

8 January 2024

Our ref: 233269/ARB

Mrs R Lawson
37 Kerris Way
Lower Earley
Reading
Berkshire
RG6 5UW

Dear Mrs Lawson

37 KERRIS WAY, LOWER EARLEY

Introduction

In accordance with your instructions, AA Environmental Limited (AAe) carried out a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the above property on Thursday 17 August 2023. The purpose of the survey was to assess the presence or likely absence of bats utilising the buildings and provide appropriate mitigation measures, as necessary. A series of photographs has been attached for reference.

The proposals are for the construction of a new residential dwelling with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the demolition of the existing garage and removal of the shed, and clearance of some garden vegetation. It is anticipated that the majority of the boundary vegetation will remain unaffected by the works.

Legislation

Currently there are 17 species of bat known to breed in the UK. All species and their roosts are protected under Regulation 41 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. As a signatory to the *Bonn Convention (Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe)* the UK is also required to protect their habitats. This legislation makes it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts and protection from damage or disturbance of important feeding areas. Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

Methodology

Baseline Data

As certain baseline data is now readily available on the internet, the Multi-agency website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk) was consulted to determine whether any part of the site or nearby habitats have been statutorily or otherwise designated and whether any European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats have been granted within 1 km of the site. In addition, a review of Google Earth's satellite imagery (http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/index.html) was completed to determine past land uses of the site and surrounding land.

Walk-over Site Survey

A visual survey of the site was completed to record any evidence of bats or features that could provide potential roosting opportunities following the guidelines provided by the Bat Conservation Trust¹ and by an experienced

¹ Collins, J. (ed) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (3rd edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

and licensed ecologist². A thorough internal and external examination of the existing buildings was carried out, with any access points inspected for evidence of bats. All internal roof voids/spaces were accessed to check for any evidence of bats.

In addition, a careful inspection of any tree within the vicinity of the works was carried out to identify those features that are important for roosting bats. Surveying trees presents particular problems at any time of the year as bats will use a wide variety of roost sites in cavities, splits, cracks, knotholes and under loose bark, many of which are not easily detected from the ground.

Each tree was assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

- **Negligible** – negligible habitat features likely to be used by roosting bats.
- **Low** – a tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roosting features (PRFs) but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
- **Moderate** – a tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
- **High** – a tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

The surrounding habitat was also surveyed to identify any important features such as mature trees with suitable features for roosting bats and any established lines of vegetation that might provide important flightlines.

Evidence of bats is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- the presence of bat droppings, which tend to accumulate under established roost sites or at roost entrances;
- the accumulation of large numbers of moth wings, which have been discarded by feeding bats;
- areas of staining by urine or from fur rubbing; and
- the presence of bats themselves or their corpses.

The visual survey was facilitated by the use of binoculars, ladders, powerful torches (1M candlepower) and a Ridgid Micro CA-350 Inspection Camera endoscope. A heterodyne bat detector (Pettersson D200) was also used during the inspection to record any bat calls.

In accordance with good practice, the site was checked for any evidence of other protected species or species of particular note.

Results

Baseline Data

According to the Multi-agency website, there are no statutory designated ecological sites located on or adjacent to the site. The nearest site is Maiden Erlegh Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), located approximately 0.71 km to the north-east of the site. There are no Habitats of Principal Importance (HPis) located on or adjacent to the site, with the closest being an area of Deciduous Woodland, also noted in the National Forest Inventory, located approximately 0.19 km to the east of the site.

According to the Multi-agency website, only a single bat licence has been granted within the 1 km study area. The licence was for the destruction of a resting place for common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) bats (reference: EPSM2011-3341), located approximately 0.8 km to the south of the site.

² The lead surveyor was Alan Beaumont, BSc (Hons), MSc. MCIEEM.

Google Earth Imagery shows that the site has remained largely unchanged since at least 2003 being dominated by the existing buildings, hardstanding and garden area of the adjacent property (No. 37).

Site Description (Photographs 1-4)

The site is located off Kerris Way in the residential area of Lower Earley, Reading, centred at National Grid Reference: SU 743702 and covers less than 0.1 of a hectare. The site comprised the existing detached garage and garden shed with associated hardstanding and garden area. The site is bordered by Elm Lane to the south-west, footpath to the south-east, Kerris Way to the north-east and residential properties and associated gardens to the north-west and north-east.

The detached garage was of masonry construction, with a pitched interlocking pantiled roof which was well sealed. The garage had two metal up-and-over doors, with an access door on the side. There were timber soffits/fascias present. Internally, there was an enclosed roof space within the garage, which was used for storage and found to be cluttered with trusses and lined with a bitumen-based felt. The garden shed was of timber construction with a pitched bitumen-based felt roof, with no separate roof space recorded.

The garden area was dominated by a lawn, with a few semi-mature and immature apple (*Malus sp.*), fig (*Ficus carica*), plum (*Prunus domestica*) and cherry (*Prunus sp.*) trees recorded.

Bats

No evidence of bats was recorded during a careful internal and external inspection of the garage and shed. The roof tiles were well aligned and tightly sealed, as were the soffits/fascias, with no obvious access points recorded. Internally, the attic space was fully accessed and not complex allowing a thorough inspection, which appeared to be well-sealed and dusty and heavily cobwebbed throughout. The garage and shed were assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities for bats due to their construction type and condition.

The site, being a residential plot, provided only limited foraging opportunities for bats. All of the trees on site were assessed to provide **negligible to low** suitability for supporting roosting bats due to the size and lack of obvious PRFs.

Other Wildlife

Apart from a few common species of bird, either recorded on the site or flying overhead, no other species of any note were recorded.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The proposals are for the construction of a new residential dwelling with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the demolition of the existing garage and removal of the shed, and clearance of some garden vegetation. It is anticipated that the majority of the boundary vegetation will remain unaffected by the works. There are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly affected by the proposals. The site is of overall low ecological value, with no evidence of bats or other protected species recorded.

Although there are considered to be no ecological constraints to the proposals, a series of specific and generic mitigation measures, as detailed below, should be implemented to reduce any impact the development proposals may have on local wildlife. There is also an opportunity to implement some enhancement measures to increase the nature conservation value of the site in the long term in accordance with Government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023³.

³ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2023). *National Planning Policy Framework*. London.

A thorough examination of the buildings was completed, with all potential access points and/or roosting opportunities fully inspected for evidence of bats. The roof space above the garage was fully accessed and not complex allowing a thorough inspection and, therefore, there are considered to be no constraints to the survey findings. Although no evidence of bats was recorded, with the buildings assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities, and no further surveys are considered necessary, all site operatives should be made aware of current legislation protecting bats and their roosts. In the unlikely event of any bats being encountered on the site, then works should stop immediately and Natural England or AAe contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided.

It should be noted that all species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Therefore, any site clearance works should be timed to avoid the main bird nesting season, which, in general, runs from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible, a check should be carried out prior to any clearance works to ensure there are no active nests present.

As part of the proposals, soft landscaping will be carried out. Where any new planting is proposed it should aim to use native species, but where this is not practicable then species of known value for wildlife can be used. In particular, flowering plants will be of benefit to invertebrate species and shrubs and trees may provide nesting opportunities for birds once they become established.

In order to protect any vegetation to be retained, suitable fencing may be required at certain locations to reduce the possibility of any damage that could be caused during the works. To minimise accidental damage, any overhanging branches should be pruned back to suitable live growth points. All works should be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced specialist contractor and should conform to current industry best practice, i.e. BS 3998: 2010 '*Tree Work - Recommendations*'. The retention and protection of the existing boundary vegetation will help to maintain existing commuting/foraging routes currently utilised by wildlife.

Any new boundary treatment should be designed to promote permeability of the site to minimise fragmentation and allow free movement of wildlife throughout the site, for example by strengthening/enhancing the existing boundary vegetation, planting up a series of new hedgerows and/or installing post and rail fences. These measures will strengthen habitat connectivity and provide additional foraging habitat, cover and nesting opportunities. If close boarded fences are required for security reasons these should be minimised and raised slightly off the ground (c. 150-200 mm) to allow animals to pass underneath.

The site could be further enhanced by providing roosting, nesting and sheltering opportunities for a range of species and the creation of new wildlife habitats, such as some of those recommended by the Chartered Institute of Ecology Environment and Management's published Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Guidance, and listed below:

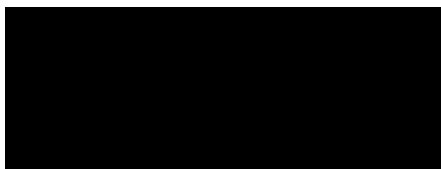
- Nest boxes
- Hedgehog houses
- Bat boxes
- Pollinator nest sites
- Planting wildflowers

The effects of lighting on plants and animals are difficult to assess, but it is thought that lighting can adversely affect invertebrates, birds and bats. As the site already experiences some lighting from on-site sources there should be no change in current light levels from the proposed works.

The recommendations provided above try to pre-empt any issues that may arise as well as provide some mitigation and enhancement measures.

I trust this is of interest to you and provides the Local Planning Authority with enough information to determine the application but let me know if further clarification is required.

Yours sincerely



Alan Beaumont
BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM
Class Licence CL18

Encl. Photograph Record Sheet (Drg. No. 233269/01)



Photograph 1: Showing the front of the detached garage.



Photograph 2: Showing the side of the detached garage.



Photograph 3: Showing the roof space above the detached garage, which was cluttered with trusses.



Photograph 4: Showing the timber shed within the garden area.

Rev.	Details	Drawn Chkd.	Date
PROJECT 37 Kerris Way Lower Earley			
TITLE Photograph Record Sheet			
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Scale NTS	Date 08.01.24	Drawn NAB	Drg No. 233269/01
		Chkd. ARB	Rev.