

Preliminary Roost Assessment, 4 Broom Grove, Barkham, Wokingham

Background

As part of a forthcoming planning application, Wokingham Borough Council has asked for a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at 4 Broom Grove, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4TX to be undertaken to determine the suitability of the property to support bats.

Development Proposals

The proposed development includes the construction of an additional level above the existing single storey side extension. The proposed works will affect the existing roof of the single storey extension and the very south eastern end of the main roof.

Survey Objectives

The objectives of the PBRA were to:

- Identify, where possible, if bats are currently using the building as a roost;
- Identify potential roosting features;
- Advise on any further survey work if necessary, and;
- Assess the potential constraints and implications of the survey findings with regards to the proposed works.

Legislation

All species of bat occurring within the UK are included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Under regulation 41 bats are protected from deliberate capture, injury or killing, from deliberate disturbance and from deliberate damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place (roost).

All UK bats are also included on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb bats while they are occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection, or to obstruct access to any such place.

Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*, Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii*, brown long-eared bat, greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, noctule and soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* bats are included as species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

Planning policy

CP7 of Wokingham Borough Core Plan states “*Development:*

A) Which may harm county designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire), whether directly or indirectly, or

B) 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, or

C) That compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans

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”.*

Policy 187 of NPPF (2024) reads “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability”.

Surveyor Background and Experience

The Site was surveyed on 14th January 2025 by Rebecca Anderson BSc MSc MCIEEM using the recommended bat survey guidelines (Collins, 2023). Rebecca has over 20 years experience as an ecological consultant working both in the private and public sector and is experienced in undertaking preliminary roost assessments, emergence surveys and bat call analysis.

Methodology

The PRA included an external and internal inspection of the extension and part of the roof to be affected by the proposed development to assess their suitability for roosting bats based on factors including, but not limited to, the number/orientation/locations of PRFs, the proximity of suitable foraging habitat, and the presence of lighting. Any evidence of bat presence, e.g. droppings, feeding remains, staining marks around potential roost access points and live or dead animals, were recorded (where identified). Where possible to reach from ground level or with an extendable ladder, close-up inspection of Potential Roost Features (PRFs) was undertaken.

An individual building may have several features of potential interest to roosting bats and it is not always possible to confirm usage of a feature by bats during the PRA survey, given the often-transient nature of bat roosts. Consequently, it is customary when undertaking such surveys to assign a given building to a defined category of roosting suitability (i.e. confirmed, high, moderate, low, negligible or none), taking into consideration current good practice guidelines (Collins, 2023).

The detached garage and the majority of the property was not inspected as these areas will not be affected by the proposed development. There is no loft space above the single storey extension, which is in use as a kitchen/ diner, and therefore no internal inspection of this part of the building was undertaken.

Survey Limitations

No limitations were identified during the preliminary roost assessment, allowing a complete survey of the building.

Site Description

The Site comprises a detached, brick-built property with a detached garage, which is currently occupied. The rest of the site comprises a front drive and garden and a rear garden which is laid to lawn with some shrubs around the boundaries.

The property is situated on a housing estate, with the immediate surrounding area being urbanised. There are trees and hedgerows within the gardens of neighbouring properties and a copse approximately 35m south west of the site. The surrounding area comprises housing, roads and hardstanding, with parkland and a large woodland (The Coombes) approximately 900m from the site. The site itself offers limited habitat for bats although there is good ecological connectivity to bat foraging and commuting habitat in the wider landscape.

Data Consultation

Roosting Bats

No current EPS licences relating to bats were identified within 2 km of the Site following a review of the MAGIC website. The most recent record pertained to common pipistrelle and was located approximately 320m north west of the Site dated from 2023 and allowed the destruction of a resting place.

Preliminary Roost Assessment Results

Roosting bats

External Inspection

The extension is a single-storey building that is four years old, and comprises brick walls and a pitched roof (Photographs 1 and 2). The brickwork of the walls are all in a good condition and there were no visible broken or cracked bricks (Photograph 3). The roof of the single storey extension is covered in closely fitted tiles, all of which are overlapping and had no gaps in which roosting bats could utilise (Photographs 4 and 5). The Velux windows are all well fitted and had no gaps between the window and tiles in which roosting bats could utilise (Figure 6). The ridge tiles along the extension are tightly fitted with no gaps (Photograph 7) and the verges are well cemented and had no cracks in which roosting bats could exploit (Photograph 8). The lead flashing connecting the extension to the main house is well fitted and provided no opportunities for bats to roost (Photograph 9). There are no soffit boxes along the extension, but the fascia's are all tightly fitted and there were no cracks or splits to the brickwork behind (Photograph 10)

The main roof where the proposed second storey extension will impact was also inspected externally. The roof is also pitched and covered in closely fitted tiles, none of which are missing or broken (Photographs 11 and 12). The ridge tiles along the roof are tightly fitted with no gaps in which roosting bats could use (Photograph 13) and the verge where the new extension would be constructed is well cemented with no gaps in the cement that could be used by roosting bats (Photograph 14). There are no soffits on the roofline of the main house. The fascia's are well maintained, tightly fitted and there were no cracks or splits to the brickwork

behind which bats could use for roosting (Photograph 15)

Internal Inspection

There is one main loft space within the property, which is accessed through a hatch by integral ladders. The loft is insulated, partially boarded, uncluttered and cobwebbed (Photographs 16 and 17). The roof beams are all in a good condition with no cracks large enough to provide roosting opportunities for bats (Photograph 18). The roof tiles are lined with bitumen felt, all of which is in a good condition with no rips or tears that expose the roof tiles (Photograph 19).

No bats or evidence of bats was found internally.

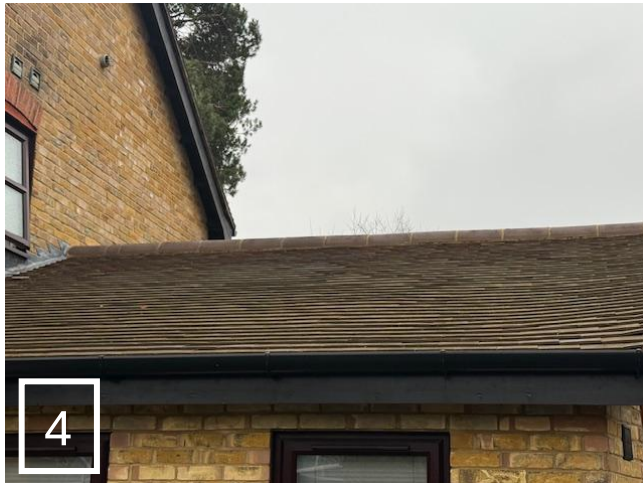
Evaluation

It is considered that the extension and part of the roof of the main property that will be affected by the proposed development display 'negligible' suitability for roosting bats following good practice guidelines (Collins, 2023). This is due to the fact that no bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the PRA and that there were no features on the building, either internally or externally, that could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats or provide access into the building for roosting bats. In line with best practice, no further surveys are required.

In the unlikely event that bats are found during the proposed works, all work will stop, and advice sought from a licensed bat ecologist.

Ecological Enhancement

As part of the proposals, and in accordance with national and local policy, one bat brick, tile or box will be fitted onto the new extension. The bat feature will be positioned at least 4m above ground level in a location away from artificial light sources. A suitably qualified ecologist will advise the builders on suitable locations.



Photograph 1 – Front of single storey extension

Photograph 2 – Rear of single storey extension

Photograph 3 – Brickwork of main house and extension

Photograph 4 – Roof of extension from the front

Photograph 5 – Roof of extension from the rear



Photograph 6 – Velux window on extension

Photograph 7 –Closely fitted ridge tiles on extension

Photograph 8 – Verges of extension

Photograph 9 – Lead flashing between main house and extension

Photograph 10 – Fascia's around extension



Photograph 11 – Closely fitted tiles on main roof at the front

Photograph 12 – Tiles on main roof at the rear

Photograph 13 – Ridge tiles on property

Photograph 14 – Verges on main property

Photograph 15 – Fascia's around the main property



Photograph 16 – Internal space of loft

Photograph 17 –Loft space showing water tank

Photograph 18 – Roof beams within the loft

Photograph 19 – Intact bitumen lining in loft