.



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7.2 Contingency Plan

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 the site may become more suitable to support roosting bats.

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.

9. 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
Natural England Licence CLS-CLS-17637, CLS-CLS-17638



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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.