52 AVENUE ROAD LONDON NW8

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT



2021

CLIVE HERBERT

Amphibian, Reptile & Mammal Conservation Limited Species protection and habitat conservation specialists

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1. <u>Introduction</u>

- 1.1 Amphibian, Reptile & Mammal Conservation Limited were contracted to undertake a standard Preliminary Roost Assessment of the vacant property (see cover photograph) at 52 Avenue Road, London NW8 6HS, and situated at approximately National Grid Reference TQ 270 837.
- 1.2 This Preliminary Roost Assessment was undertaken in order to determine the potential for bats to occur in the property and to identify if any further bat survey work or mitigation / avoidance measures were required.
- 1.3 The Assessment was commissioned in support of a forthcoming planning application for the demolition of the building and the redevelopment of the site for residential use.
- 1.4 There are, however, no historical records of any bats roosting within the property and this Assessment was therefore undertaken as a precautionary measure in order to inform the future planning process.

2. <u>Methodology</u>

- 2.1 The objective of the daytime Preliminary Roost Assessment was to view the existing site layout, to inspect the exterior and interior of the property in order to assess its suitability to act as a bat roost site(s) and to conduct detailed internal and external searches for any direct evidence of historical or current bat occupancy, such as droppings, staining on walls and rafters etc.
- 2.2 The Assessment was completed on 10th August 2021 when there was full access to all parts of the proposed development footprint and standard 10 x 40 binoculars together with ladders and an endoscope were available, where appropriate, to inspect the exterior and interior of the building.
- 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 in and around Greater London.
- 2.4 The Assessment was conducted according to the latest 'best practice' standards as published in the 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines' (Bat Conservation Trust, 3rd edition, 2016) and with regard to the Standing Advice to LPAs published by *Natural England* on 28th March 2015 and updated on 4th March 2019.

3. <u>Constraints</u>

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 winter hibernation 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 Assessment visit, after which time they should not be relied upon and further advice should be sought regarding updating the survey.

4. <u>Results</u>

4.1 Preliminary Roost Assessment

The proposed development footprint comprises an unoccupied two-storey, brick-built, residential property dating from approximately the 1960s (see photographs 1 - 4 below), together with a single-storey front extension. There is also a single-storey garage block adjoining the rear elevation (see photograph 5 below).



Photographs 1 - 4: Front, rear and side elevations



Photograph 5: Garage block

The roof of the house is tiled and this was found to be in excellent condition throughout with no missing/damaged tiles, mortar or other gaps visible that could act as potential bat ingress points. A single chimney is present.

In contrast, the single-storey, flat-roofed front extension is in a very poor state of repair, with large holes in the roof providing a draughty and wet interior. This extended part of the house, however, contains no potential roost features suitable for use by bats.

The main roof is lined with sarking and the material was found to be in good condition throughout. The rafters are all modern-sawn timbers, commensurate with the recent age of the property, with no open mortise joints that are typically utilised by bats as roost locations and there is also no large central ridge beam present (see photographs 6 - 9 below). Old fibre-glass floor insulation is present throughout the roof space.

The loft void shows no signs of past usage by the previous owner, thereby providing optimal undisturbed internal conditions for recording any current or historical bat activity.

The various soffits and chimney flashing were all found to be tight-fitting with the walls and tiles and afforded no potential points of ingress for bats to utilise (see photographs 10 - 11 below).

There are no other features associated with the property, such as hanging tiles or weather-boarding, which could provide alternative roosting opportunities for bats away from the roof space.

There are also no underground structures present that would be suitable as potential hibernation sites for bats in the winter.



Photographs 6 - 9: Internal roof void



Photographs 10 - 11: Examples of close-fitting soffit & chimney flashing

The single-storey adjoining garage on the rear elevation has a pitched, tilecovered roof that is in excellent condition and three boarded-up dormer windows on its frontage (see photograph 5 above). The fascia boards were all found to be tight-fitting and do not offer any suitable bat access points into the roof. As a result of the structure of the main part of the house and garage, and its excellent condition throughout with no potential bat access points identified, the building was assessed to be of '<u>negligible potential</u>' as a roost site for bats.

4.2 Internal Inspection

Notwithstanding an intensive search of the interior of the property, no past or current evidence of bat occupancy was detected.

This result supports the 'negligible potential' assessment of the structure (see section 4.1 above) to support a bat roost.

4.3 External Inspection

No evidence of any past or current bat occupancy was found during the detailed external inspection of the property.

This result also supports the 'negligible potential' assessment of the structure (see section 4.1 above) to support a bat roost.

4.4 Trees

A number of mature trees, principally Common Lime (*Tilia* x *vulgaris*) and nonnative Maple (*Acer* sp.), were present around the perimeter of the site (see example photographs 12 - 15 below).





Photographs 12 - 15: Mature trees around site perimeter

No suitable 'potential roost features' (such as old woodpecker holes, splits, loose bark, rot holes etc) that could be utilised by bats were found in any of these mature trees.

All of the trees were therefore determined to have '<u>negligible potential</u>' to act as a bat roost site.

5. Summary & Recommendations

- 5.1 The Preliminary Roost Assessment of the property categorised the main house and garage as having a **'negligible potential'** to support a bat roost due to its structure and the excellent condition of the roof coverings which afforded no opportunities for bat ingress.
- 5.2 The internal inspection of both the main house and adjoining garage did not locate any evidence of current or past bat occupancy within the property.
- 5.3 The external inspection of both the main house and garage also did not locate any evidence of current or past bat occupancy within the property.
- 5.4 The mature trees around the site boundary were found not to possess any features that could be suitable to act as a bat roost site.

5.5 In accordance with nationally published guidance, it is therefore now **recommended** that **no dusk emergence surveys are required** to be completed during the bats' active season 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 within section 3.3 above.