

# ROOSTING BATS

## DO I NEED A BAT SURVEY?

If you're planning a development where there is a reasonable likelihood of roosting bats being present and/or affected by the proposed works, then a bat survey (also known as a 'Preliminary Roost Appraisal (PRA)' or 'Phase 1 bat survey') will likely be required. If you think you might need a bat survey, it is important that you appoint a suitably experienced and licensed bat ecologist.

**But how do I know if my development will impact on bats?** The first step is to get in touch to discuss your plans, we will provide free initial advice on whether a bat survey would likely be required for your project. A list of common developments that are likely to impact on roosting bats is provided below:

- Building demolition / extension / conversions;
- Works to the roof, weather boarding or hanging tiles / fascia and soffits;
- Loft conversions / loft works / roof raising;
- Roof alterations, including new roof lights/dormer windows;
- Works to quarries / caves or built structures such as tunnels, bridges, ice houses, cellars and other underground structures;
- And / or illumination / changes to exterior lighting (e.g. light spill onto a church, building, tree, woodland, watercourse or hedgerow or other features deemed suitable for bats).

**Why are bats protected?** Over the last few decades, bat populations have declined due to habitat loss and development, and a large proportion of bats are now occupying man-made structures such as houses, barns, outbuildings and churches. As a result, bats and their resting places (known as 'roosts') are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Some rarer bats are also afforded additional legal protection under Annex II of The EC Species and Habitats Directive (1992). All bats in the UK are listed as a European Protected Species (EPS), and it is illegal to:

- Deliberately capture, injure, kill bats;
- Deliberately or recklessly disturb bat(s) in their roost;
- Damage or destroy a place used by bats for breeding or resting (roosts), even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time;

- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost; or
- Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat of a species found in the wild in the EU (dead or alive) or any part of a bat.

You will need a bat EPS licence from Natural England if any of your planned works impact on roosting bats (see below).

## WHATS INVOLVED IN A BAT SURVEY?

### Buildings/structures and tree surveys

We will arrange a daytime visit to your property/site to undertake an initial assessment on any buildings/structures/trees that will be impacted as part of the proposed works. The ecologist will conduct a thorough search for signs of bats including:

- Bat droppings;
- Staining on potential bat entrance / exit points;
- Feeding signs such as butterfly wings and casings;
- And presence of live / dead bats.

Should evidence of roosting bats be found, then the building/structure/tree would be identified as a 'confirmed bat roost'. Any bat droppings found will need to be sent to a laboratory for DNA analysis, which will confirm the bat species present (as required by the Local Planning Authorities).

Many of our native bats are crevice-dwelling species and potential evidence of these bats is often concealed due to the nature and remote location of their roosts. Common roosting areas include behind hanging tiles/fascia/soffits/barge boards/cladding/weather boarding/lead flashing; between roofing tiles and felt, in the roof apex and eaves and in cavity walls. Bats will tuck themselves into the smallest of gaps and crevices and so can be easily missed during the survey. Therefore, should no evidence of roosting bats be found, the ecologist will assess the building/structure/tree on a sliding scale of 'negligible' to 'high potential' for supporting roosting bats. This assessment will be made by evaluating the presence and number of potential bat access points (such as gaps under roof tiles), potential roosting areas and the immediate habitat surroundings.

If the building/structure/tree features evidence of roosting bats, or holds potential to support roosting bats, then dusk emergence/dawn re-entry surveys (also known as 'bat activity surveys' or 'Phase 2 bat surveys') will be required in accordance with The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Good Practice Survey Guidelines (Collins, 2016) (see 'What happens next?' below).

## Bat foraging/commuting habitat surveys

In addition to a building/structure/tree survey, an assessment will also be made, where necessary, of any habitats on site of their potential to support foraging and commuting bats. Your development may affect habitats on site, through vegetation clearance; loss/severance of hedgerows; or indirect impacts such as a change in light spill in the area, which may have negative impacts on foraging bats.

If suitable habitat is identified, further bat activity transect surveys alongside static monitoring may be required, this involves a walking route across the site to record any bat activity.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If the initial bat survey has determined that there is 'negligible potential' for bats and no evidence of bats has been recorded, then a bat report will be provided to support your application shortly following this survey. However, if the building/structure/tree has been identified to support bats, or holds 'potential' for roosting bats, then a series of bat activity surveys will be required to inform the report for planning. **The following information regarding further bat activity surveys should be noted:**

- Bat activity survey(s) on buildings/structures/trees must be undertaken between May and August during the optimal bat survey season (if three surveys are required then one of the three surveys can be conducted in the sub-optimal month of September). Local Planning Authorities will not condition these further surveys and they must be undertaken prior to submission of the planning application.
- Each survey must be spaced a minimum of two weeks apart.
- The survey(s) must be conducted in suitable weather conditions (no rain/strong winds and a minimum of 10c in the evening).

The survey(s) involve a number of experienced bat surveyors observing the building/structure/tree around dusk and/or dawn; the surveyors will determine if bats are present/likely absent, the species of bat present, the numbers of bats, locations of any bat access points and any roosting locations. We use specialized bat recording equipment to record any bat activity which helps determine the species of bats present.

The survey data will then be used to inform a report suitable for the Local Planning Authority to determine your planning application. The bat report will include a clear plan of how the works will be undertaken to minimise impacts on roosting bats and may include replacement bat roosting features and supervision of certain activities by a licensed bat ecologist.

If a bat roost is present, then an EPS bat licence or a Bat Low-Impact Class Licence (BLICL) from Natural England may be required. To apply for the Natural England (NE) licence, the bat activity surveys are required to help establish the locations of access points, numbers of bats, type of roost(s) and bat species, which will be crucial in designing the bat mitigation plan. Note that an EPS bat licence can only be obtained following planning approval, once the EPS licence is approved, works may then commence in line with the licence and approved bat report.

## WHERE CAN I GO FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

You can find more information on bats, surveys and the bat licensing process through the following resources:

- [Bat Mitigation Guidelines \(English Nature, 2006\).](#)
- [Bat Conservation Trust. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition \(Collins \*et al.\*, 2016\).](#)
- [Natural England Standing Species Advice: Bats \(Natural England, 2015\).](#)
- [The Bat Conservation Trust \(BCT, 2019\).](#)

You can also get further information by looking up your Local Planning Authority's website, which often provide further information on bats and planning. Alternatively, if you wish to discuss your plans, please fill in the online contact form at [www.abrecology.com](http://www.abrecology.com) or e-mail us with details of your development proposals to [abrecology@gmail.com](mailto:abrecology@gmail.com).