



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT 216b NINE MILE RIDE WOKINGHAM



**Prepared for:
Mr J Sood
216b Nine Mile Ride
Wokingham
RG40 3QD**

6 February 2025

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CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Instruction
- 1.2 Aims and Objectives
- 1.3 Proposed works
- 1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

- 2.1 Legislative Background

3. Site Location and Description

- 3.1 Site Location
- 3.2 Site Description

4. Survey Methodology

- 4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search
- 4.2 Daylight Survey
- 4.3 Constraints

5. Survey Findings

- 5.1 External Inspection
- 5.2 Internal Inspection

6. Evaluation

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 Interpretation
- 7.2 Contingency plan

8. References

9. Queries

Appendix 1

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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 J Sood to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]) of 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham RG40 3QD. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Tuesday 21 January 2025 at 11.50am, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property and detached garage 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 one statutory designated site is located within, and three current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats have been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The habitat, south of the site, includes mixed woodland, farmland and grassland and provides rich and diverse habitats suitable for a wide range of bat species and there is direct ecological connectivity to these areas from the site.

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. Potential roost features were identified on the property however, no potential roost features were identified on the garage during the preliminary roost assessment.

When combined, the lack of features on the garage and data from the desk top study results in the garage being characterised as having negligible potential¹ to support roosting bats. In line with best practice guidelines², no further survey effort is required on the garage.

Should the proposed plans change, and the roof/loft space of property be affected by the development, further survey effort will be required in order to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats.

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 J Sood to conduct a DBW of 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham RG40 3QD 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 client has advised that this will seek to construct a single storey extension that will connect to the existing garage.

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 received training in bat ecology and surveying, bat detector use, acoustic monitoring/sonogram analysis, architectural terms for bat workers, bats and development, H & S awareness for bat workers, legislation for bat workers, British bats their ecology and conservation, surveying trees for bats, Bat ID and handling, bat biology.

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 SU79976485, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham, highlighted.

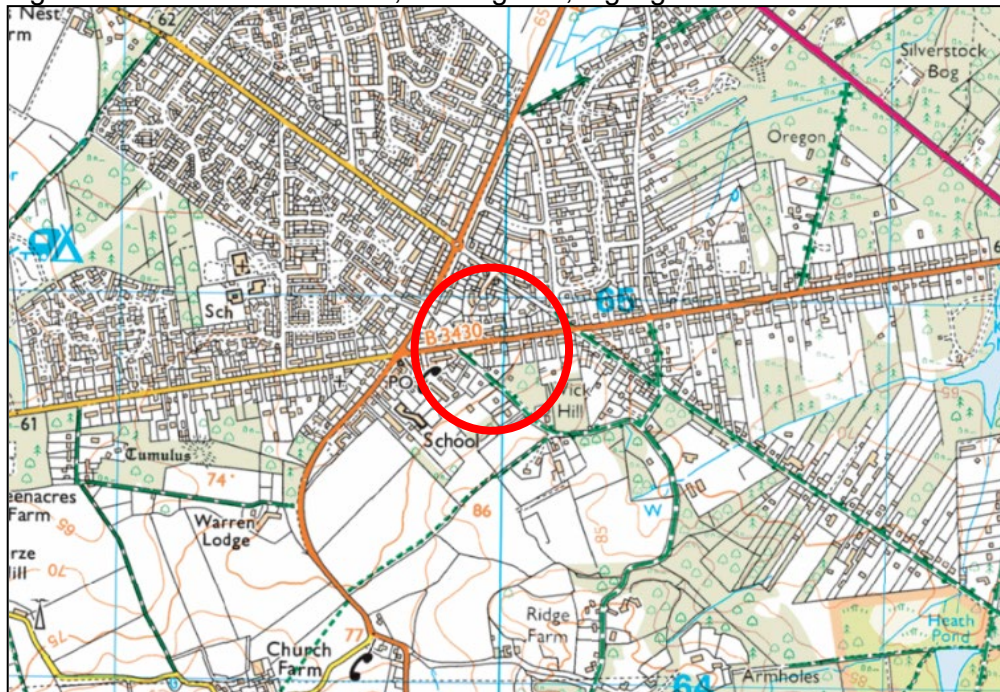


Figure 2. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham, overview of the immediate area.





3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached, brick-built property with link-attached garage. The remainder of the site comprises a gravel driveway/parking area with lawn and single, mature tree and a rear garden which is mainly laid to lawn with patio area and trees mainly on the rear boundary, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers some foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is good ecological connectivity to bat foraging and commuting habitat in the wider landscape.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. 21.01.25



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

The client has advised that, to their knowledge, no previous bat surveys have been undertaken at 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 application site is situated in the village of Finchampstead and is surrounded by properties and gardens of varying sizes and styles. To the south of the site and connected via the rear garden, can be found mixed woodland, farmland and grassland providing rich and diverse habitats suitable for a wide range of bat species and there is good ecological connectivity to these areas from the site. Further afield more woodland, including Simons Wood, California Country Park and Finchampstead Ridges lie in close proximity to the site, and although they are known to provide good habitat for bats, housing and roads limit the connectivity from these areas to the site.



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Longmoor Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Longmoor Bog Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lie within 2km of the proposed development site although there is no ecological connectivity from the site to this designated site. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed three current EPSLs for bats have been granted within 2km of the site, the details of which are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Current EPSLs for bats within 2km of the site

EPSL reference	Licence end date	Species on licence
2018-37292-EPS-MIT	10/2028	Common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared
2020-45340-EPS-MIT	09/2025	Brown long-eared
2019-39174-EPS-MIT	03/2029	Common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham RG40 3QD was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 21 January 2025 at 11.50am. The weather conditions for the survey were bright with a temperature of 5 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, endoscope and a ladder.

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

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. A thorough inspection of the loft space was not possible due to tight access beyond the water tank but given that the loft of the property is not being affected by the proposed works this was not considered a constraint to the survey.



5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property and garage 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 site contains a detached, brick-built two storey property, which is in a good condition externally. The pitched roof of the property is covered in tiles, the majority of which are close fitted however some have moved leaving gaps that could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species, see Figure 4 below. The ridge tiles are all tightly fitted and had no missing mortar, and the verges are all well cemented with no cracks or splits in which crevice dwelling bats could use for roosting, see Figure 5 on page 9. Sections of the lead flashing around the chimney has lifted leaving gaps (see Figure 6 on page 9), and on the eastern elevation there are gaps between the wall and uPVC soffits which bats could utilise for roosting, see Figure 7 on page 10.

The brick-built garage is attached to the neighbours garage and is in a good condition, see cover photograph and Figure 8 on page 10. The flat roof is covered in bitumen felt, all of which is tightly fitted and had no rips or tears in which roosting bats could enter the building, see Figure 9 on page 11. The uPVC fascias are tight to the wall with no gaps, see Figure 10 on page 11.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the external inspection of the property or garage however externally on the property only, there were visible roosting opportunities for bats that could provide access into the property for roosting bats.

Figure 4. Example raised roof tiles. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. 21.01.25





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Figure 5. Example of sealed verges. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. 21.01.25



Figure 6. Lifted lead flashing around chimney stack. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. 21.01.25





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Figure 7. Gap between soffit and wall on western elevation. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. 21.01.25



Figure 8. Rear view of garage. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. 21.01.25





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Figure 9. Roof of garage. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. 21.01.25



Figure 10. Sealed fascias on garage. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. 21.01.25





5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The loft space in the property was accessed through a hatch via a loft ladder and is in a good condition internally. The loft is partially lit, partially boarded and insulated and contains a large water tank restricting access for the inspection, see Figure 11 below. The roof tiles are lined with bitumen felt, all of which that could be seen is in a good condition with no rips or tears in which roosting bats could exploit, see Figure 12 on page 13. When the light was turned off there was light ingress through the roof vent which was open with no mesh which could afford bats access into the loft, see Figure 13 on page 13.

The garage was also inspected internally. The flat roof is boarded, all of which is tightly fitted with no gaps and although the electric door is not tight fitted (gap at the top) internally the garage offers no roosting potential due to the construction materials and light ingress through the rear windows, see Figure 11 on page 12.

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

Figure 11. Example of loft space. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. 21.01.25





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Figure 12. Example of bitumen lining in loft space. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham.
21.01.25



Figure 13. Light ingress through open roof vent. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham.
21.01.25





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Figure 14. Example of boarded garage roof and light ingress at top of door. 216b Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. 21.01.25



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.**



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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 combined evidence from the desktop study and the internal and external inspection of the property and garage provides a high level of confidence in support of the opinions set out in this report. There are no visible features externally on the garage which could be utilised by roosting bats or in which bats could access the building to roost and internally there are no potential roosting opportunities for bats.

Although the majority of the property is in a good condition, there are gaps in roof tiles, lead flashing around the chimney stack and between the soffits and wall on the western elevation which could provide opportunities for crevice dwelling bats to roost in the house. However, as these sections of the building will not be affected by the current proposals therefore, based on recommendations in the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, no further survey effort is required.

7.2 Contingency Plan

In the unlikely event that bats are found during the proposed works, all work must stop, and advice sought from Urban Tree Experts or another licensed bat ecologist.

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 bats may start roosting at the site.

If the current proposals change and the roof/loft space of the property will be affected by any new plans, further survey effort will be required in order to establish the presence or absence of 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.



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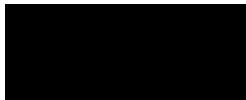
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9. Queries

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.