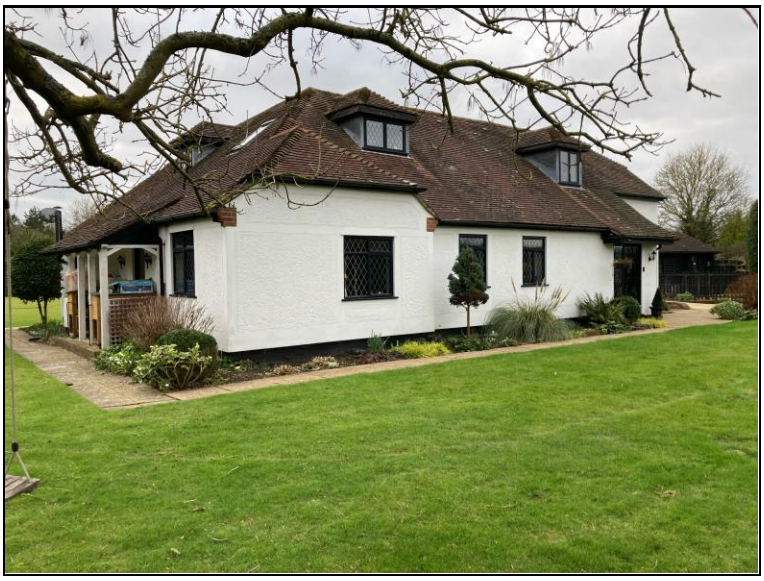
‘VALENTINES’

WELLPOND GREEN, STANDON
HERTFORDSHIRE

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT



2024

CLIVE HERBERT

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Species protection and habitat conservation specialists

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1. Introduction

1.1 Amphibian, Reptile & Mammal Conservation Limited were contracted on 23rd January 2024 to undertake a standard Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of a house and three outbuildings located at 'Valentines', Wellpond Green, Standon, Hertfordshire SG11 1NJ.

1.2 The Preliminary Roost Assessment was completed in support of a forthcoming planning application for the demolition of the existing house and three outbuildings and the construction of a new residential dwelling.

1.3 The PRA seeks to determine the potential for bats to occur within the proposed development footprint and to identify if any further bat survey work or mitigation/avoidance measures are required.

1.4 There are, however, no historical records of any bats roosting within the proposed development footprint and this assessment was therefore undertaken as a precautionary measure in order to inform the future planning process.

2. Methodology

2.1 The objective of the daytime PRA was to view the existing site layout and to inspect the exterior and interior of the house and outbuildings, from ground level, in order to assess their suitability to act as a bat roost site(s) by identifying the presence of any 'potential roost features' that bats could utilise.

These may typically include, but are not limited to, missing or damaged tiles, broken air-bricks, ill-fitting soffits, bargeboards or weatherboarding, raised flashings etc., that may act as access routes for bats into the fabric of the buildings.

Detailed internal and external searches for any direct evidence of past or current bat occupancy, such as droppings, staining on walls, rafters, windows etc., were also conducted.

2.2 The assessment visit was undertaken on 31st January 2024 when there was complete access to all parts of the proposed development footprint and standard 10 x 40 binoculars, together with ladders, torches, mirrors and an endoscope were available, where required, to inspect the exterior and interior of all buildings.

2.3 This work was carried out under *Natural England* Class Survey Licence WML-CL18 (Bat Survey Level 2), registration number 2015-13348-CLS-CLS and completed by the report's author, a licensed bat ecologist with over 35 years' experience working throughout Hertfordshire and the surrounding counties.

2.4 The assessment was conducted according to the current 'best practice' standards as published in the 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines' (Bat Conservation Trust, 4th edition, 2023) and with due regard to the Standing Advice to LPAs (Bats: advice for making planning decisions) published by *Natural England* on 28th March 2015 and updated on 14th January 2022.

3. Constraints

3.1 It is considered that there are no specific constraints operating on the assessment results presented in section 4 below.

3.2 The absence of a bat roost in any one season can, however, never completely prove the absence of a roost at another season, such as during the summer maternity period, as bats regularly move their roost locations in response to both environmental conditions and the time of the year.

3.3 The results presented in section 4 below remain valid for a period of twelve months from the date of the site visit, after which time they should not be relied upon and further advice should be sought regarding updating the assessment.

4. Results

4.1 Preliminary Roost Assessment

The site is located to the south of the A120, on the edge of the Wellpond Green hamlet, in a highly rural setting comprising agricultural fields with an extensive network of hedgerows and their associated mature trees.

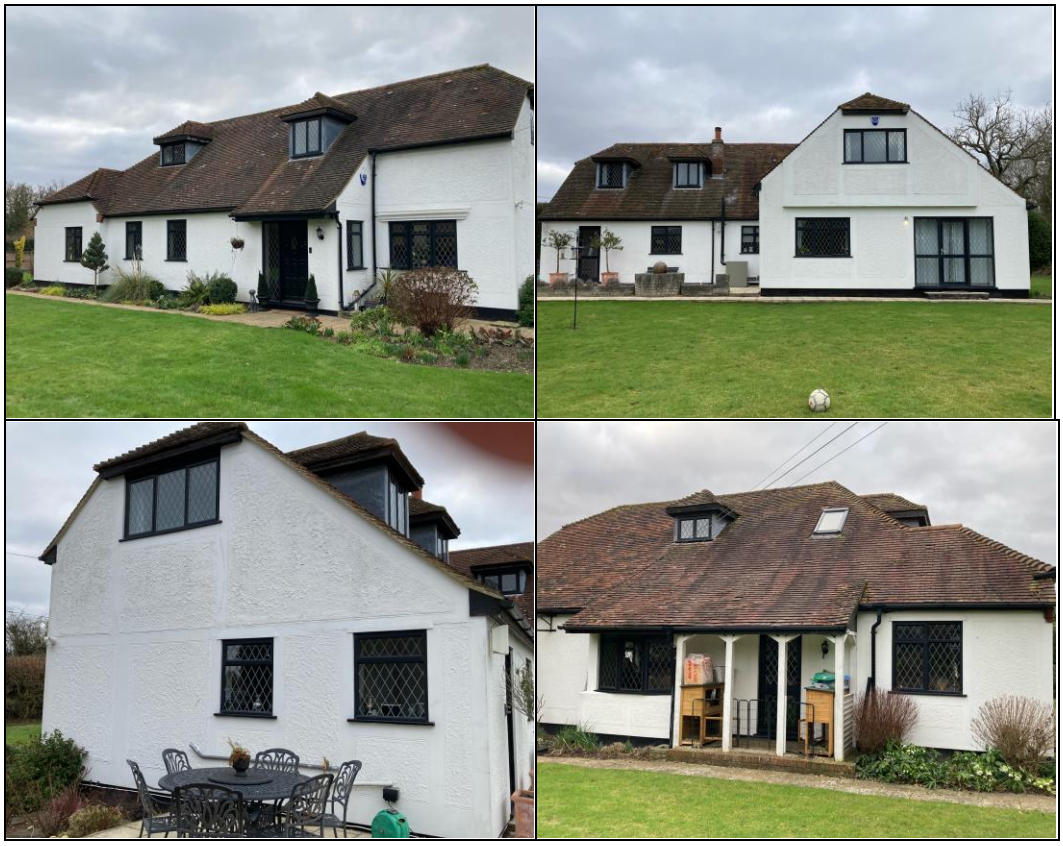
The location is, therefore, one of a high quality, inter-connected landscape of excellent bat foraging habitat.

House (TL 4125 2225)

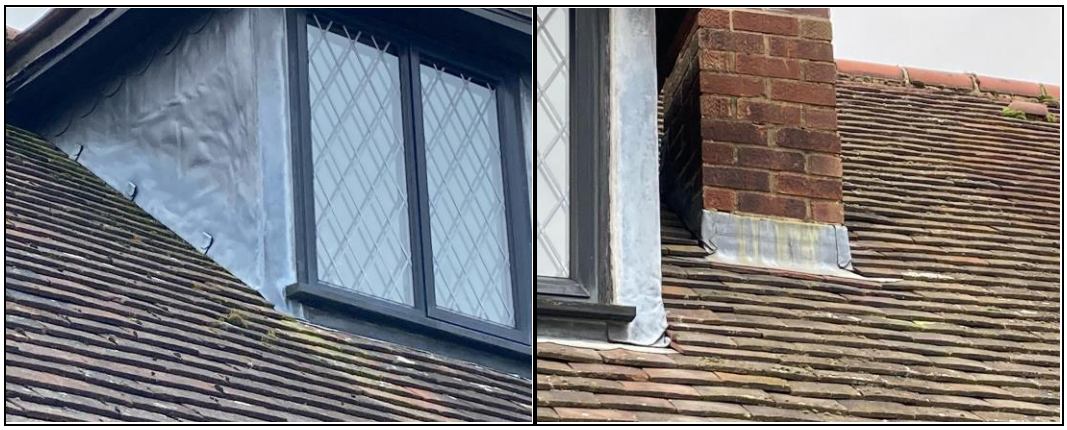
The property (see photographs 1 – 4 below) comprises a detached, single-storey house, dating from around 1910, with a full loft conversion. An extension, of unknown date, is also present on the rear elevation. Dormer windows, together with their associated flashings, are present on both the front and rear elevations (see photograph 5 below). All dormer flashings were found to be tight-fitting with no suitable gaps for bat access.

The house is of standard brick construction and the pitched, tiled roof has one chimney present on the rear elevation. This has standard metal flashing (see photograph 6 below) at its base which also appeared to be tight-fitting with the tiles and with no gaps visible from ground level.

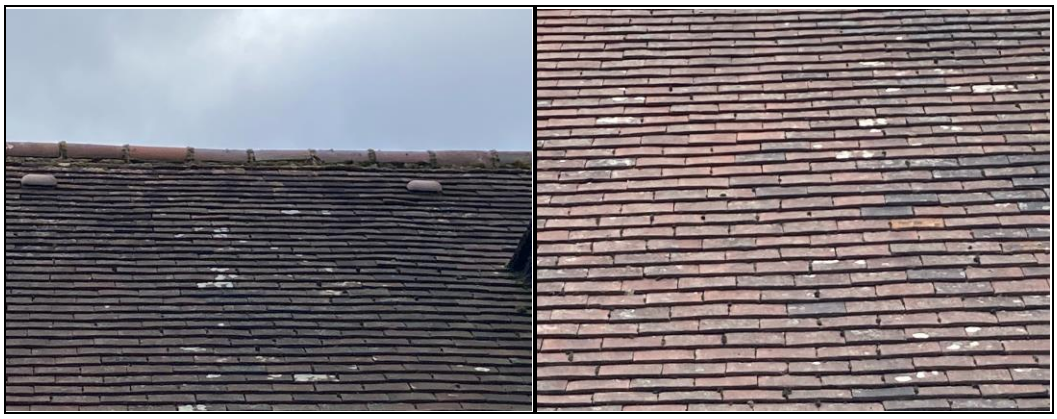
The roof tiles appeared to be in good condition throughout with no missing, raised or damaged tiles (see photographs 7 - 8 below) capable of allowing bat access into the roof.



Photographs 1 – 4: Front, rear and side elevations

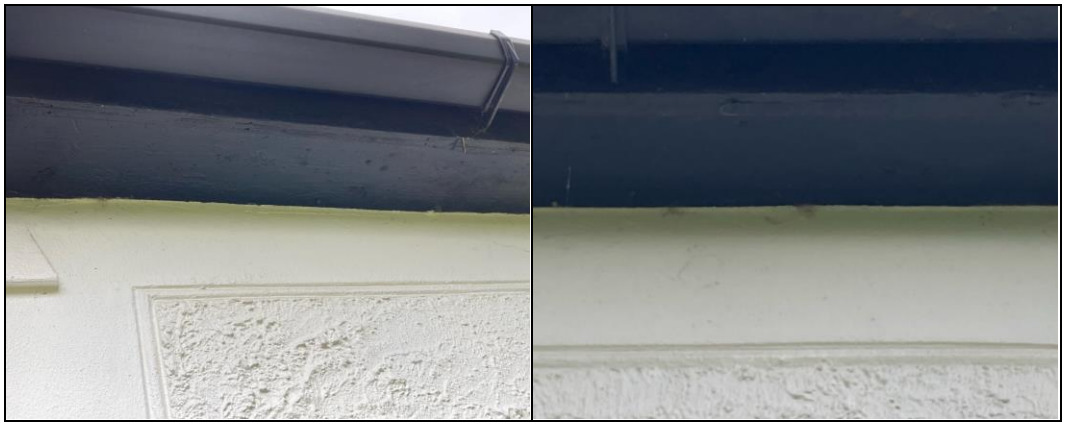


Photographs 5 - 6: Close-fitting dormer flashings and chimney



Photographs 7 – 8: Roof tiles & ridge

The various eaves, barge boards and soffits also appeared to be in excellent condition and were found to be tight-fitting with the walls (see photographs 9 - 10 below).



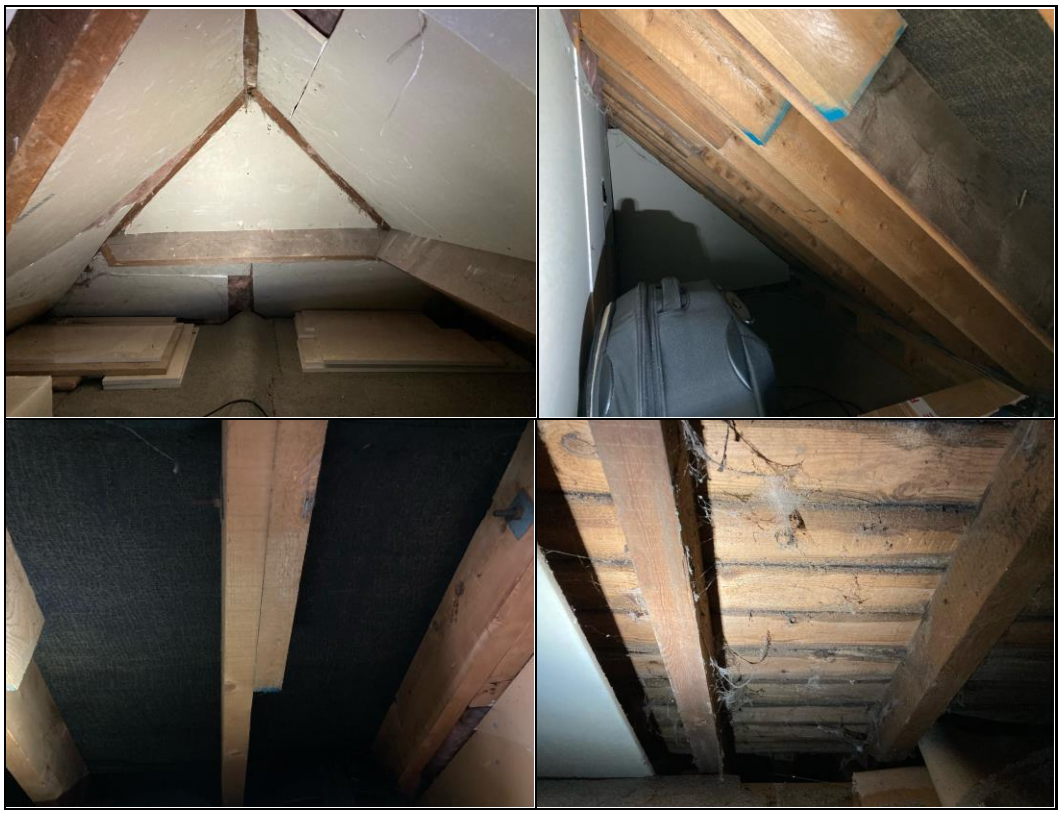
Photographs 9 - 10: Typical tight-fitting eaves/barge boards/soffits

As a result of the extensive loft conversion, the only remaining voids (see photographs 11 – 12 below) are located in several separate sections above the eaves. These voids are used only for occasional storage.

The roof comprises rafters that are of modern sawn timber (see photograph 13 below) commensurate with the age of the property. There are no gaps or open mortise joints present that could provide potential roosting sites for bats.

The roof is both felt-lined, plasterboard-lined and lined with sarking in different places (see photograph 14 below). All of these materials are in excellent condition throughout.

There is also fibre-glass floor insulation present in places.



Photographs 11 – 14: Internal roof voids at eaves

The remaining roof spaces appear to be largely undisturbed, thereby providing optimal survey conditions for recording any evidence of current or past bat occupancy.

There are no other features associated with the house, such as hanging tiles or weatherboarding, which could provide alternative roosting opportunities for bats away from the roof.

There are also no underground structures (cellars, air raid shelters, ice houses etc.) present that would be suitable as potential hibernation sites for bats in the winter.

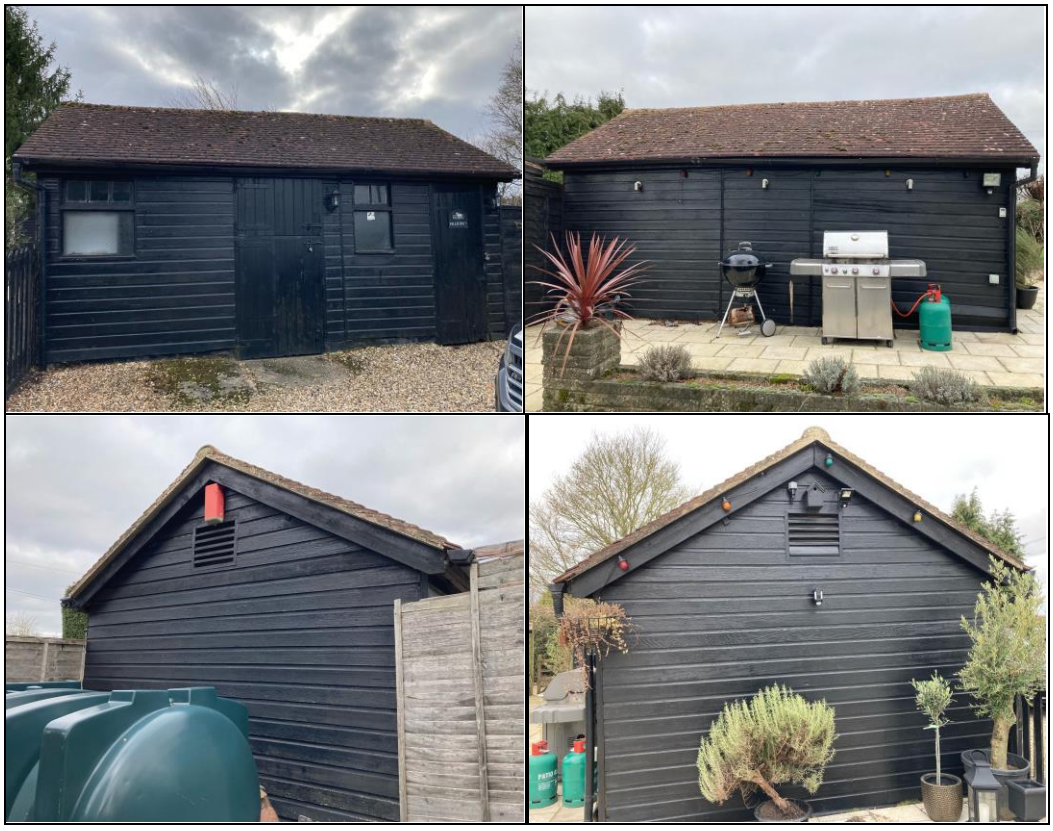
As a result of the structure of the house, the materials used and its excellent condition throughout, with no 'potential roost features' or access points identified, the property was assessed to be of **'negligible potential'** as a roost site for bats.

Small Building by House (TL 4124 2224)

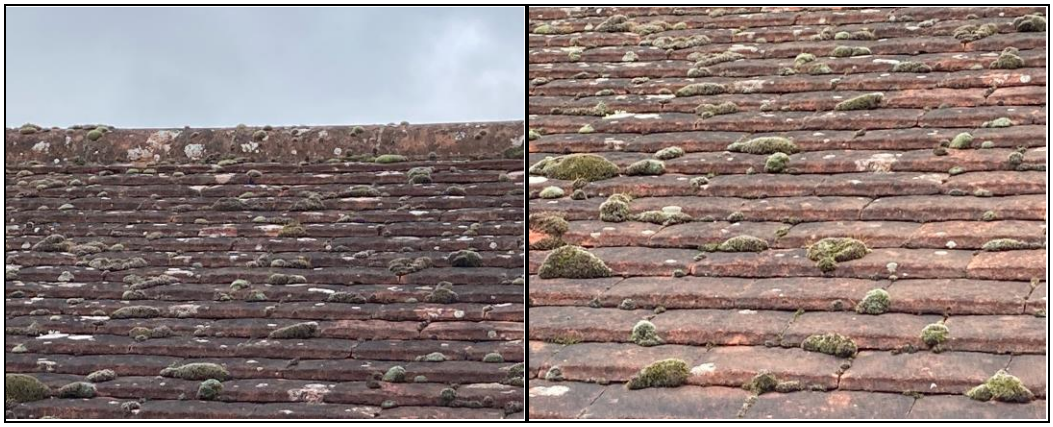
This building (see photographs 15 – 18 below) is a modern former stable unit that still retains the original half-split door on the front elevation, although it is now in regular use as a utility room and for sundry storage.

Internally it has been divided by a wooden wall into two compartments but only up to gutter level.

The building has a pitched, tiled roof (see photographs 19 – 20 below) which appeared to be in excellent condition throughout with no missing, raised or damaged tiles capable of allowing bat access into the roof.



Photographs 15 – 18: Front, rear and side elevations

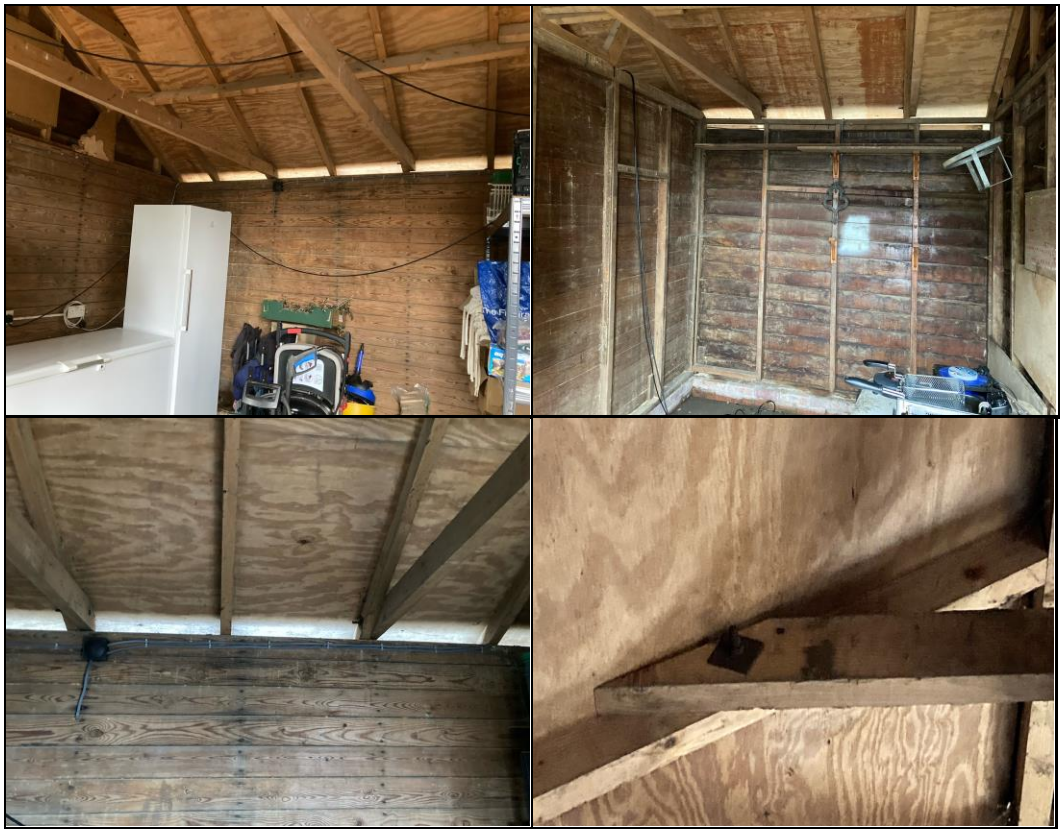


Photographs 19 – 20: Roof tiles & ridge

The roof is lined with wooden sheeting, (see photographs 21 – 24 below) but there is no loft void present and no roof insulation.

The tops of the walls at gutter level are open, leading to an extremely cold and draughty interior.

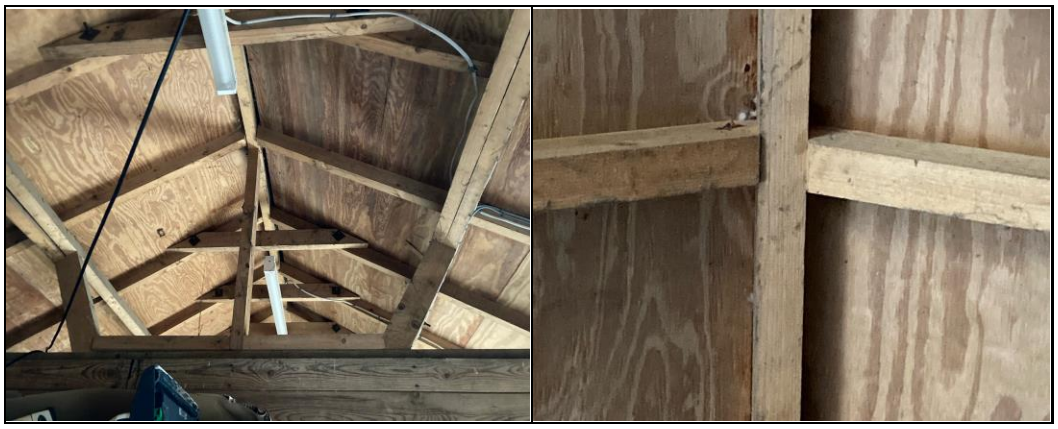
A louvre-style ventilation panel is also present on both side elevations, below the roof apex, further increasing the internal draught.



Photographs 21 – 24: Internal roof void

The narrow rafters (see photographs 25 – 26 below) are of modern-sawn timber, commensurate with the recent age of the unit, and lack any gaps, crevices or mortise joints that could afford potential roosting locations for bats.

There are two windows present on the front elevation which provides for a well-lit interior.



Photographs 25 – 26: Central ridge beam & wooden boarding

There are no other features associated with the structure, such as hanging tiles, which could provide alternative roosting opportunities for bats away from the main roof.

There are also no underground structures (cellars, air raid shelters, ice houses etc.) present that would be suitable as potential hibernation sites for bats in the winter.

Due to the structure of the building, no 'potential roost features' that could support bats were located and, as a result, the building was classified as being of '**negligible potential**' as a roost site.

Main Stable Block (TL 4125 2222)

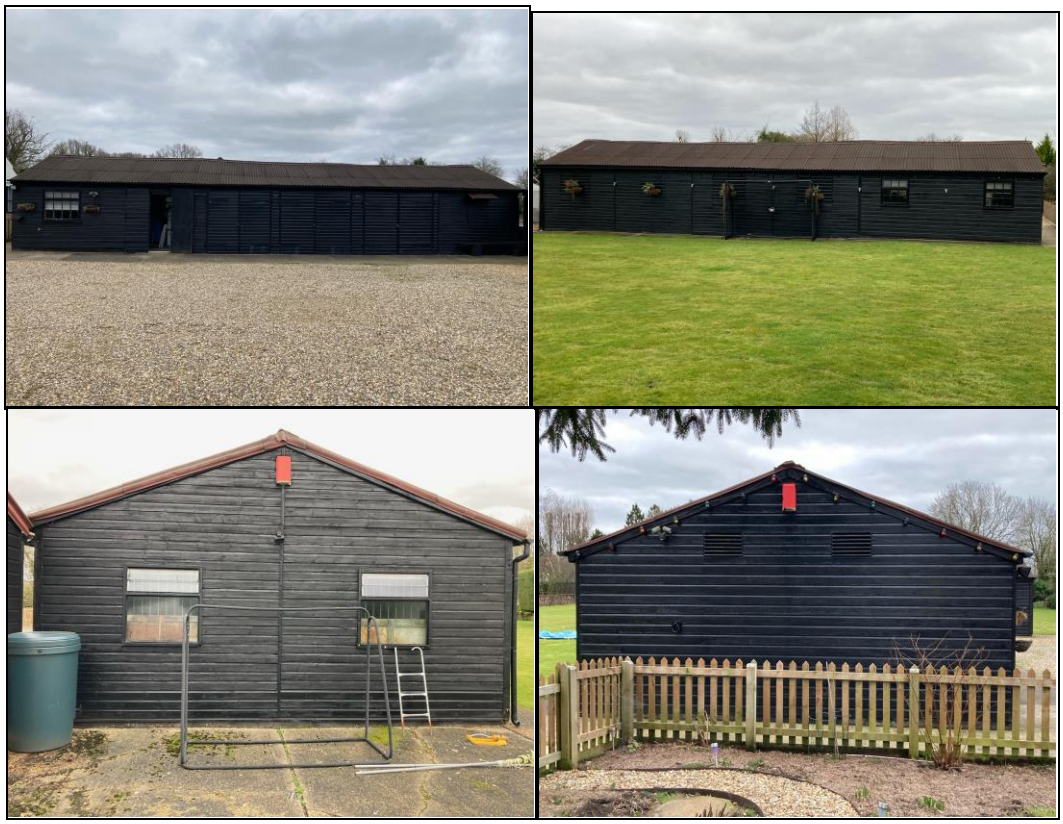
This building (see photographs 27 – 30 below) is a modern former stable unit, although it is now in use only for regular storage. It has wooden walls that are lined with boarding and one internal dividing wall that reaches the main ridge.

It has a pitched, corrugated bitumen sheet roof (see photograph 31 below) which appeared to be in excellent condition.

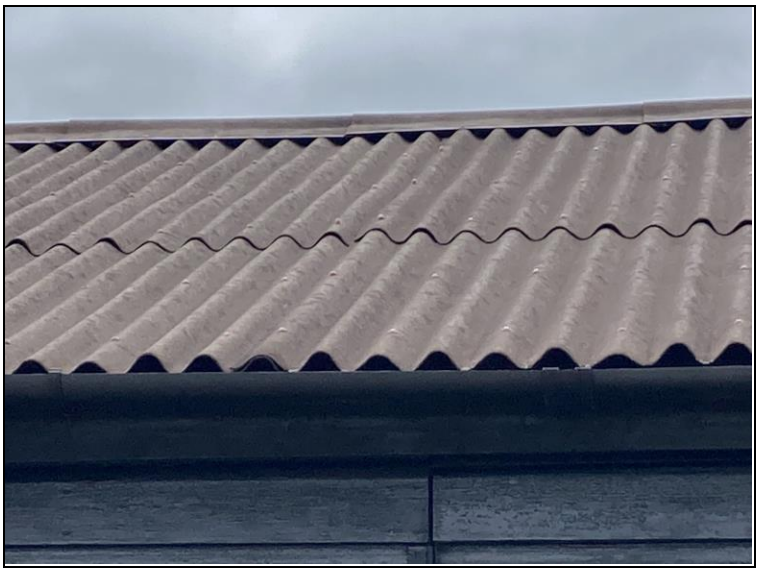
The roof is lined with wooden boarding (see photographs 32 – 35 below) but there is no loft void present, except at one end that is used as a small office/storage room, and no roof insulation.

There are three large double doors and one single door on the front elevation leading to an extremely draughty interior.

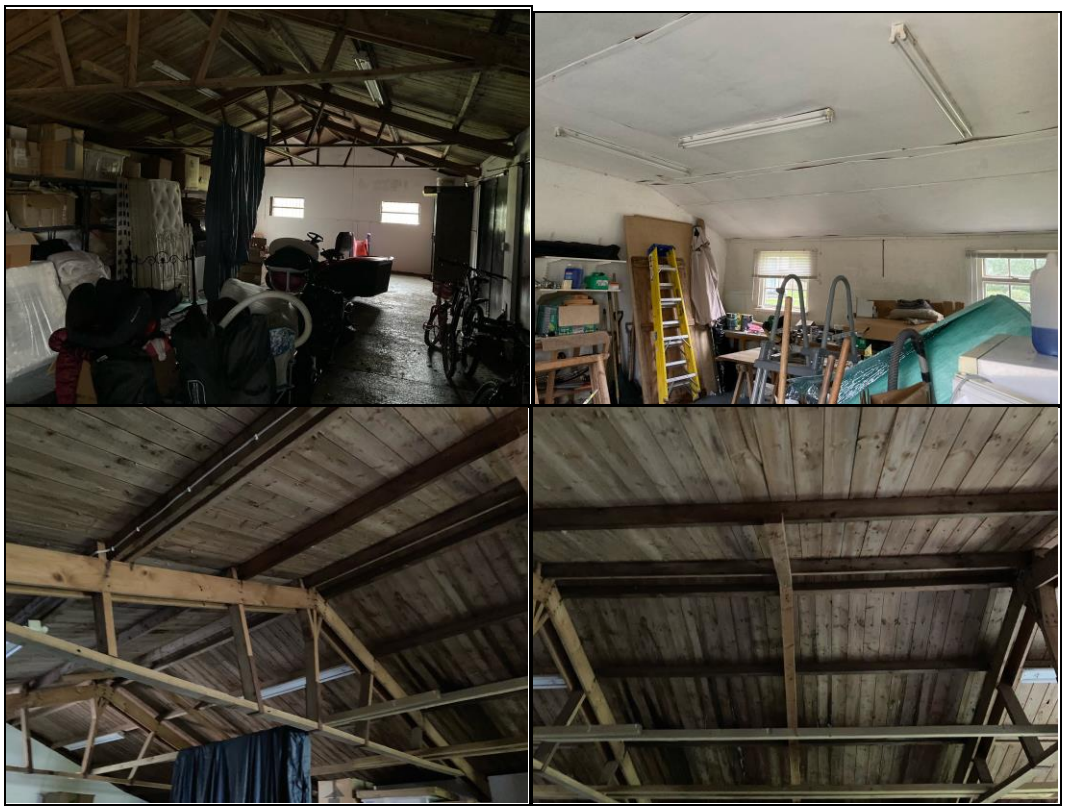
Two louvre-style ventilation panels are present on one side elevation, located below the roof apex, further increasing the internal draught.



Photographs 27 – 30: Front, rear & side elevations



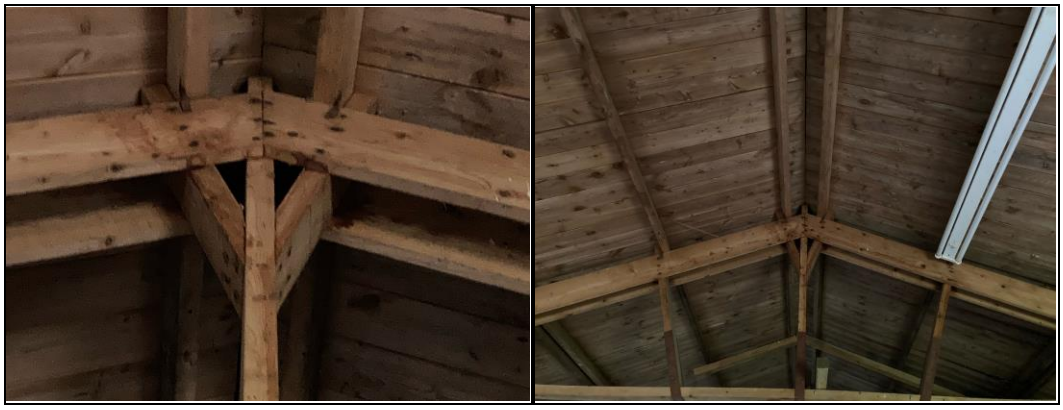
Photograph 31: Corrugated bitumen sheet roof in excellent condition



Photographs 32 – 35: Internal roof void

The narrow rafters (see photographs 36 – 37 below) are of modern-sawn timber, commensurate with the recent age of the structure, and lack any gaps, crevices or mortise joints that could afford potential roosting locations for bats.

There is one window present on the front elevation, two windows on the rear elevation and a further two windows on one side elevation which all provide for a well-lit interior.



Photographs 36 – 37: Narrow rafters & wooden lining

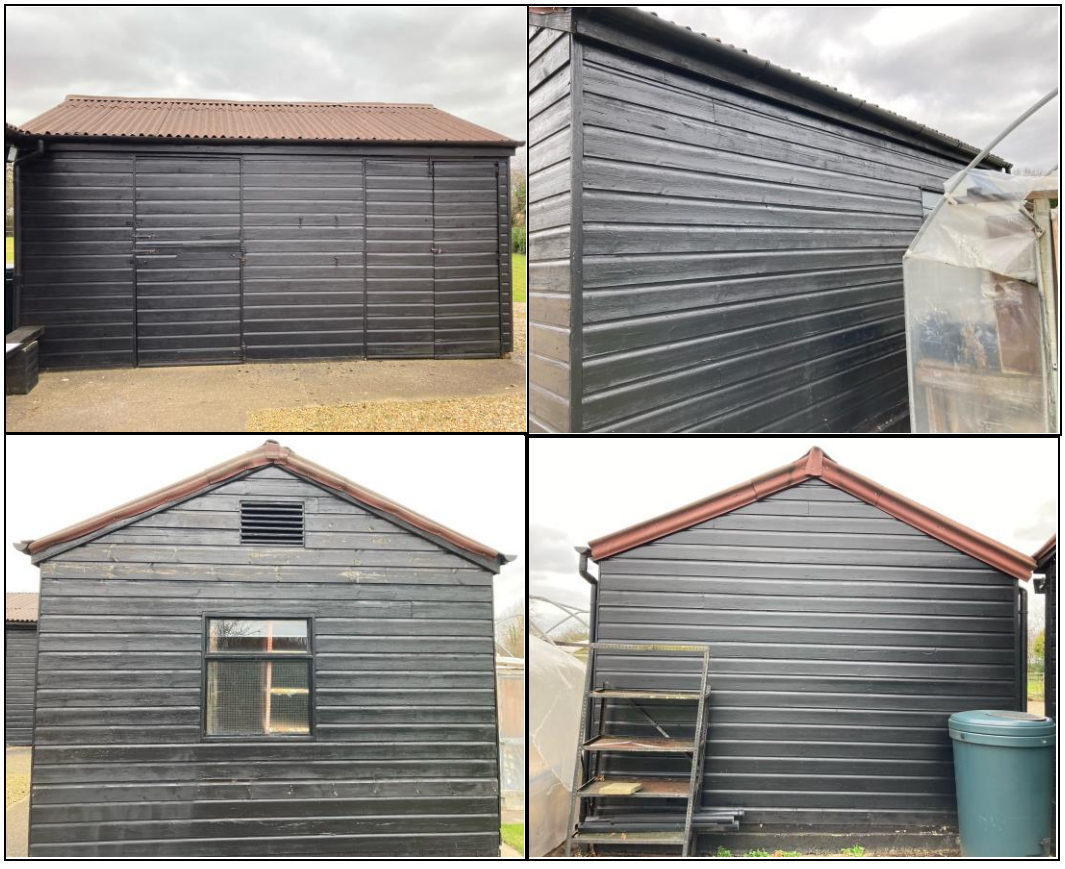
There are no other features associated with the structure, such as hanging tiles, which could provide alternative roosting opportunities for bats away from the main roof.

There are also no underground structures (cellars, air raid shelters, ice houses etc.) present that would be suitable as potential hibernation sites for bats in the winter.

Due to the structure of the building, no 'potential roost features' that could support bats were located and, as a result, the building was classified as being of '**negligible potential**' as a roost site.

Secondary Stable Block (TL 4125 2221)

This small building (see photographs 38 – 41 below), located next to the main stable block, is a modern former stable unit, although it is now completely empty and unused. It has wooden walls that are lined with chipboard up to a height of approximately 1.25 metres and one internal dividing wall that reaches to gutter level only.



Photographs 38 – 41: Front, rear & side elevations

It has a pitched, corrugated bitumen sheet roof (see photograph 42 below) which appeared to be in excellent condition.

The roof is lined with chipboard (see photographs 43 – 46 below) but there is no loft void present and no roof insulation.

There is one split stable door and one standard door on the front elevation leading to an extremely draughty interior.

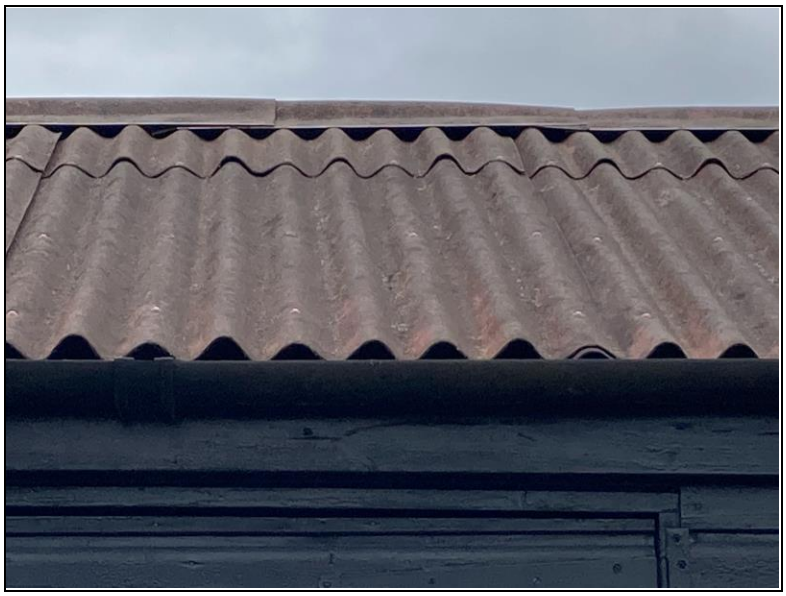
A single louvre-style ventilation panel is present on one side elevation, located below the roof apex, further increasing the internal draught.

The narrow rafters and ridge (see photographs 47 – 48 below) are of modern-sawn timber, commensurate with the recent age of the structure, and lack any gaps, crevices or mortise joints that could afford potential roosting locations for bats.

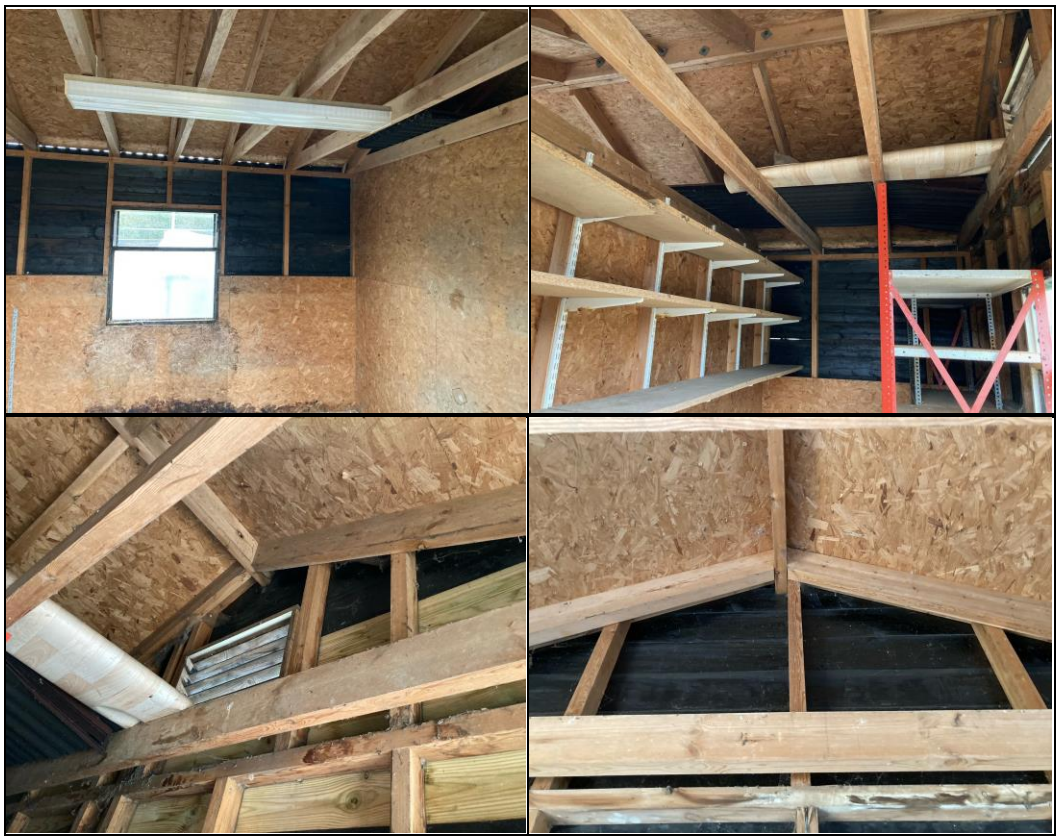
There is one window present on the rear elevation and another window on one side elevation which provide for a well-lit interior.

There are no other features associated with the structure, such as hanging tiles, which could provide alternative roosting opportunities for bats away from the main roof.

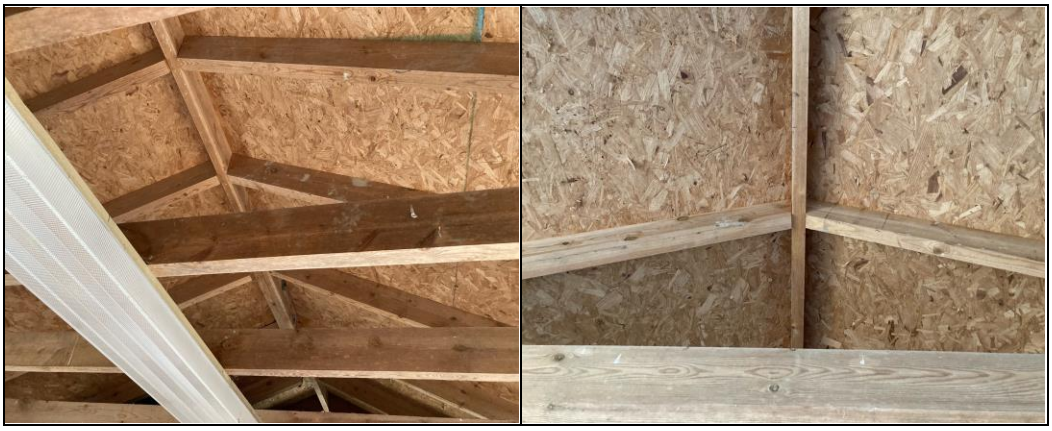
There are also no underground structures (cellars, air raid shelters, ice houses etc.) present that would be suitable as potential hibernation sites for bats in the winter.



Photograph 42: Corrugated bitumen sheet roof in excellent condition



Photographs 43 – 46: Internal roof void



Photographs 47 – 48: Narrow rafters & wooden lining

Due to the structure of the building, no 'potential roost features' that could support bats were located and, as a result, the building was classified as being of '**negligible potential**' as a roost site.

4.2 Internal Inspection

Notwithstanding an intensive search of the interior of the house and three outbuildings, no past or current evidence of bat occupancy was detected, thereby supporting the 'negligible potential' assessment results for all structures as detailed in section 4.1 above.

4.3 External Inspection

No evidence of any past or current bat occupancy was found during the detailed external inspection of the house and three outbuildings, further supporting the 'negligible potential' assessment results for all structures as detailed in section 4.1 above.

5. Summary & Recommendations

5.1 The Preliminary Roost Assessments of the house and three outbuildings categorised all structures as having a **'negligible potential'** to support a bat roost based on their age, structure and the absence of any 'potential roost features' that bats could utilise.

5.2 The internal inspections of the house and outbuildings did not locate any evidence of current or past bat occupancy.

5.3 The external inspections of the house and outbuildings did not locate any evidence of current or past bat occupancy.

5.4 In accordance with the nationally published guidance for buildings assessed to be of 'negligible potential', it is now **recommended** that **no dusk emergence surveys are required** to be completed during the bats' active season (May to September) in order to confirm the presence/absence of a roost.

In our opinion, therefore, any future planning application can be determined without further reference to the presence of roosting bats, subject to being within the timing constraints noted in section 3.3 above.