Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW)
AT
412 FINCHAMPSTEAD ROAD
WOKINGHAM

Prepared for:
Mr H Matharu
412 Finchampstead Road
Wokingham
RG40 3RA

26 November 2025

Ref: SPH/PEA-25/14.11

Offices in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Worcestershire
Tel: 0118 976 2902

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 H Matharu to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]) of 412 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 3RA. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Friday 14 November 2025 at 12.35pm, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property 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 that two statutory designated sites are located within, and one current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats has been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The habitat to the south of the site consists of tree and hedge lined agricultural fields that provide habitats suitable for a wide range of bat species and there is some ecological connectivity to these areas from the site via the garden network.

The DBW comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the property 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 building's suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and no potential roost features were identified during the preliminary inspection. When combined with the data from the desk top study, this resulted in the property being characterised as having a negligible potential[1] to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines[2], no further survey effort is required.

[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).

1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr H Matharu to conduct a DBW of 412 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham RG40 3RA 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 building.
- 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 will seek to construct a first floor side extension to previously approved single storey side extension (app. Ref. 231338), see plan at Appendix 1.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats was completed by, and report written by Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv.

Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI64844). 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 2.

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 SU79836497, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 412 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, highlighted.

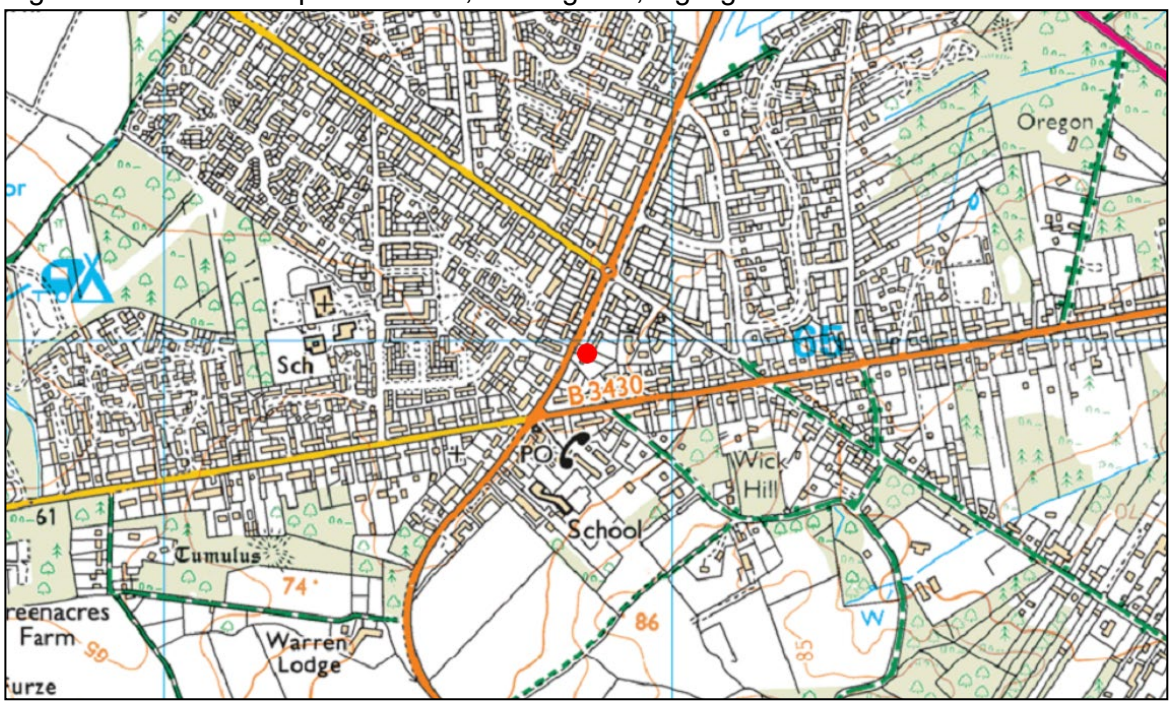


Figure 2. 412 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, overview of the immediate area.

3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached, two storey brick build and part rendered property. The remainder of the site comprises a paved front garden (see cover photograph) and a rear garden that is mainly laid to lawn with seating area and matures trees and shrubs on the boundaries, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers some foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is some ecological connectivity to bat foraging and commuting habitat in the wider landscape via the garden network.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 412 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 14.11.25

4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

The client has advised that, to his knowledge, no previous bat surveys have been conducted on the property. 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 property is situated in the village of Finchampstead and is surrounded by properties and gardens of differing sizes and styles. To the south lie large arable fields and pockets of woodland, which are likely to provide good habitat for bats and are within travelling distance for bats. California Country Park, the Ridges and large areas of woodland and lakes lie in close proximity to the site, all of which are known to provide good habitat for bats, and there is ecological connectivity in the form of tree lined hedgerows, from the site to these areas. Other areas including Sand Martins golf club lie slightly further from the site, and they too provide suitable habitat for bats although dense urban infrastructure separate these areas from the site.

Longmoor Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Longmoor Bog Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lie to the northwest, within 2km of the proposed development site however there is limited ecological connectivity from the site to these designated sites. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed one current EPSLs 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
2019-39174-EPS-MIT	03/2029	Common and soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of 412 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham RG40 3RA was carried out by Simon Holmes on Friday 14 November 2025 at 12.35pm. The weather conditions for the survey were overcast with light drizzle and a temperature of 14 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, endoscope and a ladder.

During the DBW, an internal and external inspection of the property 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 building – 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 building.
- 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.

4.3 Constraints

Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client and there were no constraints to the survey.

5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property 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 property is a detached, brick-built and part-rendered two-story building that is in very good condition externally. The half-hipped roof with rear pitched section and front and rear dormers are covered in close fitting composite tiles, none of which are missing or broken, see Figure 4 below. There is no missing mortar from the ridges or hip tiles, they are all tightly fitted and offer no roosting potential (see Figure 5 on page 9) and the verges are fully sealed, see Figure 6 on page 9. The uPVC soffits and fascias are all in good condition and have no gaps which could be utilised by roosting bats, see Figure 7 on page 9.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded externally on the property and there appeared to be no visible roosting opportunities for bats or access into the building for roosting bats.

Figure 4. Example well fitted roof tiles. 412 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 14.11.25

Figure 5. Example sealed ridge and hip tiles. 412 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 14.11.25

Figure 6. Example sealed verge. 412 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 14.11.25

Figure 7. Example sealed uPVC soffits and fascias. 412 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 14.11.25

5.2 Internal Inspection

An internal inspection of the property was undertaken and examined for any signs of bats (as described in section 4.2).

The majority of the loft space has been converted into habitable accommodation leaving a small roof void and eaves cupboards at the front (not being affected by the proposed works). The loft space was accessed via a ladder and is in a good condition internally. The loft is lit, boarded and insulted and the roof tiles are lined with insulation, all of which is tightly fitted with no rips or tears, see Figure 7 below. No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the loft and internally there appeared to be no roosting opportunities for bats within the building.

Figure 7. Internal view of loft space. 412 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 14.11.25

6. Evaluation

The bat roost potential of the features within the site 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

The combined evidence from the desktop study and the internal and external inspection of the property provides a high level of confidence in support of the opinions set out in this report. There were no bats or evidence of bats and no features externally on the building which could be utilised by roosting bats or in which bats could access the building to roost and internally there are no potential roosting opportunities for bats.

Informed by the results of the survey and the factors highlighted in Section 6, along with the data from the desktop study, it is concluded that there is negligible potential for roosting bats within the property. Based on recommendations in the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, no further survey effort is required.

7.2 Contingency Plan

In the unlikely event that bats are found during the proposed works, all work must stop, and advice sought from Urban Tree Experts or another licensed bat ecologist.

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 bats may start roosting at the site.

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:

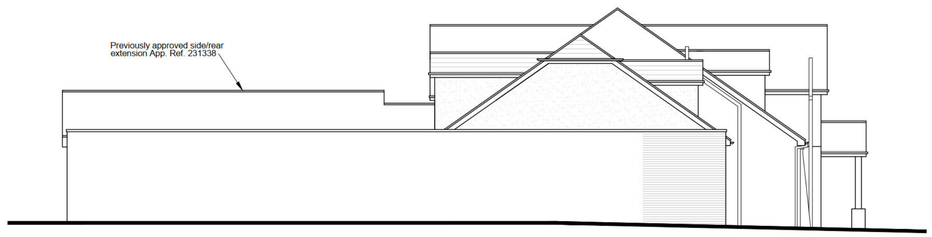
Telephone: 01189 762902
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

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

[redacted]
Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv.
Consultant, Urban Tree Experts
Natural England Licence CLS-CLS-17637, CLS-CLS-17638

APPENDIX 1

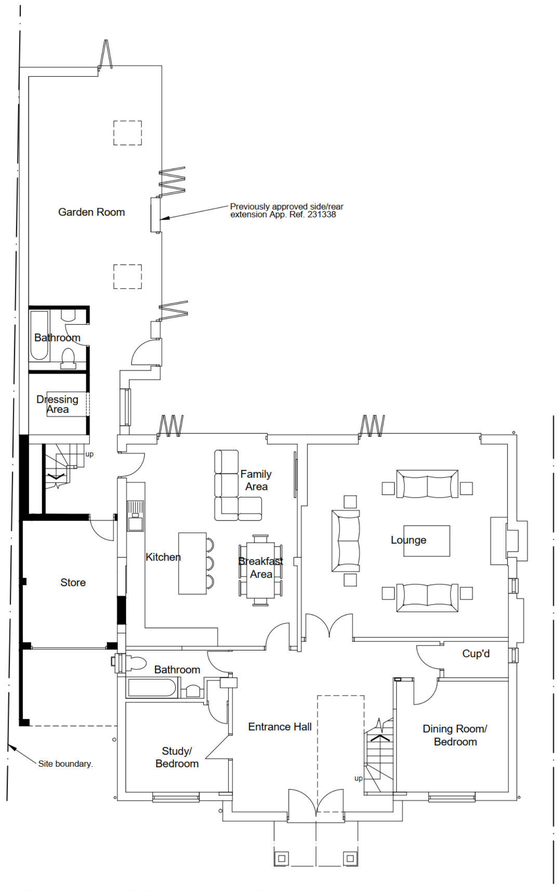
Proposed N.W. Elevation



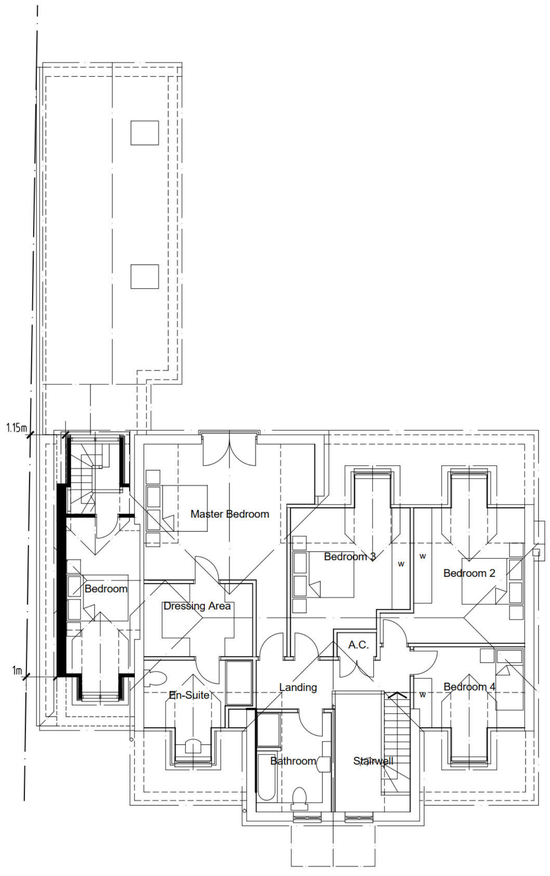
Proposed N.E. Elevation

Proposed S.E. Elevation

Proposed S.W. Elevation



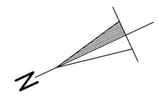
Proposed Ground Floor Plan

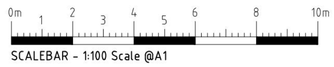


Proposed First Floor Plan

PROPOSED MATERIALS:-

Walls -	Facing brickwork/render to match the existing.
Roof -	Plain tiles to match existing main roof.
Windows -	White u-PVC to match the existing.
Doors -	White u-PVC to match the existing.





SCALEBAR - 1:100 Scale @A1

Proposed First Floor Side Extension to Previously Approved Single Storey Side Extension App. Ref. 231338

Client
Harmeet Singh Matharu
412 Finchampstead Road
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 3RA

Description
Proposed Plans and Elevations

MARTIN BUTLER PARTNERSHIP LIMITED
28 Broad Street
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 1AB
Tel/Fax: 0118 989 0990

Scale	Project	drawing	revision
1:100	22510-1	02	

date 03/10/25
drawn MB

APPENDIX 2

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.