



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT 75 PITTS LANE EARLEY



**Prepared for:
JCENG Solutions Ltd
10 Manners Road
Woodley
Wokingham
RG5 3EA**

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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 Jas Chhina of JCENG Solutions Ltd to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]), of 75 Pitts Lane, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 1BX. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Wednesday 5 June 2024 at 1pm, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the buildings 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 three current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) have been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The immediate surrounding habitat is made up of dense urban housing development and infrastructure with a low potential for foraging bats however, there is ecological connectivity to both Bulmershe Park and the allotments via adjacent gardens which provide good roosting, foraging and commuting habitat for bats.

The DBW comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the buildings 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 buildings suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and potential roost features identified during the preliminary inspection. The property and garage are in a good condition internally and externally. There are a number of gaps within the roof and hip tiles on the property which could provide potential roosting opportunities or access into the building for bats and the presence or absence of bats could not be established.

In 2020 a preliminary survey was conducted on the then unoccupied property by Crossman Associates ref: S1176.001, which resulted in the property being characterised as having moderate potential to support roosting bats. Two activity surveys were then conducted by the same company and no bats were seen emerging from or returning to the building to roost during either survey. No bats or evidence of bats were found during this survey however, similar potential roost features were identified to those of the 2020 survey. When combining the evidence from our desk top study, and findings from the 2020 preliminary survey and activity surveys, resulted in the property being characterised as having a low potential¹ to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines², a single dusk emergence survey is required on the property in order to establish the presence or absence of bats. If bats are recorded roosting during this survey, further survey effort and mitigation will be required in order for the proposed development to proceed legally.

The garage had no potential roosting opportunities for bats and therefore no further surveys on this building are 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 JCENG Solutions Ltd to conduct a DBW of 75 Pitts Lane, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 1BX 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 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 that is seeking to construct a first floor above the existing single storey side extension.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats was undertaken by Nick Powell and the report written by Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv.

Nick Powell. 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 (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.



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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

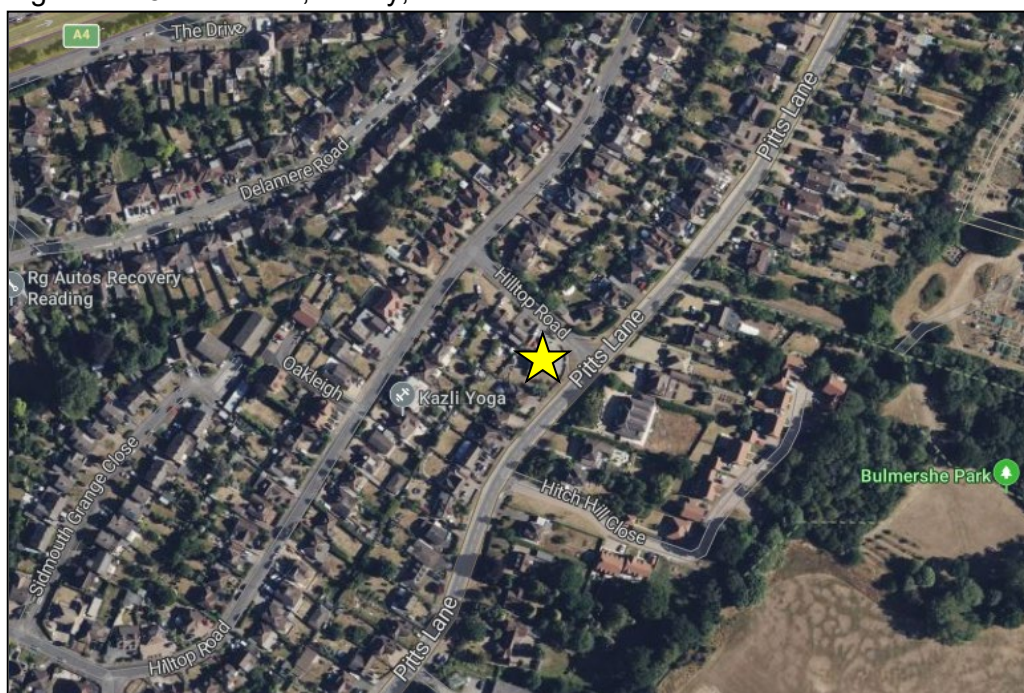
3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU 7485 7355, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley, highlighted.



Figure 2. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley, overview of the immediate area.





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3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached, brick-built dwelling with a detached garage set within its own grounds. The remainder of the site comprises a large, paved parking areas/driveway to the front (east) and north with shrubs in borders and a rear/side (south facing) garden, which is mainly laid to lawn with some mature trees and shrubs on the boundaries, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers low foraging and commuting habitat for bats however there is ecological connectivity to the wider landscape via the adjacent gardens.

Figure 3. Side/rear garden. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

The client has advised that, to their knowledge, the only previous bat survey conducted on the property is that carried out in 2020 (see executive summary). Google Earth and MAGIC maps (magic.defra.gov.uk) websites were used prior to the survey to determine the suitability of the surrounding habitat to support roosting bats and to identify any statutory designated sites or EPSLs within 2km of the site. Due to the urban 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 in the town of Earley and is surrounded by properties and gardens of varying sizes and styles. Housing developments lie in all directions, which provide limited habitat to support bats. To the east lies Bulmershe Park and allotments, both of which provide good habitat to support roosting, commuting and foraging bats and are within commuting distance for bats. Caversham Lakes, the River Thames and Thames Valley Nature Park lie to the north of the site, all of which are known to provide good habitat to support bats, although housing and commercial developments and main roads separate these areas from the site.



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Further afield lie large areas of parkland, grassland, woodland and a number of fresh waterbodies, all of which are likely to provide good habitat for bats, although there is limited ecological connectivity from the site to these areas.

Highwood Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Ali's Pond LNR lie within 2km of the proposed development site, although there is no ecological connectivity from the site to these designated sites. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed three 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
2020-48694-EPS-MIT	12/2025	Common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle
2020-48093-EPS-MIT	02/2026	Common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared
2020-48353-EPS-MIT	02/2026	Soprano pipistrelle

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of 75 Pitts Lane, Earley, Reading, RG6 1BX was carried out by Nick Powell on Wednesday 5 June 2024 at 1pm. The weather conditions for the survey were sunny and a temperature of 24 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, endoscope and a ladder.

During the DBW, an external inspection of the property and detached garage 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. This includes the glass and uPVC conservatory build on dwarf wall as it does not offer any roosting potential.



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 and detached garage 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 'Mock Tudor' building that is in a good condition externally. The multi pitched roof is covered in clay tiles, a number of which are lifted on the north elevation, providing potential gaps in which crevice dwelling bats could exploit, see Figure 4 on page 9. The majority of the hip tiles are in good order with no missing mortar however, on the front elevation (east and south facing) the hip tiles and attached roof tiles have moved leaving gaps (see Figure 5 on page 9), which crevice dwelling bats could utilise for roosting. The soffits and fascias are all tightly fitted with no gaps in which bats could use for roosting (see Figure 6 on page 10) and the verges are all well cemented and had no cracks or splits in which roosting bats could utilise. There is a small area of hanging tiles on the front elevation, all of which are tightly fitted with no gaps which crevice dwelling bats could utilise for roosting, see Figure 7 on page 10. The flat roof of the single storey extension on the north elevation is covered in bitumen felt, all of which is tightly fitted with no rips or tears (see Figure 8 on page 11), and the fascias are tight to the wall and offer no roosting opportunities.

The detached garage was also inspected externally. The garage is single storey, brick built and also in a good condition, see Figure 10 on page 12. The pitched roof of the garage is covered in interlocking tiles, all of which are tightly fitted and had no cracks or gaps in which roosting bats could enter the building to roost, and the verges are sealed, see Figure 11 on page 12.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded externally on the property or garage although there were gaps within the roof and hip tiles on the main property which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats externally or provide access into the building for roosting bats.



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Figure 4. Gaps in roof tiles on north elevation. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24



Figure 5. Lifted hip and roof tiles on east and south elevation. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24





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Figure 6. Example sealed soffits and fascias. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24



Figure 7. Hanging tiles on front elevation. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24





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Figure 8. Bitumen felt covering flat roof extension. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24



Figure 9. Sealed fascias on flat roof extension. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24





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Figure 10. The detached garage. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24



Figure 11. Example roof/ridge tiles, verges and fascia of garage. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24





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5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The loft of the property was accessed via a loft ladder and was in a good condition internally. The loft was partially lit, boarded and insulated and one of the gables had been partially boarded at head height, see Figure 12 below. The roof tiles are lined with bitumen felt, all of which appears to be in a good condition with no rips or tears which could be utilised by roosting bats, see Figure 13 on page 14.

The garage was also inspected internally, it is used for storage but this did not hinder the inspection. The tiles are lined with bitumen which did not have any features in which roosting bats could exploit internally, see Figure 14 on page 14.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of loft of the property or garage and internally there appeared to be no roosting opportunities for bats within the buildings.

Figure 12. Example of loft space. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24





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Figure 13. Example bitumen lining in loft. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24



Figure 14. Interior of garage and bitumen lining to tiles. 75 Pitts Lane, Earley. 05.06.24





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

No bats or evidence of bats were detected during the preliminary ecological appraisal in 2020 and there are no material changes to the property and no evidence of bats from this PEA. However, there are a small number of gaps in the roof and hip tiles on the main dwelling which provide crevice like features suitable for bats to roost and may provide access into the building for bats.

Based on the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, one dusk emergence survey needs to be undertaken on the property, between May and August, in order to establish the presence of absence of roosting bats at the property. The features identified will require four survey positions all equipped with bat detectors and night vision cameras in order to cover the potential bat roosting features.

The garage did not have any features suitable to support roosting bats and therefore no further survey of the garage is required.



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7.2 Contingency Plan

If, for whatever reason, there is a time delay of greater than 12 months between this survey and the commencement of work, then the survey should be repeated as the condition of the building may change and the site may become more suitable to support roosting bats.

8. References

Collins, J (ed.) (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 (3rd 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.