

25 Ridgeway
Wargrave
Wokingham
RG10 8AS

Preliminary Roost Assessment

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Lucy Dickinson and Tom Price to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment for bats (PRA) at 25 Ridgeway in Wargrave, Wokingham. The PRA was commissioned to accompany a householder planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for a part two-storey, part single-storey side extension and associated alterations.
- 1.1.2** 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 the proposed development activities. A detailed inspection of the exterior and interior of the property was undertaken on the 24th October 2024 by Vicky Potts MCIEEM and Conor Watson ACIEEM (CL18.: 2016-27162-CLS-CLS & 2024-11877-CL18-BAT), in accordance with good practice guidelines (Collins 2023).
- 1.1.3** The roof void lacks sufficient uncluttered space for the internal flight exhibited by void-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded brown long-eared, and there was no evidence of presence (i.e. medium-sized bat droppings) during the internal inspection. Therefore, it is considered highly unlikely that void-dwelling bats are present in the house. The house and garage do not possess any potential roost sites suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded common pipistrelle (*P. pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*P. pygmaeus*). Therefore, the house and garage have been assigned negligible potential suitability for roosting bats.
- 1.1.4** The development proposals are considered highly unlikely to result in the damage/destruction of a bat roost or the disturbance/injury/death of a bat. Therefore, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required for the planned works to proceed lawfully. In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during construction, the works must stop immediately, and a suitably licensed ecologist should be called to site attend to the bat and provide advice on how to proceed.
- 1.1.5** This report contains information regarding a mobile species so it will likely be valid for 12 months only (CIEEM 2019b).

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Lucy Dickinson and Tom Price to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment for bats (PRA) at 25 Ridgeway in Wargrave, Wokingham.

2.1.2 The PRA was commissioned to accompany a householder planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for a part two-storey, part single-storey side extension and associated alterations (see planning drawings in **Appendix 1**).

2.2 Site Location and Context

2.2.1 The property is a detached house in a residential cul-de-sac on Ridgeway in Wargrave, Wokingham (central OS grid reference: SU 7908 7892).

2.2.2 The house is in a suburban setting located amongst similar residential properties and private gardens. Beyond the residential development, the surrounding landscape is characterised by arable farmland and the River Thames approximately 530m west. There is a lake nearby, approximately 185m northwest of the property, which is adjacent to Wargrave Manor (Wargrove Hill) – a pre-1800 parkscape.

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 the 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)(e) – the derogation is for the purposes of '*preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.*'
- (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:

- Google Earth – satellite imagery was 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 to provide background information for the site.

4.2 Building Inspection

Survey Details

4.2.1 A detailed inspection of the exterior and interior of the property was undertaken on the 24th October 2024 by Vicky Potts MCIEEM and Conor Watson ACIEEM registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 (Registration nos.: 2016-27162-CLS-CLS & 2024-11877-CL18-BAT), in accordance with good practice guidelines (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 12 months only (CIEEM 2019b).

5 SURVEY RESULTS

5.1 Desk Study

- 5.1.1** The surrounding landscape, which includes the River Thames and Wargrave Manor (Wargrove Hill) – a pre-1800 parkscape, resembles high-quality habitat with flight paths and foraging opportunities for bats roosting locally.
- 5.1.2** Bat mitigation licences that have been granted within the last 10 years inside a 2km radius of the application site are detailed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Bat mitigation licences granted within a 2km radius (Source: MAGIC).

Case Reference of Granted Licence	Species on the Licence	Licensable Period	Licensable Works	Distance (m)
2015-7300-EPS-MIT	Brown long-eared Common pipistrelle Soprano pipistrelle	07/04/2015- 30/03/2020	Destruction of resting place	~1290N
2015-7300-EPS-MIT-1	Brown long-eared Common pipistrelle Soprano pipistrelle	09/06/2015- 30/04/2020	Destruction of resting place	~1290N
2015-7300-EPS-MIT-2	Brown long-eared Common pipistrelle Soprano pipistrelle	19/11/2015- 30/04/2020	Destruction of resting place	~1290N
2018-35667-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle	01/09/2018- 31/08/2019	Destruction of resting place	~1330E
2018-35667-EPS-MIT-1	Common pipistrelle	01/01/2019- 31/12/2019	Destruction of resting place	~1330E
2015-7819-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle Soprano pipistrelle	24/04/2015- 30/04/2020	Destruction of resting place	~1360NW
2015-7768-EPS-MIT	Soprano pipistrelle	27/04/2015- 30/04/2020	Destruction of resting place	~1670NW
2015-7768-EPS-MIT-1	Soprano pipistrelle	19/02/2016- 30/04/2020	Destruction of resting place	~1670NW
2019-43232-EPS-MIT	Soprano pipistrelle	01/11/2019- 30/06/2025	Destruction of resting place	~1890NW
2017-29718-EPS-MIT	Brown long-eared Soprano pipistrelle	12/06/2017- 08/06/2022	Destruction of resting place	~1920W
EPSM2013-6116	Brown long-eared	02/09/2013- 31/07/2015	Destruction of resting place	~1945NE

- 5.1.3** There were no pre-existing bat survey reports available for the property on the Wokingham Borough Council planning portal.

5.2 Building Inspection

Overview

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

External Survey

- 5.2.2** The property was a detached house of brick walls with external render and a pitched roof; a detached garage was present at the western gable end (**Photographs 1 & 2**).



Photograph 1. Front of property viewed from northwest.



Photograph 2. Rear of property viewed from south.

- 5.2.3** The roof was covered with interlocking 'S'-shaped tiles that were flat and intact; the ridge tiles were fully mortared (**Photograph 3**). The uPVC soffits were flush at the gable ends and along the eaves (**Photographs 4 & 5**).



Photograph 3. Interlocking roof tiles and intact ridge tiles (rear elevation).



Photograph 4. uPVC soffits on gables (western elevation).



Photograph 5. uPVC soffits at eaves (front elevation).

- 5.2.4** A bay window at the front of the house had a bituminous flat roof which was tightly fitted (**Photograph 6**). Ornamental window shutters were tight to the walls (**Photograph 7**).



Photograph 6. Tight bituminous roofing felt on the bay window (front elevation).



Photograph 7. Shutters tight to the rendered walls (front elevation).

- 5.2.5** The front of the garage was connected to the house; the garage had a bituminous flat roof and tight fascias (**Photographs 8 & 9**).



Photograph 8. Front of garage viewed from north.



Photograph 9. Tight fascias on garage (eastern elevation).

- 5.2.6** No evidence of roosting bats was identified during the external inspection of the property.

Internal Survey

- 5.2.7** The roof void was accessible via a first floor loft hatch (**Photograph 10**). The void had an approximate floor-to-ridge height of 2m and was of pre-formed trussed rafter construction. The floor was insulated with fibreglass but the eaves were empty with the soffit visible in places. The hessian-reinforced bitumen roofing felt had large holes on the front elevation; the ridge was cobwebbed which indicates a lack of recent void-dwelling bat activity (**Photograph 11**).



Photograph 10. Roof void.



Photograph 11. Cobwebbed ridge (roof void).

- 5.2.8** The ridge had defunct vents that had been filled with fibreglass insulation. The gable walls were of breezeblock construction with gaps over the blockwork leading into the wall cavity (**Photograph 12**). There was a boiler at the western gable end and the roofing felt had been cut around and below the flue (**Photograph 13**).



Photograph 12. Gap over gable blockwork (roof void).



Photograph 13. Boiler at western gable end (roof void).

- 5.2.9** There was a room to the rear of the garage that had been plastered but the main space had exposed roof timbers and breezeblock walls (**Photographs 14 & 15**).



Photograph 14. Internal view of the front northern end of the garage..



Photograph 15. Rear southern end of the garage with plastered walls. .

5.2.10 No evidence of roosting bats was identified during the internal inspection.



6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Assessment of Roost Suitability

6.1.1 The surrounding landscape, which includes the River Thames and Wargrave Manor (Wargrove Hill) – a pre-1800 parkscape, resembles high-quality habitat with flight paths and foraging opportunities for bats roosting locally. Furthermore, the search of bat mitigation licences identified the following three species: brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*).

6.1.1 The roof void lacks sufficient uncluttered space for the internal flight exhibited by void-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded brown long-eared (*P. auritus*), and there was no evidence of presence (i.e. medium-sized bat droppings) during the internal inspection. Therefore, it is considered highly unlikely that void-dwelling bats are present in the house.

6.1.2 The house and garage do not possess any potential roost sites suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded common pipistrelle (*P. pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*P. pygmaeus*). Therefore, the house and garage have been assigned negligible potential suitability for roosting bats.

6.2 Conclusion

6.2.1 The development proposals are considered highly unlikely to result in the damage/destruction of a bat roost or the disturbance/injury/death of a bat. Therefore, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required for the planned works to proceed lawfully.

6.2.2 In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during construction, the works must stop immediately, and a suitably licensed ecologist should be called to site 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 works to recommence lawfully.

7 REFERENCES

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

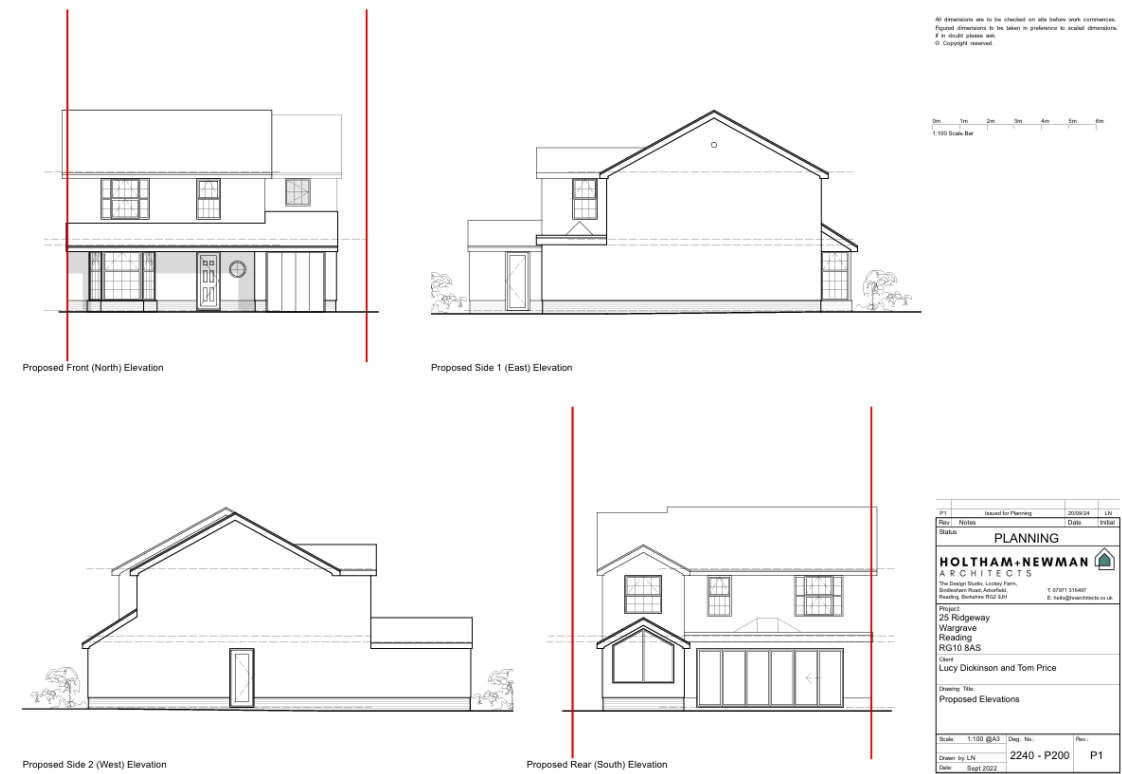
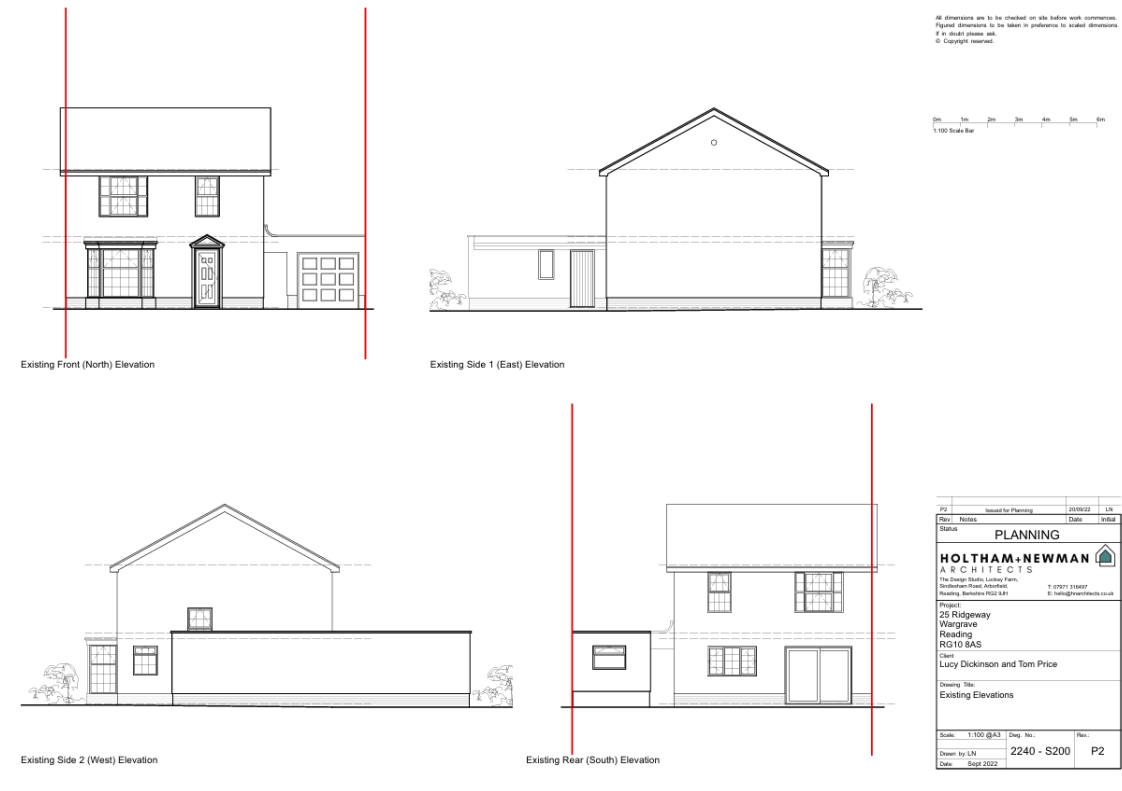
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APPENDIX 1 – PLANNING DRAWINGS



APPENDIX 2 – 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 3 – 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 4 – 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.