

Sarandi
Forest Road
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 5SA

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Report prepared by Verity West; reviewed by Vicky Potts
Ref: R3355/a

February 2023

The logo for John Wenman ecological consultancy. It features the word "JOHN" in a stylized orange font with a small bat silhouette integrated into the letter 'O'. To the right of "JOHN" is the word "WENMAN" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. Below "JOHN WENMAN" is the phrase "ecological consultancy" in a smaller, lowercase, orange, sans-serif font.

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1 SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Jack Streak to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the semi-detached residential property at Sarandi, Forest Road, Wokingham in Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 82445 71053). The assessment was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Wokingham Borough Council, seeking consent for a two-storey side extension and single storey rear extension, removing a pitched roof and replacing with a flat roof.
- 1.1.2** All British bat species are fully protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitat Regulations') (as amended). A survey of the interior and exterior of the property, was undertaken on the 7th February 2023 by Vicky Potts, an ecologist registered under the Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 (2016-27162-CLS-CLS) and assistant ecologist Verity West.
- 1.1.3** Approximately 200 small and medium sized bat droppings of a shape and size most typical of those deposited by the crevice dwelling pipistrelle bat species (*Pipistrellus sp.*) and the void dwelling long-eared bat species (*Plecotus sp.*), were observed throughout the main roof void. Externally, a bat dropping was visible in a cobweb behind the northern facing extension gable end and the property had potential roost features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bats such as pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus spp.*) and small *Myotis* species. The most likely potential roosting sites were located under the barge boards at the eastern facing side gable end and in gaps the verge mortar and behind the barge boards at the rear.
- 1.1.4** The proposed works will directly impact the roof void and the external features, and therefore the works could result in the permanent damage of bat roosts, and may disturb and/or harm any bats present at the time of works. Further survey work is required to determine the status of the bat roost(s) within the property and identify the access points used, and therefore confirm whether the work will result in the loss of a roost(s) and/or lead to bats being disturbed or harmed. The further

surveys should comprise of at least three evening emergence and/or dawn re-entry surveys.

- 1.1.5** Subject to the survey findings i.e. if bats are shown to be present, a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) or if applicable, registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) may be required to allow the planned works to go ahead lawfully.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Jack Streak to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the semi-detached residential property at Sarandi, Forest Road, Wokingham in Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 82445 71053).
- 2.1.2** The assessment was commissioned in connection with planning proposals to be lodged with Wokingham Borough Council, seeking consent for a two-storey side extension and single storey rear extension, removing a pitched roof replacing with a flat roof.

2.2 Legislative Background

- 2.2.1** All British bat species are fully protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitat Regulations') (as amended). In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat;
 - Deliberately, 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; or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species;
 - Deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.
- 2.2.2** The government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations. A licence can be issued if the following three tests have been met:
- **Regulation 55(9)(a)** - there is "no satisfactory alternative" to the derogation, and;
 - **Regulation 55(9)(b)** - the derogation "will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range" and;

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- **Regulation 55(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”.

- 2.2.3** Local authorities have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3e) of the Habitat Regulations to have regard to requirements of the Habitats Directive in the exercise of their functions. They must therefore consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by planning proposals affecting European Protected Species before granting planning permission.
- 2.2.4** If a European Protected Species 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.
- 2.2.5** Licensable projects affecting small numbers of seven commonly occurring species occupying roosts of low conservation importance may fall under the remit of the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (Low Impact) (WML-CL21), which would enable consultants registered by Natural England, or accredited agents appointed by them, to carry licensable work under the Class Licence once sites have been registered in advance with Natural England. Registration forms must be submitted at least three weeks before work is due to start, and if acceptable, Natural England aims to register sites within two weeks.
- 2.2.6** Survey data supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or the registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (WML-CL21) must be up to date i.e. have been conducted within the current or most recent optimal survey season i.e. May to August. Therefore, if surveys show bats are present and licensable work is delayed until during or after the next survey season, updated surveys will be required to support an application or site registration.

2.3 Site Location and Context

- 2.3.1** The semi-detached residential property is situated on the northern side of Forest Road in Wokingham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 82445 71053).
- 2.3.2** The property is situated to the north of Wokingham town centre, with further residential properties and their associated gardens to the east and west, with open agricultural fields and grassland to the north and south.
- 2.3.3** In the wider area, Tippin's Wood is approximately 230m to the north-east, Pond Wood approximately 300m to the north and Ashridge Woods approximately 510m to the west. The nearest non-statutory designated sites, Holt Copse and Joel Park Local Nature Reserves, are approximately 2.5km to the south-west.
- 2.3.4** Overall, the habitats nearby offer high quality habitat suitable for roosting, commuting and foraging bats adapted to semi-rural environments.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Building Inspection

3.1.1 A survey of the exterior and interior of the property was undertaken on the 7th February 2023 by Vicky Potts - an ecologist registered under Natural England bat survey Class Licence CL18 (Registration no. CL18 2016-27162-CLS-CLS) - and assistant ecologist Verity West.

3.1.2 The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars, a high power (1 million candle power) torch and looked for features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines (Collins 2016; Mitchell-Jones 2004; Mitchell-Jones & McLeish 2004).

3.1.3 The following may indicate the presence of a bat roost within a building:

- Bat droppings (these can be found externally, especially in sheltered areas such as window sills, underneath roost entrances or internally within a roof space);
- Piles of insect remains e.g. moth wings (these may be indicative of regular feeding sites used by species such as brown long eared bat);
- Staining at roost entrances or within the roost (urine and oil from fur can leave stains on timbers when bats are gathered for long periods);
- Bats (live or dead).

Residential buildings may offer potential roosting sites in a number of locations, favoured locations include:

- Under roof, ridge and hip tiles, especially when loose or lifted tiles are present, or sections of mortar are missing;
- Under sections of raised lead flashing;
- Beneath lifted barge boards;
- At the gable ends – access is typically gained at the roof apex via gaps in the soffits or under roof tiles;
- At the eaves – gaining access via gaps between the soffits and wall;
- Within an enclosed roof space – long-eared bats (*Plecotus* sp.) for example, will often cluster at the ridge beam.

3.2 Survey Constraints

- 3.2.1** Full access was available to the exterior of the property, and the main loft space, however the smaller loft space was only accessible to inspect from the step ladder in the hatch opening, due to its restricted size and the presence of asbestos roof tiles.
- 3.2.2** It must be noted that due to the roosting behaviour of crevice-dwelling bats in particular, it is possible that evidence of roosting bats may not be visible during the survey and could be hidden in crevices such as wall cavities and in the space between roof coverings and lining; an absence of evidence does not necessarily mean an absence of roosting bats.

4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Photographs of the house are presented in **Appendix 1** and a plan of the external and internal survey findings with associated target notes is shown in **Appendix 2**. The survey findings from the exterior and interior of the house are described as follows:

4.2 External Survey

4.2.1 The semi-detached property has a pitched roof, with an intersecting gable end on a ground floor extension and a further flat roof extension at the rear (**Photographs 1 & 2; Target Notes 1 & 2**).

4.2.2 The asbestos backed slate roof tiles were tight and in place with no visible gaps (**Photograph 3; Target Note 3**). The ridge tiles were in place with mortar missing in places (**Photograph 4; Target Note 4**). The gable end barge boards on the western side, had a large gap behind, offering potential access opportunities for bats into the main void space (**Photograph 5; Target Note 5**). There were also gaps in the brickwork mortar where the brickwork joined the barge boards at the corner of the eaves (**Photograph 6; Target Note 6**). The barge boards on the extension gable end had large gaps behind where a bat dropping was visible, in the cobwebs (**Photograph 7; Target Note 7**). The apex of the rear extension gable end had missing mortar in the verge (**Photograph 8; Target Note 8**). There were gaps in the mortar around the lead flashing on the rear of the property (**Photograph 9; Target Note 9**). The soffits were tightly sealed to the brickwork to the front and rear of the house, and on the rear extensions (**Photograph 10**).

4.3 Internal Survey

4.3.1 The main roof void (roof space 1) was accessed via a hatch and loft ladder. The eaves had an estimated roof to floor height of 2.5 metres (**Photograph 11; Target Note 10**). The roof was unlined and the asbestos backing of the slate tiles was visible (**Photograph 12; Target Note 11**). No gaps in the roof tiles were

visible. The void was part boarded with fibreglass insulation on the floor (**Photograph 13**). The ridge beam was cobwebbed in places (**Target note 12**).

4.3.2 Approximately 200 small and medium sized droppings were found throughout the main void space, with the highest density concentrated on the floor at the western gable end (approx. 100 droppings), and on the wall and chimney (approx. 50 droppings). In addition there were droppings in a pile under the ridge in the centre of the void (approx. 20 droppings), on the eastern gable end wall (approx. 15 droppings), and at the base on stored items and on the floor (approx. 15 droppings) (**Photographs 14-18**).

4.3.3 A smaller roof void (roof space 2) for the ground floor extension, was partially accessible via a hatch and step ladder. As with the main void, the roof was unlined and the asbestos backing of the slate tiles was visible with no gaps (**Target note 13**). The void was not boarded, with fibreglass insulation on the floor (**Target Note 14**).

4.3.4 The roof space was inspected visually from the ladder, and no bat evidence was visible.

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential

- 5.1.1** As evidence of roosting bats was found internally, it is highly likely that the void supports primarily void-dwelling bat species such as the long-eared bat species (*Plecotus sp.*) and also, crevice-dwelling bat species such as the pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus spp.*). Potential access points to the void were identified to be along the eastern gable end, behind the barge boards.
- 5.1.2** Two long-eared bat species are found within the UK: brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) and grey long-eared (*Plecotus austriacus*). Brown long-eared bats (*P. auritus*) are a widespread species found throughout the UK and roosts occupied by small numbers of non-breeding individuals are considered to be of low conservation importance; however, they are a species of principal importance for conservation (as defined within Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006) and any loss of roosts may have an adverse impact on the status of local populations (Mitchell-Jones 2004). The grey long-eared bat (*P. austriacus*) has a restricted distribution confined to the far south of England (Richardson 2000) and therefore it is possible, although very unlikely, that this rarer species is present.
- 5.1.3** Two species of pipistrelle bat: common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) are widespread and abundant throughout the UK (Richardson 2000). Roosts supporting pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus spp.*) bat species are considered to be of low-moderate conservation importance (subject to the type of roost present i.e. non-breeding roosts supporting individual or small numbers of bats through to maternity roosts supporting large numbers of female bats) (Mitchell-Jones 2004).
- 5.1.4** Considering the evidence within the void, and potential crevice roost features and surrounding habitats, the property is considered to have high bat roost potential.
- ### **5.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations**
- 5.2.1** The proposals will impact on the features across the roof at the side and the rear, including access gaps around the apexes and lead flashing. The changes to the

property could therefore result in the temporary and/or permanent damage of bat roosts, and may disturb and/or harm any bats present at the time of works.

- 5.2.2** Further surveys are required to confirm the presence or absence of active bat roosts within the property. The further surveys should comprise of three evening emergence and/or dawn re-entry surveys to determine the presence or absence of bats and access gaps used. The surveys should be undertaken in the period between May and September inclusive with at least two of the surveys carried out in the peak season for recording maternity roosts i.e., May to August (Collins 2016).
- 5.2.3** If bats are shown to be present, a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (ESPML) or if applicable, the registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) may be required to permit the lawful damage of a bat roost(s), and to permit the disturbance of any bats present at the time of the work. A licence can be issued by Natural England if the three licensing tests (detailed in **Paragraph 2.2.2**) have been met by the proposals.
- 5.2.4** To meet one of the licensing tests, it is necessary to demonstrate that the 'favourable conservation status' of bats using the property is maintained throughout and after the completion of the work by employing mitigation measures during the work, by providing compensatory roosts in the short-term and ensuring that roosting sites are retained on site in the long-term, as indicatively summarised in **Section 6** below (**please note that the preparation of a full mitigation strategy should be based on the findings of full survey data as set out in 5.2.2 above**).

7 INDICATIVE MITIGATION AND COMPENSATION REQUIREMENTS

- 7.1.1** If a mitigation licence is required, under the terms of the EPSML or BMCL (if applicable), the commencement of work affecting bat roost(s) would be timed to avoid the periods when bats are most susceptible to disturbance i.e., winter hibernation season where there is potential for hibernating bats (mid-November to February) to avoid disturbing torpid bats, and to take place outside of the peak summer breeding season (May to mid-September) where evidence of a maternity roost is recorded.
- 7.1.2** Replacement roosting opportunities would be provided so that they are available to bats in the short-term, i.e. before and during the work by erecting at least one woodcrete bat box on a mature tree or a purposeful erected pole in the garden before the work starts.
- 7.1.3** A 'soft strip' approach to the work affecting identified roosts would be adopted, i.e. the careful removal of tiles and roof coverings associated with the roost(s), by gloved hands and with hand-held tools under the supervision of a licensed ecologist or the Registered Consultant if working under the BMCL. In the event that bats are discovered during the course of the work, the licensed ecologist or Registered Consultant would capture the bat(s) and transfer it/them directly to one of the bat boxes erected in advance of the works.
- 7.1.4** In the long-term, compensatory roosting locations may need to be incorporated into the extended property. Bitumen and hessian (Type 1F) roofing felt or breathable membranes that have been certified to meet the snagging propensity tests set by Natural England should be used; other breathable membranes, which are harmful to bats, must be avoided.

REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. & McLeish, A. P. (2004). *Bat Workers' Manual (3rd Edition)*. JNCC, Peterborough.

Richardson, P. (2000). Distribution Atlas of Bats in Britain and Ireland 1980 – 1999. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



1. Front of the property viewed from the south



2. Rear of the property viewed from the north



3. Tight slate roof tiles



4. Ridge tiles with occasional missing mortar



5. Gap behind barge board on eastern gable



6. Gap around the edges of the brickwork and timber barge boards



7. Gap behind barge board on extension gable with visible dropping in cobweb



8. Gap in verge mortar apex of extension gable roof



9. Gaps in mortar around lead flashing



10. Soffits were tight to brickwork throughout



11. Internal view of loft space 1



12. Asbestos lined tight slate roof tiles



13. Part boarded floor with fibreglass insulation, with droppings



14. Approx 100 dropping at base of western gable end



15. Droppings stuck on the chimney wall



16. Droppings stuck on the wall

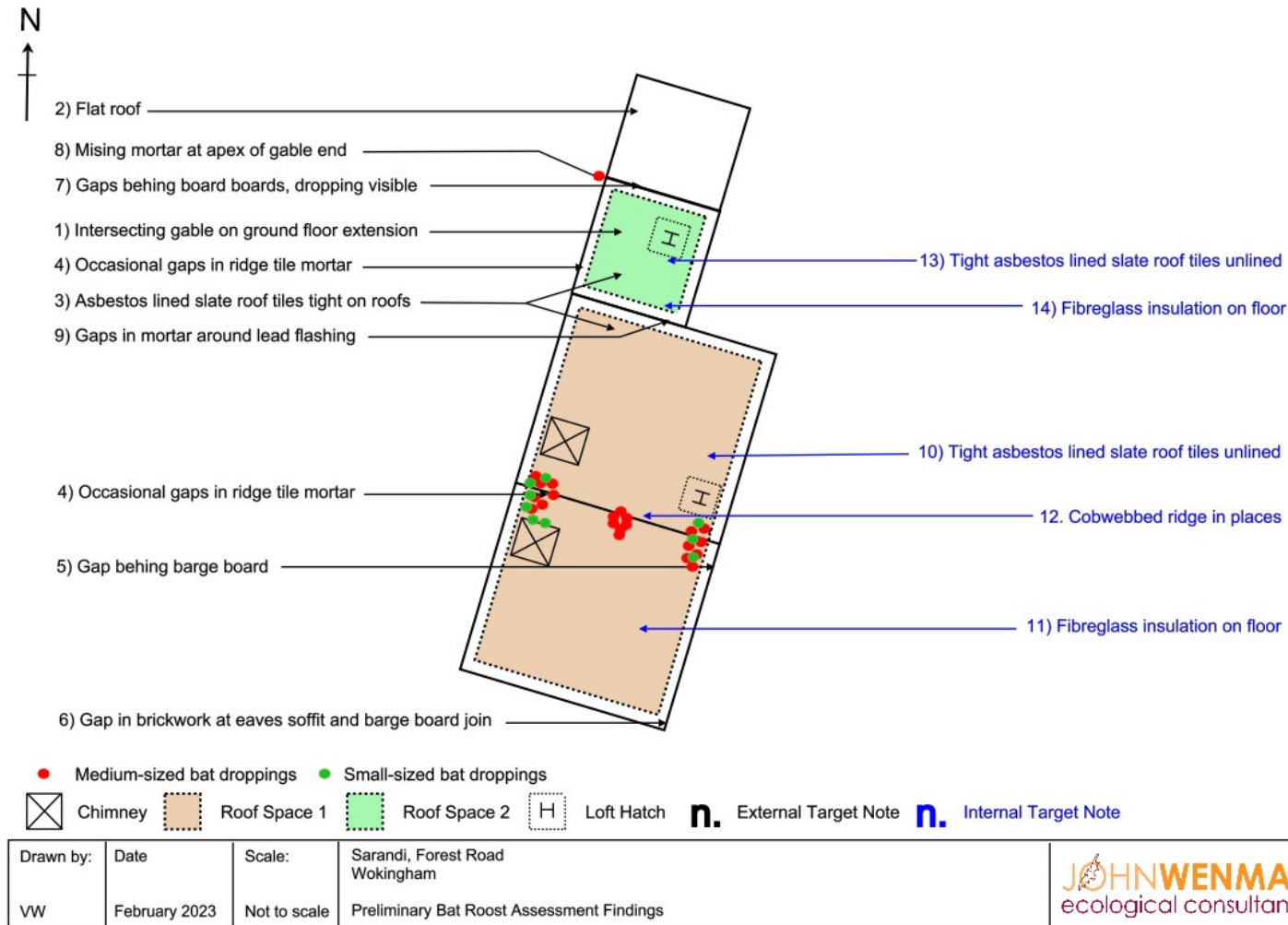


17. Droppings on stored items



18. Droppings on floor amongst pipe work and stored items

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



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