



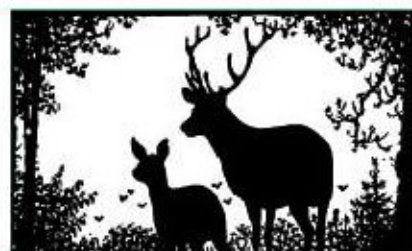
Bat Roosting & Impact Assessment Report

**Refurbishment Proposals for
Cottages 1 & 2
Knights Hill Farm
Westmill
Buntingford**

June 2022

On behalf of:

[REDACTED]
Knights Hill Farm
Westmill
Buntingford
SG9 9LX



ELMAW Consulting
*Consultant Ecologists &
Wildlife Managers*

Author

Keith Seaman BSc, DipHE, CertHE, CBiol, MRSB, MCIEEM
Chartered Biologist & Principal Consultant
Natural England Bat Survey & Research Class Licence Level 2
Registered to use Bat Mitigation Class Licence CL21

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Declaration

*This report has been produced following the guidelines published by
The Bat Conservation Trust*

Quality Assurance

Author	Keith Seaman
Checked by	Emma Seaman
Approved by	Emma Seaman

Report produced by:



ELMAW Consulting
*Consultant Ecologists &
Wildlife Managers*



Chartered
Biologists



Greys Farm, Therfield Road, Royston, Herts SG8 9NW
Phone: 01763 245900 Fax: 01763 245982
E mail: info@elmaw.co.uk
Website: www.elmaw.co.uk

Special Note

Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure this report accurately identifies potential ecological constraints to development or the likely presence or absence of species and the spatial and temporal use of the site by such species, it must only be viewed as a snap shot in time and reflects the ecological status of the site at the time of survey.

No liability can be assumed for ecological changes that may or may not occur on the surveyed site after the production of this report. The author of this report must be consulted as to the current applicability of the report if there are any seasonal delays in the use of this report.

This report can only be used for the purposes for which it was instructed and agreed at the time of commission.

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Executive Summary

It is proposed to redevelop two cottages (which form one building) at Knights Hill Farm, Westmill, near Buntingford in Hertfordshire. It is proposed to construct two extensions; one on the western gable end and the other on the eastern gable end, to re-roof the building and to carry out improvements such as insulation.

A Preliminary Bat Roosting Assessment (PBRA) of the cottages has found evidence of bat roosting within the loft space (roof void), with the presence of many fresh and old bat droppings on the floor of the loft space, as well as on the chimney breast. At that time however, whilst the species of bat is suspected to be brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), the species, roost type and conservation status was not established. It was however considered that the redevelopment and refurbishment proposal have the potential to have a direct impact on roosting bats which, under the Habitats Regulations would be unlawful, even with planning consent. Consequently, evening activity surveys have been carried out in May and June of 2022 and have subsequently established the presence of a large brown long-eared maternity roost within the cottages' roof void.

Without mitigation the redevelopment proposals, which include the roof replacement, are considered highly likely to result in the loss of the bat roost, as are a number of other refurbishment proposals. It is also considered possible that the post-redevelopment residential occupancy of the cottages would also adversely affect the roost that may lead to its abandonment though the illumination of roost entry and exit points and changes in the thermal regime of the roof void. Therefore, to facilitate the redevelopment and refurbishment proposals, it is proposed to implement a number of mitigation measures during the building works and residential occupancy to ensure bats are not harmed in the building works and the roost can continue to function into the future.

Even with mitigation measures, it is expected that roosting bats may be disturbed and the roof void may be modified in some way and therefore, to make these effects of the redevelopment proposals on bats and their places of shelter lawful, a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence will be obtained from Natural England. To obtain a licence, three European Tests

have to be met and, whilst the destruction of the roost would not meet these tests and therefore is unlikely to receive a EPSM licence, the disturbance to bats and modification of the roost would meet these tests and an EPSM licence would likely be forthcoming.

Implemented mitigation measures, as discussed below, will endeavour to ensure bats are not harmed in the proposed redevelopment works and the maternity roost is not lost and the favourable conservation status of the local bat population can be maintained.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Building Proposals & Background

1.1.1 A planning application for the extension and refurbishment of two cottages at Knights Hill Farm has been submitted to East Herts Council. Proposals are for the *'erection of two-storey side extensions, single rear storey extensions to link dwellings to the existing detached stores, replacement pitched roofs and two detached garages. Alterations to fenestration and openings.'*

1.1.2 The aerial photo below indicates the location of the two cottages and show them in their geographical context, within their landscape surroundings.



Plate 1 – Aerial photo showing indicative location of the two cottages

1.1.3 The two cottages (known as numbers 1 and 2, Knights Hill Cottages) are located to the south-west of the main Knights Hill Farm complex, to the side of an unadopted road that leads to the Knights Hill Farm complex. The cottages are a pair of currently unoccupied two-bedroomed semi-detached dwellings. The cottages are not within the curtilage of the Grade II listed Farmhouse at Knights Hill Farm.

1.1.4 The wider landscape around the two cottages comprises old traditional parkland containing permanent pasture and scattered veteran and old parkland trees. Small spinneys and copses are scattered in the surrounding parkland. There is a large duck pond in the centre of the Knights Hill farmyard,

to the north-east of the cottages. Keeper's Cottage lies approximately 80m to the south of the cottages.

- 1.1.5 Knights Hill Farm is a former livestock farm which is now redundant and lies derelict. There are currently proposals for the redevelopment of most of the redundant farm buildings within Knights Hill Farm and all of these buildings have been and continue to be the subject of extensive bat surveys. The surveys have established the presence or roosting bats within a number of these buildings.
- 1.1.6 In November 2021, a Preliminary Bat Roosting Assessment (PBRA) was carried out by Keith Seaman, a Natural England licensed bat surveyor with ELMAW Consulting and the results were subsequently reported in the *Preliminary Bat Roosting Assessment* - December 2021. The PBRA found limited external potential bat roosting features on the building but did discover many old and fresh bat droppings within the roof void, strongly indicating a bat roost, possibly of brown long-eared bats. It was assumed that the proposed building works had a high potential to disturb roosting bats and to damage their roosting locations and, as such, recommendations were made to carry out further bat surveys of the cottages to establish the status of roosting bats within the building and to formulate a mitigation strategy to enable the proposed refurbishment of the cottages whilst maintaining the favourable conservation status of the local roosting bat population.
- 1.1.7 Consequently, three evening bat emergence surveys have been completed in May and June of 2022. The results of these surveys are described and discussed below.
- 1.1.8 Cognisance should be paid to the December 2021 *Preliminary Bat Roosting Assessment* report.

2.0 Methodology & Technical Approach

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 This report relies upon the biological data search results of known bat records in the locality carried out of the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC) on the 4th of November 2021 and discussed in the December 2021 PBRA report.

2.2 Surveyor Information

- 2.2.1 The evening emergence surveys carried out in May and June 2022 were designed by Mr Keith Seaman, Natural England Bat Survey & Research surveyor Level 2 licence holder. Emergence surveys were carried out by Natural England licensed bat surveyors; Keith and Emma Seaman, Reg Chapman and Peter Oakenfull (licence registration numbers are available on request).

2.3 Limitations

- 2.3.1 With regard to establishing the presence of roosting bats, it must be acknowledged that surveys carried out in accordance with industry standards endeavour to establish the presence of bat roosts appropriate to the time of year when the surveys have been carried out. Surveys completed within the optimum period, as required by Natural England, endeavour to establish the presence of non-breeding summer roosts or important summer maternity roosts. Surveys carried out at this time of the year cannot, with any certainty, establish the presence of spring/autumn transitory or winter roosts or seasonally occupied opportunist roosts by single or low numbers of bats.
- 2.3.2 Access into the roof void was restricted by the narrow width of the ceiling joists and, as such, the roof void could not be properly inspected and only assumptions have been made, based on limited observations of the roof void.

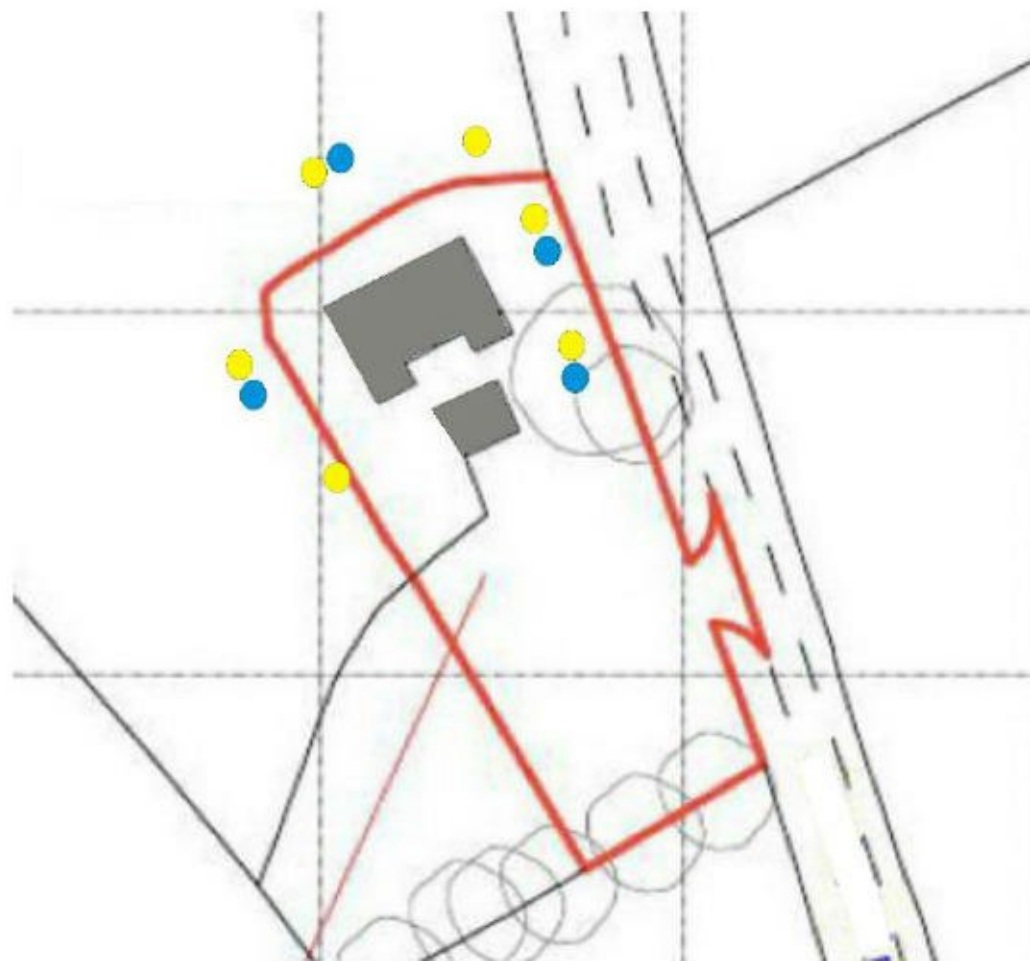
2.4 Assessment & Mitigation

- 2.4.1 The assessment and valuation of the survey findings and subsequent mitigation and compensatory strategy is based on advice and guidance published by The Bat Conservation Trust and Natural England in *Bat Surveys for Professional*

Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition 2016 (Ref. 1), Bat Workers' Manual 2004 (Ref. 4) and Bat Mitigation Guidelines 2004 (Ref. 3).

2.5 Emergence Survey Methodology

2.5.1 Following the published guidelines from the document mentioned above, three evening emergence surveys were carried out on the 30th of May 2022, the 22nd of June 2022 and the 28th June 2022. Four licensed bat surveyors were positioned on all four corners of the building (as illustrated below), each with an infrared video camera observing and filming and recording from 15 minutes before sunset and finishing one and half hours after sunset.



Key

- Location of surveyor
- Location of Infra-red video camera

2.6 Survey Equipment Employed

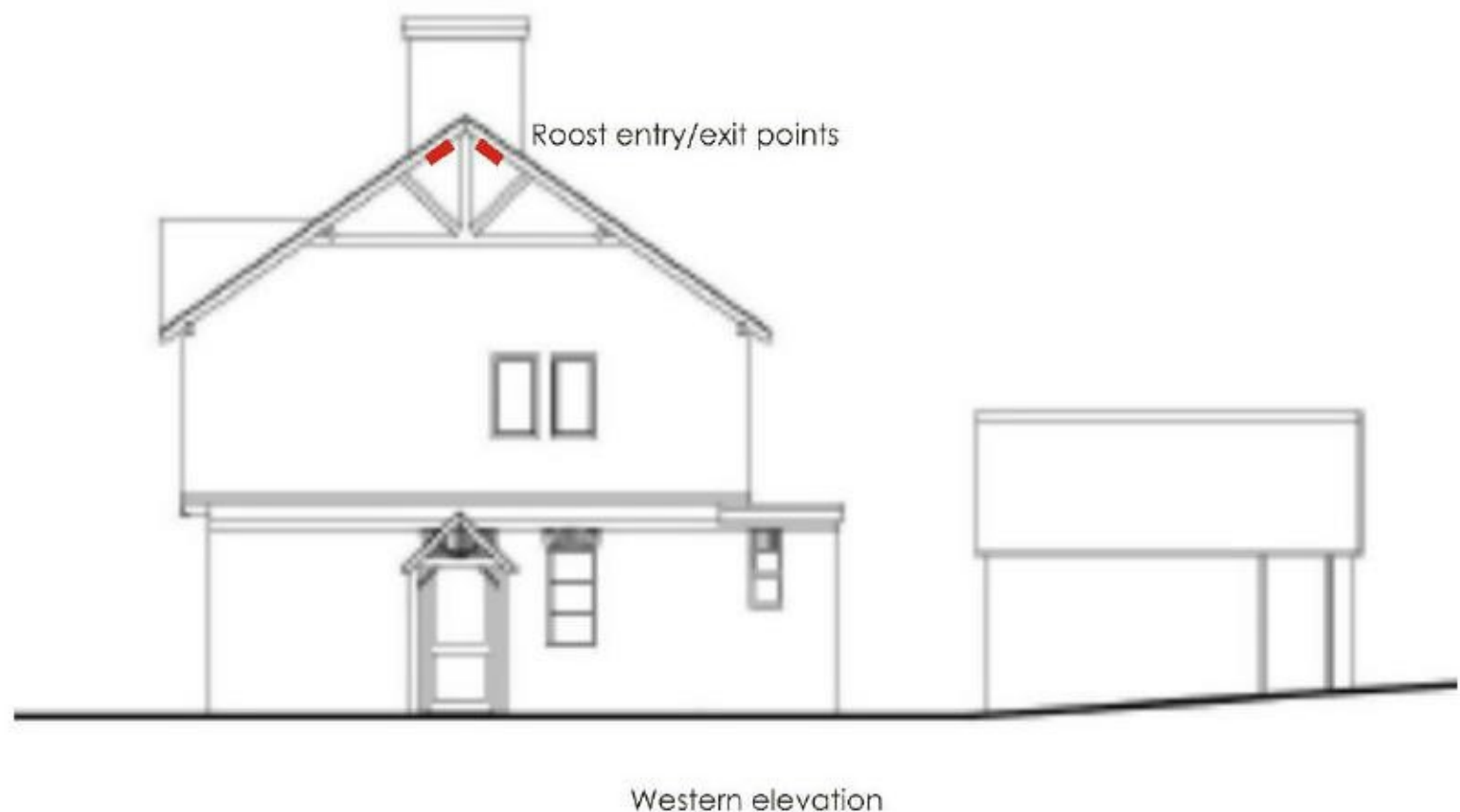
- 4 No. Canon XA40, 30, 25 & 10 Infrared Video Cameras
- 4 No. 9" Viltrox Field Monitors
- 10 No. Blacksun 2 B502 50mm IR illuminators
- 6 No. Wildlife Engineering IRLamp6 infrared lamps
- 4 No. Full Spectrum Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro ultrasonic bat detectors
- Zero Crossing AnaBat SD2 with directional microphone
- Tripod with 4.2m aerial extension
- AnaLook analysis software

3.0 Results

3.1 Results of the Evening Emergence Surveys

31st May 2022

- 3.1.1 This survey was commenced fifteen minutes before sunset, which was logged at 21:08. The weather was mild and still (BS=0), with very light cloud. The temperature at the start of the survey was 11°C and at the end was 10°C. Light conditions were considered to be good and insects were flying.
- 3.1.2 At 21:28 (20 minutes after sunset), a single common pipistrelle was observed arriving on site from the south and fed over the fields to the west of the cottages.
- 3.1.3 Between 21:43 (35 minutes after sunset) and 21:51 (43 minutes after sunset), four brown long-eared bats were observed emerging from the roof void at the apex of the western gable end of the cottages and flew towards the trees to the south-east of the cottages (as shown on the drawings below):



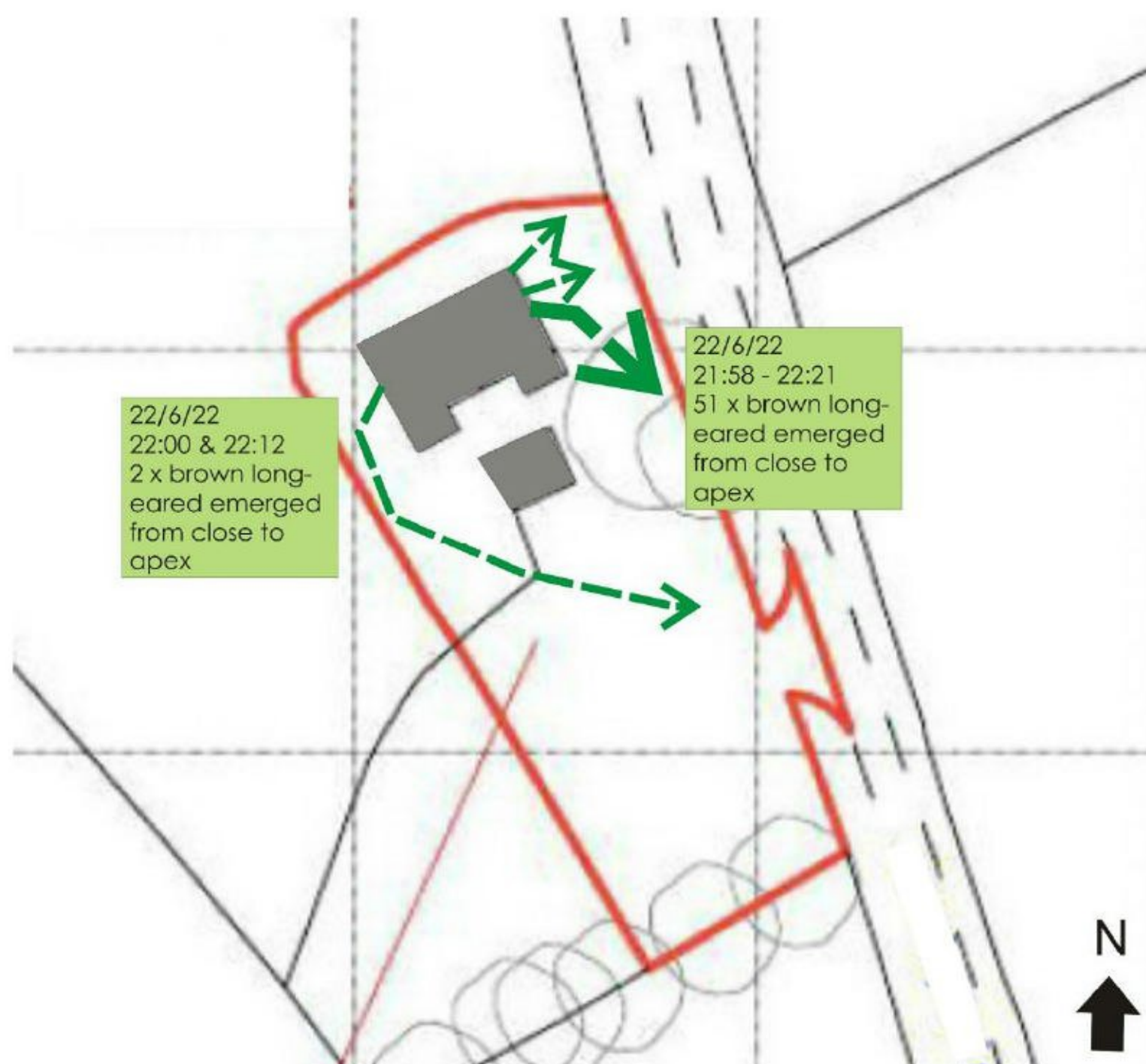
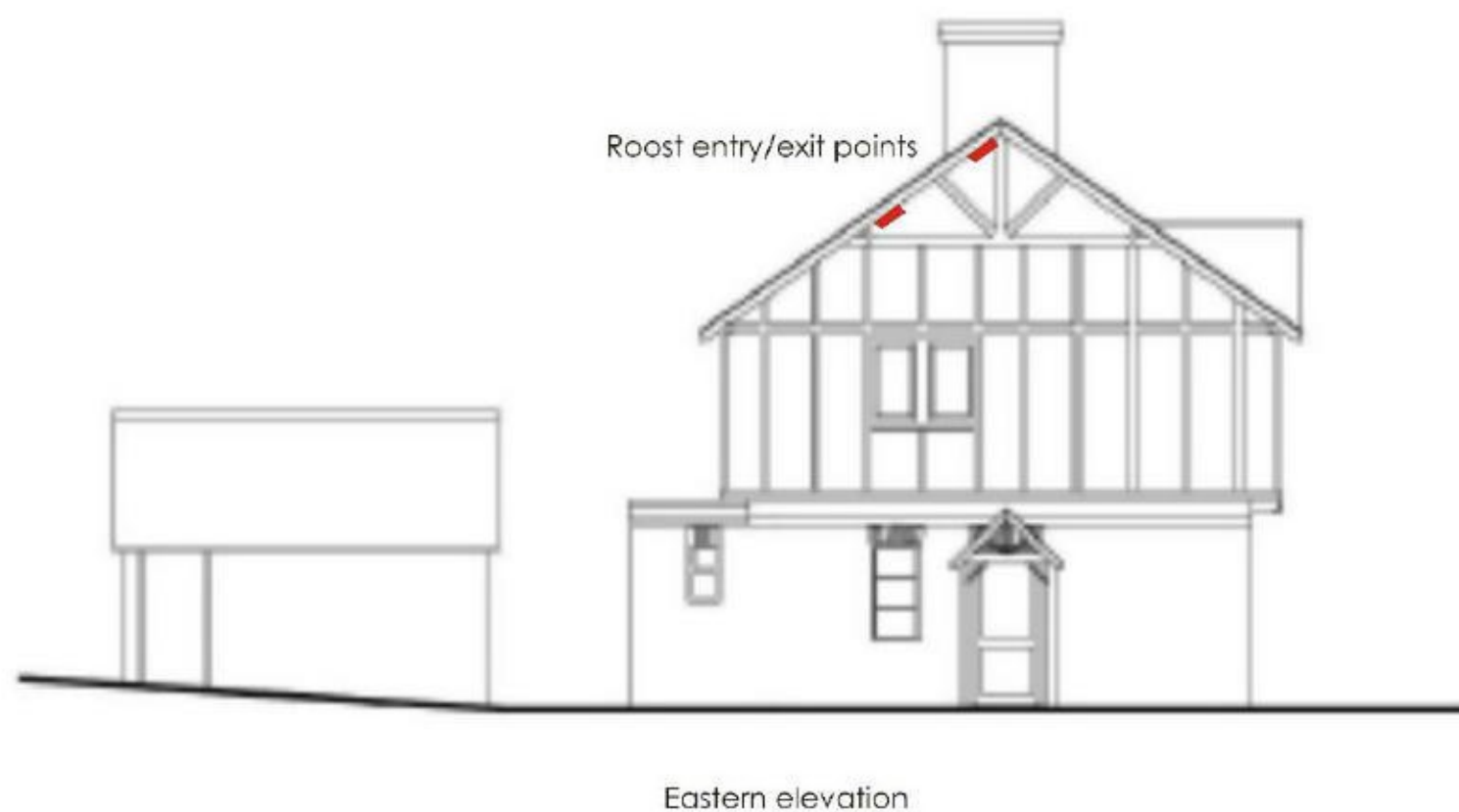


- 3.1.4 During this survey, some limited feeding and foraging activity from a single or very low number of common pipistrelles was observed and recorded around the trees and fields surrounding the cottages.

22nd June 2022

- 3.1.5 This survey was commenced fifteen minutes before sunset, which was logged at 21:24. The weather was very warm, with a light breeze (BS=1) and very light cloud. The temperature at the start of the survey was 19°C and at the end was 16°C. Light conditions were considered to be excellent and insects were flying.
- 3.1.6 At 21:47 (23 minutes after sunset), a single common pipistrelle was observed arriving on site from the west and flying straight past the northern side of the site, apparently commuting.
- 3.1.7 Between 21:58 (34 minutes after sunset) and 22:21 (57 minutes after sunset), 51 brown long-eared bats were observed emerging from the roof void at the apex

of the eastern gable end of the cottages. The majority flew towards the trees to the south-east of the cottages, with some flying north-east and some east across the unmade road (as shown on the drawings below).



- 3.1.8 In addition, at 22:00 (36 minutes after sunset), a single brown long-eared bat was observed emerging from close to the apex of the western gable end of the cottages and this was followed by a second brown long-eared bat, emerging at 22:12 (48 minutes after sunset).

28th June 2022

- 3.1.9 This survey was commenced fifteen minutes before sunset, which was logged at 21:24. The weather was mild, with light cloud and a very light breeze (BS=1). The temperature at the start of the survey was 15°C and at the end was 14°C. Light conditions were considered to be good and insects were flying.
- 3.1.10 On this survey occasion, a single or very low number of common pipistrelle bats arrived on site from the south at 21:34 and fed and foraged around the cottages and its surrounding fields intermittently, until the end of the survey.
- 3.1.11 Between 21:54 (30 minutes after sunset) and 22:20 (56 minutes after sunset), 50 brown long-eared bats were observed emerging from the roof void at the apex of the eastern gable end of the cottages. The majority flew towards the trees to the south-east of the cottages, with some flying north-east and some east across the unmade road, as before.

4.0 Results Evaluation

- 4.1.1 Brown long-eared bats have been observed and filmed emerging from the roof void at both the western and eastern gable end apexes. A maximum of four bats were recorded emerging on the 31st May 2022, from the western gable end; 51 bats from the eastern gable end on the 22nd June 2022 and 50 bats from the eastern gable end on the 28th June 2022. Both gable end apex emergence points lead to and from the roof void and, when considered together with the bat droppings on the floor of the roof void, it has been concluded that the roost is within the roof void and may extend into the roof tiles, which would be very typical of brown long-eared bats.
- 4.1.2 It is considered likely that the four bats emerging from the western gable end in May 2022 were either males, non-breeding females or the start of the formation of a maternity roost. The subsequent 51 brown long-eared bats observed leaving the roost at the eastern gable end in June would indicate the presence of a brown long-eared bat maternity roost. With brown long-eared maternity roosts typically averaging 10 - 20 (Ref. 5), 51 bats would be considered a large roost.
- 4.1.3 Maternity roosts of brown long-eared bats would typically be occupied from May through to August/September, being vacated by both the adult females and independent pups by September. It is possible that the males may remain within the roost until October. As to the roof void being used for hibernation, brown long-eared bats rarely use buildings for hibernation and when they do, they prefer the cellars (Ref 5). Typically, brown long-eared bats hibernate in natural caves, as well as man-made structures such as mines, icehouses and kilns. As such, the building is not considered likely to provide hibernation opportunities for the local brown long-eared bat population.
- 4.1.4 Natural England, in their guidelines for proportionate mitigation (Ref 3), consider a maternity site of common species (such as brown long-eared bats) to be of moderate conservation significance. However brown long-eared bats, whilst considered to be one of our most common bats widespread and frequent in Hertfordshire, a nursery roost comprising 51 adults is well above the average and may suggest that this roost is locally very important to the local population.

5.0 Impact Assessment

5.1 *Assessment of Potential Impacts & Redevelopment Constraints*

- 5.1.1 There are currently a number of refurbishment and redevelopment proposals that are predicted to have a direct impact on the brown long-eared bat roost within the roof void;
- Building of two extensions on the western and eastern gable ends of the cottages, just below the existing roof ridge line
 - The re-roofing the existing roof
 - Illumination of the roost entry and exit points as the result of residential occupancy
 - Possible changes to the internal temperature of the roof void as the result of the proposed insulation of the walls and roof area to improve the thermal performance of the cottages
- 5.1.2 The building of the two extensions and the re-roofing, which may require the use of scaffolding would, if the roost is occupied at the time, likely cause disturbance to the bats mainly due to construction activities and the possible blocking of roost entry and exit points.
- 5.1.3 Re-roofing will involve the complete removal of the slate-tiled roof, including the ridge tiles and may also include the removal of the bitumastic felt liner. Should this operation be carried out while the bats are occupying the roost then, there is a very high risk that bats will be disturbed, injured or killed and the removal of the roof will result in the loss of the roost, albeit temporarily. In addition, replacement of the bitumastic felt liner with a breathable membrane would result in the possible entanglement of roosting bats.
- 5.1.4 Being woodland bats, brown long-eared are known as 'dark bats'; they prefer low lux light levels. Any illumination of the western and eastern roost exits and entry points as the result of external lighting/security lighting would, in all likelihood, result in the abandonment of the roost. The temperature of maternity roosts of this species ranges typically between 10°C and 26°C, which is considered cooler than other maternity roosts of many other species. Improvements to the thermal performance of the cottages could alter the

internal temperature of the roof void, thus making it unsuitable as a nursery and this may also result in changes to its use as a maternity roost.

5.1.5 Overall, the proposed refurbishment works and extensions, as well as the post-works residential occupancy of the cottages will have a direct and indirect impact on the brown long-eared bat maternity roost - it may result in the loss of the roost and it may result in the disturbance and harm to roosting bats.

5.1.6 Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, the deliberate disturbance or harming of roosting bats and/or the damage or destruction of a bat's place of shelter (their roost) would be unlawful, even with planning permission in place. However, for the purposes of activities which can be justified under the imperative reasons of overriding public interest test (IROPI), such as residential planning permission, a derogation of the Act is available through the granting of a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence that allows the disturbance to bats and the damage to or destruction of bat roosts. But only if three tests can be met which include the IROPI (Test 1), and also requires that there is no satisfactory alternative (Test 2) and that the favourable conservation status of the bat population can be maintained (Test 3).

- Test 1 - Planning permission demonstrates that Test 1 can be met.
- Test 2 - The second test that there is 'no satisfactory alternative' is not considered met. There is an option of retaining the roost in-situ and the proposed works could be carried out with suitable mitigation measures put in place which would suggest that there is a 'satisfactory alternative'.
- Test 3 - To maintain the favourable conservation status of the local bat population, any lost roosts must be compensated for which must be both appropriate and proportionate. As such, Natural England require a like-for-like replacement of any lost maternity roosts such as this and, as such, if it is considered likely that the roost would be lost through the refurbishment proposals, then a replacement roost of similar dimensions as the roof void and environmental conditions will need to be provided to meet this test. Ordinarily, this would require the provision of a roof space within a separate, stand-alone building such as a cart lodge,

barn or stable-type building, converted into a compensatory bat barn/loft. If this measure can be provided then Test 3 could be met.

- 5.1.7 With regard to meeting all three tests, it is considered that the 2nd test could not be met and, as such, an EPSM licence to destroy the bat roost would not be forthcoming to facilitate the refurbishment works and therefore the bat roost will have to be retained in-situ and could not be destroyed. However, an EPSM licence would be available to disturb bats, to modify the roost, and to permit the temporary loss of the roost whilst the roof is being re-roofed, if suitable mitigation measures are adopted and covered under the EPSM licence. The following mitigation measures are proposed that would permit the refurbishment works affecting the bat roost and permit the granting of an EPSM licence.
- 5.1.8 It is expected that a planning condition will be attached to planning permission for the proposed redevelopment works that obligates the applicant to implement the proposed mitigation measures contained in this report and any conditions and restrictions attached to the EPSM licence.

6.0 Proposed Mitigation Measures

6.1 Timing

- To avoid disturbing the nursery roost whilst it is occupied by bats, no works to the roof void, including the re-roofing of the cottage would be undertaken between the beginning of May and the end of September.
- Works to the roof will only be commenced once the roof void has been inspected by the named licensed Ecologist and it has been confirmed that the nursery roost has seasonally vacated the roof void.
- The construction of the two extensions can proceed during the maternity season, but only with care and with the adoption of disturbance and noise reduction methods below the roof entry and exit points.
- With the exception of the cottage roof void, internal refurbishment works will be carried out with no timing restrictions, avoiding any entry into the main roof void during the maternity season without the prior approval and accompaniment of the named licensed Ecologist.
- Post-redevelopment residential occupancy of the cottages will avoid access into the main roof void/roost between the months of May and late September unless accompanied by a Natural England licensed roost surveyor.

6.2 Materials

- Breathable Roofing Materials (BRMs) are not permitted to be used inside the main roof and would not be licensed by Natural England. Only F1 Bitumastic felt liner is permitted inside a bat roost and ideally BRMs would be avoided in the roofs of the two proposed extensions.

6.3 Environmental Considerations

- Steps would be taken to avoid changing the temperature inside the main roof void by avoiding the insulation of the roof. The roof void floor

can be insulated to retain and improve the thermal performance of the cottages below the roof void and first floor ceiling.

- The existing four roof void roost exit and entry points on the western and eastern gable ends will be retained. The two new extension roofs sit below the exit and entry points and therefore they will still function.
- There will be no light spillage from external illumination; either from construction operations or post-redevelopment residential occupancy such as flood or security lighting over the western and eastern gable ends, either extension roofs and particularly over the gable end of the new eastern gable end extension. This will permit the bats to exit the roost and fly towards the existing oak and ash trees and along the lane in the dark.
- To provide alternative roost entry and exit options due to the possible changes in emergence and re-entry behavior of the bats resulting from the construction of the two extensions, two new entry and exit points will be installed into the ridge of the main roof. Two ridge tiles will be modified to allow the bats alternative entry and exit points into the ridge and small gaps will be provided in the felt liner at the apex of the roof to allow the bats entry into the roof void below.

6.3.1 These mitigation measures will form the basis of the mitigation proposals for the EPSM licence application; they will require fine tuning however, following discussions with the builders. It is considered that these mitigation measures will be required to meet the 3rd Test in maintaining the favourable conservation status of the local bat population by conserving the brown long-eared bat maternity roost, whilst facilitating Knights Hill Farm Cottages' refurbishment.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1.1 Building inspections, as well as limited roof void inspections and evening emergence surveys of the two cottages have established the presence of a brown long-eared bat maternity roost occupying the roof void and, in all likelihood, within the roof ridge. A total of 53 brown long-eared bats were recorded exiting the roost which would a), indicate a maternity roost and b), suggest an above average size roost of local importance. Bat entry and exit to and from inside the roost was found to be via four gaps in both the western and eastern gable end roof apex eaves; although at the time of the June 2022 survey, 51 of the 53 emerging bats were exiting from the eastern gable end of the roost.
- 7.1.2 The refurbishment proposals for the cottages include a number of proposals, that would directly affect the roof and the roof void and therefore structurally affect the roost and the roosting bats. Specifically, these proposals include re-roofing, the thermal performance improvement of the cottages and the construction of two extensions on the western and eastern gable ends. Post redevelopment residential occupancy also has the potential to create disturbance through noise, access into the roof void when occupied by bats and light spillage over the entry and exit points. It is considered that without appropriate mitigation and licensing, these building and post redevelopment occupancy activities would result in the loss (destruction) of the roost.
- 7.1.3 Whilst the Habitats Regulations have a provision to licence disturbing and roost damaging activities such as those proposed, Natural England's provision of a licence to permit such activities is dependent on the meeting of three European tests. It is considered however, that the loss and destruction of this roost would not meet the tests and, as such, a licence would not be issued by Natural England to destroy the bat roost and disturb bats.
- 7.1.4 Consideration is then given to retaining the roost in-situ and it is felt that with appropriate licensed mitigation measures, the refurbishment and extension works, as proposed, could go ahead whilst protecting the bat roost. As the maternity roost is only occupied in the spring and summer months, and unlikely to be used in the winter, works that directly affect the cottage's roof would be restricted to outside this occupied time period. Careful design and installation

of the building's insulation proposals would ensure, as far as practicable, the temperature regime does not change inside the building's roof void, the avoidance of light spillage over the roost entry and exit points and the adoption of disturbance avoidance measures during construction would meet the European Tests and permit the proposed building works whilst maintaining the favourable conservation status of the local bat roost and population.

8.0 References

- Ref. 1 Bat Conservation Trust. (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition*, Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- Ref. 2 Altringham, J.D. (2003). *British Bats*. HarperCollins Publishers. London.
- Ref. 3 English Nature. (2004), *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*, English Nature, Peterborough.
- Ref. 4 Joint Nature Conservation Committee. (2004), *Bat Workers' Manual*, JNCC, Peterborough.
- Ref. 5 Swift, S. M. (1998). *Long-eared bats*. Poyser Natural History. London.

9.0 Appendix 1

9.1 *Legislation Relating to Bats*

9.1.1 All bats and their roosts in the UK are protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and under the Environment Act 2021.

9.1.2 In England the legislation makes it illegal to;

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat,
- Deliberately disturb a bat which is likely to impair their ability to survive, breed or reproduce, rear or nurture their young, hibernate, migrate or affect significantly their local distribution or abundance
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat
- Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead bat or any part of a bat

9.1.3 Bats' roosts (including resting places) are protected whether or not bats are present at the time. The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) additionally makes it an offence to;

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat at a roost
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost

9.1.4 Finally, under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, a duty is placed on all public bodies to promote and enhance biodiversity in all its functions. There is a general biodiversity duty in the NERC Act (Section 40) which requires every public body in the exercising of its functions to 'have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. Section 41 draws up lists of species of principal importance to which special attention must be given and a number of bats are included in this list.