



**PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT
REPORT**

CUCKFIELD COTTAGE HOMES TRUST

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CHURCH PLATT
CUCKFIELD
WEST SUSSEX
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A preliminary roost assessment (PRA) was carried out at Cuckfield Cottage Homes, Church Platt, Cuckfield, West Sussex on the 23rd May 2025 to determine whether this species group could pose constraints to the proposed project at the site. Proposals are for the extension of the existing residential building to include changes to the south and west elevation of the building, creating new roof projections and flat roofs.

A summary of the survey findings and recommendations is provided below:

- * The building includes a number of potential bat roosting features and access opportunities; however these are more limited within the direct work impact zone.
- * No bats or secondary evidence of bat presence was identified at the site.
- * The building is assessed as having Moderate potential to support roosting bats and the proposed works pose a potential risk to bats and their roost sites.
- * In order to confirm the presence/absence of roosting bats at the site and confirm the impacts of the proposal, further bat surveys are required.
- * Two bat emergence surveys must be carried out between May and August inclusive. If a roost is identified, additional survey work will be necessary to fully characterise the roost.
- * Full details of the further requirements are provided in Section 5 of this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 CT Ecology Limited (in association with Mountfield Ecology) was commissioned by Cuckfield Cottage Homes Trust to carry out a preliminary bat roost assessment (PBRA) of Cuckfield Cottage Homes at Church Platt, Cuckfield, West Sussex (hereafter referred to as "the site"). This assessment was undertaken to assess the suitability and potential for roosting bats owing to impacts associated with the proposed project.
- 1.2 This report provides an assessment of the likelihood of roosting bats to be present at the surveyed building and provides an initial assessment of the potential impacts of the proposal upon bats and their roosts.
- 1.3 The site is situated in a semi-rural location, to the southwest periphery of Cuckfield. Holy Trinity Church is situated to the east, with further residential properties to the north and west. The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is TQ 3030 2445.

Development Proposals

- 1.4 Proposals are to extend the existing residential building to the south and west along with internal reconfigurations to enable two additional flats to be provided within the building. Access will remain as existing. No trees or boundary features will require removal to facilitate the works. Current proposals include changes to the west elevation of the building, creating new roof projections and flat roofs.

2. METHODOLOGY

Desk Top Study

- 2.1 A full desk top study was undertaken as part of the preliminary ecological appraisal of the site (CT Ecology, 2025). A summary of the desk top study has been excerpted into this report, highlighting any habitat features or designated site/s of particular value to roosting bats.
- 2.2 Records for bats within a 2km radius of the site were requested from the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC, 2025).

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

- 2.3 The building inspection was carried out by Sally-Ann Hurry (Mountfield Ecology), an ecologist with over 15 years' commercial bat survey experience. Sally-Ann specialises in bats and holds a personal bat survey class licence, levels 1-4. Sally-Ann has designed, held and implemented numerous bat mitigation licenses for a variety of species within the south-east.
- 2.4 The inspection of the structure was carried out on the 23rd May 2025 in accordance with good practice guidelines (Collins, 2023).
- 2.5 The interior and exterior of the building was inspected closely with the aim of identifying the presence of bats and any secondary evidence, together with any potential roost sites or access points. Secondary evidence includes droppings, feeding remains, scratch marks and oil and urine staining. The external inspection comprised a detailed inspection and search of all accessible architectural features. Equipment included a high-powered LED torch and binoculars.
- 2.6 Accessible roof voids were also visually inspected from the access hatches (owing to the reduced height limiting safe access). A search using a high-powered LED hand torch for any accumulations of bat droppings and/or feeding remains was carried out.
- 2.7 The building was given a rating for the level of bat potential present i.e. likelihood of a bat roost to be present within the structure. Field signs and features, along with surveyor experience were used to make an assessment (in line with Collins, 2023). The following categories were used to provide a general rating and level of assessment for each building:
 - * Negligible: No suitable features which could be used by bats. The structure may still have features which are commonly known to be used by bats but due to the circumstances of that feature or structure the feature is deemed unsuitable for bats;

- * Low: A small number of potential suitable bat roosting features are present but are most likely to support a low conservation status roost such as individual bats of a common species (not a maternity roost). The structure or site may be isolated within the surrounding landscape;
- * Moderate: Several potential suitable bat roosting features are present and the surrounding habitat is of value to commuting and foraging bats with linear features and suitable habitats;
- * High: Several potential bat roosting features are present and those features are of particular significance to roosting bats. Surrounding habitat is of high value to commuting and foraging bats e.g. woodland, open water etc. with linear features. The structure is close to a known roost;
- * Confirmed: Bats or recent secondary evidence of a bat roost such as droppings located within the structure and/or bats heard chattering from within the structure.

Constraints

Data Search Constraints

2.8 It is important to note that, even where data is held, a lack of records for a defined geographical area does not necessarily mean that there is a lack of ecological interest; the area may be simply under-recorded.

Bat Survey Constraints

2.9 Bats are mobile animals and can move roost sites throughout the year. It is possible that a survey carried out in May, could miss roosts occupied earlier or later in the year. However, where undisturbed, it is possible to find secondary evidence of bats inside a building throughout the year, although secondary signs may be missed where they are within an area that can't be fully accessed, such as crevice features, or where a building is in regular use by people.

2.10 The roof voids of the property could only be inspected from the access hatches owing to the reduced height of the voids and thick insulation present. However, the roof voids were small enough to allow an adequate inspection of the floor area for any secondary evidence of bat presence to have been identified.

3. RESULTS

Desk Top Study

Habitats and Landscape Features of Value to Bats

- 3.1 The site is not subject to any statutory designations. There are no designated sites with a 2km radius for which bats are a qualifying feature.
- 3.2 The application area is in a semi-rural environment, located at the western edge of Cuckfield in West Sussex. Land-use in the immediate vicinity includes a combination of residential properties, church grounds, and amenity green space, with open countryside comprising agricultural fields and scattered woodland located beyond the village. There are no ponds within the site boundary however there are a range of water bodies within a 500m radius, the closest of which is a large pond located approximately 140m to the north-east. Features in the wider landscape provide high value to bats for foraging, commuting and roosting.

Bat Records

- 3.3 The data search returned at least nine species of bat within a 2km radius of the application site boundary, recorded since 2000. Species included pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus* sp.); Nathusius's pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), myotis species (*Myotis* sp.) whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*), Brandt's bat (*Myotis brandtii*), Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*), long-eared bat species (*Plecotus* sp.) and brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*).
- 3.4 No records were returned from within the site. A total of 43 recent (post 2000) bat records were recorded within a 2km radius, with a further 25 historic records also returned. The most frequently recorded bat species since 2000 was common pipistrelle, with a total of eight records and a combined abundance count of 40 individuals.
- 3.5 A total of 14 known bat roost records were returned within a 2km radius of the application site since 2000; the closest of these is an unspecified common pipistrelle roost, located approximately 320m to the north-east. This record, dated 2012, reported a total of 32 individuals. A recent (2024) in-flight record has also been returned for barbastelle, approximately 900m to the north. These species have a large home range and may utilise habitats and features in the immediate vicinity.
- 3.6 The closest previously approved Protected Species Mitigation Licence (PSML) concerning bats, is for a location situated 2.1km north of the site. The licence permitted damage and destruction of resting sites for common pipistrelle and brown long-eared, between 2015 and 2020.

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

3.7 The building is of brick construction with upper tile hung wall elevations. The hanging tiles were in general good condition, with lifted tiles located at corners (of which there were many). The main roof pitch is half-hipped and faces west to east, with various dormers situated along both roof pitches (see Photographs 1 and 2). Dormers were tile hung, with various lifted tiles associated with the east elevation, and tighter, modern hanging tiles associated with the west elevation. The roof pitches were clad in traditional clay roof tiles which were in moderate condition, with a few raised and lifted tiles across the roof pitches. Dormers associated with the west elevation had felted flat roofs, and ground level flat roof extensions were also felted, all of these areas appeared to be tight fitting with no obvious gaps at the eaves. The eaves across the wider extent of the building consist of the roof pitches abutting the external wall surfaces, and some small gaps were present (see Photographs 3). Some large gaps were noted along the lower eaves of the west elevation (between the flat roof extensions). One small crevice feature was also noted to the southeast corner of the building, associated with the tile verge (see Photograph 4).

3.8 Internally, the property has three roof voids, these are described separately below:

Roof Void associated with Property 1A (Photograph 5):

3.9 The roof void measures approximately 2.8m (l) x 1.8m (w) x 1m (h), with thick fibreglass insulation between the joists and the roof pitches were lined with a modern breathable membrane. The roof void was densely cobwebbed.

Roof Void associated with property 2A:

3.10 The roof void measures approximately 3.5m (l) x 1.8m (w) x 1m (h) with the same materials associated with the space as in 1A, and with cobwebs throughout. This roof void included a small dormer roof void.

Roof Void associated with property 3A (Photograph 6):

3.11 The roof void measures approximately 7m (l) x 1.8m (w) x 1m (h) with the same materials associated with the spaces in the other roof voids and with cobwebs throughout.

Evidence of Bat Presence / Activity

3.12 No bats or secondary evidence of bat presence was located at the site.



Photograph 1: East elevation of the building with tile hung dormers.



Photograph 2: South and east elevations of the building, with flat roofed dormers.



Photograph 3: Gap at the eaves associated with the north elevation.



Photograph 4: Missing mortar at south facing tile verge.



Photograph 5: View within roof void above 1A.



Photograph 6: View within roof void above 3A.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The site is located in a semi-rural setting, with areas of suitable bat foraging habitat in close proximity. These habitats extend across the local landscape and the high value of the surrounding habitats is confirmed by the number of bat records returned within the local area and variety of bat species present. In turn, this increases the potential for bats to find and utilise suitable bat roosting features at the site.

Survey Overview

4.2 The site supports a variety of potential bat roosting features and access opportunities, including a low number of raised roof tiles, lifted hanging tiles and gaps at the eaves.

4.3 No bats or secondary evidence of bat presence was identified at the site, however the building supports a variety of crevice features which cannot be fully inspected. No clear bat access opportunities into the inspected roof voids were observed and with a lack of secondary evidence to suggest any recent bat presence, along with the presence of dense cobwebs further suggesting a lack of internal bat flight activity in recent times, it is unlikely bats are using the inspected internal roof voids.

4.4 Owing to the surrounding habitats and identified building features, the site is assessed as having Moderate potential to support roosting bats.

Impact Assessment

4.5 Current proposals include extensions to the south and west elevations, with new roof pitches and alterations.

4.6 The proposed works will directly impact upon the western roof pitches and dormers and sections of the southern roof pitches. These areas support potential bat roosting features and access opportunities, and so there is a risk that bats and their roost sites could be impacted by the proposals. As all UK bat species and their roost sites currently receive legal protection prohibiting detrimental impacts (see Appendix A), it is therefore, necessary to carry out a reasonable level of further survey work to ascertain bat presence/absence prior to any potentially impactful works commencing.

Project Constraints

Further Bat Surveys

4.7 Further survey work is necessary to confirm the presence/absence of bat roosts at the site. The required further surveys are time restricted to the peak bat active period between May and August inclusive.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Recommendations are detailed below. A summary of the legislation afforded to bats is detailed in Appendix A.

Further Bat Surveys

5.2 To confirm the presence/absence of roosting bats at the site, two bat emergence surveys must be carried out between May and August inclusive. Three experienced bat surveyors will be required, along with one unattended night-vision aid and static detector (a total of 4 survey positions) to fully survey the building.

5.3 The survey should follow the current survey guidelines (Collins, 2023) and commence 15 minutes prior to sunset and finish a minimum of 1.5hrs after sunset, during suitable weather conditions. The surveys must be spaced a minimum of three weeks apart, preferably more, in order to improve reliability of any conclusions drawn. Night-vision aids should be used to assist the survey and improve visibility during low light conditions.

5.4 If a roost is identified at the site, additional roost characterisation surveys would be required to fully assess the status of the roost and inform an impact assessment and any licensing (mitigation (and compensation)) requirements.

General

5.5 If the recommendations within this report are not implemented within 18 months of the date of this survey, a re-survey of the site building will be required.

6. REFERENCES

- * CT Ecology Ltd. (2025). *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at Cuckfield Cottage Homes, Cuckfield, West Sussex*. Unpublished report for Cuckfield Cottage Homes Trust. CT Ecology: West Sussex.
- * The British Standards Institution (2013). *Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development BS42020:2013*. BSI Standards Limited
- * Collins, J. (ed.). (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. 4th edn. The Bat Conservation Trust, London
- * Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (2025) *Ecological Data Search for Cuckfield Cottage Homes, Cuckfield, West Sussex*. Unpublished report for CT Ecology. SxBRC: West Sussex.

Appendix A

Legislation

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

This section contains information pertaining to the legislation and planning policy applicable in Britain. This information is not applicable to Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands. Information contained in the following appendix is provided for guidance only.

Species

The objective of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (formerly The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) and The Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007 (as amended) is to conserve plants and animals which are considered to be rare across Europe.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) implements the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and also implements the obligations set out for species protection from the Council Directive 2009/147/EC (formerly 79/409/EEC) on the Conservation of Wild Birds (EC Birds Directive) in Great Britain.

Various amendments have been made since the Wildlife & Countryside Act came into force in 1981. Further details pertaining to alterations of the Act can be found on the following website: www.opsi.gov.uk. Key amendments have been made through the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000) and Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

There are a number of other legislative Acts affording protection to species and habitats. These include

- * Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000
- * Deer Act 1991
- * Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- * Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- * Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

Bats

Bats are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This act protects individuals from:

- * intentional or reckless disturbance (at any level);
- * intentional or reckless obstruction of access to any place of shelter or protection; and
- * selling, offering or exposing for sale, possession or transporting for purpose of sale

In addition, all species of bat are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 2. Regulation 41 prohibits:

- * deliberate killing, injuring or capturing of Schedule 2 species (all bats);
- * deliberate disturbance of bat species as to impair their ability:
 - (i) to survive, breed, or reproduce, or to rear or nurture young; and
 - (ii) to hibernate or migrate.
- * deliberate disturbance of bat species as to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species;
- * damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place; and
- * keeping, transporting, selling, exchanging or offering for sale whether live or dead or of any part thereof.

A Protected Species Mitigation Licence (PSML) issued by Natural England will be required for works liable to affect a bat roost or for operations likely to result in a level of disturbance which might impair their ability to undertake activities listed above. A licence is required to allow derogation from the relevant legislation but also to enable appropriate mitigation measures to be put in place and monitored.