AEWC Ltd

Animal Ecology & Wildlife Consultants

Bat Assessment Report

Highclere

Easebourne Lane
Easebourne
Midhurst
GU29 9AY

Annika Binet

23-116
August 2023

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Summary

- AEWC Ltd were commissioned by Charlie Boher on behalf of their client to undertake a daytime bat assessment at Highclere, Easebourne Lane, Easebourne, Midhurst, GU29 9AY at grid reference SU 88983 22141 to help inform the proposed development of the site.
- This report details the results of the survey, which was carried out on 2nd August 2023 by Annika Binet, a Natural England licensed bat ecologist.
- The site contains a detached residential property which is proposed for ground floor extension.
- Tile hangings are present on the western and northern elevations of the property, the roof and hanging tiles were noted to be very flat and tight fitting with no gaps suitable for access by bats noted to be present.
- A roof void is present above the existing single storey extension, which will be directly impacted by the proposed works. No evidence of the likely presence of bat roosts was identified within the void and no natural light ingress was noted.
- **The building was considered to have negligible potential to support roosting bats and, as such, there are no known constraints regarding these species and the proposed development.**
- Lighting can have notable negative impacts on commuting bats, that are known to be present locally. There is potential for lighting during and post-development to cause indirect disturbance to bats within the local area. Additional external lighting should be avoided or kept to the minimum necessary, and preferably on a motion sensor to reduce lighting time.
- Additional work lighting which may be required during the development must be positioned to ensure that it shines onto the area of works with minimal spread into the wider area.
- **In the unlikely event bats are found on site during works, the procedure detailed within section 6 of this report must be followed.**

1 Introduction

1.1 AEWC Ltd were commissioned by Charlie Boher on behalf of their client to undertake a daytime bat assessment at Highclere, Easebourne Lane, Easebourne, Midhurst, GU29 9AY to help inform the proposed development of the site.

1.2 The bat surveys and report writing were carried out in accordance with Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines (Bat Conservation Trust, 2016).

1.3 No ecological surveys are known to have been carried out for the site previously. Bat assessment was therefore required to ascertain whether bats, or potential for bats, is present at the site and represents a constraint to the proposed development.

1.4 This report details the results of the bat assessment and outlines recommendations in relation to bats and the proposed development of the site.

Aims and objectives

1.5 The objectives of the survey were to:

- Identify the potential of the buildings on the site to support roosting bats;
- Identify whether bats are present using the buildings on site;
- Determine the potential impacts on any bat roost from the proposed development schedule; and
- Provide information for use in the design and development of ecological mitigation and enhancement measures where appropriate.

Site Location

1.6 The proposed development site is located at Highclere, Easebourne Lane, Easebourne, Midhurst, GU29 9AY at grid reference SU 88983 22141. The site is located on the edge of the town of Midhurst in the South Downs National Park in West Sussex. The surrounding landscape comprises residential properties with associated amenity gardens immediately adjacent to the site, with the River Rother located adjacent to the road to the western end of the garden. Extensive treelines in the area provide connectivity to woodland blocks, with pastureland also providing additional foraging opportunities. See Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE SITE

1.7 The site contains a detached dwelling situated within an amenity garden.

FIGURE 2: SHOWING THE BUILDING SUBJECT TO SURVEY.

Legislation

1.8 All species of bats are listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* which affords them protection under *Section 9*, as amended. They are also protected under the *Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*. In combination, this makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture etc.);
- possess;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, obstruct access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection, or disturb any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
- sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative) or advertise for buying or selling such things.

1.9 A roost is defined as 'any structure or place which a bat uses for shelter or protection'. As bats tend to reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not bats are present.

1.10 Any disturbance of a bat occupying a roost can lead to prosecution. Disturbance can be caused by noise, vibration and artificial lighting. Penalties for breaking the law can include fines of £5,000 per bat, imprisonment and the seizure of equipment.

1.11 Furthermore, seven bat species (barbastelle, Bechstein's, noctule, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, lesser horseshoe and greater horseshoe) are also Species of Principal Importance in England under *Section 41* of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.

Development proposals

1.12 The proposal is for construction of a single-storey kitchen extension to the eastern elevation.

2 Methods

Daytime Assessment

2.1 A detailed bat building inspection was undertaken on the 2nd August 2023 by Annika Binet, a Natural England licensed bat ecologist.

2.2 A systematic internal inspection of the building was conducted using a high-powered torch to illuminate all areas thought to be suitable for roosting bats. Additionally, an external search around the perimeter of the building was conducted and any possible access points i.e. gaps and crevices were noted and surveyed with a high-powered torch and ladder as appropriate.

2.3 The building's suitability for bat roosting was assessed by examining structural features that may influence the suitability of a building to support roosting bats; these include the presence of a roof void, the presence of access points into the building

(including gaps beneath barge boards, weatherboarding, soffits and facias, gaps under lead flashing, gaps within masonry and under loose tiles, gaps between tenon and mortise joints), the complexity and size of any roof void and daytime light levels in the roof void.

2.4 The building's suitability for roosting bats was also assessed by examining the surrounding habitat. Important habitat features surrounding the structure which may influence roost potential include whether the structure is in a semi-rural or parkland location, its proximity to a significant linear habitat features such as a watercourse, mature hedgerow, wooded lanes or an area of woodland.

2.5 All surfaces were also surveyed for signs of bat presence. Features of potential value to bats were surveyed not only for the presence of bats but also for signs that could indicate use by bats, such as:

- bat droppings that are dry and do not putrefy, but can crumble away to dust;
- staining of access points used by bats to enter the structure; and
- feeding remains such as moth and butterfly wings.

2.6 Taking account of these architectural, habitat features and signs of presence, the building was then assigned a level of roost suitability based the criteria given in the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016) and professional judgement. The primary objective of this exercise was to identify the need for further detailed bat survey later in the year, or alternatively to obtain sufficient information that would dismiss the need for further assessment.

3 Constraints/Limitations

3.1 Bats are difficult to locate in large structures, with so many potential roosting areas, particularly in inaccessible areas such as large buildings, finding the exact roosting site can be difficult, especially male/single bat roosting sites. It should be noted that it is not always possible to identify bat presence by examining externally around buildings as poor weather conditions may have washed away droppings which were deposited on exposed surfaces.

3.2 Bats can have seasonal use of buildings and being so mobile may arrive and start using a site after it has been surveyed, or roost somewhere else during the period it was surveyed. For this reason, bats may potentially be present but remain undetected, particularly during daytime assessment.

3.3 The survey was undertaken after a brief thundery shower, therefore heavy rain could have washed away any external evidence of presence of bats if present.

4 Results

Daytime Assessment

4.1 The site contains a two-storey gable roofed property with single-storey extension attached at the north-eastern corner of the property. The roof supports flat clay tiles and is lined with bitumastic roofing felt. Clay tile hangings are present on the eastern and northern elevations of the property.

4.2 The roof and hanging tiles were noted to be very flat and tight fitting with no gaps suitable for access by bats noted to be present. Soffit boxes present around the eaves of the property were noted to be in good condition and tight fitting with no gaps suitable for access by bats noted.

4.3 The eastern elevation wall of the house, and southern elevation of the extension, which will be directly impacted by the extension works are plain brick with no suitable bat roost features present.

4.4 A roof void is present above the existing single storey extension, which will be directly impacted by the proposed works. Some cobwebbing was noted at the ridge of the void and at the gable walls. The tile hung wall was internally sealed with no obvious access from the batten space of the tile hangings into the roof void. No evidence of the likely presence of bat roosts was identified within the void and no natural light ingress was noted.

Photograph 1: *Southern elevation of the extension and eastern elevation of the house*

Photograph 2: *Roof void above the single-storey extension*

	
Photograph 3: *Northern elevation of the extension*	**Photograph 4:** *Western elevation of the extension and partial northern elevation of the house, with tile hangings visible*

5 Evaluation, Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 Initial observations consider the local area suitable for bats. The river corridor close to the site, in addition to extensive woodland and pasture in close proximity to the site with a network of connective tree and hedge lines provides excellent foraging and commuting habitat for a range of bat species. Buildings and trees within the local area additionally offer potential roosting opportunities.

5.2 The daytime assessment identified negligible potential for roosting bats within the areas of the property to be impacted by the works, due to a lack of suitable access points or roosting features. It is therefore considered that no bat roosts are likely to be present within the works area or impacted by the works.

5.3 The building was considered to have negligible potential to support roosting bats and, as such, there are no known constraints regarding these species and the proposed development.

5.4 Lighting can have notable negative impacts on commuting bats, that are known to be present locally. There is potential for lighting during and post-development to cause indirect disturbance to bats within the local area. Additional external lighting should be avoided or kept to the minimum necessary, and preferably on a motion sensor to reduce lighting time.

5.5 Additional work lighting which may be required during the development must be positioned to ensure that it shines onto the area of works with minimal spread into the wider area.

5.6 In the unlikely event bats are found on site during works, the procedure detailed within section 6 of this report must be followed.

6 Procedure to follow in the event a bat is found on site.

6.1 Bats are present within the vicinity of the site and may be found at any location on, in or around the buildings. Bats are protected species, and these procedures must be followed to avoid committing an offence.

6.2 If a bat is found at any location around the site DO NOT TOUCH unless necessary for the safety of the bat.

6.3 If the bat was uncovered in a roosting location carefully replace covering ensuring the bat is not crushed or harmed. If this is not possible cover the animal with a loose covering.

6.4 Stop all work at that area and the immediate vicinity. Work may continue at other areas around the site.

6.5 Call the AEWC Ltd bat licensed project ecologist Annika Binet 07528 956486, call the office on 08452 505585, or licensed ecologists Daniel Whitby 07764813002 or Brigitte de Coriolis 07545130203.

7 References

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