Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) OF AN OUTBUILDING AT 66 FINCHAMPSTEAD ROAD EARLEY



Prepared for:
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18 August 2026

Ref: SPH/NP/PEA-26/11.08

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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 1 Right Plan to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]) of an outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 2NS. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Tuesday 11 August 2026 commencing at 8.50am, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the outbuilding 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 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 landform to the south of the site consists of tree and hedge lined agricultural fields/improved grassland with Emm Brook which provides foraging, commuting and roosting opportunities for a wide range of bat species.

The DBW comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the building 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 outbuilding's suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and potential roost features identified during the preliminary inspection. There are moved/missing/broken roof tiles resulting in gaps which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats and the presence or absence of bats could not be established without further survey effort. When combined with the data from the desk top study, this resulted in the property being characterised as having a low potential[1] to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines[2], a single separate dusk emergence survey is required on the outbuilding 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).

1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by 1 Right Plan to conduct a DBW of an outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 2NS 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 for the conversion of the building into habitable accommodation including replacing the existing roof.

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 holds a Class 2 Bat License (CLS-11742) and has been surveying bats for 4 years with various ecological consultancies and has received training in surveying techniques, bat detector use, bat biology, identification, acoustic monitoring, echolocation analysis and netting.

Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI-64844). He has 36 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.

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 SU80996802, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing maps.

Figure 1. Outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, highlighted.

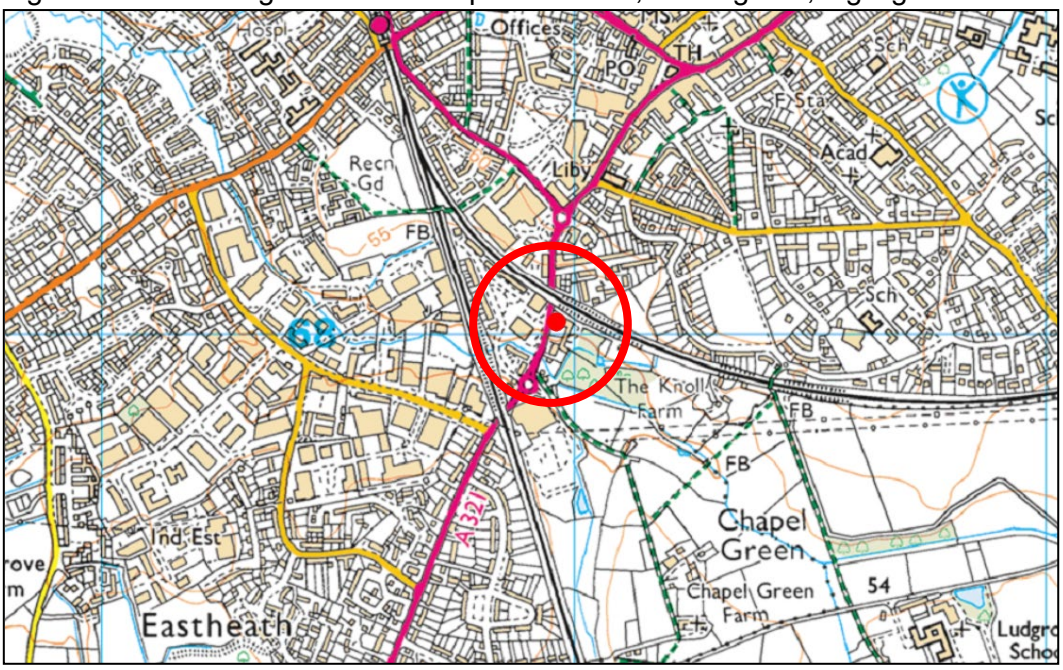


Figure 2. Outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, overview of the immediate area.



3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached, brick-built outbuilding. The remainder of the site comprises an overgrown parking area/hardstanding (see cover photograph) with, to the northeast a minor road that abuts a main railway line and, to the rear (southeast), the gardens of a former physiotherapy clinic which are mainly laid to lawn with mature trees, see Figure 3 below. The site offers limited foraging and commuting habitat for bats however there is ecological connectivity to bat foraging and commuting habitat in the wider landscape.

Figure 3. Surrounding habitat. Outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 11.08.26





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 outbuilding is situated between residential areas to the north and east and industrial buildings to the west, south of the town of Wokingham. 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 east lies Langborough Recreation Ground which is known to provide good habitat for bats and is within travelling distance for bats. To the north lies the town centre, with dense infrastructure, commercial and housing development, which do not provide suitable habitat for bats.

Holt Copse & Joel Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies to the north of the site and within 2 kilometers however there is no ecological connectivity to the statutory designated site due to the intervening-built environment. A search of Magic Maps revealed one current EPSL for bats, 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 and soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of the outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 2NS was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 11 August 2026 commencing at 8.50am. The weather conditions for the survey were dry and bright with a temperature of 24.6 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 outbuilding 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. A section of the building internally could not be accessed as the yale lock had not been opened, see Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Locked door at outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 11.08.26



5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the outbuilding 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 outbuilding is a detached, brick-built and part painted/part timber single storey building which is in a fair to poor condition externally. The pitched roof is covered in slate tiles, some of which on both elevations have moved/are raised or are missing/broken, see Figure 5 on page 9. There is no missing mortar from the ridge tiles (see Figure 5 on page 9) and the verges are sealed. The wooden fascias on the road side of the building are flush to the wall plate (see Figure 6 on page 10), the wooden cladding on the front elevation is all flush with no gaps that crevice dwelling bat species could use for roosting (see Figure 7 on page 10) and, whilst there is a section of missing soffit on the rear elevation, due to the proximity of an adjacent summer house, this would not be utilised by bats for roosting due to the acute angle required to enter and exit the feature, see Figure 8 on page 10.

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

Figure 5. Example of moved/raised/missing roof tiles on front and rear elevations and sealed ridge tiles. Outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 11.08.26









Figure 6. Example flush wooden fascias. Outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 11.08.26

Figure 7. Example wooden cladding. Outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 11.08.26

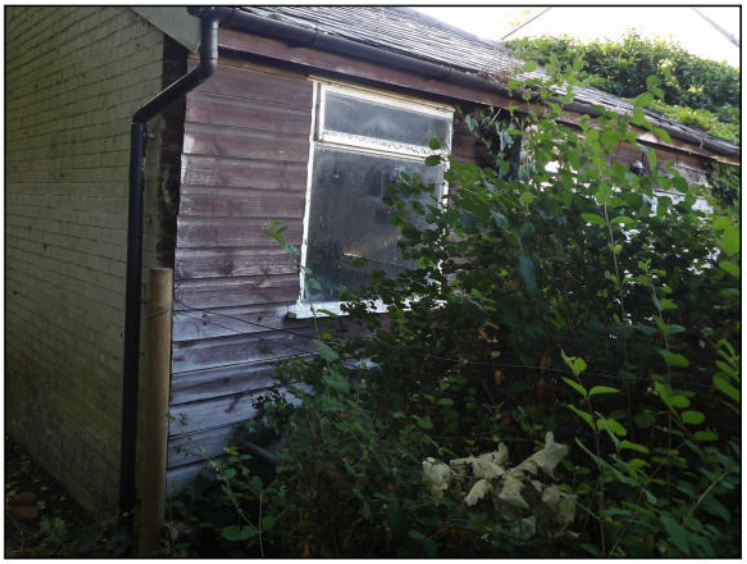
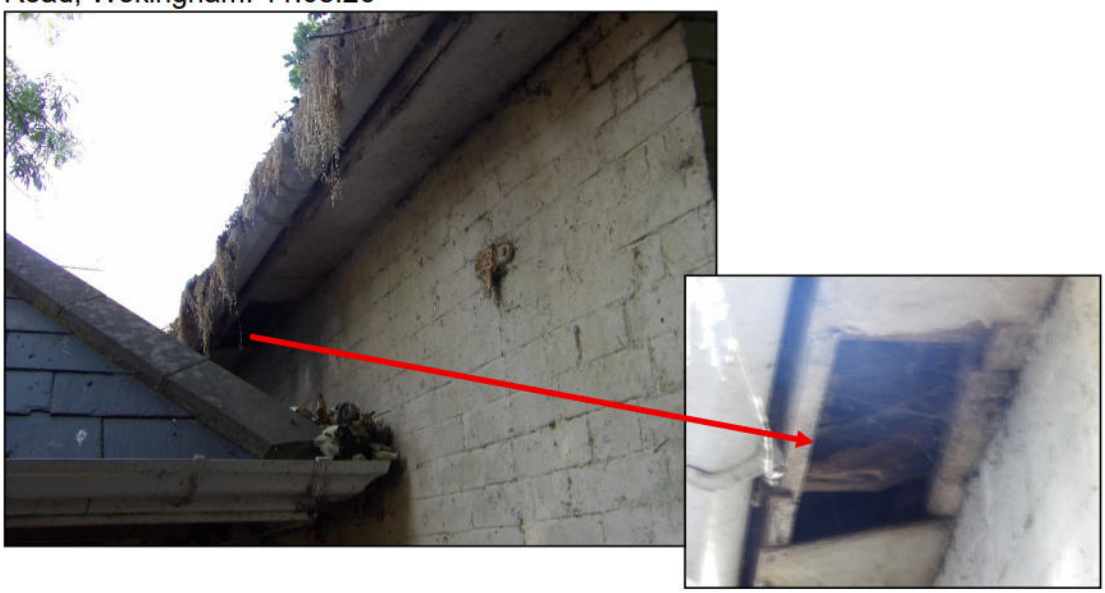


Figure 8. Missing soffit board on rear elevation. Outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 11.08.26



5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The section of the building behind the double doors is empty (see Figure 9 below) and the roof tiles are lined with a combination of timber sarking and MDF (see Figure 9 below) and this offers roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling bat species.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the open section of the outbuilding.

Figure 9. Internal view of section of building that could be accessed and combination of timber sarking and MDF. Outbuilding at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham. 11.08.26





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

No bats or evidence of bats were recorded during the survey of the outbuilding however, there are numerous features on the outbuilding which provide crevice like features suitable for bats to roost and the presence or absence of bats could not be determined without further survey effort. 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 must be undertaken on the outbuilding, between May and August, in order to establish the presence of absence of roosting bats in the building. The features identified will require two survey positions equipped with bat detectors and night vision cameras in order to cover the potential bat roosting features.

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.) (2003) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition).

Reason, P.F. & Wray, S. (2023) UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Ampfield, CIEEM.

HMSO (2017) Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 [online]. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made

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.