



Preliminary Roost Assessment

26 Old Bath Rd,
Sonning,
Reading,
RG4 6TA

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REPORT DETAILS

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management, nature conservation,
communication materials, design and wildlife
book publisher.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NatureBureau Ltd was commissioned by Emma Younger to undertake a daytime bat Preliminary Roost Assessment at 26 Old Bath Rd, Sonning, Reading (Building B1) to inform proposed development. The survey was carried out on 27 February 2026 by Natural England licenced bat ecologists Kristina Wood and Nathaniel Dove.

The survey included a desk study and an external inspection of a residential dwelling proposed for extension.

The surrounding landscape provides very high suitability for bats, consisting of well-connected Deciduous Woodland and Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland that offer extensive commuting and foraging opportunities. Thirteen bat roosts have been recorded within 2 kilometres of the site in the past ten years, with the nearest approximately 200 metres away, indicating an established local bat population.

No evidence of bats was recorded internally within B1; however, access and visibility in parts of the loft space were limited, so absence of evidence cannot be considered conclusive.

Externally, the building is generally in good condition, but several features were identified that could provide roosting opportunities for crevice-dwelling bats. These include gaps beneath roof tiles on the southeastern and northwestern elevations, lifted roof tiles and gaps in lead flashing around the chimney, and voids beneath hanging tiles on the northwest elevation. These features may provide access to sheltered crevices or internal voids that could support bat roosts, including potential maternity roosts.

In accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, **B1 is assessed as having high bat roosting potential**. However, the features present are unlikely to provide suitable conditions for hibernation, and the building is therefore considered to have low potential for hibernating bats.

Proposed works affecting the roof, hanging tiles, or chimney flashing could damage or destroy a bat roost or cause disturbance, injury, or mortality to bats, which would constitute an offence under wildlife legislation.

Following Collins (2023), **three dusk emergence surveys are recommended** to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats. If bats are confirmed, a Method Statement or Natural England derogation licence will be required before works can proceed.

No evidence of nesting birds was identified during the survey; however, nesting could occur during the bird breeding season, and appropriate recommendations have been provided.

1 INTRODUCTION

NatureBureau Ltd was commissioned by Emma Younger (hereafter referred to as “the client”) to undertake a Preliminary (bat) Roost Assessment (PRA) at 26 Old Bath Rd, Sonning, Reading, RG4 6TA (hereafter referred to as ‘the site’) to satisfy planning conditions in relation to bats and their roosts, which are protected by law. This report summarises the findings of that survey.

1.1 Site Overview

The site, centred on Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SU 75610 74411 comprises a detached residential dwelling (Building B1) with an amenity garden to the rear (northwest), side (west) and front (southwest), where a driveway is also located. A narrow belt of trees forms the northern boundary of the rear garden, separating the property from the A4, beyond which lie further residential areas and a large sports complex dominated by amenity grassland. Immediately to the south and southeast there is a further line of residential properties with sizable, well-vegetated gardens adjoining an extensive wooded area associated with the north side of the Reading–Maidenhead railway line.

The site is situated within a low-density residential area to the south of Sonning, on the eastern outskirts of Reading, approximately 4.25 kilometres (km) from the town centre. The surrounding landscape is characterised by a mosaic of residential properties with gardens, amenity grassland, and patches of mixed broadleaved woodland and scrub. There is a railway line 190 metres (m) south.

1.2 Site Plans

The proposed works comprise a two-storey rear (northwest) gable extension, which will necessitate the removal of the existing catslide roof, together with a single-storey wraparound extension to the northwest and southwest elevations.

The works will also involve the removal of the existing gable-end chimney and rear (ground level) hanging tiles to facilitate the development (collectively hereafter referred to as “the proposed works”).



EXISTING REAR (NW) ELEVATION



PROPOSED REAR (NW) ELEVATION

1.3 Scope of Assessment

The aim of the roost assessment is to assess the potential status of roosting bats on the site and to determine the existence and location of any bat-suitable foraging and commuting habitats. With regards to roosting bats, this information will serve to assess the potential ecological impact of the proposals and identify any ecological and legislative constraints and/or mitigation measures that may be required.

Figure 1: 26 Old Bath Road, Sonning, Reading, RG4 6TA



Figure 2: The site within the wider landscape



2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

Freely available online datasets were searched for licences granted for works involving bats within 2 km of the site, and for records of relevant designated sites within this same radius. Additionally, maps/aerial images were interrogated for features of bat interest.

Table 1: Resources used during the desk study

Resource	Information assessed
Google Earth ¹	Assessment of the local landscape. Latest image date: March 2025
Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website ²	Records of licences issued by Natural England for works affecting bat species within 2 km of the site; any relevant site designations within 2 km of the site; Special Areas of Conservation designated for bat interest within 10 km of the site; Priority Habitats in the local area

2.2 Field Survey

A site visit was undertaken on 27 February 2026, between 16:15 and 17:15 hours. The survey was carried out by Kristina Wood and Nathaniel Dove – both Natural England bat licenced ecologists.

The work, analysis and reporting were undertaken in line with CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct³, the Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines⁴ and other relevant guidelines and legislation as listed in the Appendices of this report.

2.2.1 Preliminary Roost Assessment

An assessment was carried out on B1 to determine its potential to support roosting bats. The assessment included an external investigation of structures for signs of bat activity such as droppings, rub or scratch marks, staining at potential roosts and exit holes, live or dead bats, and features potentially suitable for use by roosting bats, such as raised or missing tiles. Equipment used during the survey includes binoculars, a high-powered torch and a phone camera.

The suitability of B1 to support bats was rated from no suitability to high suitability in accordance with Section 4.3 of the Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines, and recommendations for further survey requirements are also taken from Collins (2023)⁴.

2.3 Limitations

Visibility of entirety of the roof was constrained by its complex form. In particular, the valley between two hip ends on the northeast elevation could not be inspected from ground level and therefore could not be fully assessed.

Stored items within the loft void restricted a full internal inspection. The homeowner advised that these items had only been placed in the loft within the past few months. Therefore, if bats had been present during the previous active season, any evidence such as droppings would be expected to be located beneath these stored items.

DEFRA's MAGIC mapping system has recently been updated (12 December 2024), and as a result, European Protected Species licences are not always displayed accurately or in full. It is possible that the available data is incomplete.

The survey was conducted in accordance with current best practice guidelines (Collins, 2023) to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats. However, the data collected represents a snapshot in time, based on conditions observed during specific survey dates. As such, it provides an indication of site use by bats at the time of assessment only.

Identifying bat roosts within buildings can be challenging, particularly in larger structures or those with numerous potential roosting features. Roosting sites used by solitary bats or males can be especially difficult to detect due to their discreet nature. Many bat species utilise narrow crevices, such as gaps between roof tiles or beneath tile linings, where any droppings or signs of occupancy may become concealed and inaccessible to surveyors.

Additionally, inspections may not always reveal evidence of bat presence, as droppings and other field signs can degrade quickly due to adverse weather.

The results of this report are valid up to 12 months and/or if the conditions of the site change significantly, as per the Advice Note on the lifespan of ecological reports and surveys produced by CIEEM in 2019.

RESULTS

2.4 Desk Study

2.4.1 Natural England Protected Species Licences

According to Defra's MAGIC database, thirteen Natural England European Protected Species (EPS) licences have been issued within 2 km of the site for activities affecting bats. These licences relate to works impacting brown long-eared bats (*Plecotus auritus*), common pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), and soprano pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) between 2014 and 2026, and all relate to the damage or destruction of resting places.

The nearest record (Licence Ref: 2018-38132-EPS-MIT) pertains to works that caused the destruction of the resting places of brown long-eared bats and soprano pipistrelle bats and is located approximately 200 m east of the site, issued in 2018.

A review of aerial imagery indicates high habitat connectivity between the site and known bat roosts via tree lines, vegetated gardens and pockets of mixed broadleaved woodland.

2.4.2 Site Designations

Within 2 km of the site there are three Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). Ali's Pond LNR is located approximately 725 m north of the site and is known to support several local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species, including pipistrelle bats. Highwood LNR, situated approximately 1.75 km south of the site, is a 15-hectare woodland-dominated reserve comprising semi-natural broadleaved woodland and an area of heathland, with a network of paths and links to adjacent green spaces such as Southlake. Alder Moors LNR lies approximately 1.75 km east-southeast of the site and consists of ancient woodland dominated by alder, with additional species including ash, hawthorn and willow.

These LNRs provide habitats of high value for commuting and foraging bats, and there is strong connectivity between these habitats and the site via tree-lined back gardens, woodland, and areas of undeveloped land.

Within a 2 km radius of the site, there are no further Statutory Designated Sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

No SACs designated for bat interest are located within a 10 km radius of the site.

2.4.3 Priority Habitats

The site is surrounded by pockets of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and other areas of deciduous woodland and lies approximately 600 m south of a significant area of wood pasture and parkland, which is designated as a BAP Priority Habitat. Within a 2 km radius, seven traditional orchards are

also present. These priority habitats are known to support a diverse assemblage of bat species, providing high-quality foraging and potential roosting resources within the wider landscape.

A review of aerial imagery indicates good habitat connectivity between the site and these priority habitats, facilitated by treelines and a mosaic of vegetated gardens, woodland patches, and amenity green spaces.

2.5 Preliminary Bat Roost Survey

A daytime site visit was undertaken on 27 February 2026 under bright and clear conditions, with a recorded temperature of 15°C at the time of the survey.

B1 comprises a two-storey residential dwelling of brick and render construction, characterised by a cross-gabled roof with additional hipped extensions, resulting in a relatively complex roof geometry. To the rear elevation, bay windows are present at both ground and first-floor level, with hanging tiles located between them and above on the gable extension.

To the front elevation, there is a single-storey hipped extension incorporating a small projection forming a porch roof. A catslide roof is present on the northwest elevation. All roof slopes are clad in concrete tiles, and a chimney stack is located on the southwest gable end.

The external rendered brickwork is in good condition, with no evidence of deterioration. Windows, doors, and soffits are well-fitted and appear appropriately integrated into the structure.

2.5.1 External Assessment

Along the northwest elevation (the area of the proposed extension), multiple potential roost features (PRFs) are present. Notably, roof tiles are lifted along the northern ridge close to the gable end, and gaps are present where the lead flashing has lifted around the north side of the chimney. On the catslide roof, several tiles are lifted, creating gaps beneath which bats could gain access. Tiles running vertically down the verge also show significant lifting.

Hanging tiles at both ground- and first-floor levels provide openings into an internal void which may facilitate bat roosting in larger numbers. The upper hanging tiles present gaps where they meet the roof overhang, potentially providing access into further unseen voids, including the loft space.

On the south and southeast elevations, several PRFs were observed, most notably beneath roof tiles along the ridge near the gable end and beneath lifted tiles and lead flashing around the chimney. A small gap is present beneath a single lifted tile on the left-hand side of the porch roof, while a larger gap was noted beneath the ridge tile on the far right-hand side of the main roof section.

The north and northeast elevations of B1 presented no visible roost features. However, the roof valleys between the intersecting roof pitches could not be accessed or visually inspected; therefore, potential roost features within these areas of the tiled roof structure could not be fully assessed.

Figure 3: Example of PRFs identified on B1



2.5.2 Internal Assessment

Access to the loft void is gained via a hatch located at first-floor level. The roof structure comprises a traditional A-frame timber construction lined with roofing membrane, forming an enclosed loft space that offers dark, sheltered conditions which could be suitable for roosting bats.

A systematic inspection of all accessible areas of the loft void revealed no bats and no direct evidence of bat activity at the time of survey, such as droppings, staining, feeding remains, or roosting accumulations. However, the presence of stored items within the loft restricted full access and visibility to certain areas. In particular, the southwest gable end (an area that will be directly affected by the proposed works) could not be fully inspected.

At the north gable end, a single tear was observed in the roofing membrane. This damage is considered likely to have been caused by rodents, supported by the presence of mouse droppings (likely attributable to *Mus musculus*) directly beneath the feature. The tear creates a small opening within the roofing membrane which may provide a potential access point into the loft void for bats.

A combination of the desk study and the results of the building survey found that overall, in accordance with Collins (2023), **B1 is assessed as having high potential to support roosting bats.**

2.5.3 On-site and Neighbouring Habitats

The site is predominantly composed of amenity garden, with local mature tree lines connecting the building to the neighbouring high-quality bat habitats. These ecological features also provide commuting and foraging opportunities.

2.5.4 Tree Assessment

No trees are due to be impacted by the proposed development; therefore, no tree assessments were undertaken.

2.5.5 Nesting Birds

No birds were seen nesting on site the at time of the survey, however, the survey was undertaken outside of the main bird nesting season. It is possible that birds could begin nesting on or near B1 at any time during bird nesting season.

3 EVALUATION

The surrounding landscape offers very high overall suitability for bats, with the site situated within a well-connected mosaic of deciduous woodland and Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland that provides extensive commuting and foraging opportunities. These habitats are known to support high insect abundance and strong habitat connectivity for bats. Records from the past ten years indicate that thirteen bat roosts have been recorded within a 2 km radius of the site, with the nearest located approximately 200 m from the property. This demonstrates that the local landscape supports an established bat population and that suitable roosting and foraging habitat is present near the site.

Internally, B1 showed no evidence of bat use during the survey; however, the inspection was partially constrained by limited access and visibility within some areas of the loft space. As such, the absence of evidence cannot be considered conclusive.

Externally, the building fabric is generally in good condition, with intact render, eaves and soffits. Nevertheless, several features were identified that may provide suitable roosting opportunities for crevice-dwelling bat species. These include gaps beneath roof tiles on the southeastern and northwestern elevations, as well as lifted roof tiles and gaps associated with the lead flashing around the chimney stack. These features could allow bats to access narrow, sheltered crevices within the roof structure, or gaps could lead into larger voids between the roof battens where maternity roosts tend to gather during the summer period.

Additional roosting potential was identified beneath hanging tiles on the northwest elevation. These features also provide access to an internal void within the building fabric that may offer dark, sheltered, and relatively stable conditions which have the potential to support higher conservation value roosts.

B1 is therefore assessed, in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, as offering high bat roosting potential.

No features typically associated with bat hibernation, such as cellars, deep cavities, or substantial stone crevices, are present on site. The limited external crevice features observed are unlikely to provide the stable, humid, and thermally buffered conditions required for hibernation. Consequently, B1 is assessed as having low potential to support hibernating bats.

3.1 Impact Assessment

The proposed works will necessitate the removal of the existing catslide roof, the existing gable-end chimney as well as the removal of the hanging tiles on the northwest elevation to facilitate the ground level development.

Should bats be present within the hanging tiles, under the verge roof tiles on the northwest elevation, or under the lifted tiles/lead flashing associated with the chimney, these works have the

potential to damage or destroy a bat roost. In addition, the construction activities could result in injury, mortality, or disturbance of bats roosting elsewhere on the property. Such impacts would constitute an offence under relevant wildlife legislation, as detailed in the Appendices.

3.2 Recommendations

In accordance with Collins (2023), **three dusk emergence surveys are required**, to identify the presence or likely absence of roosting bats on site. The emergence surveys should be carried out between late-May and August inclusive. The surveys must take place in optimum weather conditions, to maximise the likelihood of recording bats, with dusk air temperatures exceeding 10°C and avoiding heavy rain or strong wind. The surveys should commence at least 15 minutes before sunset and continue for at least 1.5 hours after sunset. However, to account for late-emerging species, it is recommended that the survey continue for at least two hours after sunset.

The Phase Two surveys will require three surveyors, and four night-vision aids. The surveyors should be equipped with a bat detector and night-vision recording equipment to count the number and species of bats and their activity in a defined area. The cameras should be paired with a recording bat detector, operated by a trained and experienced surveyor.

If bats are found to be roosting on the site, additional survey efforts may be required to characterise the type(s) of roost(s) present. In this circumstance, either a Method Statement or Natural England derogation licence will also be required to permit the works. Full details of recommended mitigation and compensation would be provided upon the completion of the surveys. Lighting mitigation may be required based on the outcome of the Phase Two surveys.

3.3 Nesting Birds

No evidence of bird nesting was identified on or within B1. However, birds could potentially begin nesting anywhere on site at any time during bird nesting season. The proposed works could therefore cause disturbance, injury or death to nesting birds.

If work is to be carried out during bird nesting season (March to August, inclusive), the site owner and site contractors must be aware of their obligations towards nesting birds and must check for them prior to commencing the works. If an active bird nest is discovered, an exclusion zone must be put in place (minimum 5 m), and works must be halted in that area. Breeding birds and their nests are protected by law, and all active nests must be retained until the young have fledged. Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works.

4 CONCLUSION

26 Old Bath Road is assessed as having high potential for roosting bats. This evaluation is based on the location, number and size of potential roosting features identified, set within a landscape that offers high suitability for bats.

Given the potential for the proposed works to damage or destroy a bat roost, or cause disturbance to roosting bat, it is recommended that at least three bat emergence surveys are undertaken to confirm bat presence or likely absence prior to the commencement of works. If bats are found to be roosting on site, either a Method Statement or Natural England derogation licence will be required to permit the works.

In addition, it is advised that precautionary working methods are implemented during the bird nesting season (typically March to August inclusive) to avoid disturbance to nesting birds and to ensure compliance with relevant wildlife protection legislation.

5 APPENDICES

5.1 Additional photos from the Site Visit on 27 February 2026















5.2 Bat Legislation

All species of bats receive special protection under UK law, including the strict species protection provisions of the EU Habitats Directive as implemented in England and Wales by Part 3 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (the “2017 Regulations, amended by the 2019 Regulations due to Britain leaving the EU”), and Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended by the 2019 Regulations) makes it illegal to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Deliberately disturb bats in a way that would significantly affect their local distribution or abundance, or affect their ability to survive, breed or rear young; or
- Damage or destroy a roost – regardless of whether the action was deliberate or not.

Furthermore, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb bats whilst they are occupying a structure or place which is used for shelter or protection, or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to this structure or place.

Eight of the UK bat species are also listed as Priority Species on the UK BAP¹, highlighting them as species of conservation concern.

6.3 Industry Guidance and Standards

This report has been written with consideration to:

- Bat Conservation Trust (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines. 4th edition.
- Bat Conservation Trust (2019). National Bat Monitoring Program Annual Report 2019.
- British Standard 42020 (2013). Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2018). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

¹ [UK Biodiversity Framework - Biodiversity policy & advocacy - Bat Conservation Trust \(bats.org.uk\)](https://www.bats.org.uk/biodiversity-policy-advocacy/)

- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2020). Guidelines for Accessing, Using and Sharing Biodiversity Data in the UK. 2nd Edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Garland, L. & Markham, S. (2008) Is Important Bat Foraging and Commuting Habitat Legally Protected? <http://biodiversitybydesign.co.uk/cmsAdmin/uploads/protection-for-bat-habitat-sep-2007.pdf>
- Harris, S. & Yalden, D. (2008). Mammals of the British Isles: Handbook, 4th Edition. The Mammal Society, Southampton.
- Institution of Lighting Professionals (2018). Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK. Bats and the Built Environment Series Publication: http://www.bats.org.uk/news.php/406/new_guidance_on_bats_and_lighting
- JNCC (2004) Bat workers manual (3rd edition). JNCC, Peterborough.
- Mathews F, and Harrower C. (2020). IUCN – compliant Red List for Britain’s Terrestrial Mammals. Assessment by the Mammal Society under contract to Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage. Natural England, Peterborough ISBN 978-1-78354-485-1.

6.4 Table 4.1 from Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines

Table 4.1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.

Potential suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	Potential flight-paths and foraging habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).
Negligible ^a	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions ^b and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats ^c).	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight-paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^b and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^b and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight-paths such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

a Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant'. This category may be used where there are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute) but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute).

b For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance.

c Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten *et al.*, 2016 and Jansen *et al.*, 2022). Common pipistrelle swarming has been observed in the UK (Bell, 2022 and Tomlinson, 2020) and winter hibernation of numbers of this species has been detected at Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland (National Trust, 2018). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK, but ecologists should be aware of the potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in prominent buildings in the landscape, urban or otherwise.

6.5 Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development. The Framework specifies the need for protection of designated sites and priority habitats and species. An emphasis is also made on the need for ecological infrastructure through protection, restoration and recreation. The protection and recovery of priority species (considered likely to be those listed as species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006) is also listed as a requirement of planning policy.

In determining a planning application, planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by ensuring that: designated sites are protected from harm; there is appropriate mitigation or compensation where significant harm cannot be avoided; measurable gains in biodiversity in and around developments are incorporated; and planning permission is refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including aged or veteran trees and also ancient woodland.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Biodiversity Duty

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. This is commonly referred to as the 'biodiversity duty'. Section 41 of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of 'principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity'. This list is intended to assist decision makers such as public bodies in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act. Under the Act these habitats and species are regarded as a material consideration in determining planning applications. A developer must show that their protection has been adequately addressed within a development proposal.

Proportionality

The work involved in preparing and implementing all ecological surveys, impact assessments and measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development. Consequently, the decision-maker should only request supporting information and conservation measures that are relevant, necessary and material to the application in question. Similarly, the decision-maker and their consultees should ensure that any comments and advice made over an application are also proportionate.