

**2021 Updated Bat Survey Report for  
9a Plymouth Road, Barnt Green,  
Birmingham, B45 8JE**



**Cotswold Wildlife Surveys**

**28<sup>th</sup> February 2018, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

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## SUMMARY

At 9a Plymouth Road in Barnt Green, Birmingham, planning permission is being sought for a replacement dwelling.

As this could impact on features commonly used by bats as roosting places, an initial daytime inspection was undertaken on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018 to assess the building for signs of bat occupation. The dwelling was re-surveyed on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

All the internal and external features, especially those associated with the roof and walls of the building were examined.

No signs of bat activity or occupation were found, and the suitability for roosting pipistrelles *Pipistrellus sp* or other bat species was considered to be negligible.

At the times of the surveys, 9a Plymouth Road was not identified as a bat roost or hibernation site, and as such no further surveys or mitigation measures are required.

\*

No birds' nests were observed in or around the building.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In late February 2018, Cotswold Wildlife Surveys was instructed by Jason Bennett, on behalf of his clients Mr & Mrs G Thomas, to undertake a bat survey of 9a Plymouth Road in Barnt Green, Birmingham. On 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018, a visit was made to the property to carry out a diurnal inspection of the building to check for signs of bat occupation.

The dwelling was re-inspected on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021 on behalf of Francis Homes.

The results of the surveys are contained in this report.

In England, Scotland and Wales, all bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended), through inclusion in Schedule 5. In England and Wales this Act has been amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW), which adds an extra offence, makes species offences arrestable, increases the time limits for some prosecutions, and increases penalties.

All bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994, (or Northern Ireland 1995) (the Habitats Regulations), which defines 'European protected species of animals'.

The above legislation can be summarised thus (Mitchell-Jones and McLeish, 2004):

- ❑ *Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) bats*
- ❑ *Deliberately disturb bats (whether in a roost or not)*
- ❑ *Recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts*
- ❑ *Damage or destroy roosts*
- ❑ *Possess or transport a bat or any part of a part of a bat, unless acquired legally*
- ❑ *Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats, or parts of bats*

The word 'roost' is not used in the legislation, but is used here for simplicity. The actual wording is 'any structure or place which any wild animal...uses for shelter or protection' (WCA), or 'breeding site or resting place' (Habitats Regulations).

As bats generally have both a winter and a summer roost, the legislation is clear that all roosts are protected whether bats are in residence at the time or not.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

In order to fully assess bat occupation of a particular site, the Bat Conservation Trust (2016) recommends that information gathered from a desk study of known bat records, and a daytime site walkover, is used to inform the type and extent of future bat survey work, potentially including nocturnal surveys.

The diurnal walkover provides an opportunity to check for signs of occupancy, such as droppings, scratch marks, feeding remains, carcasses, or even animals in residence, whilst nocturnal surveys (if required) allow numbers and species of bats to be confirmed. The latter are also used to determine the presence or absence of bats, where signs of bat activity are indeterminate or absent but suitability of roosting is considered to be medium to high.

Roosting places vary depending on the species. Pipistrelles usually inhabit narrow cracks or cavities around the outside of buildings, but they will roost in similar niches inside larger barns. Typical sites include soffit spaces, gaps behind fascia boards and end rafters, crevices around the ends of projecting purlins, under warped or lifted roof and ridge tiles, or in gaps in stone and brickwork where mortar has dropped out.

Larger species such as Brown Long-eared Bats *Plecotus auritus*, Myotis bats (Natterer's *Myotis nattereri* and Whiskered/Brandt's *M. mystacinus/M. brandtii*), and Lesser Horseshoes *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, like to roost in the roof voids of buildings, and can often be found hanging singly or in small groups from ridge boards or roof timbers, especially where these butt up against gable walls or chimney breasts. They especially favour older structures with timber frames. Here they squeeze into tight crevices making them difficult to observe.

Diurnal walkovers can be carried out at any time of the year, but nocturnal surveys should only be undertaken when bats are out of hibernation and in their summer roosts. The recommended period is from May to September inclusive, with May to August optimum and September sub-optimum. The season can be extended into October, although particularly cold weather will render this inadvisable. Indeed, the air temperature at the start of each survey must be at least 10°C or above.

Visits will be a minimum of two weeks apart, and the number of surveys is dependent on the evidence found or the suitability of the site to bats.

Where bats are found, or there is evidence of bat occupation or activity, i.e. that bat use is confirmed, the number and timing of visits will be decided by the ecologist, and will be appropriate for the type of roost. In general at least two nocturnal surveys will be carried out, both of which can be emergence surveys, or one emergence and one dawn re-entry.

Where there is no evidence of bat presence, and no suitability for roosting, no nocturnal surveys will be needed.

For a site with no evidence but low suitability, just one nocturnal emergence survey is required, this to be in the optimum period.

For medium suitability a minimum of two visits are needed, of which one must be in the optimum period, and one must be a dawn re-entry survey. With high suitability, three visits will be necessary, of which two must be in the optimum period. At least one of these must be a dawn re-entry survey, with the third visit either an emergence or a dawn re-entry.

For sites < 5 ha in size, and/or regularly shaped structures, at least two surveyors must be present, with more surveyors at larger sites and more complex buildings, e.g. those with multiple elevations and/or roof structures.

On 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021, thorough inspections of 9a Plymouth Road were made by Andy Warren (Natural England bat licence No. 2015-16489-CLS-CLS), including the exterior and interior walls, roof covering, roof void, roof and ceiling timbers, eaves, gables, window casements and door frames.

10x42 Nikon binoculars and a Fenix TK75 torch were used for the inaccessible/unreachable areas. On this occasion an endoscope was not used, as there were no crevices and cavities that could not be inspected with a torch or by use of binoculars from a ladder.

The results of the inspections are detailed in Section 3.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Location

Barnt Green lies approximately 5.0 km northeast of Bromsgrove in Birmingham. Plymouth Road runs off Twatling Road, the latter running in a northwesterly direction out of the village. No. 9a is located towards the eastern end of Plymouth Road, on the south side, at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SO 99486 73842 (Appendix 1).

#### 3.2 Site Description

The site comprised a fairly large, detached, two storey house with a pitched pantile roof and an integral garage (Fig. 1). To the rear there was a conservatory and a veranda, with large external chimney (Fig. 2).



**Figs. 1 & 2 9a Plymouth Road in 2018 – front elevation (L) & rear elevation (R)**

The house was set in a fairly large garden, with trees and shrubs along the boundaries. The rear garden contained a timber summerhouse (Fig. 3), and the front garden had a dual entrance driveway around a central lawned area (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 3 Rear garden**



**Fig. 4 Front garden**

Neighbouring gardens which surrounded the house were well-vegetated, with a wide variety of mature and semi-mature conifers and broadleaved trees. About 400 m to the east there was an extensive area of woodland which formed part of Lickey Hills. The layout of the site is shown in the aerial photograph in Appendix 2.

### 3.3 Building Survey

The initial daytime inspection was carried out on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018, commencing at 10:00. The weather conditions during the time of the survey were recorded and are presented in Table 1 below.

Parameter	Value
Temperature (°C)	-2.5
Cloud cover (%)	60
Precipitation	None – but light snow cover
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	0

**Table 1 Weather conditions during the 1<sup>st</sup> diurnal survey**

The ridge was fully intact and sealed, with no gaps or crevices, whilst all the roof tiles were tightly overlapping, with none raised, broken, dislodged or missing (Figs. 5-7).

The rear roof slope was partially covered with solar panels (Fig. 8).

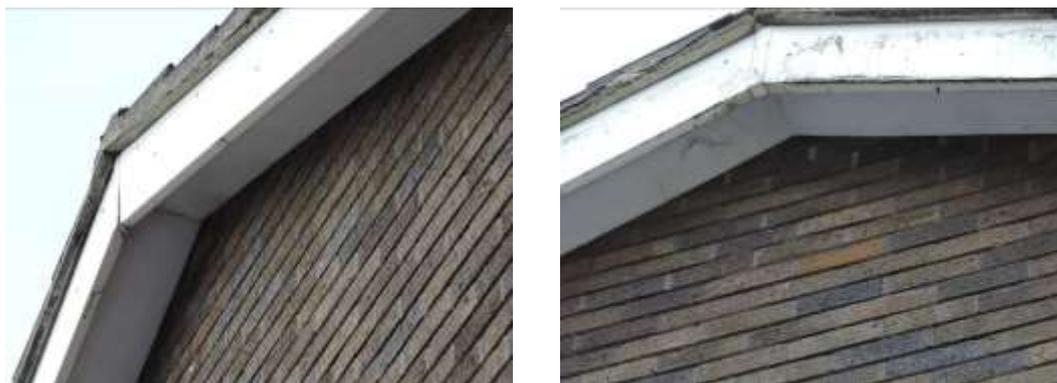


**Figs. 5 & 6 Ridges and tiles on north roof slope**



**Figs. 7 & 8 Ridge, tiles and solar panels on south roof slope**

The gables were finished with roof end soffits, these tightly joined and sealed against the gable brickwork (Figs. 9 and 10).



**Figs. 9 & 10 Sealed gable soffits**

The eaves were also finished with boxed soffits, these tightly fitting all round (Figs. 11 and 12). In the soffits there were ventilation holes, but all were grilled over.



**Figs. 11 & 12 Sealed boxed eaves soffits**

The lead flashing sealing the chimney breast and conservatory to the walls was tightly moulded, with just a very small hole at the end of the conservatory flashing – this was not suitable for bat roosting (Figs. 13 and 14).



**Figs. 13 & 14 Tightly moulded lead flashing**

On the ground floor to the rear of the garage and under the veranda there was an open storage area (Fig. 15). This was generally sealed, except for one small gap which was choked with windblown debris (Fig. 16 – arrowed).



**Figs. 15 & 16 Ground floor storage area**

The brick walls were sound throughout, whilst all the window casements and door frames were tightly fitting with no gaps or crevices.

No signs of bat activity were found around the outside of the house.

Internally the building had a single roof void, half of which was 1.8 m high and half 1.25 m high (Figs 17 and 18).



**Figs. 17 & 18 Roof void**

The whole of the roof was lined with a tarred membrane felt in good condition with no holes or tears (Fig. 19). Only one small area next to a vent was heavily cobwebbed (Fig. 20), with the rest only sparsely cobwebbed.



**Figs. 19 & 20 Tarred felt lined roof with heavy cobwebbing at vent**

There was no external light penetration, and the void was considered inaccessible to bats. Certainly no evidence of bat occupation was discovered inside the house.

The timber summerhouse was considered unsuitable for bat roosting, as it contained no suitable external crevices or cavities, and no internal roof void.

### 3.4 2020 re-inspection

The daytime re-inspection was carried out on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020, commencing at 10:00. The weather conditions during the time of the survey were recorded and are presented in Table 2 below.

Parameter	Value
Temperature (°C)	6.0
Cloud cover (%)	50
Precipitation	None
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	0

**Table 2 Weather conditions during the re-inspection**

There had been little change in the appearance of the house since 2018, and the ridge was still fully intact and sealed, with no gaps or crevices, whilst all the roof tiles were tightly overlapping, with none raised, broken, dislodged or missing (Figs. 21 and 22).



**Figs. 21 & 22 House in January 2020**

Since the 2020 survey, there had been little change in the condition of the house, the ridge was still fully intact and sealed, with no gaps or crevices, whilst all the roof tiles were tightly overlapping, with none raised, broken, dislodged or missing (Figs. 22 and 23).



**Figs. 23 & 24 House in August 2021**

The gable and eaves soffits were all tight, as were the window casements and door frames.

No signs of bat activity were found around the outside of the house.

Internally the roof void was still inaccessible to bats, with thick cobwebbing around the flue pipe and no light penetration (Figs. 25 and 26).

Again no evidence of bat occupation was discovered inside the building.

In the garden the lawns had been cleared, but the boundary trees and shrubs were still present (Fig. 27).



**Figs. 25 & 26 Roof void in January 2020**



**Fig. 27 Front garden in January 2020**

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bats tend to be seasonal visitors to properties, and are not usually in occupation all year round. The females normally form maternity colonies during May or June and then leave for adjacent trees and/or woodland during July or August once the young bats are able to fly and become independent. Here they will spend the winter months in hibernation before returning to the house or barn the following spring.

Male bats generally live alone and have a number of favoured roosts. During the summer they visit each of these for a few days at a time, before moving to their chosen hibernation site in mid-late October.

Different species have different habits, but this seasonal movement is common to all.

Bats choose their roosts carefully. During the summer they look for sites which are warmed by the sun, and as a result are most often found on the south and western side of buildings.

Pipistrelles, our smallest and commonest bats, prefer to roost in very confined spaces around the outside of buildings, typical places being behind hanging tiles, weather boarding, soffit, barge and eave boarding, between roof felt and roof tiles or in cavity walls.

As such they can be very difficult to find, so suitability for roosting was also assessed.

This was negligible, as there were no suitable external crevices or cavities.

Another bat frequently encountered in buildings is the Brown Long-eared. This is also a common species, but unlike pipistrelles, they prefer the dry, warm space of the loft or roof void, and can often be found hanging from roof timbers, especially rafters and the ridge board next to chimney breasts.

No signs of Brown Long-eared Bat activity were found, nor indeed signs of other species which are commonly found in roof spaces, and the interior of the building was considered inaccessible to bats.

A search of the bat data was not made, but personal observations of bats in the area have included the discovery of a roosting Brown Long-eared Bat at No. 3 Plymouth Road in 2009-2011. This lies 100 m to the southeast.

Despite this record, at the times of the surveys, No. 9a Plymouth Road was not identified as a bat roost or hibernation site, and as such no further surveys or mitigation measures are required.

\*

No birds' nests were observed in or around the house.

## 5. REFERENCES

**Collins, J. (ed.), 2016.** *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines.* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn). Bat Conservation Trust, London.

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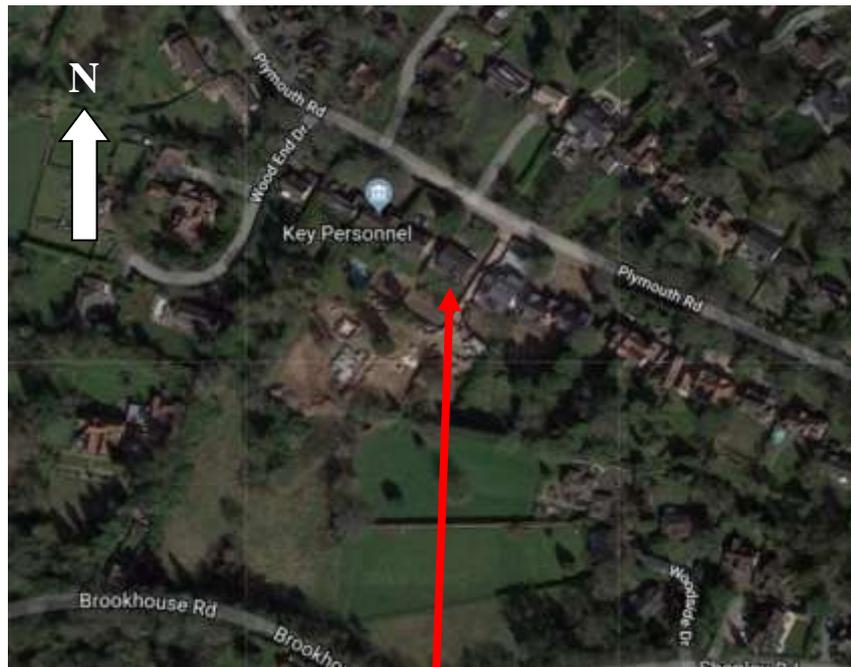
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## APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Location plan

Appendix 2: Site layout

### Appendix 1: Location plan



9a Plymouth Road

### Appendix 2: Site layout



No. 9a

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