

71 London Road
Wokingham

Report for:
Christopher James Architecture
27 Chaucer Way
Woosehill
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG41 3BG

INTRODUCTION

As instructed, AA Environmental Limited (AAe) carried out a detailed visual inspection of the above property on Tuesday 18 February 2025. The purpose of the survey was to confirm the presence or likely absence of bats utilising the building(s) and provide appropriate mitigation measures, as necessary. A series of photographs has been attached for reference.

The redevelopment proposals are for the change of use of the property to supported living accommodation (Use Class C2), plus erection of a two-storey front/side extension and a single-storey side/rear extension, associated landscaping, parking, installation of PV panels and bin storage, following demolition of the existing attached garage and single-storey rear extension.

LEGISLATION

Currently there are 17 species of bat known to breed in the UK. All species and their roosts are protected under Regulation 41 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. As a signatory to the *Bonn Convention (Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe)* the UK is also required to protect their habitats. This legislation makes it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts and protection from damage or disturbance of important feeding areas. Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

METHODOLOGY

Baseline Data

A review of previous Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment (November 2024) produced by Arbtech Consulting Limited (Arbtech) was completed to provide baseline conditions for the site. As certain baseline data is now readily available on the internet, the Multi-agency website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk) was consulted to determine whether any part of the site or nearby habitats have been statutorily or otherwise designated and whether any European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats have been granted within 1 km of the site. In addition, a review of Google Earth's satellite imagery (http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/index.html) was completed to determine past land uses of the site and surrounding land.

Walk-over Site Survey

A visual survey of the site was completed to record any evidence of bats or features that could provide potential roosting opportunities following the guidelines provided by the Bat Conservation Trust¹ and by an experienced and licensed ecologist². A thorough internal and external re-examination of the existing buildings was carried out, with any potential access points inspected for evidence of bats. All internal roof voids/spaces, where present, were accessed to check for any evidence of bats.

¹ Collins, J. (ed) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

² The lead surveyor was Harry Simpson, BSc (Hons), MSc. Class Licence: 2023-11139-CL18-BAT.

The surrounding habitat was also surveyed to identify any important features such as mature trees with suitable features for roosting bats and any established lines of vegetation that might provide important flightlines.

Evidence of bats is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- the presence of bat droppings, which tend to accumulate under established roost sites or at roost entrances;
- the accumulation of large numbers of moth wings, which have been discarded by feeding bats;
- areas of staining by urine or from fur rubbing; and
- the presence of bats themselves or their corpses.

The visual survey was facilitated by the use of binoculars, ladders, powerful torches (1M candlepower) and a Ridgid Micro CA-350 Inspection Camera endoscope. In addition, a careful check of external features on the buildings was conducted from the ground and then followed by an aerial inspection using a Mobile Elevated Working Platform (MEWP), to get up-close and examine any potential PRFs on the roof for evidence of bats.

In accordance with good practice, the site was re-checked for any evidence of other protected species or species of particular note.

RESULTS

Baseline Data

The results of the previous survey completed by Arbtech concluded that although no evidence of bats was recorded during the initial visual inspection, the dwelling was assessed to provide **moderate** suitability for roosting bats, due to the presence of several lifted tiles and recommended that further bat activity surveys be completed. However, due to the building type, condition and location within a built-up area, following discussions with the Council's Ecologist, it was agreed that a detailed follow-up visual inspection using an endoscope to check all PRFs would be sufficient to confirm presence/likely absence of bats within the dwelling on this occasion.

According to the multi-agency website, there are no statutory ecological designated sites located directly on or adjacent to the site. The nearest site is Holt Copse & Joel Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), located approximately 1.1 km to the north-west of the site and the site lies within the outer SSSI Impact Risk Zone³ for Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths Site of Special Scientific Interest, which is located over 4.8 km to the south-east. There are no Habitats of Principal Importance (HPIs) located on or adjacent to the site. The nearest HPI is an area of Deciduous Woodland, also noted in the National Forest Inventory as Broadleaved Woodland, located approximately 0.36 km to the south-east of the site.

According to the multi-agency website, a single bat licence has been granted within the surrounding 1 km study area, permitting the destruction of a resting place for brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) and common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) bats (reference: 2018-34805-EPS-MIT), located approximately 0.88 km to the south-south-east of the site.

Google Earth imagery shows that the site has remained largely unchanged since at least 2003, with the site comprising the existing residential plot, including the existing dwelling and associated hardstanding and well-maintained garden areas.

³ The proposals are within the guidelines to proceed without consulting Natural England; the local authority will be consulted as the site is within the Zone of Influence for European Sites.

Site Description (Photographs 1-8)

The site is located off London Road in Wokingham, centred at National Grid Reference: SU 816687 and covers less than 0.1 of a hectare. The site comprised the existing residential dwelling, with associated hardstanding and garden areas. The site is bordered by London Road to the north, with residential dwellings and associated garden areas to all other sides.

The site was dominated by the existing dwelling and attached garage, with a driveway and well-maintained garden areas. The dwelling was a two-storey residential property of masonry construction, with a pitched and hipped slate-tiled roof. Timber soffits/fascias were present and well-sealed, with a single chimney present, which had lead flashing around its base. Internally, a single roof space was recorded, lined with a modern membrane and insulated with mineral wool. The attached garage was of masonry construction, with a flat bitumen-felt roof and no separate roof space. A single-storey rear extension was present on the dwelling, of the same construction type as the main dwelling, with a pitched, slate-tiled roof and no separate roof space.

Bats

During the follow-up inspection carried out by AAe (18.02.25), no evidence of bats was recorded. AAe completed a detailed internal and external re-inspection of the dwelling, with the roof space fully accessible. In addition, all external PRFs previously identified by Arbtech were thoroughly checked, facilitated by a MEWP, ladders and an endoscope, with no evidence of bats recorded. The masonry, roof and ridge tiles were generally well-aligned and tightly sealed, with any restricted gaps found to be shallow and filled with cobwebs, moss and/or general debris.

The site itself, comprising a well-maintained residential plot of restricted size, located within a built-up and well-lit residential area, provides very limited foraging opportunities for bats. It is anticipated that most of the existing trees and established garden vegetation will be retained and protected as part of the works, therefore, any foraging habitat utilised by bats will be maintained.

Other Wildlife

Apart from a few common species of birds, either recorded on the site or flying overhead, no other species of any note were recorded.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The redevelopment proposals are for the change of use of the property to supported living accommodation (Use Class C2), plus erection of a two-storey front/side extension and a single storey side/rear extension, associated landscaping, parking, installation of PV panels and bin storage, following demolition of the existing attached garage and single storey rear extension. The site is of overall limited ecological value, with the species recorded described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of bats or other protected species recorded.

Although there are considered to be no over-riding ecological constraints to the proposals, a series of generic mitigation measures, as detailed below, should be implemented to reduce any impact the development proposals may have on local wildlife. There is also an opportunity to implement some enhancement measures to increase the nature conservation value of the site in the long term in accordance with Government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024⁴.

Although the previous survey and the more detailed visual inspection completed recorded no evidence of bats and no further surveys are considered necessary, in accordance with best practice all site operatives should be given a toolbox talk on the possibility of encountering bats and the legal protection they and their

⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2024). *National Planning Policy Framework*. London.

roosts are afforded (copy attached at Appendix A for reference). In the unlikely event of any bats being encountered on the site, then works should stop immediately and Natural England or AAe contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided.

It should be noted that all species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Although no bird nesting material was recorded during the survey with very limited areas of potential nesting habitat to be removed/affected, a check should be carried out prior to any works to ensure there are no active nests present.

In order to protect any nearby established vegetation, suitable fencing may be required at certain locations to reduce the possibility of any damage that could be caused during the works. To minimise accidental damage, any overhanging branches should be pruned back to suitable live growth points. All works should be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced specialist contractor and should conform to current industry best practice, i.e. BS 3998: 2010 '*Tree Work - Recommendations*'. The retention and protection of the existing vegetation will help to maintain existing commuting/foraging routes currently utilised by bats and other wildlife.

Although the works are restricted with limited opportunities to implement any enhancement measures, a series of wildlife boxes (such as bat and bird boxes) could be installed onto the site to provide enhanced roosting and nesting opportunities.

The effects of lighting on plants and animals are difficult to assess, but it is thought that lighting can adversely affect invertebrates, birds and bats. As the site already experiences some lighting from on-site sources there should be no change in current light levels from the proposed works.

Overall, the findings of this detailed visual survey would indicate that there are no ecological constraints to the redevelopment proposals that would preclude planning permission being granted, subject to appropriately worded conditions. A range of standard controls are available and deliverable to ensure that there would be no adverse impact on bats and local wildlife with a series of controls to be implemented to avoid contravention of current legislation.

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Photograph Record Sheets



Photograph 1: Showing the close inspection of the roof and ridge tiles on the main residential dwelling, with well-sealed slate tiles.



Photograph 2: Showing the close inspection of the ridge and roof tiles, mostly well-sealed, with any restricted gaps found to be filled by moss and general debris.



Photograph 3: Showing the close inspection of the roof and ridge tiles on the single-storey rear-extension.



Photograph 4: Showing the single roof space, recorded within the main residential dwelling.

Rev.	Details	Drawn Chkd.	Date
PROJECT			
71 London Road Wokingham			
TITLE			
Photograph Record Sheet 1 (Photographs 1 to 4)			
<div>  <div> AAe Environmental Consultants </div> </div> <div> AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T: 01235 536042 F: 01235 523849 info@aae-ltd.co.uk www.aae-ltd.co.uk </div>			
Scale	Date	Drg No.	Rev.
NTS	04.03.25	253070/01	
	Drawn NAB	Chkd. HRS	



Photograph 5: Showing an endoscope image from beneath roof tiles at the main dwelling, with any restricted gaps found to be cobwebbed and shallow..



Photograph 6: Showing the endoscope inspection under ridge tiles on the main dwelling.



Photograph 7: Showing a shallow gap beneath ridge tiles on the single-storey rear-extension.



Photograph 8: Showing the well-sealed lead flashing and restricted gap on the single-storey rear extension, thoroughly investigated and found to be shallow and cobwebbed throughout.

Rev.	Details	Drawn	Date
		Chkd.	
PROJECT			
71 London Road Wokingham			
TITLE			
Photograph Record Sheet 2 (Photographs 5 to 8)			
		AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T: 01235 536042 F: 01235 523849 info@aae-ltd.co.uk www.aae-ltd.co.uk	
Scale	Date 04.03.25	Drg No.	
NTS	Drawn NAB	Chkd. HRS	253070/02
			Rev.

Appendix A
Toolbox Talk (Bats)

TOOLBOX TALK:

BATS

Did you know?

- Bats are the world's only flying mammal.
- There are 17 species of bat known to be breeding in the UK, 6 of which are endangered or rare and 6 are classed as vulnerable.
- Bats can be found across the country in urban and rural locations.
- They are often sighted at dusk as they leave their roost, flying around hedgerows, woodland and waterbodies, feeding on insects.
- Throughout the year bats will often change their roost, depending upon the season.
- Usually a pregnant female will only have one baby a year, this makes colonies vulnerable to population decline.
- During the winter bats hibernate and may not wake up, even if disturbed. Therefore it's important not to work on sites with bats during these months.
- Bats may not use the same roost throughout the year, however they are legally protected with or without a bat occupying them.

Identification

- You may find bats in any number of places, they tend to prefer dark, quiet spots with good shelter, such as holes and cracks in trees, roofs and walls of buildings, under bridges, old tunnels and in caves.
- Signs of bat presence include discarded moth wings, staining around crevices and small mouse-like droppings which crumble easily.

Legislation

- All bats and their roosts are protected by UK and European Law. This makes it **illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats** or obstruct access to, damage or destroy their roosts and protects important feeding areas from damage or disturbance.
- Under law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

Site Controls

- There is always a **risk** that bats, as they move between different roost sites and occupy new roosts, could be encountered during site works.
- **If any bats are encountered during works the following controls must be applied to avoid breaking the law:**
 1. If bats are discovered/suspected works must stop **immediately** with any bat left in-situ and AAe immediately contacted (contact details above).
 2. If any injured bats are found during the works AAe would care for them and where possible be released in the same location once recovered.
 3. During works staff must wear gloves in case of accidental contact with bats.
 4. Any roof tiles will be lifted straight up, rather than being rolled over, minimising the risk of harming bats which may be sheltering underneath.
 5. Areas must be fully checked for any bats or their evidence prior to filling any gaps and repointing any brickwork.
 6. Any lighting must be installed must avoid illuminating vegetation and or bat boxes/access points.

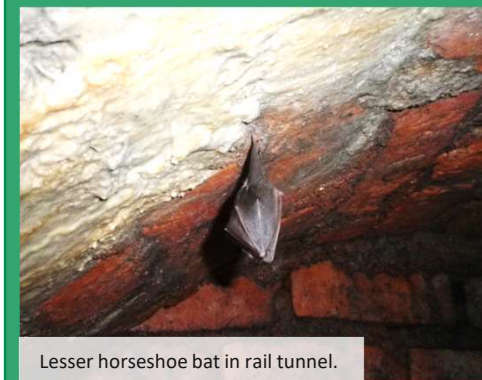
These controls have been put in place to protect all site operatives from breaking the law. You're not expected to be able to identify bats or their presence so remember, **if in doubt shout and contact the relevant person.**

Key Contacts

AA Environmental Ltd, Units 4-8 Cholswell Court, Shippon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6HX
Tel: 01235 536042



Brown long-eared bat.



Lesser horseshoe bat in rail tunnel.



Common pipistrelle bat.