



PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT

11 OAKMOUNT AVENUE, CHANDLER'S FORD, EASTLEIGH, SO53 3AB

FINAL REPORT

February 2024

Report conditions

<i>Report title</i>	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment – 11 Oakmount Avenue, Chandler's Ford.	
<i>Client</i>	Aaron Roberts	
<i>Report status</i>	Final	
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<i>Written by</i>	Connor Hill	<i>Date</i> 08/02/2024
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Executive Summary

- This preliminary roost assessment report has been prepared in order to support a planning application for the proposed extension works at 11 Oakmount Avenue, Chandler's Ford.
- A preliminary roost assessment survey was undertaken on the 2nd February 2024.
- The preliminary roost assessment has confirmed the presence of moderate suitability roosting features on the house including multiple gaps under the roof tiles and ridge tiles. No evidence of activity was recorded internally during the survey.
- 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 (4th edition) is required for the house. The recommended survey effort for structures with moderate roost suitability is two presence/absence surveys. If activity is higher than expected, additional surveys may 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.

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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 11 Oakmount Avenue, Chandler's Ford (central grid reference: SU 43950 19838).

1.2 Description of proposal

The current proposal is for the demolition of the existing flat roofed extensions followed by the construction of a two-storey extension on the western and southern elevations/ roof faces on the house.

1.3 Report context

Aaron Roberts (the applicant) has prepared a planning application for the proposed works at 11 Oakmount Avenue, Chandler's Ford. Phillips Ecology have been instructed by the Applicant to undertake an ecological assessment to support this application is to be submitted to Eastleigh Borough Council.

1.4 Survey area

The survey area comprised the existing house, and its immediate surrounds. The survey extended to all areas of the house for completeness this included the proposed zone of impact of the western and southern elevations and roof faces and the existing extensions.

1.5 Limitations

No limitations were encountered throughout the duration of the survey's completion.

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 Connor Hill of Phillips Ecology.

2.2 Survey area

The survey area comprised the house at 11 Oakmount Avenue, and its immediate surrounds which will be modified by the proposed extension works. The survey area extended to all areas of the building 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 particularly focused on the building's western and southern elevations/roof faces in addition to the roof void and existing flat roofed extensions.

2.3 Survey date

The survey was carried out during the daytime on the 2nd February 2024.

2.4 Survey description

The survey did not depart from the Bat Conservation Trust's (BCT) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th 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
- Camera
- Binoculars

2.6 Weather conditions

Weather during the survey can be described as: dry, 100% cloud cover, still and 9°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 building comprises a two-storey brick-built house which rises to a pitched and hipped design roof clad with concrete interlocking roof, ridge and hip tiles (Figure 1). The house is oriented north to south. The eaves extend beyond their wall plates and are enclosed with uPVC fascia and under boards with adjoining guttering. A total of three single-storey flat roofed extensions protrude from the house. One from the western elevation and two from the southern elevation (Figures 2 and 3). The windows and doors are set in uPVC frames which are tight fitting to the surrounding brickwork.

Internally, the house supports a single roof void. The roof is lined with heavy-duty bitumen lining and fibreglass insulation is present on the floor which is boarded (Figure 4). The space is used for storage and is frequently disturbed with light cobwebbing present along the ridge beam.



Figure 1 – northern elevation of the house



Figure 2 – southern elevation with two extensions



Figure 3 – western elevation with single extension



Figure 4 – interior roof void of the house

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

Table 2 – The house recorded features and activity

Suitability	Evidence
Exterior The following suitable access/egress and roosting features were recorded externally during the survey: - Gaps under the interlocking roof tiles (Figures 5 and 6). - Missing mortar under the ridge/hip tiles has created crevices.	No evidence of roosting activity was recorded externally during the survey.
Interior The following suitable access/egress and roosting features were recorded internally during the survey: - Some section of hanging felt lining. - A central ridge beam suitable for roosting bats.	No evidence of roosting activity was recorded internally during the survey.



Figure 5 – lifted roof tiles on western roof face



Figure 6 – lifted roof tiles

3.2 Site grounds

The immediate surrounds of the building comprise, hardstanding, managed lawn ornamental planting, scattered trees and shed outbuildings. Beyond this, Chandler's Ford comprises a mosaic of residential properties with associated gardens, woodland to the north which follows the present railway line, parkland, commercial development and services. In this context, the habitats within the footprint of the proposal are considered unexceptional for foraging and commuting bats, however, given their location within a landscape which is 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 nesting activity was recorded.

4. Discussion and Assessment of Impacts

4.1 Preliminary assessment of suitability and potential impacts

The house 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 (e.g. maternity roost). This assessment is based on the nature of the identified roost features on the building including the gaps under the roof and ridge tiles.

On the basis that the house supports moderate suitability for roosting bats, there is considered to be a reasonable likelihood that bats will be present and affected by the proposed extension 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.

In the absence of avoidance measures, if bats are present then works to the house are likely to result in the destruction of any roosts present at that location, possible damage / modification to any roosts present elsewhere, and possible killing, injury or disturbance of any bats present.

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.

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 longer periods than 18 months might be required to carry out further ecological surveys to ensure planning authorities have the necessary up-to-date information to make well informed, evidence-based decisions.

5.1.1 Bats

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 house. 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 surveys undertaken during the bat active season. The recommended minimum number of presence/absence surveys for a building with moderate roost suitability is two. If activity is higher than expected, additional surveys may be required.

Surveyors will be equipped with high- specification time expansion or full spectrum bat detectors with digital recording capability. They 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. There needs to be a minimum of three 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).

The proposed development will impact the adjacent hardstanding to the west of the house and will have minimal encroachment into the southern garden habitats and ornamental planting. The ornamental planting to be impacted contains a mixture of non-native species that is of little ecological value.

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*

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 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 on either the new extensions or the remaining house elevations.
- 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 house supports moderate suitability for roosting bats. Therefore, further survey effort is recommended to confirm the presence/absence of further roosts, characterise any bat roost/s, assess the extent bats may be affected by the extension works and devise an appropriate mitigation strategy to support the proposed extension works 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. If activity is higher than expected, additional surveys may be required. Opportunities for ecological enhancement have been suggested for the site.

7. References

- **Altringham J D, 2003**, British Bats, Collins New Naturalist
- **Bat Conservation Trust, 2023**, BCT Bat Survey Guidelines Fourth 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
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- **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 plans for house TBC



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