



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT WEST GRAYLAKE, PART LANE RISELEY



**Prepared for:
Mr & Mrs R Ashford
West Graylake
Part Lane
Riseley
Reading
RG7 1RU**

14 June 2024

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Bramley House
Newnham Bridge
Tenbury Wells
Worcestershire
WR15 8NX
Tel: 0118 976 2902
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

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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.



Executive Summary

Urban Tree Experts was commissioned by Mr and Mrs R Ashford to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]) of West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley, Reading, RG7 1RU. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Wednesday 5 June 2024 at 1.30pm, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property, detached garage and shed 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 three statutory designated sites are located within, and no current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats have been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The surrounding habitat of farmland and woodland provide a rich and diverse habitat suitable for a wide range of bat species and they are connected to the site via ecological corridors such as tree lines and hedgerows.

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 and droppings identified during the preliminary inspection. The property, garage and shed are in a good condition. There are a small number of gaps within the verges on the property and within the roof of the shed which could provide potential roosting opportunities or access into the buildings for bats. In addition, a small number of bat droppings were recorded externally on the gable end of the house and on the shed window that are of a similar size and consistency to those of *pipistrelle spp.* bats, indicating that bats are or have been using the buildings for roosting.

In line with best practice guidelines¹, three separate dusk emergence surveys are required on the property and shed, in order to assess the status of the roost currently and to inform appropriate mitigation for the proposed works.

¹ 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 Mr and Mrs R Ashford to conduct a DBW of West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley, Reading, RG7 1RU to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The DBW is designed to:

- Identify the presence/likely absence of bats within the buildings.
- Provide information on previous bat ecological surveys/reports.
- Provide information on the status of bats using the buildings currently or previously).
- To add confidence where no bats are found, or to categorise the nature of a roost where evidence of bats are found.
- To establish whether further surveys, mitigation or an EPSL is required.

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) and report writing were carried out in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 4th edition.

1.3 Proposed Works

The survey was commissioned in connection with a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council, the final details are unknown but are likely to include the re-siting/demolition of the shed, conversion of the garage into habitable accommodation, and extension connecting the garage to the house.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The DBW and report was written by Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv. Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI64844). He has 34 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work.

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

2.1 Legislative Background

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

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.



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3. Site Location and Description

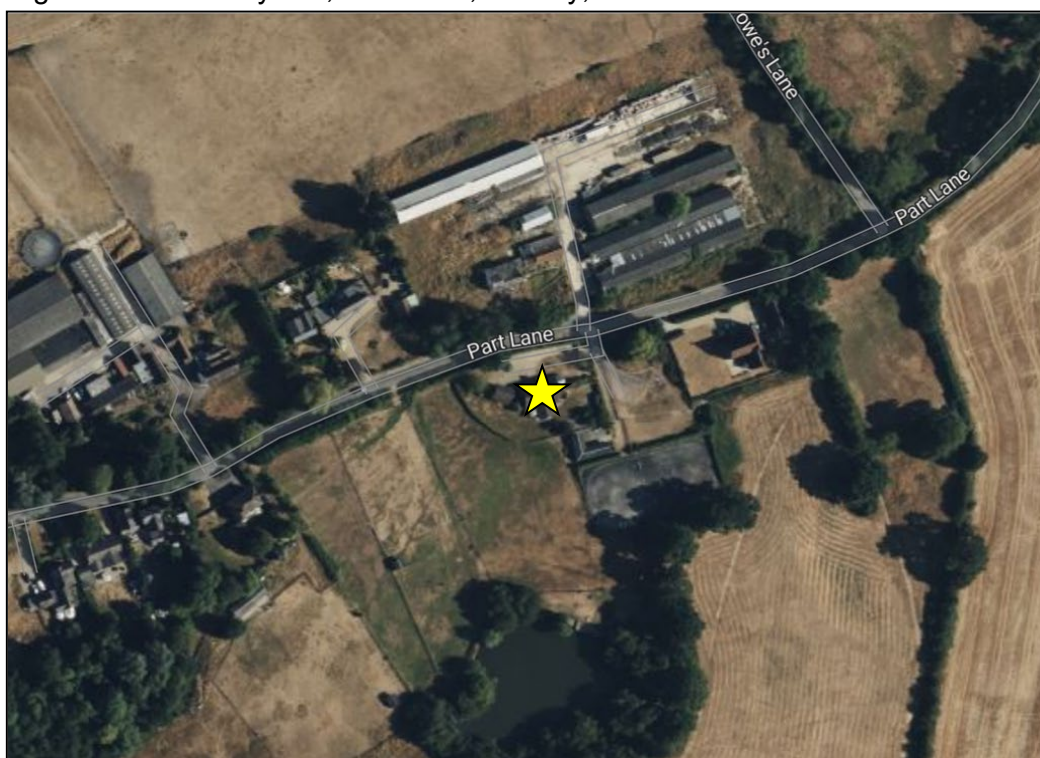
3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU 72893 63403, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley, highlighted.



Figure 2. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley, overview of the immediate area.





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3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached, brick-built property with a two-storey detached garage and wooden shed. The remainder of the site comprises a gravel driveway/parking area, a front garden laid to lawn (see Figure 3 below) and a rear garden, which is mainly laid to lawn with some trees, hedgerows and shrubs throughout, see Figure 4 below. The site itself offers good foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is direct ecological connectivity to the wider landscape that also provides a diverse habitat for foraging and roosting bats.

Figure 3. Driveway and front garden. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24



Figure 4. Rear garden. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24





4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

The client has advised that, to their knowledge, no previous bat surveys have been undertaken on this site. 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 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 village of Riseley and the surrounding area has a range of properties and buildings of differing sizes and styles. Adjoining the site, in all directions, lie large tree and hedge lined agricultural fields, all of which are likely to provide foraging and commuting habitat for bats and are connected to the site via the front and rear gardens. Riseley Common and Wellington Country Park lie in proximity of the site, which contain woodland, wetland and grassland areas with known bat populations. These areas provide good habitat for bats and are connected to the site via ecological corridors. Further afield lie large areas of farmland and woodland, which provide good habitat to support roosting, commuting and foraging bats and there is ecological connectivity from the site to these areas.

The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), Bramshill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and The Marshes Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lie within 2km of the proposed development site and there is some ecological connectivity to these designated sites from the proposed development site. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed no current EPSLs for bats have been granted within 2km of the site, although there are four historical records within the search area.

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley, Reading, RG7 1RU was carried out by Simon Holmes on Wednesday 5 June 2024 at 1.30pm. The weather conditions for the survey were overcast with a temperature of 16 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, endoscope and a ladder.

During the DBW an external and internal inspection of the property, detached garage and shed 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.



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Field signs that would indicate the presence of bats were searched for. These included:

- Bat droppings on the floor and walls of the buildings.
- Feeding remains (particularly butterfly and moth wings).
- Evidence of urine and/or oily staining around possible roost entrances.
- Presence of areas cleared of cobwebs.
- Where a breathable roofing membrane has been fitted staining on the membrane may suggest use by bats.
- Odour can sometimes suggest the present of bats.
- Squeaking and chattering can reveal bats roosting between the tiles and roofing underlay.

Buildings or structures that were not to be affected by the current proposals or with no bat roosting potential were not inspected.

4.3 Constraints

Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client. There was no access to the main property internally and therefore an internal inspection of this building was not possible.

5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property, garage and shed 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 building which is in a good condition externally. The roof of the property is multi-pitched (see Figure 5 on page 9) and covered in close fitting, composite tiles, none of which are missing or broken, see Figure 6 on page 9. The ridge and hip tiles are all tightly fitted with no gaps in which bats could utilise for roosting and the Velux windows within the roof are tightly fitted to the tiles and had no gaps in which roosting bats could exploit. The house and garage gable ends are timber clad and it was tightly fitted, overlapping and had no obvious gaps in which bats could use to roost, see Figure 7 on page 10. The verge of the house has been finished with metal flashing, which has significant gaps along some sections which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats, or access to the underside of the tiles, see Figure 8 on page 10. There were a small number of bat droppings on the west facing wall plate below the upper window (see Figure 9 on page 11), which indicates that bats are or could have been using the building to roost. Given the location of the bat droppings, it is likely that they could be related to a roost within the poorly fitted verge.

The garage was also inspected externally. The garage is also brick built and in a good condition, see Figure 10 on page 11. The roof and ridge tiles are all tightly fitted with no gaps (see Figure 11 on page 12) and the verges are all well cemented with no gaps in which crevice dwelling bats could use for roosting. There was also a Velux window on the roof of the garage which is tightly fitted to the roof tiles and had no gaps in which roosting bats could exploit, see Figure 12 on page 12. The wooden soffits and fascias are all in a good condition, with no gaps or splits in which crevice dwelling bats could utilise, see Figure 13 on page 13.



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There is a timber shed between the house and garage which was also inspected externally, see Figure 14 on page 13. The shed is of wooden construction, the cladding of which is all tightly fitted and had no obvious gaps in which roosting bats could utilise, see Figure 15 on page 14. The roof of the shed is pitched and covered in corrugated felt, which has some gaps externally in which bats could exploit for roosting or gain access to the shed to roost, see Figure 16 on page 14. There was a single bat dropping stuck to the window of the shed, indicating that bats are either roosting under the felt/roof void or have explored roosting opportunities in the shed, see Figure 17 on page 15.

Figure 5. Multi pitched roof. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24



Figure 6. Example of roof tiles. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24





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Figure 7. Wooden cladding on property. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24



Figure 8. Gaps along the verges. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24





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Figure 9. Example of bat droppings externally on wall plate. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24



Figure 10. The detached garage. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24





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Figure 11. Example of garage roof. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24



Figure 12. Velux window on garage roof. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24





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Figure 13. Soffits and fascias on garage. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24



Figure 14. Wooden shed. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24





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Figure 15. Tightly fitted wooden cladding of shed. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24



Figure 16. Roof of shed. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24





Figure 17. Example of bat dropping on window of shed. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24



5.2 Internal Inspection

An internal inspection of the garage and shed was undertaken, and they were examined for any signs of bats (as described in section 4.2). The property has no loft and therefore an internal inspection of the main property was not possible.

The garage was inspected internally and found to be in a good condition. The garage at ground level is used for storage and is cluttered (see Figure 18 on page 16) but this did not hinder the inspection. The first floor was empty, and has no loft void, it has a plaster board ceiling, wooden floor, with a velux window in the south facing roof and two windows on each gable end.

The shed contained animal cages and is also used for storage and is in a good condition. There is a tongue and groove timber ceiling (see Figure 19 on page 16) with no access above and internally it was in a good condition with no cracks or splits in which roosting bats could exploit.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the garage or shed and internally, there was no potential roosting opportunities for bats.



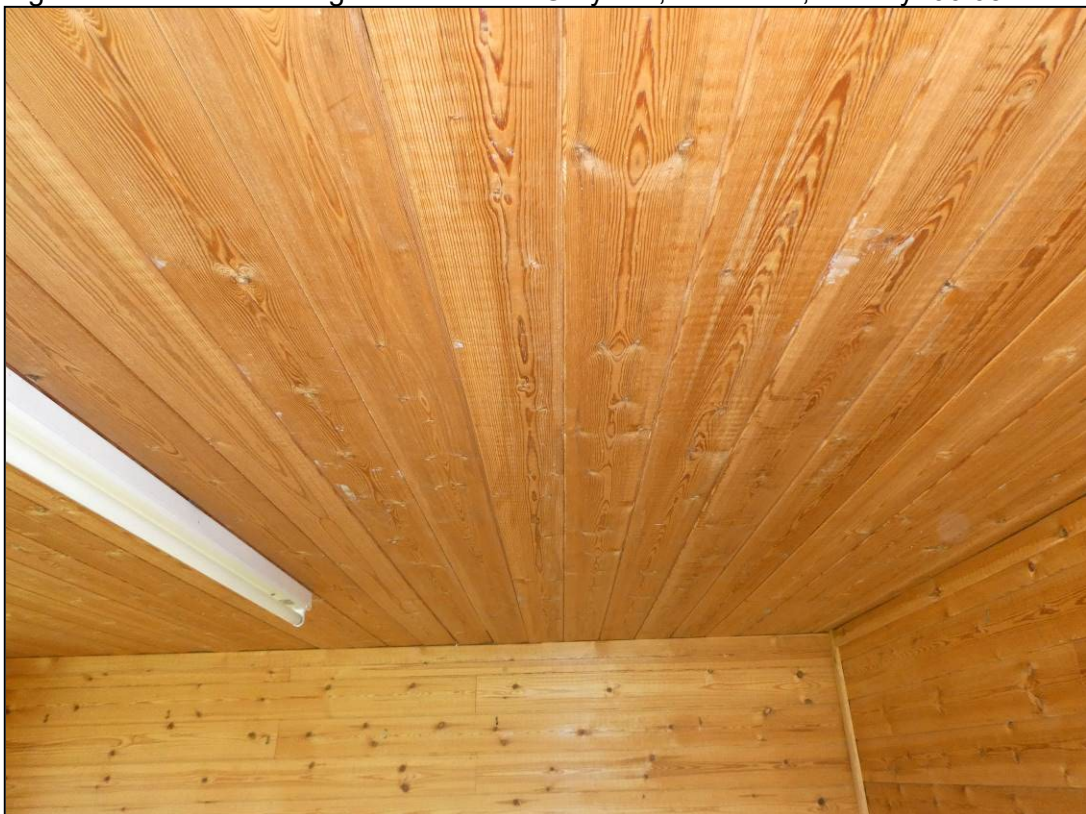
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Figure 18. Internal space of garage. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24



Figure 12. Wooden ceiling of shed. West Greylake, Part Lane, Riseley. 06.05.24





6. Evaluation

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Conclusions

7.1 Interpretation

The surrounding habitat provides good foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is direct ecological connectivity to the wider landscape that also provides a diverse habitat for foraging and roosting bats.

Gaps along the west facing verge (opposite the garage) provide potential access to the underside of the roof tiles and felt that may support roosting bats and the droppings observed along the wall plate were of a similar size to those of the *pipistrelle spp.* (crevice dwelling) bats.

The dropping observed on the shed window was also a similar size to those of the *pipistrelle spp* bat and the shed roof has crevice like features suitable for bats to roost.



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Low numbers of bat droppings are normally associated with low numbers or individual bats and there is no evidence of maternity roosting or hibernation use at the property or in the shed. The property and shed have, in our opinion, been used opportunistically as a day/summer roost by a low number of *pipistrelle spp.* bats.

Based on the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, three dusk emergence surveys need to be undertaken on the property and shed, between May and September, to assess the current status of roosting bats, in order to inform appropriate mitigation for the proposed works. The features identified will require three survey positions both equipped with bat detectors and night vision cameras in order to cover the potential bat roosting features. The garage did not provide opportunities for roosting bats and therefore no further survey of the garage is required.

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 buildings may change and different species or larger number of bats may start roosting at the site.

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:

Telephone: 01189 762902
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

Urban Tree Experts
Bramley House
Newnham Bridge
Tenbury Wells
Worcestershire WR15 8NX

Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv.
Consultant, Urban Tree Experts
Natural England Licence CLS-CLS-17637, CLS-CLS-17638



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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.