

7 Ryecroft Close
Wagrave
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG10 8BL

Preliminary Roost Assessment

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Adrian Smith to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at 7 Ryecroft Close in Wargrave, Wokingham. The survey was commissioned to accompany a householder planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for a proposed two storey side and rear extension and the addition of a single storey garage to the western side.
- 1.1.2** The property had no potential bat access points leading into the roof void and no bat droppings were found internally, so the presence of void-dwelling bats is considered highly unlikely. There were no bat access points identified on the main roof which could provide sufficient space, shelter, protection and conditions for regular use by individual or small non-breeding groups of crevice-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded common and soprano pipistrelle. There were two features identified on the single storey extensions behind the fascias which could offer roosting opportunities for crevice-dwelling bats. The property has been assigned low suitability for roosting bats.
- 1.1.3** The identified potential roost features will not be impacted by the proposals. The development proposals are therefore considered highly unlikely to result in the death, injury or disturbance of bats; the damage or destruction of a bat roost; or the obstruction of access to a bat roost. As such, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required for the planned works to go ahead lawfully. In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the construction activities, the works must stop immediately and a licensed ecologist should be called to site to attend to the bat and provide advice on how to proceed.
- 1.1.4** This report contains information regarding a mobile species so it will likely be valid for less than 12 months (CIEEM 2019b).

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

- 2.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Adrian Smith to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at 7 Ryecroft Close in Wargrave, Wokingham.
- 2.1.2** The survey was commissioned to accompany a householder planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for a proposed two storey side and rear extension and the addition of a single storey garage to the western side.

2.2 Site Location and Context

- 2.2.1** The detached property is located in the southern corner of a cul-de-sac on Ryecroft Close, towards the north eastern side of the village of Wargrave (central OS grid reference: SU 79131 78895).
- 2.2.2** The property is in a suburban setting surrounded by neighbouring residential properties and associated private residential gardens with mature scattered trees. Open countryside extends from the edge of Wargrave approximately 195 metres to the north. Allotments are situated 250 metres to the southeast and recreational fields are situated 330 metres and 380 metres to the southeast of the site. The River Thames is 590 metres to the west of the site.
- 2.2.3** The suburban setting comprises habitats that provide high suitability commuting and foraging opportunities for bats adapted to suburban areas.

2.3 Report Objectives

- 2.3.1** The aim of the PRA is to ascertain if there is evidence of the presence of bats and/or potential for roosting bats to be present, and therefore whether further survey and/or mitigation would be required for future proposed development activities.

3 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND

3.1 Relevant Legislation

3.1.1 In England and Wales, all bat species found in the wild are fully protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA) and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); the regulations are commonly referred to as the Habitat Regulations and hereafter referred to as such. The Habitat Regulations refer to European Protected Species (EPS) and all species of bats in the United Kingdom (UK) are EPS. Although the UK left the European Union on the 31st January 2020 and is therefore no longer tied to European legislation, the Habitat Regulations have been retained in their current format.

3.1.2 The legal framework underpinned by the WCA and Habitat Regulations makes these specific actions an offence as follows:

- Deliberately kill, injure, capture or take a wild bat;
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, to rear or nurture their young, to hibernate or migrate, or to significantly affect local distribution or abundance;
- Damage or destroy a place used by a bat for breeding or resting; and
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place used by a bat for shelter or protection.

3.2 Planning Policy

3.2.1 The biodiversity duty imposed through the Environment Act 2021 states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) must consider what action they can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. Government planning policy, such as the ODPM Circular 06/2005, requires LPAs to account for the conservation of protected species when considering and determining planning applications.

3.2.2 The ODPM Circular 06/2005 states that *‘the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat.’* This policy means that in instances where there is a reasonable likelihood of bats being present and affected by a development, surveys must be undertaken to inform a mitigation strategy to be agreed prior to granting planning permission.

3.3 Mitigation Licensing

3.3.1 The government's statutory nature conservation body, 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. An EPS mitigation licence can be issued if the following three tests derived from Regulation 55 have been satisfied:

- (2)I – 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.'*
- (9)(a) – there is *'no satisfactory alternative'* to the derogation; and
- (9)(b) – *'the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.'*

3.3.2 LPAs have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3)(e) of the Habitat Regulations to consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by planning proposals affecting EPS before granting planning permission. 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.

3.3.3 The Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) scheme allows ecologists to apply to become Registered Consultants to use this licence for low conservation status roosts, i.e. roosts comprising small numbers of seven commonly occurring species. A site registration form must be completed as a condition of the licence and submitted to Natural England at least three weeks before the licensable activities are due to start; Natural England aims to register sites within two weeks of submission.

3.3.4 Baseline survey information supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or BMCL site registrations must be up-to-date and have been completed within the current or most recent optimal season. A suitably experienced ecologist will be required to undertake a site walkover/check within three months prior to application/registration submission to confirm that conditions have not changed since the most recent survey.

4 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

4.1 Desk Study

4.1.1 A desk-based study for bats was undertaken to collate and review existing information about the site and the surrounding land. The study utilised the following open access resources:

- OS maps and Google Earth – maps and satellite imagery were used to identify potential flight-paths and foraging habitats for bats;
- MAGIC – examined to locate granted European Protected Species licences; and
- pre-existing bat survey reports – any available reports were obtained from the client or relevant planning portal.

4.2 Building Inspection

Survey Details

4.2.1 A detailed inspection of the exterior and interior of the property was undertaken on the 25th June 2024 by Vicky Potts MCIEEM registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 (Registration no. 2016-27162-CLS-CLS) assisted by Emma Shaw, in accordance with good practice guidance (Collins 2023). The equipment used during the inspection comprised binoculars, a high-power (1 million candlepower) LED torch, a headtorch, ladder and PPE (facemask, gloves etc.). The inspection involved a systematic search of the exterior and interior of the structure during daylight hours to compile information on potential and actual bat access points; potential and actual bat roost sites; and any evidence of bat presence.

External Survey

4.2.2 Frequently used bat access points and/or roost sites include (but are not limited to) spaces:

- behind hanging tiles, weatherboarding, soffit boxes and barge boards;
- under lead flashing (particularly around chimneys) and roof tiles/slates; and
- in existing bat boxes.

4.2.3 It is important to note that the two most abundant and widespread bat species, common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), typically only require gaps measuring 15mm by 20mm to gain access to a roost inside a building.

4.2.4 The external survey involved a systematic search for evidence of bats including:

- live or dead specimens;
- droppings;
- urine marks;
- fur-oil staining; and
- squeaking noises.

4.2.5 It should be noted that bats can be present in a building while leaving no visible signs externally and wet weather has the potential to wash any evidence away. The search for evidence was focused on (but was not limited to) the ground, windowsills, windowpanes and walls (including cladding and hanging tiles); particularly in places near to potential bat access points and/or roost sites.

Internal Survey

4.2.6 The internal survey comprised a systematic search for evidence of bats on the upper floors of the building (i.e. checking the exterior from windows) and inside the roof and eave spaces. Evidence of bats found during an internal inspection can include:

- live or dead specimens;
- droppings;
- urine marks;
- fur-oil staining;
- feeding remains (i.e. moth wings);
- squeaking noises;
- bat-fly (Nycteribiid) pupal cases; and
- odour.

4.2.7 It should be noted that only specimens or droppings can be relied upon in isolation to confirm the presence of a bat roost.

4.2.8 Frequently used roosting locations within the roof include (but are not limited to):

- the apex of the gable end or dividing walls;
- the top of chimney breasts;

- ridge and hip beams;
- mortise and tenon joints;
- behind purlins; and
- between tiles and roof lining.

Survey Limitations and Validity

- 4.2.9** There were no significant survey limitations because PRAs can be carried out at any time of year under any weather conditions and the building was fully accessible.
- 4.2.10** It should be noted that it is not always possible to inspect all potential roost sites during a survey, particularly for bat species which typically roost in hidden crevices. Therefore, an absence of bat evidence found during a survey does not necessarily equate to evidence of bat absence in a building.
- 4.2.11** This report contains information regarding a mobile species so it will likely be valid for less than 12 months (CIEEM 2019b).

5 SURVEY RESULTS

5.1 Desk Study

5.1.1 The linked private gardens with mature scattered trees in the suburban setting resembles continuous habitat that could be used as flight paths connecting to high-quality foraging habitats in the nearby open countryside for any bats roosting locally.

5.1.2 Bat mitigation licences that have been granted within the last 10 years inside a 2 kilometre radius of the property are detailed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Bat mitigation licences granted within a 1km radius of the property (Source: MAGIC).

Case Reference of Granted Licence	Species on the Licence	Licensable Period	Licensable Works	Distance (m)
2018-35667-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle	01/09/2018 - 31/08/2019	Destruction of resting place	1272 m E
2015-7300-EPS-MIT	Brown long-eared Common pipistrelle Soprano pipistrelle	07/04/2015 - 30/03/2020	Destruction of resting place	1324 m N
2015-7819-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle Soprano pipistrelle	24/04/2015 - 30/04/2020	Destruction of resting place	1414 m NW
2015-7768-EPS-MIT-1	Soprano pipistrelle	19/02/2016 - 30/04/2020	Destruction of resting place	1763 m NW
2019-43232-EPS-MIT	Soprano pipistrelle	01/11/2019 - 30/06/2025	Destruction of resting place	1937 m NW

5.2 Building Inspection

5.2.1 The findings from the external and internal inspections carried out for the property are described with photographs and annotated in a plan, as follows:

External Survey

5.2.2 The property was a detached brick built residential house with a pitched roof covered with interlocking roof tiles. The property had a single-storey tiled extension to the front and side and a flat-roofed rear extension(**Photographs 1 & 2**).



Photograph 1. Front of property viewed from north.

Photograph 2. Rear of property viewed from south.

- 5.2.3** The interlocking roof tiles on the main roof were flat and intact, and the ridge tiles were also intact with mortar (**Photograph 3**). A couple of ventilation ridge tiles were present along the ridge. There was mesh present under the bottom row of tiles, restricting access beneath the roof tiles (**Photograph 4**). The verge tiles were fully mortared on the gable ends, but a slight gap was present where the two boards met at the apex on the rear gable end (**Photograph 5; Target note 1**). The walls to the front and rear of the house were clad with tightly fitted uPVC cladding (**Photograph 6**).



Photograph 3. Interlocking roof tiles in place and intact, and ridge tiles fully mortared.



Photograph 4. Mesh present under bottom row of roof tiles.



Photograph 5. Gap where the two soffit fascias joined on the rear roof elevation. Verge mortar intact.



Photograph 6. Walls tightly clad with uPVC boards.

- 5.2.4** The interlocking roof tiles were flat and intact on the single-storey extension and mesh was present under the bottom row of roof tiles restricting access beneath the roof tiles (**Photograph 7**). The verge tiles were fully mortared on the gable end to the rear of the property. A heavily cobwebbed gap was present behind the uPVC fascias on the rear single-storey extension (**Photograph 8; Target note 2**). A cobwebbed gap was present in the porch between the underclanking and soffit box and a second gap of limited extent was present underneath lead flashing at the junction between the single-storey roof and the western elevation wall of the house (**Photographs 9 & 10; Target notes 3 & 4**).



Photograph 7. Mesh present along the base of the roof tiles on the sloped single storey extension to the front of the house.



Photograph 8. Heavily cobwebbed gap being the fascias on the rear gable end of the single storey extension.



Photograph 9. Cobwebbed gap between the underclocking and soffit box on the front porch.



Photograph 10. Cobwebbed gap under the lead flashing at the western side of the house.

Internal Survey

- 5.2.5** The roof space was accessed via a loft hatch and was of trussed rafter construction. The space had a maximum height of approximately 1 ¼ metres and was used for storage. The floor was covered with loose boarding in places and lined with fibreglass insulation throughout. The eaves were open in places (**Photograph 11**). The roof was lined with a bitumen roofing felt which had some paper in places and large gaps around three pipes but was otherwise intact (**Photographs 12 & 13; Target note 5**). The ridge was lightly cobwebbed. The roof was cluttered with pipework, timbers and stored items (**Photograph 14**). The gable ends were tightly lined with foil covered insulation with breathable roofing membrane at the apex (**Photograph 15**).



Photograph 11. Roof void boarded with fibreglass insulation, and eaves partially open.



Photograph 12. The intact roofing felt.



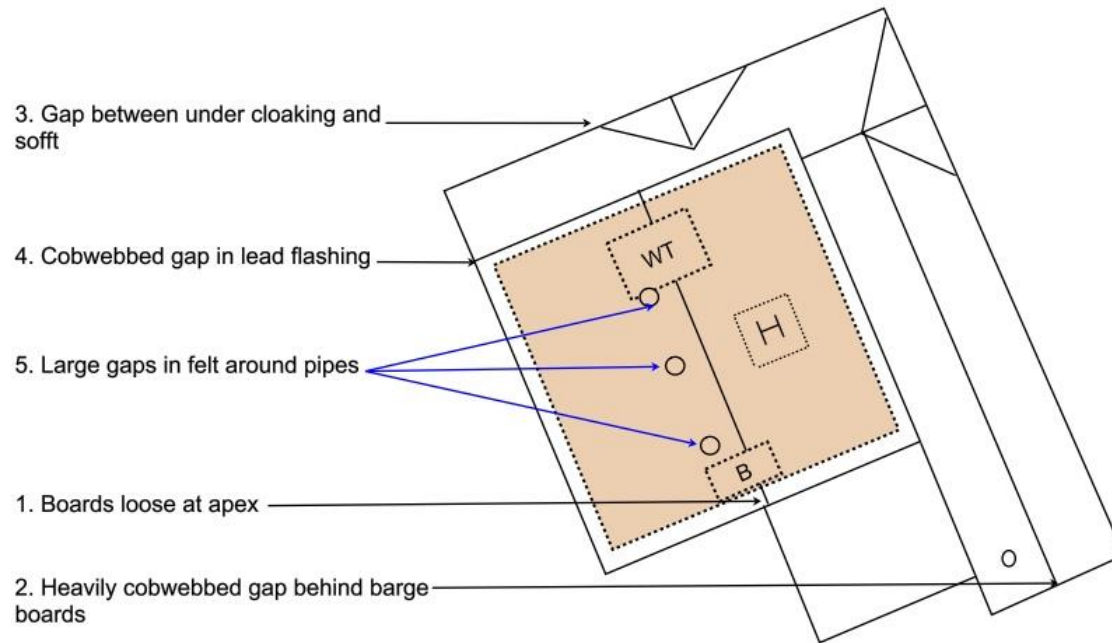
Photograph 13. Gap in felt around a pipe.



Photograph 14, The cluttered roof space.



Photograph 15. Tightly fitted gable end with foil covered insulation.



 Chimney
  Roof space
  Loft hatch
  Water Tank
  Boiler
  External Target note
  Internal Target note

Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	7 Ryecroft Close Wargrave	
VP	July 2024	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Assessment of Potential Roost Suitability

6.1.1 The linked residential gardens with scattered trees in the suburban setting resembles continuous habitat that could be used as flight paths connecting to high-quality foraging habitats in the nearby open countryside for any bats roosting locally. Furthermore, the search of granted bat mitigation licences identified three species known to be roosting within a 2km radius of the property: common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*pipistrellus pygmaeus*), and brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*).

6.1.1 The property had gaps in the roofing felt around three pipes exposing the undersides of tiles in the roof void, however the roof tiles were tightly fitted around the pipes with no daylight or access points visible (**Photograph 13; Target note 5**). There were no potential bat access points to the exterior of the main roof which was tightly fitted and intact throughout. A vertical gap was present where the two boards met at the apex on the rear gable end, however this was not suitable for use by bats due to it being too small for bats to access (**Photograph 5; Target note 1**). Gaps were present behind the fascias on the front and rear gable ends of the single storey extension (**Photograph 8 & 9; Target notes 2 & 3**). There was also a gap in the lead flashing on the single storey front extension which was cobwebbed and of limited extent, and considered unsuitable for use by bats (**Photograph 10; Target note 4**).

6.1.2 The roof void had insufficient space for internal flight for supporting individual or small numbers of void-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*). Furthermore no bat droppings were found internally and no access points were identified to the exterior of the house, so the presence of void-dwelling bats is considered highly unlikely. There were two potential roost features suitable for crevice-dwelling bats on the two gable ends on the single storey extension, such as the locally recorded common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*pipistrellus pygmaeus*) bats.

6.1.3 Therefore, the property has been assigned low suitability for crevice-dwelling bats overall (see **Appendix 1** for potential suitability categories).

6.2 Impact Assessment and Recommendations

6.2.1 The two potential roost features suitable for use by bats are not to be impacted by the proposed two-storey extension to the side and rear. Therefore the survey findings

demonstrate that the development proposals are considered unlikely to result in the death, injury or disturbance of bats; the damage or destruction of a bat roost; or the obstruction of access to a bat roost. As such, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required for the planned works to go ahead lawfully.

- 6.2.2** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the construction activities, the works must stop immediately and a licensed ecologist should be called to site to attend to the bat and provide advice on how to proceed; works should not continue until further written advice has been received. At this stage, an EPS mitigation licence may be required to permit the work to recommence lawfully.

7 REFERENCES

CIEEM (2019b). *Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys*. CIEEM, Winchester.

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*. CIEEM, Ampfield.

APPENDIX 1 – POTENTIAL SUITABILITY CATEGORIES FOR ROOSTING BATS

The categories detailed in **Table 2** below are derived from the '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*' (Collins 2023) and provide guidance for assessing the potential suitability of buildings (and other structures) for roosting bats. These categories are applied using professional judgement and irrespective of whether the presence of a bat roost has been confirmed during a survey, as additional bat roosts could be present which have not yet been discovered.

Table 2. Categories for potential suitability of buildings (and other structures) for roosting bats.

Potential Suitability	Category Justification
None	A building (or structure) that has no features likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of cracks, crevices or voids that could provide suitable shelter).
Negligible	A building (or structure) that has no obvious features likely to be used by roosting bats, but in this case a small element of uncertainty remains as bats will occasionally use small and apparently unsuitable features. This category may also be used where a bat could potentially roost due to one attribute, but it is considered unlikely due to another attribute (e.g. a feature that is subject to constant illumination from artificial lighting).
Low	A building (or structure) that has one or more potential roost sites suitable for opportunistic use by individual bats at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites for bats do not provide sufficient space, shelter, protection, conditions and/or surrounding suitable habitat to be used regularly or by large numbers (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for a maternity colony and not a classic hibernation site).
Moderate	A building (or structure) that has one or more potential roost sites suitable for regular use by individual bats, or small non-breeding groups, due to sufficient space, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. However, these potential roost sites for bats are unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status with regards to the type of roost only (i.e. maternity colonies and classic hibernation sites).
High	A building (or structure) that has one or more potential roost sites suitable for use by large numbers of bats more regularly and for longer periods of time due to sufficient space, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These potential roost sites for bats are capable of supporting high conservation status roosts (i.e. maternity colonies and classic hibernation sites).

APPENDIX 2 – DEFINITION OF BAT ROOST TYPES

The potential suitability of a building in conjunction with any evidence of bat presence is used to provide an initial assessment of likely roost type and importance. The types of roost considered are based on the following Natural England definitions:

- Day roost – a summer resting place used by individual bats, or small non-breeding groups, during the day;
- Night roost – a resting place used by individual bats on occasion, or by a whole colony regularly, during the night;
- Feeding perch – a resting place used by individual bats, or a few individuals, primarily for short periods of feeding during the night;
- Transitional roost – a place used by a few individual bats, or occasionally small groups, for a short period of time upon waking from hibernation or in the period prior to hibernation;
- Maternity roost – a place used by small to large groups of female bats to give birth and raise their young to independence;
- Hibernation roost – a place used by individual bats, or in groups, during winter where there is a constant cool temperature and high humidity; and
- Satellite roost – a place used by a few individuals to small groups of breeding female bats found in close proximity to the main nursery colony throughout the breeding season.

The importance of a bat roost is underpinned by the conservation status of the suspected species (i.e. the distribution/rarity of a species in a specific geographic location) and the type of roost (i.e. not all roosts have the same level of importance in supporting the local bat population). Further roost characterisation surveys may be required to fully determine the importance of a confirmed roost to allow for a robust impact assessment.

APPENDIX 3 – FURTHER SURVEY RATIONALE

In cases where no evidence of use by bats is found during a building inspection but the possibility of their presence cannot be ruled out, further presence/likely absence survey is likely to be required if the development proposals will impact potential roost sites. Emergence surveys are carried out to establish the presence or likely absence of roosting bats in buildings (and other structures) and these are designed in accordance with the '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*' (Collins 2023) detailed in **Table 3** below.

Table 3. Recommended further survey for establishing presence/likely absence of roosting bats in buildings (and other structures).

Potential Suitability	Further Survey
None	No further surveys are required.
Negligible	No further surveys are required.
Low	A minimum of one dusk emergence survey visit should be undertaken in the period of May to August. However, if all areas (including cracks, crevices and voids) can be thoroughly inspected and no evidence of use by bats is found, then emergence surveys may not be required. In cases where a complete inspection cannot be carried out, professional judgement and proportionality should be applied when assessing the impacts of the development proposals.
Moderate	A minimum of two dusk emergence survey visits should be undertaken in the period of May to September, with at least one of the surveys between May and August; the survey visits should be spaced at least three weeks apart.
High	A minimum of three separate dusk emergence survey visits should be undertaken in the period of May to September (inclusive), with at least two of the surveys between May and August; the survey visits should be spaced at least three weeks apart.

In cases where the PRA and/or further survey establishes the presence of roosting bats in a building (or structure), this will likely trigger the need for roost characterisation to collect sufficient information to inform the impact assessment and mitigation strategy. The roost characterisation comprises information collected during the PRA, emergence surveys and by other methods, such as DNA analysis of bat droppings, and ultimately aims to determine the bat species roosting; the number of bats the roosts support; the roost access points; the locations of the roosts and the types of roost present. This information is crucial when applying for planning permission and/or a European Protected Species mitigation licence.