



PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT

2 SHARON ROAD, WEST END, SOUTHAMPTON, SO30 3AS

FINAL REPORT

March 2023

Report conditions

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Executive Summary

- This preliminary roost assessment report has been prepared in order to support a planning application for the proposed the construction of a new front porch and potential extensions to the dormer windows at 2 Sharon Road, Southampton.
- A preliminary roost assessment survey was undertaken on the 7th December 2022.
- The preliminary roost assessment has confirmed the presence of moderate suitability roosting features on the house, including lifted roof tiles at the roof edges and gaps under the hanging tiles. No evidence was recorded within accessible internal areas.
- Should the proposals include the potential dormer window extensions, further survey work will be required. In order to confirm the presence/absence of further roosting bats, characterise bat roosts, assess the extent that they may be affected by the proposed works and develop a proportionate and appropriate mitigation strategy, further survey work in accordance with Natural England standing advice and the Bat Conservation Trust's (BCT) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition) is required for the house. The recommended survey effort for structures with moderate roost suitability is two presence/absence surveys.
- If the proposals only include the construction of a new porch, no further surveys will be required.
- Provided the recommendations set out in section 5 are followed, the planning authority can be confident that the development would accord with relevant planning policy, legislation and caselaw.
- Information regarding the length of time the findings from this report are valid for can be found in section 5.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Report purpose

This report presents the findings of the preliminary bat roost assessment undertaken of the house at 2 Sharon Road, Southampton (central grid reference: SU 46174 14707).

1.2 Description of proposal

The current proposal is for the construction of a new front porch and potential extensions to the dormer windows on the north-eastern and south-western roof faces of the house.

1.3 Report context

A planning application is being prepared for the proposed works to the house at 2 Sharon Road, Southampton. Phillips Ecology have been instructed by the Applicants to undertake an ecological assessment to support the application, which has been submitted to the Eastleigh Borough Council.

1.4 Survey area

The survey area comprised the existing house and its immediate surrounds.

1.5 Limitations

The south-eastern elevation of the house was not fully visible during the preliminary roost assessment due to its proximity to the property's boundaries. No other limitations were encountered during the course of the survey. Therefore, despite the aforementioned limitation, it is considered that a robust assessment of the buildings' suitability for bats was undertaken.

1.6 Relevant documents

The relevant proposal plan used to inform this assessment is presented in Appendix 1.

2. Survey Methodology

2.1 Surveyors

The survey was carried out by Katy Goddard and Connor Hill of Phillips Ecology.

2.2 Survey area

The survey area comprised the house and its immediate surrounds which will be modified by the proposed conversion. The survey area extended to all areas of the property that will be modified by the proposed works in such a way that bats or their roosts could be impacted (directly or indirectly). Therefore, the survey included the entirety of the structure.

2.3 Survey date

The survey was carried out during the daytime on the 7th December 2022.

2.4 Survey description

The survey did not depart from the Bat Conservation Trust's (BCT) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition) which states that "A preliminary roost inspection survey is a detailed inspection of the exterior and interior of a structure to look for features that bats could use for entry/exit and roosting and to search for signs of bats".

The external features of the structure which will be modified by the proposed works in such a way that bats or their roosts could be impacted (directly or indirectly) if present, were systematically inspected in detail to compile information on potential and actual bat access points and roosting places such as lifted or broken roof materials, loose brickwork and open eaves. This included a thorough search for evidence of bat activity such as bat droppings, urine splashes and fur staining.

The interior of the building was inspected in order to identify potential or actual access points and roosting places and to record any evidence of bat activity or bats themselves.

2.5 Survey equipment

Survey equipment comprised:

- High-powered torch
- Ladders
- Camera
- Binoculars

2.6 Weather conditions

Weather during the survey can be described as: dry, 10% cloud cover, light breeze and 5°C. The weather conditions did not hinder the ecologist's ability to carry out the survey effectively.

2.7 Assessment methodology

The suitability of the building for supporting bat roosts will be assessed against the guidelines within Table 1 which have been adapted from the BCT Good Practice Guidelines.

Table 1 *Suitability assessment guidelines*

Suitability ***Description of Roosting Habitats***

<i>Negligible</i>	Structure has no reasonable likelihood of supporting roosting bats i.e. no suitable roosting features present.
<i>Low</i>	A structure which could be used opportunistically by individual bats i.e. one or more potential roost sites which do not provide sufficient space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions (e.g. temperature, light, humidity) and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats.
<i>Moderate</i>	A structure which could be used by bats but is not likely to support a roost of high conservation status (e.g. maternity roost). This structure would support features which exhibit suitable size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat for roosting bats.
<i>High</i>	A structure which is obviously suitable for supporting larger numbers of bats, on a regular basis and for longer periods of time.

3. Survey results

3.1 Building description relevant to bats and their roosts

The house comprises a single-storey brick-built bungalow which rises to a pitched and gable-end design roof clad with concrete interlocking roof and ridge tiles (Figure 1). The house is oriented northeast to southwest. A brick-built flat roof extension clad with roofing felt extends from the south-western elevation of the building (Figure 2). Two flat roof dormer windows extend from the north-eastern and south-western roof faces, the sides are clad with hanging concrete tiles and the face with uPVC boards. Lead flashing covers the joins between the dormer windows and main roof faces. The roof extends beyond the wall plate and the eaves are enclosed with uPVC fascia boards and under boards which adjoin to uPVC guttering. A bay window extends from the easternmost end of the north-eastern elevation (Figure 3). The windows and doors are set in uPVC frames that are tight fitting to the surrounding brickwork.

Internally, the house supports two distinct roof voids; both voids are at the side eaves which extend the full length of the building's north-eastern and south-western roof faces (Figure 7). Both voids support fibreglass insulation on the floor and heavy-duty bitumen lining on the roof (Figure 4). The voids are partially boarded and gaps in the eaves are infilled with fibreglass insulation. The spaces are used for storage and feature light cobwebbing throughout.



Figure 1 – north-eastern elevation and dormer windows



Figure 2 – south-western elevation with extension and dormer windows



Figure 3 – north-eastern elevation with bay window and dormer windows



Figure 4 – roof void with bitumen lining and stored items

An account of suitable access/egress features and recorded evidence of bat activity is given in table 2.

Table 2 – The recorded features and activity

Suitability	Evidence
Exterior The following suitable access/egress and roosting features were recorded externally during the survey: - Lifted tiles on the south-western roof face (Figure 5). - Gaps under the hanging tiles on the dormer windows (Figure 6). - Slightly lifted sections of lead flashing.	No evidence of activity was recorded externally during the survey.
Interior The following access/egress and roosting features were recorded internally during the survey: - Tears in the bitumen lining causing hanging folds (Figure 7).	No evidence of activity was recorded internally during the survey.



Figure 5 – lifted interlocking concrete tiles



Figure 6 – gaps under hanging tile on dormer windows



Figure 7 – tears in bitumen lining and hanging folds

3.2 **Site grounds**

The immediate surrounds of the building comprise hard-standing, wooden decking, hedgerows, managed lawn, ornamental planting, and mature trees. Beyond this, West End is characterised by residential dwellings with associated gardens and services. In this context, the habitats within the footprint of the proposal are considered to be suitable for foraging and commuting bats and given their location within a landscape which is also suitable for commuting and foraging bats, it is likely that bats will commute and forage through the site.

3.3 **Other protected species**

During the course of the survey, no evidence of breeding birds or other protected species was recorded.

4. Discussion and Assessment of Impacts

4.1 Preliminary assessment of suitability and potential impacts

The potential roost features were recorded on the existing dormer windows and the roof edges. The zone of impact of the porch construction is considered to support negligible suitability for roosting bats, i.e. the structure has no reasonable likelihood of supporting roosting bats, while the zone of impact of the potential dormer extensions is considered to support moderate roost suitability i.e. a structure which could be used by bats but is not likely to support a roost of high conservation status.

On the basis that the zone of impact of the porch is considered to support negligible suitability for roosting bats, there is considered to be no reasonable likelihood of impacts on bats associated with the proposed construction works.

However, on the basis that the zone of impact of the proposed dormer extensions supports moderate suitability for roosting bats, there is considered to be a reasonable likelihood that bats will be present and affected by the proposed works which will impact the features detailed in Table 2, however, the full extent of the impact is not yet known as any roosts have not been characterised.

The extensions would result in the loss of any bat roosts present in directly affected locations. In the absence of avoidance measures, the works would also have the potential to harm individual bats if present at the time of works.

The application site is considered to support suitability for foraging bats and commuting bats leaving or returning to roost. Increasing lighting could impact this behaviour which would indirectly impact roosts.

4.2 Relevant legislation and policy

Circular 06/2005 identifies that applicants should not be required to provide information on protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood that they will be present and affected by the proposed development. The site is considered to support habitats with suitability and potential for protected species and these may be affected by the proposed development. Therefore, the proposal triggers 'reasonable likelihood' under the Circular.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations) may apply should protected species be confirmed on site.

In the case that a European protected species is found to be present and impacted by the proposal, the local planning authority will be required to engage with the Habitat Regulations. Permission will be granted unless:

- a) the development is likely to result in a breach of the Habitat Regulations, and
- b) is unlikely to be granted an EPS licence from Natural England to allow the development to proceed under a derogation from the law (under licence).

When considering whether Natural England would not be unlikely to grant a licence for the identified impact, the local planning authority must consider the three tests which are set out in the Habitat Regulations:

1. the consented operation must be for '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'; (Regulation 53(2)(l))
2. there must be 'no satisfactory alternative' (Regulation 53(9)(a)); and
3. the action authorised 'will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range' (Regulation 53(9)(b)).

Case-law (*Morge vs. Hampshire County Council*) has clarified that planning authorities are able to grant permission for developments that would cause a breach of the Regulations is likely (i.e. in the case of this proposal, destruction of a bat roost), provided that sufficient information is provided to give the planning authority assurance that the relevant EPSM licence is not unlikely to be granted - i.e. planning authorities also have a duty to assess planning applications against these tests.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Requirement for further surveys

Where there is a reasonable likelihood that a protected species will be present and impacted by the proposed development, planning authorities require further surveys to properly assess development proposals against relevant planning policy. An assessment into the requirement for further surveys is presented below, however in summary, further surveys are considered necessary if the proposed dormer extensions are included in the final plans.

It is important that planning decisions are informed by current ecological survey data. Due to this, there is a limited time frame that phase 1 and phase 2 surveys are valid before becoming outdated. This time frame can vary depending on any changes in project circumstances or plans but it is generally considered that phase 1 ecological surveys are valid for a period of 18 months (CIEEM, 2019). Projects that take place over periods longer than 18 months might be required to carry out further ecological surveys to ensure the diocese have the necessary up-to-date information to make well informed, evidence-based decisions.

5.1.1 *Bats*

If the final plans include the extensions of the dormer windows, in order to provide robust confirmation of the status of bat roosts at the site and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development as required by Circular 06/2005, further survey work in accordance with Natural England standing advice and the BCT Good Practice Guidelines is required for the roof. This same survey work will be used to inform the third test of the Habitat Regulations.

In accordance with these guidelines, further survey effort will take the form of dusk emergence and dawn re-entry presence/absence surveys undertaken during the bat active season. The recommended minimum number of presence/absence surveys for a building with moderate roost suitability is two. Surveyors will be equipped with high-specification time expansion or full spectrum bat detectors with digital recording capability.

The surveyors will remain in place monitoring and recording bat activity from 15 minutes before sunset to up to 1.5 - 2 hours after sunset for a dusk visit or 2 hours before sunrise until up to 15 minutes after sunrise for a dawn visit. There needs to be a minimum of two weeks between the visits.

The bat active season extends from April until October. However, for a building with moderate suitability, it is recommended that all surveys are undertaken between May and September with at least one survey undertaken during the peak period (May to August, inclusive).

No further survey work is considered necessary for the porch construction works.

The affected areas of habitat within the site are not likely to be an important foraging or commuting resource. Therefore, further survey is considered unnecessary for understanding impacts on foraging and commuting bats beyond the proposed

presence/absence surveys subject to precautionary avoidance measures including a sensitive lighting scheme.

5.1.2 *Breeding birds*

Subject to the precautionary mitigation measures set out in Section 5.2.2, no further surveys are considered necessary.

5.2 **Mitigation strategy**

5.2.1 *Bats*

Dependent on the final plans, further survey work is required to determine the impact of the scheme on bats and ensure that any mitigation is fit for purpose. If bat roosts are confirmed on site, a EPSM licence will be required in accordance with section 4.2 prior to any works which will impact roosting bats. Mitigation is likely to entail the provision of alternative roost features which are proportionate to the status of any identified roost, supervised removal of any identified roost features, exclusion of bats from crevice features and timing constraints on these works to minimise impacts on bats as necessary.

In order to limit any effects on foraging and commuting bats, external lighting should be limited to only that which is absolutely necessary for safety purposes, both during the construction phase and once the proposals are complete. The following lighting measures are required:

- Construction works between March and October should be undertaken during daylight hours only to avoid disturbance to bats that may forage and commute through or near the site.
- Lighting to the completed house should be as low brightness as possible, kept at a low level and directed away from all structures and boundaries. Lighting on sensors should not be so sensitive that foraging bats trigger them.

All lighting must follow the Bat Conservation Trusts and Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance on bats and artificial lighting (BCT, 2018).

5.2.2 *Breeding birds*

Care should be taken that the development does not disturb breeding birds. The bird nesting season is taken to be March to August inclusive. Any removal of suitable nest habitat will either need to be undertaken outside of this period or else checked to ensure that no nesting birds are present. If occupied nests are present then the nest must not be removed and works around the nest can only recommence once the nest becomes unoccupied of its own accord.

5.3 **Enhancements**

The delivery of biodiversity enhancement on development sites is promoted by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

Where opportunities exist it is best practice to provide enhancement features which encourage greater biodiversity within development sites in accordance with the NPPF and the Local Planning Authority's responsibilities under the NERC Act.

Options for enhancing biodiversity within the site which are proportionate to the scale of the development include:

- The provision of new bat roosting opportunities, in addition to those that may be required as mitigation, in the form two bat boxes. These should be installed as high as possible, at least 3m above ground.
- The provision of bird nesting opportunities in the form of two open fronted boxes installed at least 2m above ground.

6. Conclusion

The preliminary roost assessment has confirmed that the zone of impact of the potential dormer extensions supports moderate suitability for roosting bats. Therefore, if the final plans include the dormer extensions, further survey effort is recommended to confirm the presence/absence of roosts, characterise any bat roost/s, assess the extent bats may be affected by the conversion works and devise an appropriate mitigation strategy to support the proposed redevelopment and address any breaches in the legislation. In accordance with Natural England standing advice and BCT Good Practice Guidelines, two presence/absence surveys for the house should be undertaken between May and September. No further survey work is considered necessary for the zone of impact of the new porch, which supports negligible suitability for roosting bats. Opportunities for ecological enhancement have been suggested for the site.

7. References

- **Altringham J D, 2003**, British Bats, Collins New Naturalist
- **Bat Conservation Trust, 2016**, BCT Bat Survey Guidelines Third edition
- **Bat Conservation Trust, 2018**, Guidance Note 08/18, Bats and artificial lighting in the UK, Bats and the Built Environment Series. BCT, London.
- **Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2017**, *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. CIEEM, Winchester
- **ILP and BCT, 2018** *Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK: Guidance Note 08/18*. ILP, Warwickshire.
- **MHCLG, 2018**. *National Planning Policy Framework*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; London.
- **Mitchell Jones AJ, 2004**, *Bat Mitigation guidelines*, English Nature
- **Mitchell Jones AJ and McLeish A P, The Bat Workers Manual**, JNCC
- **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006**, Ch 3, s. 40
- **Natural England, 2011** Frequently asked wildlife questions: Bats. Natural England

Appendix 1 – Proposal plan, to be finalised





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