



# **Urban Tree Experts**

**BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting**

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## **PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) OF 628 WOKINGHAM ROAD EARLEY**



**Prepared for:  
Dr M Demirdag  
628 Wokingham Road  
Earley  
Reading  
RG6 7HN**

**12 February 2025**

**Ref: SPH/NP/PEA-24/26.11v2**



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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 Dr M Demirdag to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]), at 628 Wokingham Road, Earley, Reading, RG6 7HN. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Tuesday 26 November 2024 at 11.30am, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property and rear single storey 'lean-to' section of the property and 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 two statutory designated sites are located within, and no current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats have been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The immediate area surrounding the site has a low level of habitat suitable for roosting, commuting and foraging bats, due to the dense nature of the urban environment however there is some ecological connectivity to the wider landscape that is suitable for roosting, commuting and foraging bats.

The DBW comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the property, rear single storey 'lean-to' section and outbuilding 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 property, rear single storey 'lean-to' section and outbuildings suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and potential roost features were identified during the preliminary inspection. When combined with the data from the desk top study, this resulted in the property, rear single storey 'lean-to' section and outbuildings being characterised as having a low potential<sup>1</sup> to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines<sup>1</sup>, a single separate dusk emergence survey is required on the property, rear single storey 'lean-to' section and outbuilding in order to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats. If bats are recorded emerging from any section of the buildings during the survey, two further activity surveys and an EPSL will be required in order for the development to proceed legally.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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 Dr M Demirdag to conduct a DBW of 628 Wokingham Road, Earley, Reading, RG6 7HN 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 buildings.
- Provide information on previous bat ecological surveys/reports.
- Provide information on the status of bats using the buildings 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 4<sup>th</sup> edition.

### 1.3 Proposed Works

The survey was commissioned in connection with a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council. In 2025 the description of proposed works was amended to “Householder application for the proposed single rear extension, plus the addition of one sky light and changes to fenestration, and two storey front infill extension”.

### 1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats was completed by Nick Powell and the report was written by Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv. Nick commenced surveying bats in 2022 and holds a Class 2 Bat License (CLS-11742) and has received training in bat ecology and surveying, bat detector use, acoustic monitoring/sonogram analysis, architectural terms for bat workers, bats and development, H & S awareness for bat workers, legislation for bat workers, British bats their ecology and conservation, surveying trees for bats, Bat ID and handling, bat biology.

Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI64844). He has 34 years’ experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work.

## 2. Legislation and Planning Policy

### 2.1 Legislative Background

All species of British bat are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Under this legislation it is an offence to kill or injure a bat or interfere with any roosting or resting site. A bat roost is interpreted as “*any structure or place used for shelter or protection*” whether or not bats are present at the time. A summary of the main legislation and planning considerations are included at Appendix 1.





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Seven species of bat are also Species of Principal Importance for nature conservation in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This places a duty on all government departments to have regard for the conservation of these species and on the Secretary of State to further, or promote others to further, the conservation of these species.

## 3. Site Location and Description

### 3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU76317158, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley, highlighted.

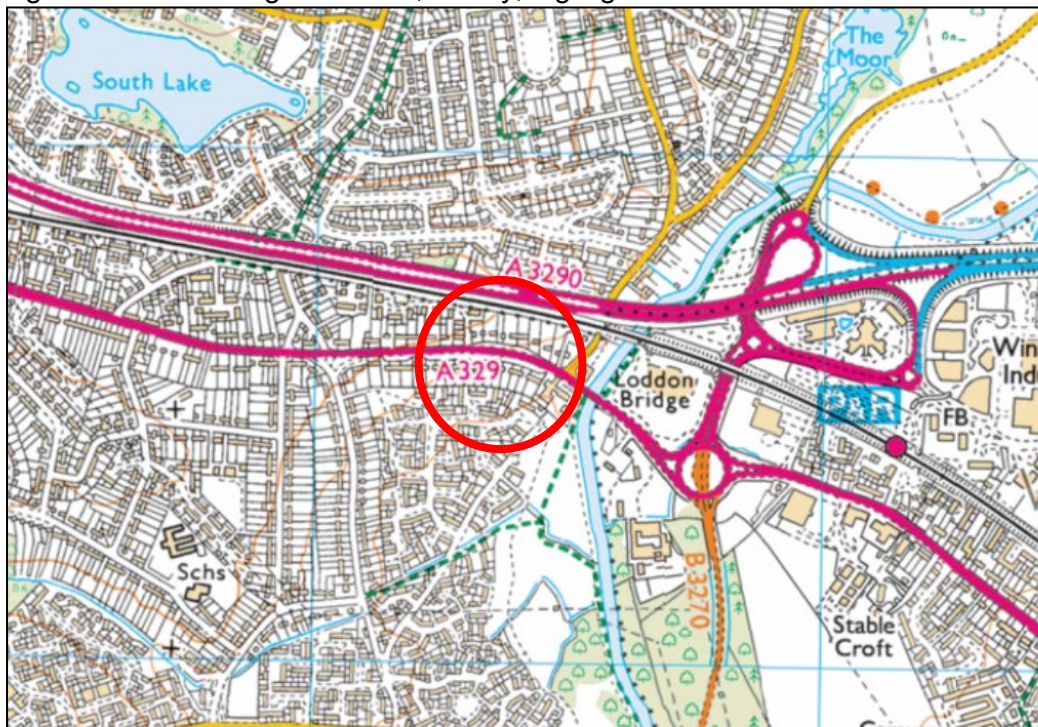
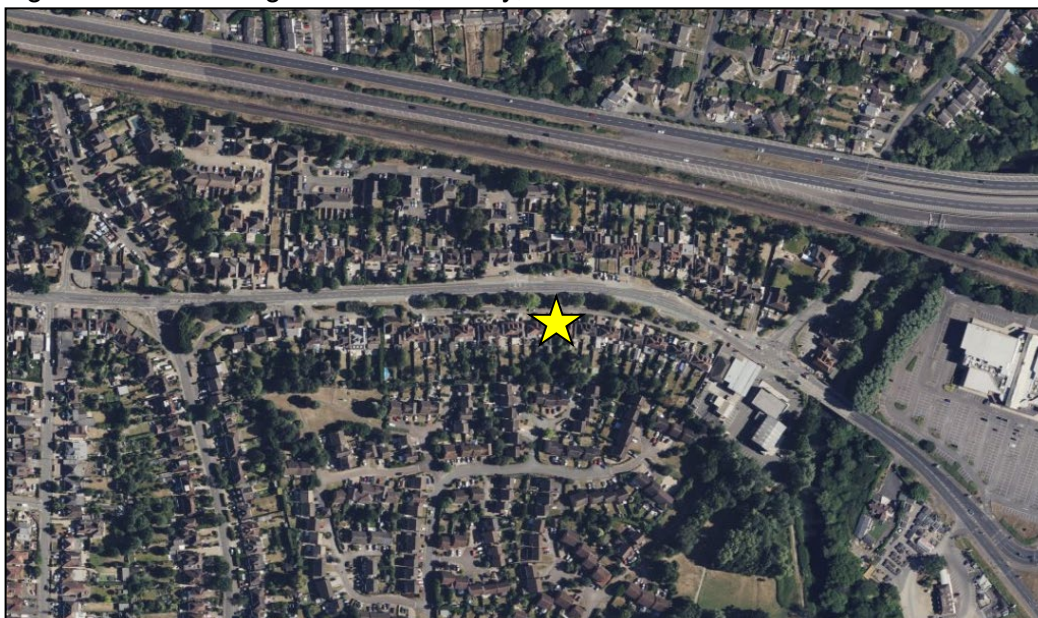


Figure 2. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley, overview of the immediate area.







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## 3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a semi-attached, brick-built property with rear outbuilding. The remainder of the site comprises a gravelled driveway and parking area, and a rear garden with patio area, lawn and some shrubs and trees on the boundaries, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers some foraging and commuting habitat for bats however, via back gardens, there is some ecological connectivity to alternative habitat for foraging and commuting bats in the wider landscape.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24



## 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 property. Google Earth and MAGIC maps ([magic.defra.gov.uk](https://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 suburban area, scale of the proposed development, and the very local impact that may occur, no data was sought from the local records centre at this time.

The site is situated to the northeast of the town of Earley and is surrounded on all sides by housing developments with the properties and gardens all of similar styles and sizes. To the east is the heavily wooded public open space of The Meadows and River Loddon, all of which are known to provide good habitat to support roosting, foraging, and commuting bats and are within travelling distance for bats. Further afield are Maiden Erlegh Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Laurel Park and Laurel Park Recreational ground, Dinton Pastures Country Park and Southlake and the University of Reading which provide a rich mosaic of woodland, grassland and wetland although there is limited connectivity from the site to these areas.



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Highwood Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Maiden Erlegh Park LNR lie within 2km of the proposed development site, although there is poor ecological connectivity from the proposed development to these designated sites. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed no current EPSLs for bats have been granted within 2km of the site however there are four expired ones.

## 4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of the property and rear single storey 'lean-to' section of the property and outbuilding at 628 Wokingham Road, Earley, Reading, RG6 7HN was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 26 November 2024 at 11.30am. The weather conditions for the survey were sunny with a temperature of 10 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, endoscope and a ladder.

During the DBW, an external and internal inspection of the property, rear single storey 'lean-to' section and 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 buildings – 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 buildings.
- 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 and there were no constraints to the survey.

## 5. Survey Findings

### 5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property, rear single storey 'lean-to' section and 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.



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The property is a semi-detached, two-storey brick-built building that is in a fair condition externally. The cross-hipped roof is covered in tiles, some of which on the front/side and rear elevations and around the rear chimney stack have moved/raised leaving gaps that could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species or allow access into the loft space for roosting bats, see examples at Figure 4 below. There is also missing mortar from the ridge and hip tiles that could be exploited by bat species, see Figure 5 on page 9. The soffits and fascias are flush to the walls with no gaps or splits, see Figure 6 on page 9. To the rear is a single-storey lean-to' style building constructed of brick, with a breeze block section attached, see Figure 7 on page 10. The roof of the 'lean-to' style section is covered in tiles that have slipped/moved leaving gaps that could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species, see Figure 8 on page 10. There is also missing mortar from the front verge, see Figure 9 on page 11.

The outbuilding is attached to the above-mentioned breeze block section and is also constructed of brick, see Figure 10 on page 11. The roof is covered in corrugated asbestos, all of which is tightly fitted, see Figure 12 on page 12. However, to the rear of the outbuilding there is missing mortar/open gaps created by the corrugation which could allow crevice dwelling bat species to enter the building to roost, see Figure 13 on page 12.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the external inspection of the property, rear single storey 'lean-to' section or outbuilding although there were several gaps in the roof and ridge tiles and gaps at the end of the outbuilding that could provide potential roosting opportunities or access into the buildings for roosting bats.

Figure 4. Example moved/raised roof tiles. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24







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Figure 5. Example missing mortar from hip tiles. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24



Figure 6. Example sealed soffits/fascias. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24







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Figure 7. Rear, lean-to style section of the property. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24



Figure 8. Gaps in tiles covering rear, lean-to style section of the property. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24







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Figure 9. Missing mortar in verge of lean-to section of the property. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24



Figure 10. Outbuilding. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24







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Figure 11. Example of corrugated asbestos covering outbuilding and attached breeze-block section. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24



Figure 12. Missing cement/gaps at rear of outbuilding. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24





### 5.2 Internal Inspection

An internal inspection of the property, rear single storey 'lean-to' section and outbuilding was undertaken and was examined for any signs of bats (as described in section 4.2).

The loft of the property was accessed via an integral ladder and is in a fair to poor condition. The loft is being used for some personal storage. It is partially lit, partially boarded and insulated, see Figure 13 below. The roof tiles are lined with tar paper, much of which is torn, see Figure 13 below.

There is no loft space in the single storey 'lean-to' section of the property, the tiles are lined with bitumen felt, all of which appeared to be in a good condition, see Figure 14 on page 14.

The outbuilding was also inspected internally. The outbuilding is used for storage and is cluttered, this did not hinder the inspection, see Figure 15 on page 14. A section of the ceiling is boarded and sealed with expanding foam internally, resulting in a void between the boarding and asbestos sheets providing potential roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling bat species with access externally, see Figure 15 on page 14.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the property or rear single storey 'lean-to' section of the property and outbuilding however internally there appeared to be roosting potential for bats within the buildings.

Figure 13. Example loft space and torn tar paper in loft. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24







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Figure 14. Example of bitumen lining to 'lean-to' building. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24



Figure 15. Internal view of outbuilding showing partly lined ceiling and expanding foam. 628 Wokingham Road, Earley. 26.11.24







### 6. Evaluation

The bat roost potential of the features within the site have been assessed with reference to the following criteria and include seasonal variation where increased or decreased probability may arise. Where features are present, they are **highlighted in bold**.

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be higher where structures:

- are of a pre-20th Century construction;
- are in a lowland rural setting;
- **have woodland, mature trees**, species-rich grassland **and/or water nearby**;
- have large dimension roof timbers with cracks, joints and holes;
- have numerous crevices in stonework and structures;
- have an uneven roof covering with gaps, though not too draughty;
- **have hanging tiles or roof cladding**, especially on south-facing walls;
- **have a roof warmed by the sun**;
- are disused or little used; largely undisturbed;
- provide appropriate hibernation conditions, such as abandoned mines, tunnels, kilns, or fortifications; or
- Recent and **historical records of bat roosts in the general area**.

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be lower where structures:

- **are in an urban setting with little green space**;
- are subject to heavy disturbance (constant movement due to draughts and noise, also unstable microclimate);
- **have a small, cluttered roof void (particularly for brown long-eared)**;
- **are of a modern construction with few gaps or crevices that bats can fly or crawl through (though pipistrelle bats may still be present)**;
- are comprised of prefabricated steel or sheet materials; (some sections);
- are active industrial premises.

Please note that the above list provides generic screening criteria only and there are exceptions to consider.

### 7. Conclusions

#### 7.1 Interpretation

The combined evidence from the desktop study and the internal and external inspection of the property, rear single storey 'lean-to' section and outbuilding provides a high level of confidence in support of the opinions set out in this report. There are a number of gaps in the roof tiles on the property and on the rear, single storey 'lean-to' section of the property and gaps in the end of the outbuilding which provide features suitable for bats to roost and may provide access into the buildings for roosting bats. The buildings were assessed as having a low potential to support roosting bats.

Based on the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, a single dusk emergence survey needs to be undertaken on the property, rear single storey 'lean-to' section and outbuilding, between May and August, to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats and in order to inform appropriate mitigation for the proposed works if necessary.



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The features identified will require 4 survey positions, 2 equipped with bat detectors and night vision cameras and 2 equipped with night vision cameras only in order to cover all the potential bat roosting features. Surveying the side section of the roof of the main property will be difficult due to the presence of the current uPVC covered carport therefore, we also recommend that a static bat detector be installed in the loft space of the main property for a minimum of 14 days during June to provide further data to support the survey process.

If bats are recorded emerging from the property or rear single storey 'lean-to' section of the property or outbuilding building during the survey, further activity survey effort and an EPSL will be required in order for the development to proceed legally.

## 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.

## 8. References

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

HM Government (2017) Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations as (amended).

HM Government (1981) The Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended).

HM Government (2006) Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004). Bat Workers' Manual (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

## 9. Queries

Any queries regarding this report should be addressed, in the first instance, to Urban Tree Experts:

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## APPENDIX 1

In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of bats to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating bats, to hibernate or migrate.
- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

### Planning Considerations:

Government guidance to Local Planning Authorities stipulates the need to consider biodiversity and protected species during the consideration of planning applications. The NPPF makes clear that the planning system should help minimise the impacts that development can have on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. In addition, the ODPM Circular 04/2005 states *"It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision"*.

Policy CP7 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (planning policy relating to the site) states *"Development which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and*

- i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or*
- ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided"*.

Developments that compromise the protection afforded to bats or roosts under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 will require a European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England (NE).

NE, the government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, is responsible for issuing EPS licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations.

Three tests must be satisfied before this licence (to permit otherwise prohibited acts) can be issued:

- Reg 44(2)(e) – the derogation is "in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment".
- Reg 44(3)(a) – there is "no satisfactory alternative" to the derogation.
- Reg 44(3)(b) –the derogation is "not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range".

Tests (a) and (e) can be met with the issue of planning permission for the proposed works. Test (b) is determined by NE's ecology department that requires the development of a suitable mitigation strategy that would ensure that any bats present on site, are retained at the same population level or better.