

20 Rotherfield Avenue
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG41 2EX

Preliminary Roost Assessment

Report ref.: R3542/a

<i>Report Quality Control Information</i>	
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Alex Smith to conduct a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at 20 Rotherfield Avenue in Wokingham, Berkshire. The PRA was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the proposed erection of a two storey side extension and the enlargement of front and rear dormers. The aim of the PRA is to determine the actual or potential presence of bats at the property and whether further survey and/or mitigation is required.
- 1.1.2** All bat species in England and Wales are fully protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitat Regulations') (as amended). A desk study, utilising open access data (i.e. MAGIC and the LPA's planning portal), found six bat species roosting in a 2-kilometre radius of the property.
- 1.1.3** A survey of the exterior and interior of the property was undertaken on the 31st August 2023 by Conor Watson ACIEEM under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL17 and assistant Sam Wenman.
- 1.1.4** During the survey, an accumulation of approximately 200 small bat droppings, resembling those typically deposited by pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus* spp.), was observed at the base of the western gable wall inside the roof void, suggesting that the property is likely used as a summer day roost by a species of pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus* sp.). The distribution of the bat droppings indicates that the roost location is behind hanging tiles at the apex of the gable and the presence of a maternity colony cannot be ruled out at this stage.
- 1.1.5** The survey findings demonstrate that these proposals could result in the damage or destruction of a bat roost and in the absence of mitigation, lead to disturbance and/or harm of any bats if present at the time of works. Further survey is required to confirm the status of the bat roost(s) in the property.
- 1.1.6** Subject to further survey findings, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence or if applicable, the registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) may be required to permit the work to proceed lawfully. In the long term, replacement access and/or roosting opportunities may need to be created and/or reinstated in the property as part of the licence.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

- 2.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Alex Smith to conduct a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at 20 Rotherfield Avenue in Wokingham, Berkshire.
- 2.1.2** The PRA was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the proposed erection of a two storey side extension and the enlargement of front and rear dormers following the demolition of the existing rear extension and side lean-to (refer to existing and proposed elevations in **Appendix 3**).
- 2.1.3** The aim of the PRA is to determine the actual or potential presence of bats at the property and whether further survey and/or mitigation is required.

2.2 Site Location and Context

- 2.2.1** The property is a residential chalet bungalow situated at the western end of Rotherfield Avenue in Wokingham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 79931 69354).
- 2.2.2** The property is in a suburban setting set off of the Reading Road (A329). The Emm Brook and deciduous woodland are adjacent to the west of the property and ancient semi-natural woodland is present approximately 450m to the east at Holt Copse & Joel Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

2.3 Legislative Background

- 2.3.1** All bat species are fully protected in England and Wales by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (*'Habitat Regulations'*). In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat;
 - Deliberately, 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; or to affect significantly the local distribution or

abundance of the species; and

- Deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

2.3.2 The government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations. A licence can be issued if the following three tests have been met:

- **Regulation 55(9)(a)** - there is "no satisfactory alternative" to the derogation;
- **Regulation 55(9)(b)** - the derogation "will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range"; and
- **Regulation 55(2)(e)** - the derogation is for the purposes of "preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment".

2.3.3 Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3e) of the Habitat Regulations to have regard to requirements of the Habitats Directive in the exercise of their functions. The LPA must therefore consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by planning proposals affecting EPS before granting planning permission.

2.3.4 If an EPS mitigation licence is necessary, a licence can be sought once all the necessary planning consents have been granted. Natural England aims to issue a decision on licence applications within 30 working days of submission.

2.3.5 Licensable projects affecting small numbers of seven commonly occurring species occupying roosts of low conservation importance may fall under the remit of the low impact Bat Mitigation Class Licence WML-CL21 (BMCL), which would enable consultants registered by Natural England, or accredited agents appointed by them, to carry licensable work under the BMCL once sites have been registered in advance with Natural England. Registration forms must be submitted at least three weeks before work is due to start, and if acceptable, Natural England aims to register sites within two weeks.

2.3.6 Survey data supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or the registration of the site under the BMCL must be up to date, i.e. have been conducted within the current

or most recent optimal survey season, i.e. May to August. Therefore, if surveys show bats are present and licensable work is delayed until during or after the next survey season, updated surveys will be required to support an application or site registration.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Desk Study

- 3.1.1** A desk-based study utilising open access data was undertaken for the property and land within a 2-kilometre radius. The study used MAGIC to examine granted European Protected Species (EPS) applications for bats and the Local Planning Authority's (LPA) planning portal to review current planning applications.

3.2 Building Inspection

- 3.2.1** A detailed inspection of the exterior and interior of the property was undertaken on the 31st August 2023 by Conor Watson ACIEEM – registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL17 (Registration no.: 2020-44817-CLS-CLS) – and assistant Sam Wenman.

- 3.2.2** The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars and a high power (1 million candle power) torch, systematically searching for signs of bat occupation and features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines (Collins 2016; Mitchell-Jones & McLeish 2004; Reason & Wray 2023).

- 3.2.3** The following signs may indicate the presence of a bat roost within a building:
- Bat droppings (these can be found externally, especially in sheltered areas such as window sills, underneath roost entrances or internally within a roof space);
 - Piles of insect remains, e.g. moth wings, which may be indicative of regular feeding sites used by species such as brown long-eared bat;
 - Staining at roost entrances or within the roost (urine and oil from fur can leave stains on timbers when bats are gathered for long periods); and
 - Bats (live or dead).

- 3.2.4** Residential buildings may offer potential roosting sites in a number of locations; favoured locations include:
- Under roof, ridge and hip tiles, especially when loose or lifted tiles are present, or sections of mortar are missing;
 - Under sections of raised lead flashing;
 - At the gable ends – access is typically gained at the roof apex via gaps in the soffits or under roof tiles;

- At the eaves – gaining access via gaps between the soffits and wall; and
- Within an enclosed roof space – brown long-eared bats for example will often cluster at the ridge beam.

3.3 Survey Constraints

3.3.1 There were no significant constraints because full external and internal access was available through the survey.

3.3.2 It should be noted that it is not always possible to inspect all potential roost locations during a survey, particularly for crevice-dwelling bats which roost behind roof lining and inside wall cavities. Therefore, an absence of bat evidence does not necessarily equate to evidence of bat absence.

4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Desk Study

4.1.1 Six bat mitigation licences have been granted within a 2-kilometre radius of the property for four different species including one maternity colony. The nearest application, approximately 300m southeast of the property, covered the destruction of a brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) resting place between 2016 and 2021 (Case ref.: 2016-22176-EPS-MIT). The next closest application, approximately 650m east of the property, covered the destruction of a noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) breeding site between 2010 and 2011 (Case ref.: EPSM2009-1496). Three separate applications covered the destruction of common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) roosts and the closest was approximately 840m north of the property between 2016 and 2021 (Case ref.: 2016-24486-EPS-MIT). The furthest application from the property, approximately 1.5km northeast, covered the destruction of resting places for brown long-eared bat (*P. auritus*), common pipistrelle (*P. pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) between 2020 and 2027 (Case ref.: 2020-48489-EPS-MIT).

4.1.2 Bat survey reports have been written for current planning applications nearby and have found at least two different species roosting in the vicinity of the property. A bat survey completed by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP in September 2016 (report ref: R1444/a) of another property on Rotherfield Avenue recorded a soprano pipistrelle day roost. A bat emergence and re-entry report by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP in July 2021 (Report ref.: R2818/a) accompanying a full planning application, for proposed works to reconnect a 340m length of historic river channel of the Emm Brook through Riverside Park, found soprano pipistrelle (*P. pygmaeus*) and common pipistrelle (*P. pipistrellus*) day roosts in trees less than 100m away (Planning ref.: 203617). A bat survey report by Phlorum Limited in September 2022 (Project no.: 11582) accompanying a full planning application, for the proposed erection of a three-part development, found a common pipistrelle feeding, day or night roost approximately 1.4km southeast away (Planning ref.: 223691).

4.2 Building Inspection

Overview

4.2.1 Photographs of the property are presented in **Appendix 1** and a plan of the external

and internal survey findings with associated target notes is shown in **Appendix 2**. The survey findings from the exterior and interior of the property are described as follows:

External Survey

- 4.2.2** The property was a detached chalet bungalow of brick cavity wall construction with a pitched roof and box dormers; small single-storey extensions were present to the side and the rear (**Photographs 1 & 2**).
- 4.2.3** The pitched roof was covered with interlocking roof tiles and ridge tiles that were in generally good condition (**Photograph 3; Target note 1**). The box dormers were clad in vertical timber panels and had bituminous flat roofs with intact soffit boxes (**Photograph 4; Target note 2**). Potential ingress/egress opportunities for bats were present at the gable ends in the form of gaps behind occasionally lifted hanging tiles and beneath the soffit boards (**Photographs 5 & 6; Target note 3**).
- 4.2.4** The rear extension was a simple timber structure with a bituminous flat roof and large windows; the side extension was a lean-to porch with a part metal, part plastic roof (**Photograph 7; Target notes 4 & 5**).

Internal Survey

- 4.2.5** The roof void was accessible via a first floor loft hatch. The void had a floor-to-ridge height less than a metre and was of 'cut and pitch' roof construction (**Photograph 8**). The roof was lined with a hessian-reinforced bituminous felt and the ridge beam was cobwebbed, which can indicate a lack of void-dwelling bat activity (**Photograph 9; Target note 6**). The floor was insulated with fibreglass and covered with loose MDF boards; the eaves were either filled with fibreglass insulation or blocked by the box dormers (**Photograph 10; Target note 7**). The gable walls were of breezeblock construction.
- 4.2.6** There was an accumulation of approximately 200 small bat droppings, resembling those typically deposited by pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus* spp.), at the base of the western gable wall behind the water tank; droppings were stuck to the wall and there were gaps at the gable apex and around a pipe on the left-hand side (**Photographs 11, 12 & 13; Target note 8**). A patch of breathable roofing membrane had been applied around a flue at the western gable end (**Photograph 14**).

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Status

- 5.1.1** No evidence of roosting bats was found inside the main extent of the roof void, which was a sub-optimal size for uninterrupted internal flight exhibited by primarily void-dwelling bats such as the brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), so it is considered highly unlikely that the property supports such species.
- 5.1.2** The observation of an accumulation of approximately 200 small bat droppings, resembling those typically deposited by pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus* spp.), at the base of the western gable wall inside the roof void suggests that the property is likely used as a summer day roost by a species of pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus* sp.). The distribution of the bat droppings indicates that the roost location is behind hanging tiles at the apex of the gable and the presence of a maternity colony cannot be ruled out at this stage.
- 5.1.3** Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) are the most abundant and widespread bats in Great Britain. Both species occur in almost any habitat type and are well adapted to the built environments; they are the species most regularly reported roosting in houses and churches (Mathews *et al.* 2018). Roosts supporting these species hold site to district level importance subject to the status of roost present, i.e. non-breeding roosts supporting individual or small numbers of bats through to maternity roosts supporting large numbers of female bats (Reason & Wray 2023).

5.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

- 5.2.1** The planning proposals seek consent for the proposed erection of a two storey side extension and the enlargement of front and rear dormers following the demolition of the existing rear extension and side lean-to (refer to existing and proposed elevations in **Appendix 3**). The survey findings demonstrate that these proposals could result in the damage or destruction of a bat roost and in the absence of mitigation, lead to disturbance and/or harm of any bats if present at the time of works. Further survey is required to confirm the status of the bat roost(s) in the property.
- 5.2.2** Further survey of the property should comprise a minimum of three evening emergence survey visits, each separated by at least three weeks. The surveys

should be conducted in the bat active season between May and September, with at least two of the survey visits undertaken in the optimal period for recording maternity roosts, i.e. May to August inclusive (Collins 2023).

5.2.3 Subject to further survey findings, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence or if applicable, the registration of the site under the low impact Bat Mitigation Class Licence WML-CL21 (BMCL) may be required to permit the work to proceed lawfully. A licence can be issued by Natural England if the three licensing tests (detailed in **Paragraph 2.2.2**) have been met by the proposals.

5.2.4 To meet one of the licensing tests, it would be necessary to demonstrate that the 'favourable conservation status' of bats using the property is maintained throughout and after the completion of the work by employing mitigation measures during the work, by providing compensatory roosts in the short-term and ensuring that roosting sites are retained on site in the long-term. Indicative and provisional mitigation proposals are summarized in **Section 5.3** below. **N.B. the preparation of a detailed mitigation strategy necessary for the submission of an EPS mitigation licence should be based on the findings of the further survey.**

5.3 Indicative and Provisional Mitigation Proposals

5.3.1 If further survey demonstrates that an EPS mitigation licence is required, under the terms of the licence or BMCL (if applicable), the commencement of work affecting bat roosts will be timed to avoid the periods when bats are most susceptible to disturbance, i.e. winter hibernation season for all roosts (mid-November to February inclusive) to avoid disturbing torpid bats, and outside of the peak summer breeding season (May to mid-September inclusive) where evidence of a maternity roost is recorded.

5.3.2 Replacement roosting opportunities would be provided so that they are available to bats in the short-term, i.e. before and during the work by erecting at least one woodcrete bat box on a mature tree or a purpose-built pole before the work starts.

5.3.3 Before the licensable work commences, a licenced ecologist or 'Registered Consultant' under the BMCL would provide a toolbox talk to contactors on site detailing that bats are present, the legislation protecting bats, the location of the roosting sites, good working practices, the measures that are required to protect bats during the work and what to do if bats are found.

- 5.3.4** A 'soft strip' approach to the work affecting identified roosts would be adopted, i.e. the careful removal of hanging tiles associated with the roost(s), by gloved hands and with hand-held tools under the supervision of a licensed ecologist or the 'Registered Consultant' if working under the BMCL. In the event that bats are discovered during the course of the work, the licenced ecologist or 'Registered Consultant' would capture the bat(s) and transfer it/them directly to one of the bat boxes erected in advance of the works.
- 5.3.5** In the long-term, replacement access and/or roosting opportunities may need to be created and/or reinstated in the property as part of an EPS mitigation licence or BMCL (if applicable). Access and roosting opportunities should be created corresponding to the positioning of access points/roosting sites identified during the further survey. **N.B. bituminous roofing felt that does not contain polypropylene/polyethylene filaments, such as bitumen felt type 1F, or a non-bitumen coated 'breathable' membrane that has passed the snagging propensity test, such as TLX 'Bat Safe', should be used; other non-bitumen coated membranes, which are harmful to bats, must be avoided.**

6 REFERENCES

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

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Mathews F., Kubasiewicz L.M., Gurnell J., Harrower C.A., McDonald R.A., Shore R.F. (2018). *A Review of the Population and Conservation Status of British Mammals*. A report by the Mammal Society under contract to Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage. Natural England, Peterborough.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. & McLeish, A. P. (2004). *Bat Workers' Manual (3rd edition)*. JNCC, Peterborough.

Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). *UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.

APPENDIX 1 – SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



1. Front of property viewed from north.



2. Rear of property viewed from south.



3. Interlocking roof tiles (rear elevation).



4. Vertical timber cladding on box dormers (rear elevation).



5. Hanging tiles on gable end (western elevation).



6. Hanging tiles on gable end (eastern elevation).



7. Porch lean-to (western elevation).



8. Roof void viewed from eastern end.



9. Bituminous roof lining and cobwebbed ridge beam (roof void).



10. Fibreglass insulation in eaves (roof void).



11. Accumulation of approximately 200 small bat droppings at western gable (roof void).



12. Gap at apex of western gable (roof void).

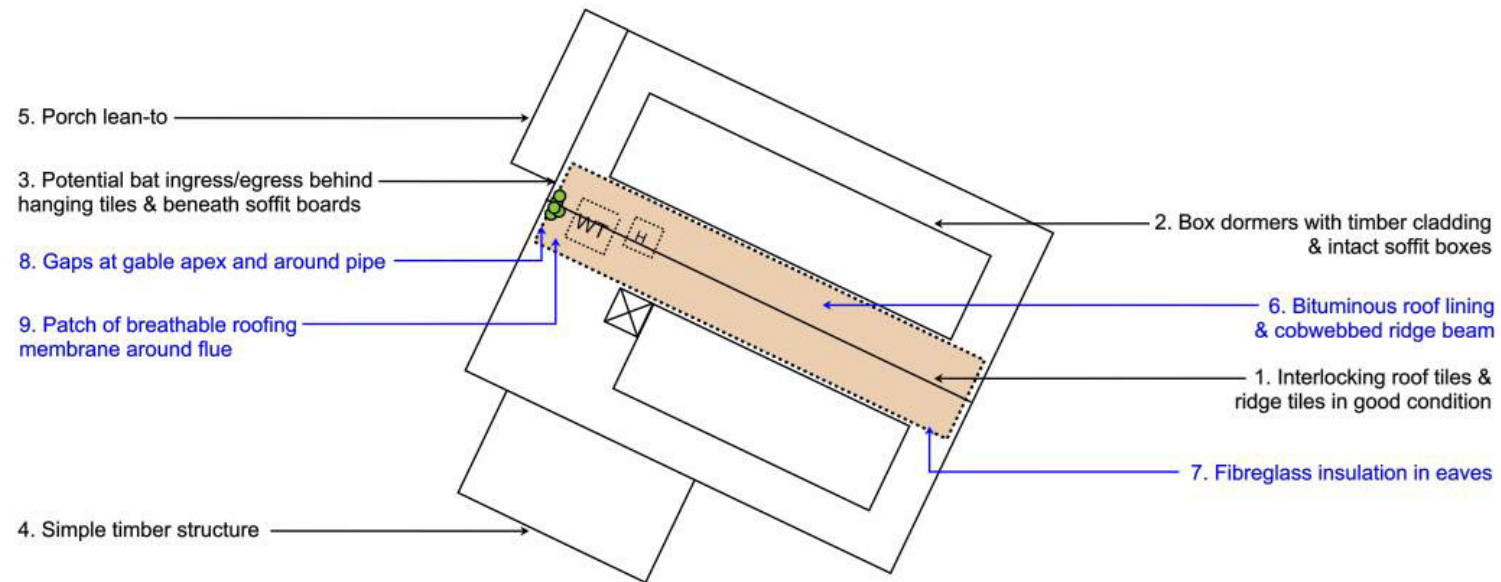


13. Gap around pipe in western gable (roof void).



14. Breathable roofing membrane patch (roof void).

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT PLAN



- Small bat droppings



Chimney



Roof void



Loft hatch



Water tank

n. External target note

n. Internal target note

Drawn by:	Date:	Scale:	20 Rotherfield Avenue Wokingham	
CW	September 2023	Not to scale	Preliminary Roost Assessment Plan	

APPENDIX 3 – EXISTING AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS



EXISTING FRONT ELEVATION



EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION



EXISTING REAR ELEVATION



EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION

MR & MRS SMITH
DESIGN PROPOSAL @
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EXISTING
ELEVATIONS

1:100 @ A2
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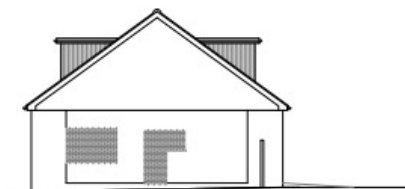
PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION



PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION



PROPOSED SECTION DRAFT

MR & MRS SMITH
DESIGN PROPOSAL @
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PROPOSED ELEVATIONS

1:100 @ A2
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