

47 FERNBANK ROAD, ASCOT

**PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT
& NOCTURNAL BAT SURVEYS**



A Report to: Landmark Group

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In July 2023, Landmark Group commissioned MMEcology to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment at 47 Fernbank Road in Ascot. This survey is required to inform a planning application associated with the demolition of the existing dwelling on site and erection of a replacement dwelling.

To fulfil the above brief, it was necessary to assess the potential for the existing dwelling on site to support roosting bats. Therefore, a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was undertaken on 14 July 2023.

As the dwelling on site was assessed to have moderate potential for roosting bats, two nocturnal bat surveys were subsequently carried out in August 2023. This report details the results of the bat survey work, including a Preliminary Roost Assessment, a single dusk emergence and a dawn re-entry survey.

1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a detached, single-storey, vacant dwelling, located within the developed area of north Ascot. The site is located at National Grid Reference SU 90591 69252.

The dwelling is set within an urban setting, surrounded by residential buildings and their private gardens to north, west and south. Immediately to east is Fernbank road, beyond which is further dwellings with their associated gardens. Approximately 160m west of the site is Jubilee Recreation Ground, along with a block of woodland approximately 185m north-west of the site. Residential buildings, wooded blocks and grass fields form the wider landscape. Figure 1 shows the location of the application site within the wider landscape.

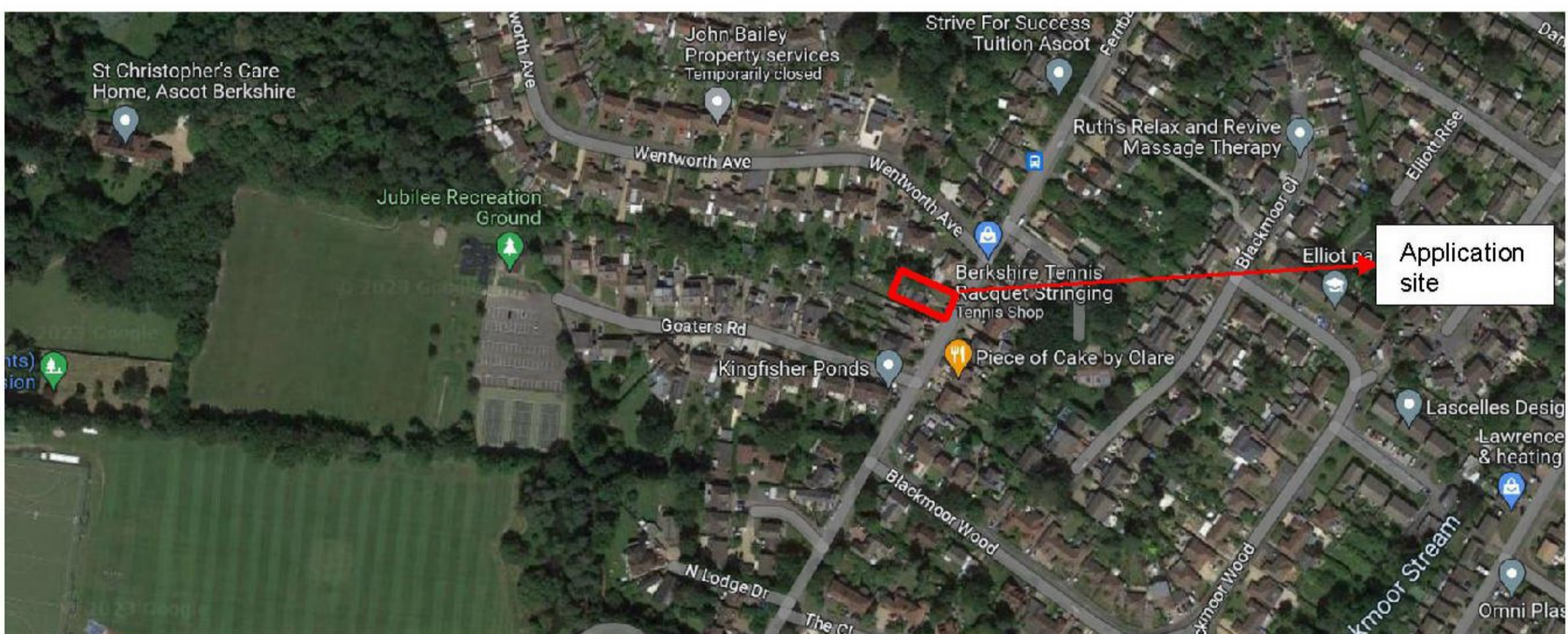


Figure 1. Aerial imagery showing the site in the wider landscape (Source: Google maps)

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT

In line with the specifications detailed in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016), a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of the building on site was conducted. The Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was conducted on 14 July 2023 by Maral Miri, Principal Ecologist, MSc, MCIEEM, CEnv, Natural England Level 2 bat class licence holder. A visual assessment was undertaken to determine the presence of any Potential Roost Features (PRFs), together with a general appraisal of the suitability of the site for foraging and commuting. Example of PRFs include behind hanging tiles, weatherboarding, soffit boxes, lead flashing and between tiles and the roof lining.

Any accessible PRFs were inspected using binoculars, a torch and endoscope for evidence of possible bat presence. Buildings were surveyed externally and internally.

Based on the PRF's present, the building on site was assessed using the suitability classes detailed within the Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016), as detailed in table below:

Suitability	Description
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.

2.2 NOCTURNAL EMERGENCE AND DAWN RE-ENTRY SURVEYS

As the dwelling on site has moderate potential for roosting bats, in line with the Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016), two nocturnal surveys were carried out. The aim of the surveys was to determine whether bats are currently roosting within the dwelling on site and identify the number and species of bats roosting.

The dusk emergence bat survey commenced 15 minutes prior to sunset and continued until 90 minutes after sunset. The dawn survey commenced 90 minutes prior to sunrise and continued until 15 minutes after sunrise.

To facilitate the detection of bats and to aid in the determination of species of bat using the site, the survey was conducted using electronic bat detectors (i.e. Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro). Computer analysis (i.e. Kaleidoscope software) of bat detector information collected was utilised to identify all species recorded on the site.

Due to the difficulty in detecting late emerging bats, a Sony FDR-AX33 camcorder with infrared recording capability, with two supplementary infrared illuminators, were used. Use of the cameras were in accordance with the Interim Guidance Note: Use of night vision aids for bat emergence surveys and further comment of dawn surveys (Bat Conservation Trust, 2022). The camcorder footage was later analysed using Video slow and fast speed Ramp software to allow slowing down the video in line with the recorded bat call to ensure the location of bat movement was captured to conclude if the bat emerged from potential roosting features associated with the site.

Each survey was carried out by three experienced members of staff. Drawing below shows the location of the surveyors and the infrared camera. Figure 2b shows sample footage from the infrared camcorder.

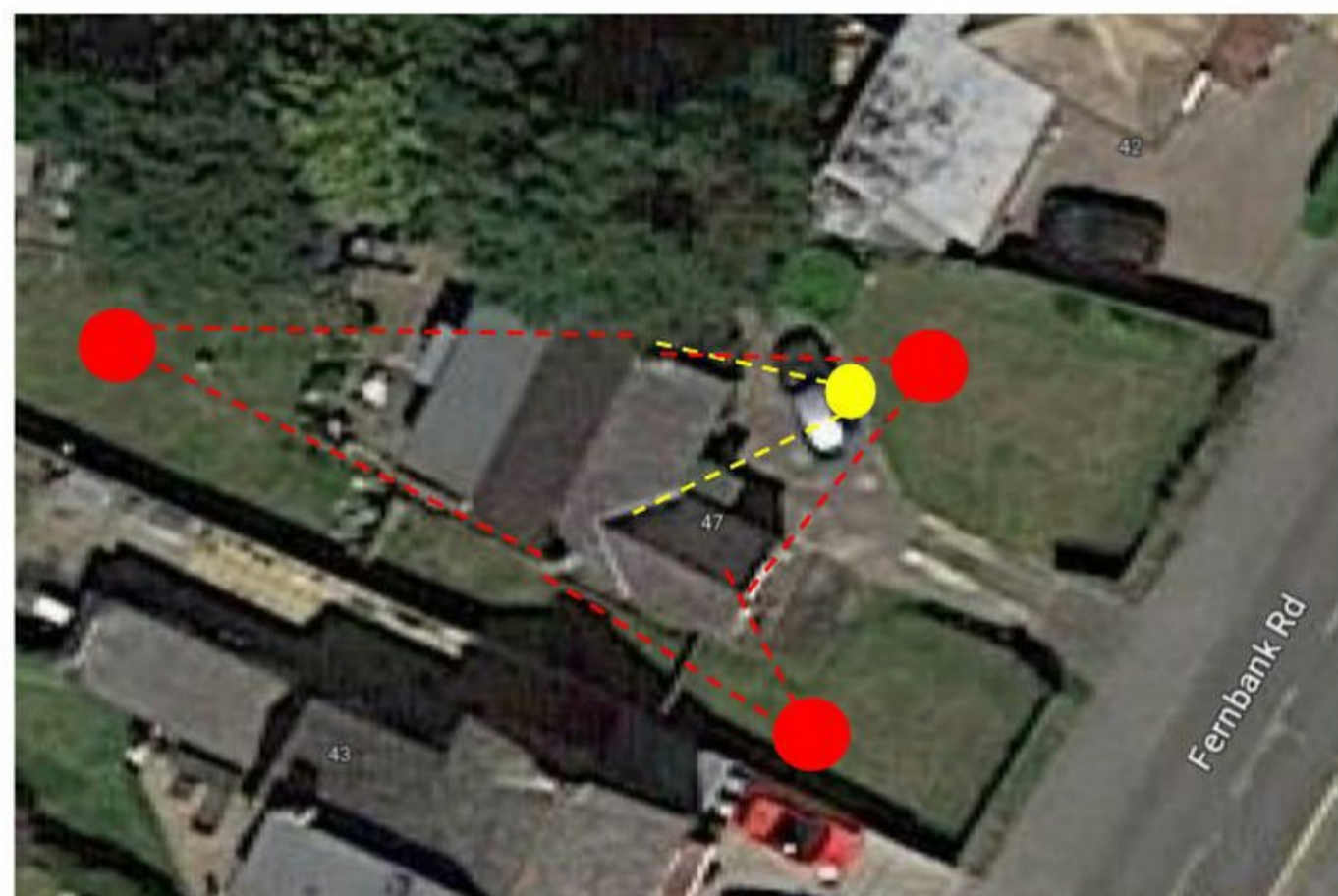


Figure 1a. Location of the surveyors (red) and camera (yellow)

3. SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 EXTERNAL INSPECTION

The vacant dwelling on site is a detached, single-storey, brick building with pitched roofs covered by slates. To the rear is a single-storey extension with a flat roof, covered by roofing felt. The brickwork is in a good condition with no cracks, areas of missing mortar or holes present. The roofing felt is also in a good condition with the edges being well-sealed.



Figure 2. View of the front and rear elevations of the dwelling



Figure 3. View of the side elevations

The roof slates are generally in a good condition and tightly fitted; however, a number of minor gaps are present below the roof slates. A brick chimney breast is present along the southern elevation. Any soffits along the eaves are tightly fitted, with no gaps present.



Figure 4. Example of tightly fitted roof slates



Figure 5. Example of slightly lifted roof slates



Figure 6. Example of slightly lifted roof slates



Figure 7. Example of slightly lifted roof slates



Figure 8. Example of tightly fitted soffit and the well-sealed eaves

A total of two ventilation grills are present within the side gables. The garden is laid to lawn.



Figure 9. View of the ventilation grill (left) - View of the garden (right)

No evidence of roosting bats was found during the external inspection of the dwelling.

A number of potential entry points and roosting features for bats in the form of slightly lifted roof slates were recorded at the time of survey. As such, based on the external inspection, the dwelling on site is considered to be of moderate potential for bats.

3.2 INTERNAL INSPECTION

Internally, a single loft void is present. The floor to apex height is approximately 1m. The central part of the loft is boarded, and the floor is insulated with Micafil Vermiculite Loose Fill loft insulation. Black felt sarking is present between the rafters and the roof slates, which was in a good state of repair at the time of survey, with no cuts, tears or areas of sagging present. Two of the gables are of brick construction, with another gable of breezeblock construction.



Figure 10. View of the loft



Figure 11. View of the brick and breezeblock gable-ends



Figure 12. View of the roofing felt between rafters and slates



Figure 13. View of the loose fill insulation

During the internal inspection, no evidence of roosting bats in the form of bat droppings, feeding remains, scratch marks, etc. was recorded. This however could be attributed to the presence of roofing felt being in good condition.

3.3 DAWN RE-ENTRY BAT SURVEY

The dawn re-entry survey was undertaken on 2 August 2023. The weather conditions recorded at the time of survey are detailed in table 3 below.

Parameter	Conditions
Temperature	14°C (start) - 15°C (end)
Cloud Cover (%)	100%
Precipitation	Dry
Wind Speed (Beaufort)	F1-F2

Table 3: Weather conditions during the dawn survey

The dawn re-entry survey commenced 90 minutes prior to sunrise and continued until 15 minutes after sunrise. Sunrise was at 05:33. No bats were recorded re-entering the dwelling on site. In total, a single species of bat, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, was recorded during the survey. Overall, very low levels of bat activity were recorded on site. More details are provided below.

Common pipistrelle

The only bat call recorded during the survey was a faint common pipistrelle call, recorded briefly at 04:29.

3.4 DUSK EMERGENCE BAT SURVEY

The dusk emergence survey was undertaken on 16 August 2023. The weather conditions recorded at the time of survey are detailed in table 2 below.

Parameter	Conditions
Temperature	21°C (start) - 18°C (end)
Cloud Cover (%)	0%
Precipitation	Dry
Wind Speed (Beaufort)	F0-F1

Table 2: Weather conditions during the nocturnal emergence survey

The nocturnal emergence survey commenced 15 minutes prior to sunset and continued until 90 minutes after sunset. Sunset was at 20:24. No bats were recorded emerging from the dwelling. A single species of bat, common pipistrelle, was recorded during the survey. Overall, low levels of commuting and foraging bat activity were recorded on site. More details are provided below.

Common Pipistrelle

The first bat activity on site was of a common pipistrelle, recorded at 20:48 (24 minutes after sunset). This was a brief call, and no visual contact was made. At 20:50, foraging activity of a common pipistrelle was heard only. A common pipistrelle was observed at 20:51, commuting above the front garden and over the roof of the dwelling, towards west. At 20:54, foraging activity of an individual common pipistrelle was observed along the trees forming the northern boundary of the site and over the back garden, before the bat flying offsite towards the neighbouring garden in the south. At 20:55, foraging call of a common pipistrelle was heard only (possibly from the neighbouring garden). Between 20:50 and 21:14, intermittent foraging activity of a single common pipistrelle bat was recorded along the northern treeline and the rear gardens of the two neighbouring properties in the south and north.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

Demolition and replacement of the existing dwelling is proposed.

4.2 SUMMARY OF BAT SURVEY WORK

The external inspection of the dwelling confirmed the presence of a number of potential features providing entry points into roosting areas for bats, in the form of minor gaps under roof slates. The dwelling is therefore considered to be of moderate potential for roosting bats.

The dusk emergence and dawn re-entry surveys carried out in August 2023 did not identify any roosting activity within the dwelling on site.

Following the suite of survey work undertaken on site, including external and internal building inspection and dusk emergence and dawn re-entry surveys, it can be confirmed that the building on site does not currently contain a bat roost.

4.3 POTENTIAL IMPACT ON BATS

All bat species are UK and European protected species and are capable of being material consideration in the planning process. This makes it an offence to:

- deliberately (or recklessly) capture, injure or kill a bat;
- deliberately (or recklessly) disturb a bat; and,
- damage or destroy a bat roost.

As the dwelling on site is unlikely to support a bat roost, the proposal is considered unlikely to result in any impacts on bats.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The building on site has been subject to a suite of surveys in line with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016), and no bat roost was identified.

The survey data obtained for the site is valid for 18 months from the survey date. If development works to the surveyed building have not commenced within this timeframe, it may be necessary to update the survey effort to establish if bats have colonised the building in the interim.

As a precautionary measure, it is recommended that the works are carried out under the supervision of an experienced and licenced bat ecologist. This will entail the soft stripping of the roof slates and any other PRFs under supervision.

In the unlikely event that a bat is found during the demolition, all works must immediately cease and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted.

Furthermore, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, it is recommended that a single bat box is installed on a suitable tree on site.

REFERENCES

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