

12 April 2024

Charlie Ridgway
2 Wilden Lane
Stourport
Worcestershire
DY13 9LR

Dear Charlie,

Preliminary Roost Assessment – 2 Wilden Lane, Stourport, Worcestershire, DY13 9LR

I am writing to provide you with a short, written report of my survey findings at the above site on 3 April 2024. The site is centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference SO 8231 7154. I am a licensed bat surveyor (Natural England licence: G. Williams: 2023-11106-CL17-BAT). I used the following equipment during the survey: telescopic ladder, high-powered torch with red filter, binoculars and collecting pots for droppings.

Access to the entire site was made available, however it was not possible to inspect the loft in full as the floor was not boarded and therefore not safe to walk over. This limitation is not considered significant given the results of the survey effort. Weather conditions on the date of survey were overcast with drizzle, and a maximum daytime temperature of 11°C.

I understand the development proposals are for a second-storey extension to the rear of the property, tying into the eastern roof elevation. I have had access to the following plans provided by the client: '24-4528-02 Proposed First Floor Extension'.

Legislation:

Bats are a European Protected Species (EPS), and are listed in Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive 1992, which affords strict protection to bats and their roosts. Actions and activities that are prohibited are:

- deliberate capture, injury or killing of a bat;
- deliberate disturbance of a bat and in particular disturbance which is likely to; impair their ability:
 - to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or

- to hibernate or migrate; or
- to affect significantly the local distribution of abundance of the species to which they belong.
- damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place (even unoccupied); and
- possessing, controlling, transporting, selling or exchanging, or offering for sale or exchange, any bat or any part of a bat or anything derived from one.

Results:

Area / Feature	Observations
2 Wilden Lane	<p><u>External Description:</u></p> <p>A two-storey, white-rendered, brick-built dwelling with a tented roof overlain with clay tiles. Gable extensions are present to the front (west) and rear (east) of the building. A single-storey extension is currently under construction to the north, east and west of the building.</p> <p>Ridge tiles appear to be in good condition. However, numerous lifted and slipped sloping tiles were observed, presenting gaps underneath. Gaps under roof tiles present suitable opportunities for crevice-roosting bat species such as the pipistrelles.</p> <p>Timber eaves around the building are well-sealed, apart from an opening on the left-hand corner of the rear gable. Discussions with the client informed that a chimney had to be removed to facilitate the single-storey extension, and the corner of the gable has been recently repaired, but now presents an opening into the loft.</p> <p>Gaps are present in the mortar under the tiles at the front-facing gable. No gaps were observed in the timber cladding of the gable.</p> <p>New windows have been recently installed around the property, which are well sealed, and no cracks were observed in the brick lintels.</p> <p>Some brickwork has been exposed during construction activities, revealing some small cracks that could provide a potential roost feature for bats. However, these are in areas that are currently heavily disturbed by construction activity and are therefore unlikely to be used.</p>

There is a crack in between the render and lead flashing of the bay window at the front of the property.



Plate 1: view of the front of the property. Photograph looking south-east.



Plate 2: view of the rear of the property. Photograph looking west.



Plate 3: recently repaired gable with open eaves and gaps under tiles. Photograph looking west.

Internal Description:

The loft void is approximately 2m in height. A central timber ridge board and rafters are present. The underside of the roof is partially lined with plastic.

The void is dark, and light could be seen leaking through gaps underneath the tiles. The void is sheltered, although the temperature is cold, and surfaces are damp due to the poor condition of the tiling and lack of underfelt lining.

The floor is lined with fibre glass insulation. Bat droppings were observed on the insulation scattered throughout accessible areas of the loft, with larger concentrations below the central ridge board (c.200+). No bats were observed *in situ* during the survey.



Plate 4: view of the loft. Photograph looking west.



Plate 5: sample of bat droppings observed below central ridge board.

Foraging / Commuting Habitat Potential			
High quality semi-natural habitats	Within immediate vicinity (<250m)	Within wider landscape (<2km)	Comments
Broadleaved/mixed woodland Waterbodies Tree lines/stands Mature hedgerows	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 Wilden Lane is located on the outskirts of a suburban residential area of Stourport. The site has good connectivity via linked back gardens to high-quality foraging and commuting habitat. The River Stour is 125m to the west of the site, where the river bank is buffered by woodland. In addition, Hartlebury Common SSSI is 100m to the south, providing 90ha of lowland heathland habitat which supports a wide range of invertebrates, providing a food source for foraging bats.
General Landscape Character	Suburban (mixed use)		
Negative Characters		Positive Characters	
Highly urbanised environment <input type="checkbox"/> Night lighting (significant) <input type="checkbox"/> Isolated from high-value habitat <input type="checkbox"/> Modern building construction <input type="checkbox"/> Human disturbance (significant) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High exposure (altitude, prevailing winds) <input type="checkbox"/> Nearby buildings modern or isolated <input type="checkbox"/>		Rural environment <input type="checkbox"/> Absence of night lighting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good connectivity to high-value habitat <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building construction suitable for bats <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Absence/Minimal human disturbance <input type="checkbox"/> Low exposure (altitude, prevailing winds) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cluster of suitable old buildings <input type="checkbox"/>	
Other <input type="checkbox"/> specify		Other <input type="checkbox"/> specify	

Conclusion:

Conclusion – Potential Suitability for Roosting Bats of Structures within the Development Site (see Collins 2023)	
2 Wilden Lane	Confirmed Roost with Moderate potential for other bat species (a structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats on a regular basis, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.)

Conclusion – Foraging / Commuting Habitat Suitability for Bats (see Collins 2023)	
Conclusion:	Moderate - Continuous habitat connected to wider landscape that could be used by commuting/foraging bats.

A detailed internal and external inspection has identified 2 Wilden Lane as a **confirmed bat roost** due to the presence of bat droppings (c. 200+) in the loft void.

2 Wilden Lane is currently an active building site. **No works should be undertaken which damage, block or otherwise alter the roof structure or loft void of the building or risk disturbing, killing or injuring bats until additional survey work has been completed and licensing requirements confirmed.**

The site is located on the outskirts of Stourport, with moderate-quality foraging and commuting habitat within the linked back gardens of the immediate surrounding area of the building, which provide connectivity to high-quality foraging areas in the wider area.

Various Potential Roost Features (PRFs) were noted externally, including gaps under roof tiles, which provide suitable roosting opportunities for crevice-dwelling species of bat such as common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle.

Further survey work will be required to allow species identification and characterisation of the identified roost within the building. Presence of roosting bats within the building means that development works for the first-floor extension will require the prior acquisition of a Bat Mitigation (Development) Licence from Natural England. Future mitigation requirements will be established based on further survey work to be completed at the site.

The possibility of the structure being used during the winter period for hibernation cannot be entirely ruled out. Current evidence indicates that whilst 'classic' bat hibernation sites provide conditions that are cool, humid and remain at a constant temperature (see e.g. Collins, 2023), Vespertilionid bats are frequently found in 'non-classic' hibernation roosts, such as under tiles and within roofing/ structural materials. These non-classic hibernation sites may be very similar to conventional summer roost sites, but are not readily detectable during typical, non-invasive PRA surveys (Middleton, 2019).

Following the assessment of hibernation potential for 'non-classic' hibernation sites (Reason & Wray, 2023), the likelihood of finding bats in winter within 2 Wilden Lane is 'moderate' due to the known roosts within the structure and other suitable potential roosting features. Our assessment of these features is that it is not practical or proportionate to survey them in winter due to the likely concealment of any resident bats, the published need to avoid unnecessary disturbance and the innate difficulty of proving absence in these structures as per Collins (2023). Therefore, temperature restrictions to avoid impacts represent the most appropriate form of mitigation in most circumstances (see Middleton, 2019).

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation, government guidance and best practice.

1. The survey evidence to date has confirmed that 2 Wilden Lane supports a bat roost. Bats and their roosts are afforded strict protection under UK and European law and the proposed works will require the prior acquisition of a bat mitigation (development) licence from Natural England due to the potential for disturbance of bats and modification of a bat roost.

No works should be undertaken which damage, block or otherwise alter the roof structure or loft void of the building or risk disturbing, killing or injuring bats until additional survey work has been completed and licensing requirements confirmed.

2. Roost characterisation surveys will be required to allow confirmation of the type of roost, access points and bat species utilising the property to inform future mitigation requirements. Surveys should include a minimum of two dusk emergence surveys completed by at least three experienced bat surveyor positions¹. Further surveys may be required if the results of the initial surveys are ambiguous. The surveys should be completed during the optimal bat survey season (May – August) and in line with Collins (2023) and the Bat Conservation Trust (2022).
3. As a precautionary approach, it is recommended that a licensed bat worker remains ‘on-call’ during the ongoing construction work of the ground-floor extension. **In the event that roosting bats are discovered work must cease immediately and the on-call ecologist contacted (Focus Environmental Consultants – 01905 780700), they will liaise with Natural England (as required) to advise on any licensing requirements to allow lawful completion of the work.**
4. To allow accurate confirmation of bat species and direct appropriate mitigation measures, a sample of bat droppings collected from the loft of 2 Wilden Lane should be sent away for DNA analysis.

¹ Each position to be covered by surveyor and/or night vision aid, as per BCT, 2022.

5. This report is considered valid for 12 months for planning purposes (CIEEM, 2019). Update surveys may be required to reassess the condition of the site (and its suitability for bats) should this period be exceeded.

I trust the above information is clear and satisfactory to requirements. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information or clarification.

Kind regards,

Gina Williams
Ecologist

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Full Q&E details of surveyors and checkers are available on request.