



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT 26 PRIEST AVENUE WOKINGHAM



**Prepared for:
Mr A Middlecote
26 Priest Avenue
Wokingham
RG40 2LX**

19 May 2025

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This report is valid for 12 months from the site inspection. The lifespan of this report may be subject to change if the site conditions change due to unspecified works that affect the site.



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Executive Summary

Urban Tree Experts was commissioned by Mr A Middlecote to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]) of 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham, RG40 2LF. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Tuesday 13 May 2025 at 10.30am, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property took place to look for signs of bats.

The DBW 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 that no 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 landform to the rear and south of the site provides suitable habitat for roosting, commuting and foraging bats with tree and hedge lined agricultural fields which provide rich and diverse habitats suitable for a wide range of bat species.

The DBW comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the property 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 properties suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and potential roost features identified on the property during the preliminary inspection. The property is in a good condition internally and externally however, there is missing mortar/moved tiles on the front (southern) corner roof and gaps in the eaves which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats and/or access into the building for bats, and the presence or absence of bats could not be determined without further survey effort. In line with best practice guidelines, the property was assessed as having low potential¹ to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines², one dusk emergence survey is required on the property in order to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats. If bats are recorded emerging from the building during the survey, two further activity surveys and an EPSL will be required in order for the development to proceed legally.

¹ Table 4.1 Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition.

² Collins, J. (ed) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition).



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1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr A Middlecote to conduct a DBW of 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham RG40 2LX. This is 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 building.
- Provide information on previous bat ecological surveys/reports.
- Provide information on the status of bats using the building currently or previously.
- To add confidence where no bats are found, or to categorise the nature of a roost where evidence of bats are found.
- To establish whether further surveys, mitigation or an EPSL is required.

The DBW and report writing were carried out in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 4th edition.

1.3 Proposed Works

The survey was commissioned in connection with a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council that will seek to construct a two-storey rear extension following demolition of the existing single storey structure.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

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

Nick holds a Class 2 Bat License (CLS-11742) and has been surveying bats for 3 years with various ecological consultancies and has received training in surveying techniques, bat detector use, bat biology, identification, acoustic monitoring, echolocation analysis and netting.

Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI64844). He has 35 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work.

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

2.1 Legislative Background

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



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Seven species of bat are also Species of Principal Importance for nature conservation in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This places a duty on all government departments to have regard for the conservation of these species and on the Secretary of State to further, or promote others to further, the conservation of these species.

3. Site Location and Description

3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU82686837, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham, highlighted.

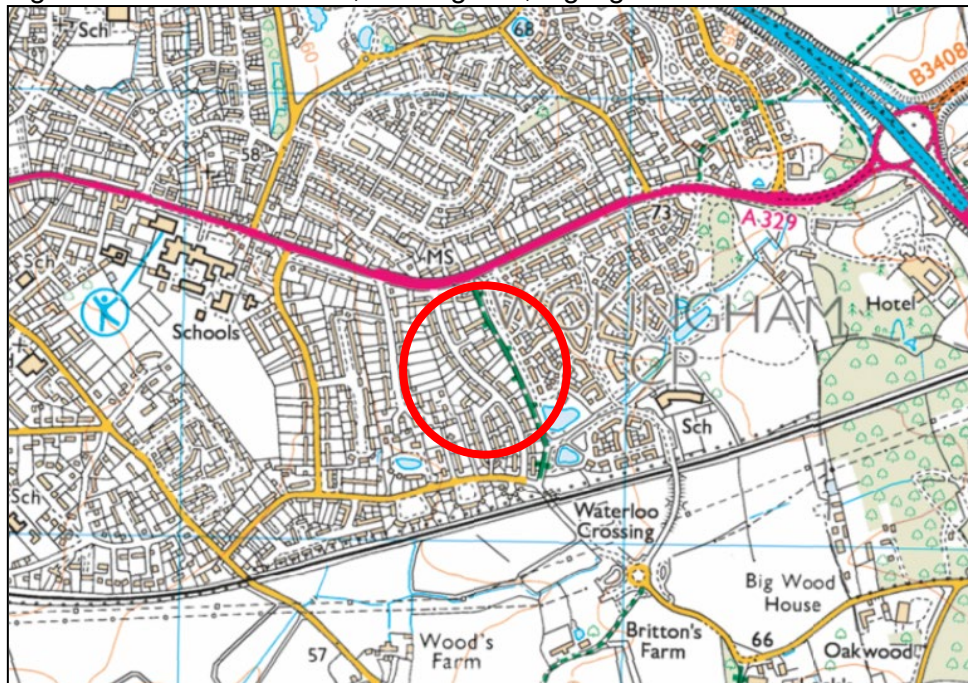
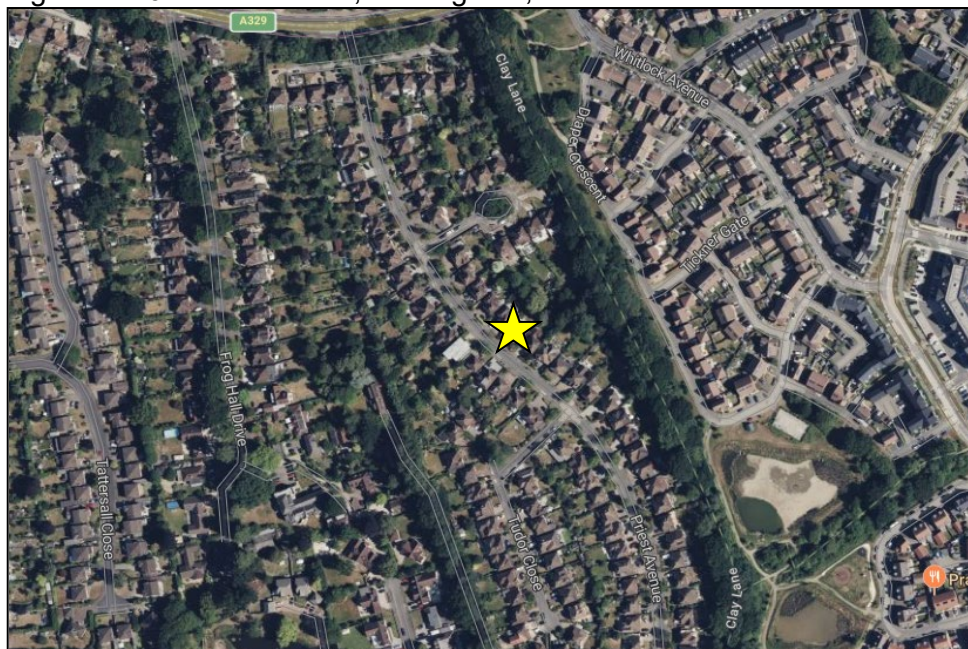


Figure 2. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham, overview of the immediate area.





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3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached two-storey, brick-built property with integral garage and rear, single story extension. The remainder of the site comprises, to the front, a driveway/parking area and lawn surrounded by hedgerows and a long rear garden that is mainly laid to lawn, with mature trees and shrubs on the boundaries, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is direct ecological connectivity to the wider landscape that provides good habitat for foraging and roosting bats.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham. 13.05.25



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 property. 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 suburban area, 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 property is situated in the town of Wokingham and is surrounded by properties and gardens of varying sizes but differing styles. To the east the garden backs directly onto the wooded walkway of Clay Lane which in turn connects directly to Draper Crescent Pond and Buckhurst Meadows and areas of woodland, all of which are likely to provide good roosting, commuting and foraging habitat for bats and are well within travelling distance for bats.

No statutory designated sites lie within 2km of the proposed development and a search of the Magic interactive website revealed no current EPSLs for bats have been granted within 2km of the site, however there are two expired ones.



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4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham, RG40 2LX was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 13 May 2025 at 10.30am. The weather conditions for the survey were dry and bright with a temperature of 19 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole and a ladder.

During the DBW an external and internal inspection of the property 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 building – soffits, loft space, tiles/slates, lead flashings etc.
- Building condition – structure of roof and walls.
- Internal conditions – microclimate stability, draughts etc.
- Access points – potential entry and exit points for bats.
- Roosting points – cracks and crevices, between underlay and roofing tiles/slates.

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

- Bat droppings on the floor and walls of the building.
- 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

Access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client. A thorough inspection of the loft space above the rear, single storey extension could not be conducted due to the low ridge height and no boarding but given the excellent condition of the roof tiles externally this was not considered a significant constraint.

5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property 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 with integral garage under a catslide roof and rear single storey extension, all of which is in a good condition. The multi pitched roof is covered in tightly fitted tiles (see Figure 4 on page 8) however, on the front southeastern corner the tiles have moved and there is missing mortar from a bonnet tile, see Figure 5 on page 8. The rest of the bonnet tiles, valleys and ridge tiles are sealed and offer no roosting opportunities, see Figure 6 on page 9. The verges are sealed as is the lead flashing around the chimney stack, see Figure 7 on page 9. The eaves are covered in bitumen felt that has rotted leaving gaps that could be exploited by roosting bats or afford access into the loft, see Figure 8 on page 9.



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At the rear is a single storey extension (see Figure 9 on page 10), the roof of which is covered in close fitted tiles with no gaps. The ridge and hip tiles are sealed with no missing mortar and the lead flashing affixing it to the main property is flat with no gaps, see Figure 10 on page 10. The soffits and fascias offer no roosting opportunities as they are flat to the wall place with no gaps or splits, see Figure 11 on page 10.

No bats or evidence of bats were recorded during the external inspection of the property although there are various features on the property that provide potential crevice roosting opportunities for bats.

Figure 4. Example sealed roof tiles. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham. 13.05.25



Figure 5. Moved tiles and missing mortar at southeaster roof corner. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham. 13.05.25





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Figure 6. Example sealed ridge/bonnet tiles and valleys. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham. 13.05.25



Figure 7. Example sealed lead flashing around chimney stack. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham. 13.05.25

Figure 8. Example rotten bitumen covering eaves. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham. 13.05.25





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Figure 9. Rear, single storey extension. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham. 13.05.25

Figure 10. Example sealed roof tiles on rear extension. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham. 13.05.25



Figure 11. Example sealed soffits and fascias on rear extension. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham. 13.05.25



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5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The loft space in the property was accessed via a loft ladder and is in a fair condition. The loft space is lit, partially boarded and insulated (see Figure 12 below), and the roof tiles are lined with tar paper, some of which was torn, see Figure 12 below. The loft space in the rear extension was accessed via steps. The loft space is not lit, not boarded and insulated (see Figure 13 below), and the roof tiles lined with bitumen felt, all of which that could be seen was in a good condition.

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

Figure 12. Example loft space and torn tar paper. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham. 13.05.25



Figure 13. Example loft space in rear extension. 26 Priest Avenue, Wokingham. 13.05.25





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 list above provides generic screening criteria only and there are exceptions to consider.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Interpretation

The property is in a good condition internally and externally. There is missing mortar/moved tiles on the front (southern) corner roof and gaps in the eaves which provide crevice-like features suitable for bats to roost and may provide access into the building for bats and we are unable to determine the presence or absence of bats in the property without further survey effort. When the findings are combined with the desk top study the property was assessed as having a low potential to support roosting bats.

Based on the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, one dusk emergence survey needs to be undertaken on the property, between May and August, to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats and in order to inform appropriate mitigation for the proposed works if necessary.



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The features identified will require three survey positions equipped with bat detectors and night vision cameras in order to cover the potential bat roosting features. If bats are recorded emerging from the building during the survey, two further activity surveys and an EPSL will be required in order for the development to proceed legally.

7.2 Contingency Plan

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

8. References

Collins, J (ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

HM Government (2017) Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations as (amended).

HM Government (1981) The Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended).

HM Government (2006) Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004). Bat Workers' Manual (3rd Edition). Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

9. Queries

Any queries regarding this report should be addressed, in the first instance, to Urban Tree Experts:

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APPENDIX 1

In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of bats to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating bats, to hibernate or migrate.
- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

Planning Considerations:

Government guidance to Local Planning Authorities stipulates the need to consider biodiversity and protected species during the consideration of planning applications. The NPPF makes clear that the planning system should help minimise the impacts that development can have on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. In addition, the ODPM Circular 04/2005 states *“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision”*.

Policy CP7 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (planning policy relating to the site) states *“Development which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and*

- i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or*
- ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided”*.

Developments that compromise the protection afforded to bats or roosts under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 will require a European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England (NE).

NE, the government’s statutory conservation advisory organisation, is responsible for issuing EPS licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations.

Three tests must be satisfied before this licence (to permit otherwise prohibited acts) can be issued:

- Reg 44(2)(e) – the derogation is “in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment”.
- Reg 44(3)(a) – there is “no satisfactory alternative” to the derogation.
- Reg 44(3)(b) –the derogation is “not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range”.

Tests (a) and (e) can be met with the issue of planning permission for the proposed works. Test (b) is determined by NE’s ecology department that requires the development of a suitable mitigation strategy that would ensure that any bats present on site, are retained at the same population level or better.