



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (BATS) AT HILLSIDE HOUSE SPENCERS WOOD



**Prepared for:
Mr J Perkins
Hillside House
Basingstoke Road
Spencers Wood
RG7 1AP**

25 November 2025

Ref: SPH/PEA-25/14.11



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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.



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Executive Summary

Urban Tree Experts was commissioned by Mr J Perkins to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]), of Hillside House, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood, RG7 1AP. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Friday 14 November 2025 at 11.25am, during daylight hours. An external and internal inspection of the property took place to look for signs of bats.

The preliminary ecological appraisal consists of a desktop 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 desktop search was conducted based upon a minimum 2km search radius and it revealed one statutory designated site is located within, and two current European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) for bats have been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The surrounding habitat, with woodland, a freshwater lake and farmland provide rich and diverse habitats suitable for a wide range of bat species and there is ecological connectivity to these areas from the site.

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 potential¹ to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines², 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).



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1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr J Perkins to conduct a DBW of Hillside House, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood, RG7 1AP to support a forthcoming planning application to the Wokingham Borough Council.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The DBW is designed to:

- Identify the presence/likely absence of bats within the property.
- 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 “Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey side and rear extension with 1no. rooflight to replace existing ground floor structure, rear second storey external modifications and changes to fenestration.”

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 (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.

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.



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3. Site Location and Description

3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU71606722, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. Hillside House, Spencers Wood, highlighted.

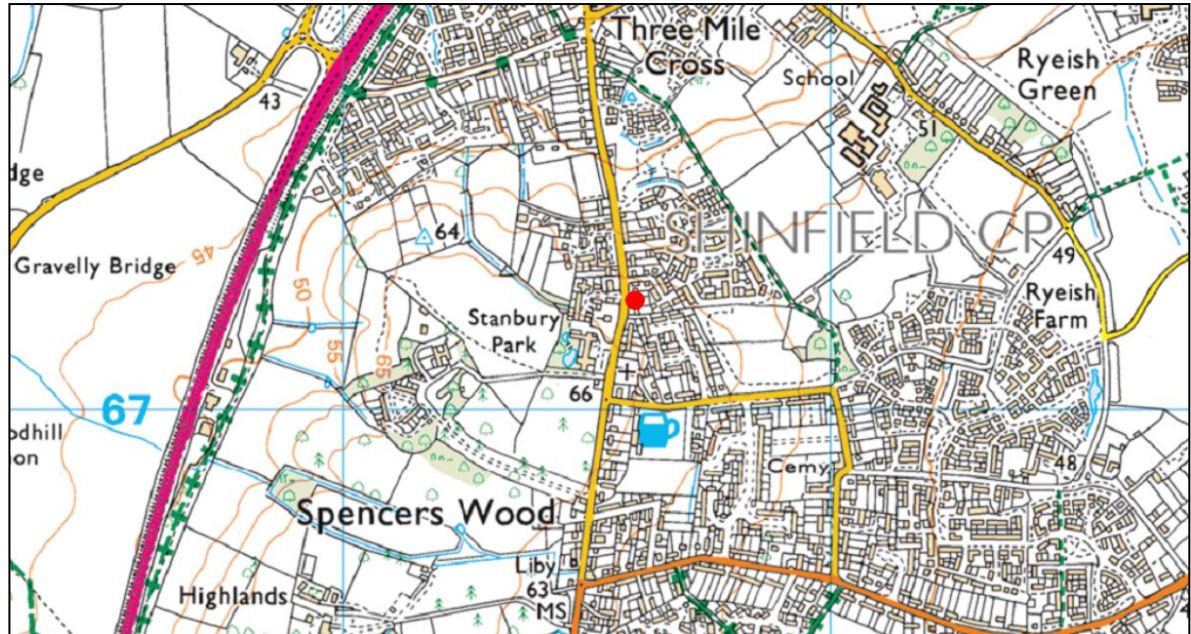
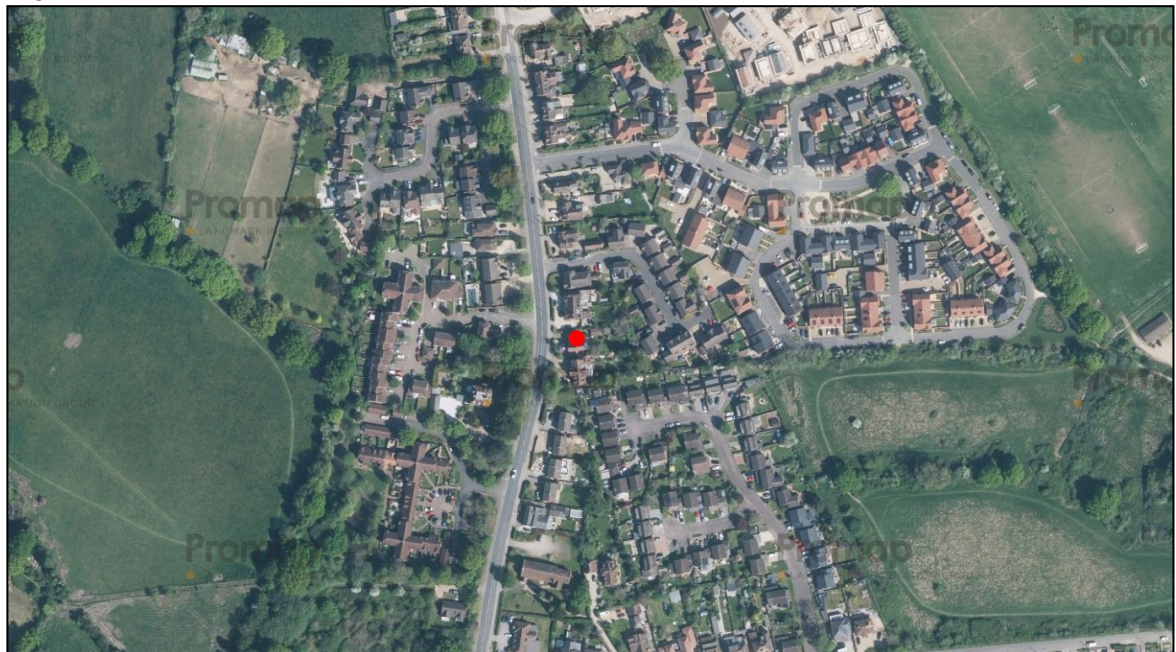


Figure 2. Hillside House, Spencers Wood, overview of the immediate area.





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3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached, brick-built two storey property with detached garage. The remainder of the site comprises, to the front, a paved driveway/parking area with various shrubs and herbaceous plants. To the rear the garden is mainly laid to lawn with various shrubs and mature trees, mainly on the boundaries, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers some foraging and commuting habitat for bats.

Figure 3. Rear garden. Hillside House, Spencers Wood. 14.11.25



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

The client has advised that, to their knowledge, no previous bat surveys have been conducted 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 within 2km of the site. Due to the suburban area, the scale of the potential development, and the very local impact that may occur, no data was sought from local records centre at this time.

The property is situated in the semi-rural village of Spencers Wood and is surrounded by properties and gardens of varying sizes and styles. Further afield to the east are the sports fields associated with Ryeish Green School and to the southeast lies a large tree and hedge lined public open space. To the front (west) are the agricultural fields and improved grassland of Stanbury Park. All of these areas are likely to provide good habitat for roosting, commuting and foraging bats and are connected to the site via ecological corridors. Further afield lies the River Loddon and areas of woodland, parkland and farmland, which provide good habitat for bats, some of which are connected to the site via tree and hedge rows.



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Stanford End Mill and River Loddon Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies within 2km of the proposed development site and there is good ecological connectivity from the site to this SSSI. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed two current EPSLs for bats have 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
2016-25203-EPS-MIT	09/2026	Common pipistrelle and brown long-eared
2018-36705-EPS-MIT-1	10/2028	Common pipistrelle and brown long-eared

4.2 Daylight Survey

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) of Hillside House, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood, RG7 1AP was carried out by Simon Holmes on Friday 14 November 2025 at 11.25am. The weather conditions for the survey were sunny with a temperature of 18 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole and a ladder.

During the preliminary ecological appraisal (bats), 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. This includes the detached garage 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 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 two-story building that is in a good condition externally. The cross-pitched roof with rear, single storey pitched roof extension (see Figure 4 below) are covered in close fitting composite tiles, none of which are missing or broken, see Figure 5 on page 9. There is no missing mortar from the verges or ridge tiles, they are all tightly fitted and offer no roosting potential, see Figure 5 on page 9. The lead flashing around the chimney stack, Velux windows and affixing the single storey extension to the main dwelling is flush fitting (see Figure 6 on page 10), and the soffits and fascias on the main dwelling and single storey rear extension are all in a good condition and have no cracks or splits which could be utilised by roosting bats, see Figure 7 on page 10. On the rear elevation are two flat roof sections both of which are covered in well fitted bitumen felt with no rips or tears that crevice dwelling bat species could use for roosting (see Figure 8 on page 11) and they are firmly affixed to the main dwelling. The attached rear wood and glass conservatory on dwarf brick wall offers no roosting potential due to the construction materials, thermal properties and light ingress, see Figure 9 on page 11. On the front bay window are hanging tiles, some of which have moved/are broken, however this section of the property is not being affected by the proposed works.

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

Figure 4. Rear view of property. Hillside House, Spencers Wood. 14.11.25





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Figure 5. Example of sealed roof and ridge tiles. Hillside House, Spencers Wood.
14.11.25





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Figure 6. Example flush lead flashing. Hillside House, Spencers Wood. 14.11.25



Figure 7. Example sealed soffits and fascias. Hillside House, Spencers Wood. 14.11.25





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Figure 8. Bitumen covered flat roof sections. Hillside House, Spencers Wood. 14.11.25



Figure 9. Rear conservatory. Hillside House, Spencers Wood. 14.11.25





5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The loft of the property has been converted into habitable accommodation leaving no loft space or eaves storage areas. The loft space above the rear, single storey extension was accessed via a small door in the gable end and is in a good condition internally. The loft is not lit, partially boarded and insulated and the roof tiles are lined with membrane, all of which is tightly fitted with no rips or tears, see Figure 10 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 10. Example loft space of rear, single storey extension. Hillside House, Spencers Wood. 14.11.25





6. Evaluation

The bat roost potential of the features within the site have been assessed with reference to the criteria laid out in the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Mitchell-Jones, 2004). These criteria are listed on page 22 of the guidelines with the features **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.



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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

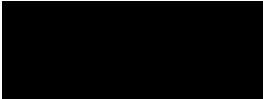
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HM Government (2017) Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations.
HM Government (1981) The Wildlife and Countryside Act.
HM Government (2006) Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.
Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (1999). Bat Workers' Manual (2nd Edition). Joint Nature Conservancy Committee, Peterborough.

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.