



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT 36/38 ROSE STREET WOKINGHAM



**Prepared for:
Iconic Project Management Ltd
4 The Courtyard
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Wokingham
RG40 2AZ**

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CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Instruction
- 1.2 Aims and Objectives
- 1.3 Proposed works
- 1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

- 2.1 Legislative Background

3. Site Location and Description

- 3.1 Site Location
- 3.2 Site Description

4. Survey Methodology

- 4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search
- 4.2 Daylight Survey
- 4.3 Constraints

5. Survey Findings

- 5.1 External Inspection
- 5.2 Internal Inspection

6. Evaluation

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 Interpretation
- 7.2 Contingency plan

8. References

9. Queries

Appendix 1

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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 E Nash of Iconic Project Management Ltd to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]) of 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham, RG40 1XU. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Thursday 19 September 2024 at 12.30pm, 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 one statutory designated site is located within, and one current European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) for bats has been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The immediate area surrounding the site has a low level of habitat suitable for roosting, commuting and foraging bats, due to the dense nature of the urban environment.

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 properties suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and potential roost features identified during the preliminary inspection. The property is in a fair condition internally and externally however, there are numerous cracked/slipped/raised roof tiles which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats, and the presence or absence of bats could not be determined. In line with best practice guidelines the building was assessed as having low potential¹ to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines², one separate dusk emergence survey is required on the property in order to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats. If bats are recorded emerging from the building during the surveys, two further activity surveys and an EPSL will be required in order for the 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 E Nash of Iconic Project Management Ltd to conduct a DBW of 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham, RG40 1XU 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 renovate the property, including works to the roof.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

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

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, and bat biology.

Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 (CL20) Bat Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI64844). He has 34 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 81316872, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham, highlighted.



Figure 2. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham, overview of the immediate area.





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3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a terraced, brick-built and painted 3 storey property that was formally 2 separate cottages. The remainder of the site comprises an overgrown rear garden with shrubs and mature trees throughout, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers some foraging and commuting habitat for bats however there is limited ecological connectivity to bat foraging and commuting habitat in the wider landscape.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 36 Rose Street, Wokingham. RG40 1XU



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 the centre of Wokingham and is surrounded by a mixture of properties with gardens and industrial premises. Some 195 metres to the northeast is All Saints Church and cemetery. Further afield to the northeast is Elizabeth Park, to the southwest King George V Playing field and to the north and northwest Cantley Park and Joel Park, all of these areas are known to provide good habitat to support roosting, commuting and foraging bats, although there are limited ecological corridors connecting these areas to the site.



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Holt Copse and Joel Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies to the northeast, within 2km of the proposed development site although there is limited ecological connectivity from the site to this LNR due to the built environment.

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 of 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham, RG40 1XU was carried out by Nick Powell on Thursday 19 September 2024 at 12.30pm. The weather conditions for the survey were sunny and clear with a temperature of 27 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 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. This includes the rear single storey Perspex roof as, due to the construction material and light ingress, this section of the building offers no roosting potential.

4.3 Constraints

Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client. The lofts of the property have been converted to habitable accommodation and there is no access to any remaining loft voids.



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 terraced, brick-built 3 storey building that is rendered and painted white, and in a fair to good condition externally. The roof structure is a complex mix of crossed pitched and flat sections, see Figure 4 below. The pitched sections are covered in clay tiles, the majority of which are raised/have moved exposing gaps that could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species, see examples at Figure 5 on page 9. The ridge tiles on the main roof are well sealed however, there is missing mortar from ridge tiles on the rear pitched rooves which could provide roosting opportunities for bats, see Figure 6 on page 9. On the rear roof elevation is a dormer window (2nd floor), the flat roof of which is covered in well fitted bitumen felt with no rips or tears and the lead flashing affixing it to the property is flat with no gaps, see Figure 7 on page 10. Between the 2 rear ridges (1st floor) is a flat section of roof that is covered in bitumen felt, all of which appears to be in a good condition with no rips or tears (see Figure 8 on page 10) and, on the ground floor there is a rear extension with flat roof, again covered in well fitted bitumen felt. The verges are in a good condition with no missing mortar and the lead flashing around both chimney stacks and affixing the building to the left, neighbouring property appears to have recently been replaced and is all in a good condition, see Figure 9 on page 11. The soffits and fascias are all tightly fitted to the walls and had no cracks or splits in which bats could use to roost, see Figure 10 on page 11. There is a rear (1st floor, above a neighbouring property) timber clad extension that is in a poor condition with some rotten/lifted timber (see Figure 11 on page 12), and a bitumen covered flat roof that has been patched up, see Figure 12 on page 12.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the external inspection of the property although there are various features that provide potential crevice roosting opportunities for bats.

Figure 4. Roof structure outlined in red. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham. RG40 1XU





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Figure 5. Example raised/lifted roof tiles. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham. RG40 1XU



Figure 6. Example missing mortar from ridge tiles. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham. RG40 1XU





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BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

Figure 7. Rear dormer window. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham. RG40 1XU



Figure 8. Rear flat roof at 1st floor level. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham. RG40 1XU





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Figure 9. Example of sealed lead flashing. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham. RG40 1XU



Figure 10. Example sealed soffits and fascias. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham. RG40 1XU





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Figure 11. Rear, timber clad 1st floor extension with warped cladding. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham. RG40 1XU



Figure 12. Roof of timber clad extension. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham. RG40 1XU





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5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The loft space has been converted into habitable accommodation and there is no access to any remaining loft voids, see examples at Figure 13 below.

Figure 13. Example of internal habitable accommodation in former loft space. 36/38 Rose Street, Wokingham. RG40 1XU





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 property is in a fair condition internally and externally. The cracked/slipped/raised roofing tiles provide numerous crevice like features suitable for bats to roost and may also provide access into the loft voids for bats to roost. When the findings are combined with the desk top study 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, a single dusk emergence survey needs to be undertaken on the property, between May and August to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats and in order to inform appropriate mitigation for the proposed works if necessary. The features identified will require three survey positions equipped with bat detectors and night vision cameras in order to cover the potential bat roosting features. If bats are recorded emerging from the building during the survey, two further activity surveys and an EPSL will be required in order for the development to proceed legally.



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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:

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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.