

Preliminary Bat Roosting Assessment Report

Offley Place, Kings Walden Road

March 2025

Maydencroft Limited was appointed to carry out a **Preliminary Bat Roosting Assessment (PBRA)** of the buildings at Offley Place, Kings Walden Road, Great Offley, Hitchin, SG5 3DX. The survey was conducted in preparation for the installation of solar panels on the roofs of the cottage, old stable, boiler room, and ballroom. No internal cabling will be installed.

The site survey was undertaken on the 6th March 2025 by Ecologist Hannah Yetman who is a Level 1 Licenced Ecologist (Registration Number: 2023-11686-CL17-BAT) and is an Accredited Agent under Callum Parradine's Level 2 Bat Survey Licence (Registration Number: 2023-11311-CL18-BAT). The survey was assisted by Ecologist Hannah Brookes. The weather was 14 degrees, sunny and clear.

The survey involved a detailed inspection of the exterior and interior of the buildings. A high-powered torch, telescopic ladder, and endoscope were used to identify and inspect potential roosting features.

Survey results

The section of land concerned in the survey (referred to as the 'Site' from hereafter) covers an area of approximately 0.59ha, and lies within Offley village, approximately 4.42km to the southwest of Hitchin. The Site is surrounded by farmland, hedgerows and woodland parcels characteristic of the Hertfordshire countryside. Offley village, comprised of houses and gardens is located to the west. The A505 is positioned 400m north of the Site. The estate that the Site lies within holds a 17th century manor house previously operated as a hotel which is now used exclusively as an event venue. The estate is comprised of buildings and associated hard standing areas with surrounding parkland, woodland, grassland and scattered mature trees as well as a walled garden and rose garden.

The buildings are described along with the associated potential roosting features (PRFs). Photographs of the buildings and potential bat roosting features are appended to this letter report.



Figure 1: Buildings on Site

Building 1: Old Stable and Boiler Room

The old stable building, along with the attached boiler room, is constructed of brick walls approximately 4m high. These support an open gabled roof covered with slate tiles and featuring lead flashing. A wooden soffit runs the entire length of the stable building up to the cottage and remains largely intact. Some bricks were missing from the external brickwork however the external walls are solid with no cavity and so the missing bricks did not constitute suitable features for bats.

On the south ascension, stepped brickwork extends from the base of the roof to a centrally positioned chimney, which is fitted with a metal guard and a wire grate to prevent bird access. Between the boiler room, located in the most southern room of the old stables, and the stables adjacent, an archway runs from the courtyard to the gardens behind the buildings, within the ceiling of the archway is where the loft hatch for this section is located.

During the internal loft inspection, due to rotten and unsafe flooring, the space was surveyed from the loft hatch. The void measures approximately 25m in length, 7m in width, and 1.5m in height at the apex and extends throughout the length of the stables. It is divided by an internal brick wall before the most northern stable where the roof level changes. The slate roof is lined with wooden boarding (sarking) providing potential crevices for roosting bats and supported by wooden beams. The loft space is uninsulated with horizontal beams across the floor supporting floorboards. Some of the floorboards are rotten, and visible holes expose the stable rooms below. Electrical cables run the entire length of the loft, but no other items have been stored within the space.

During the 2006 surveys, droppings were found attached to the brick wall of the chimney in the southern end but this could not be surveyed; there were however, approximately 20 bat

droppings scattered around the floorboards around the loft hatch, most appeared old but a few were fresh and dark confirming the loft space as an active roost.

Towards the northern end of the stable block, the last stable is positioned approximately 0.2m lower than the rest of the block. This section contains a separate, inaccessible loft space, which is divided from the main roof void by an internal brick wall at the point where the roof level changes. This loft void could not be accessed due to the use of the stable as storage, rendering the loft hatch inaccessible. Within this room, the ceiling had also fallen through, providing a line of direct sight into the loft void. Due to the hazardous conditions of the loft space and the inaccessibility of the hatch, the void was not entered. The loft void was surveyed from the room below and appeared to be of similar construction to the primary loft void. There was wooden sarking lining the stale tiles and wooden beams were present throughout. The loft hatch is kept open, which could provide access points for bats to the loft space as well as the collapsed ceiling.

Building 2: Cottage

Located at the northern end of the stable block, the cottage is constructed with brick cavity walls approximately 5m high, supporting an open gable tiled roof. The brickwork appears mostly well-maintained, with intact mortar throughout.

The western aspect features six well-sealed Georgian windows with lead frames. The open gabled roof reaches approximately 5m in height and is covered with slate tiles and curved ridge tiles, protected by lead flashing. There are two chimneys, positioned at opposite ends of the cottage and set perpendicular to each other. A wooden soffit runs the entire length of the roof edge. A brick wall runs perpendicular to the cottage in the garden to the east, separating the rear of the cottage from the rear of the stables.

The cottage has a separate loft, accessible from one of the upstairs bedrooms. During the time of survey, the loft was infested by flies and so access was limited to the loft hatch. The loft is approximately 10m long, 7m wide, and 2m high at the apex. The interior is lined with a plastic-based material, though it has several tears and gaps. Wooden beams run along the walls and floor, which is insulated. While some areas of the loft are used for storage, this is limited to within 1.5m of the entrance, no droppings or other signs of bat presence were identified.

Building 3: Ballroom

Constructed in 2018, the ballroom features immaculate brickwork with no visible gaps or cracks. The building has a flat, felted roof, with skylights present floor-to-ceiling windows on the north, south, and east aspects, while the west side is connected to the main building. No bat roosting features were observed on any aspect and the building is considered **negligible** for roosting bats.

Roosting potential

Conclusive evidence of roosting bats was found in Building 1 in the form of bat droppings within the loft void. Additionally, a number of potential roosting features (PRF) and access points into Building 1 and 2 were recorded, as detailed in *Table 1* below:

Table 1: Potential bat access and roosting features associated with the buildings

	Potential roosting features
Building 1	<i>Exterior:</i> - Lifted and slipped tiles allowing access into the building on eastern and western aspects. Present at apex of roof with lead flashing present above, which has lifted, indicating potential access into the loft void. - Gaps in soffits on eastern and western aspects. At west aspect, on the southern side, the end of soffit is open and hanging, leaving gap into void. - Missing mortar adjacent to window pane to the west. Possible day roost. - Open loft hatch in ceiling of alleyway, close to southern aspect. Opening into loft space where bat droppings found. Birds nest also immediately adjacent to hatch. - Gap in window frames to the west where three windows stuck open leaving crevice between frame and sill, to the north end facing west. <i>Interior:</i> - Loft void with wooden beams and no roof lining. No large spider webs observed and no large obstructions. Confirmed roost in loft void through presence of bat droppings.
Building 2	<i>Exterior:</i> - Lifted tiles at the west, north and east aspects with openings approximately 2-4cm wide. - Lifted lead flashing presenting two small entrances to the west along ridgeline, approximately 4cm tall and 7cm wide. - Hole in brickwork next to drainpipe on west side, approximately 15cm in diameter leading into a cavity wall. <i>Interior:</i> - Loft void with a torn lined roof and wooden beams. Competitors present in the form of a large fly infestation.
Building 3	No PRF identified.

Based on the evidence found within the loft void, building 1 has been established as a **confirmed roost**. Due to the numerous roosting opportunities and their potential to support bats, along with the suitable surrounding habitat and historical data indicating the presence of a known roost within the loft space, building 2 is considered to be of **high suitability for roosting bats**. Building 3 is considered to be of **negligible suitability for roosting bats** due to the lack of roosting features.

The hibernation status of buildings 1 and 2 are currently unknown. However, presence of year-round open loft hatches and large holes in the loft floor of building 1 suggests that lack of thermal stability would deter bats from hibernating within the loft space. Suitable foraging habitats are, however, located in the immediate surrounding area and known roosts are present in nearby buildings as well as within the loft space of building 1. As well as this, the

lifted tiles on the roof of both buildings would provide suitable overwintering shelter for small numbers of bats. Therefore, it is considered unlikely but possible that bats would overwinter in these structures.

As the presence of roosting bats are confirmed present in building 1 and cannot be precluded at this stage in building 2, the proposed works to the buildings could result in the disturbance or killing/injury of bats and/destruction of a bat roost. This would result in a contravention of the law under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Recommendations

Buildings 1 and 2

The preliminary bat roosting assessment confirmed building 1 as a roost and identified that building 2 has **high suitability for roosting bats**. Therefore, in line with the *Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Survey Guidelines for Professional Ecologists*, three dusk emergence or dawn re-entry will be required between May and August to be confident in a positive result for bat presence and characterise the bat roost in building 1 and confirm or negate bat presence in building 2 and accurately characterise the roost if present.

If it is confirmed, following further survey and assessment, that the works on the buildings will result in impact on bat roost/s, the project has the potential to be unlawful without a derogation of the Habitats Regulations and is subject to the meeting of the Habitats Regulations Three Stage Test and a European Protected Species Mitigation licence will likely be required.

Building 3

No further survey work required.

Photographs

The Old Stable and Boiler Room Loft Void:



Figure 2. The loft void within the old stable and boiler room.



Figure 3. Roof structure.



Figure 4. Bat droppings found adjacent to the open loft hatch, within the old stable.



Figure 5. Birds nest immediately adjacent to open hatch.

The Old Stable and Boiler Room East Side:

Figure 6. East aspect of the Old Stable.



Figure 7. Brick wall perpendicular to the east aspect of the old stable.



Figure 8. The alleyway running between the boiler room and old stable, containing the open loft hatch.

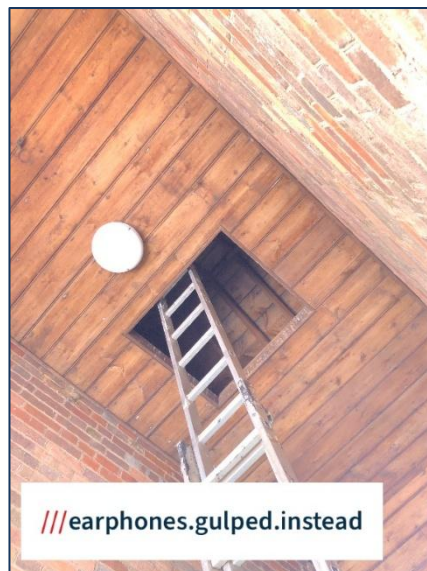


Figure 9. open loft hatch into loft space.

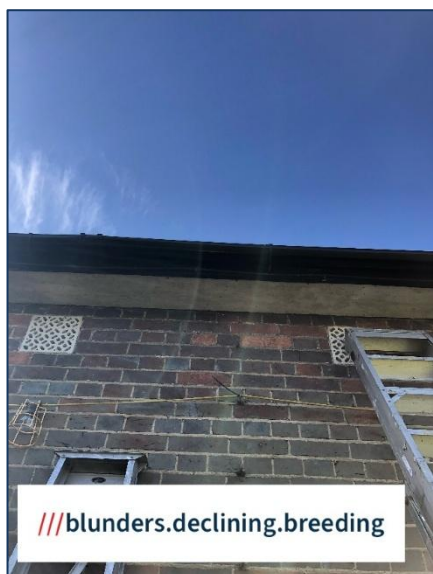


Figure 10. Gap in soffit on the east side of the old stable and boiler room stretching 13m (to ///risk.poetry.validated) with a width of 1-3.5cm.





Figure 11. Intersection between the two soffits

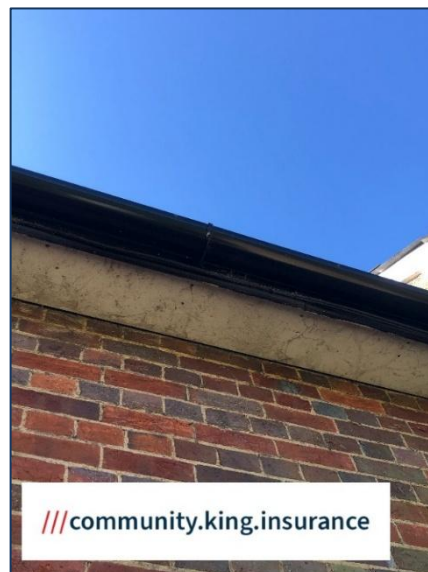


Figure 12. Gap in soffit on the east side of the old Stable and boiler Room stretching 8m (from ///risk.poetry.validated) with a width of 1-3.5cm

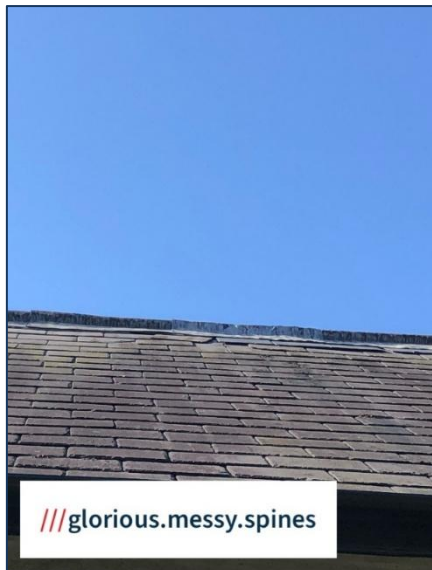


Figure 13. Lifted and slipped tiles on the east side of the roof apex of the old stable.



Figure 14. Lifted lead flashing upon cottage roof.

The Old Stable and Boiler west Side:



Figure 15. The old stables and boiler room.



Figure 16. Multiple raised tiles along full length.



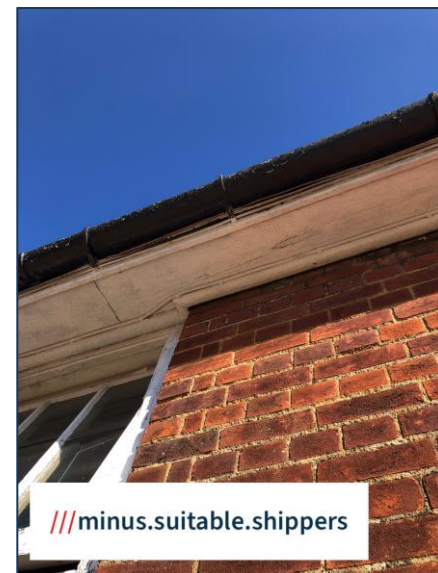
Figure 17. Missing mortar adjacent to window pane.



Figure 18. Slipped and missing tiles.



Figure 19a and b. Gap in soffit stretching approx. 10m, width undulates from 0cm to 3cm.



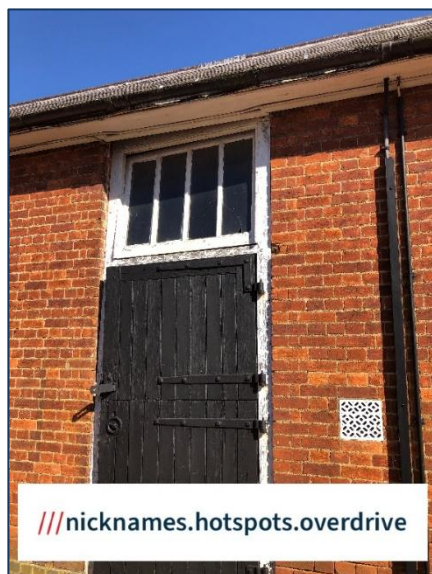


Figure 20. One of three windows stuck open, leaving crevice between frame and sill. Hole in soffit also present above window.

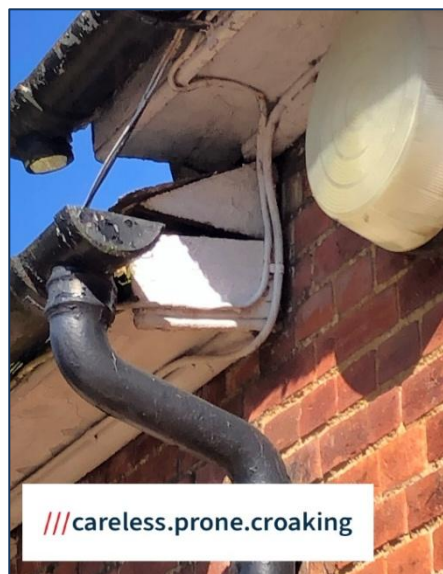


Figure 21. Gap opening into soffit.

The Old Stable and Boiler South Aspect:



Figure 22. The old stable southern aspect and gable.

The Old Cottage Voids:



Figure 23. The cottage loft void.



Figure 24. Cavity wall of cottage

The Old Cottage West Side:



Figure 25. The cottage, west aspect.

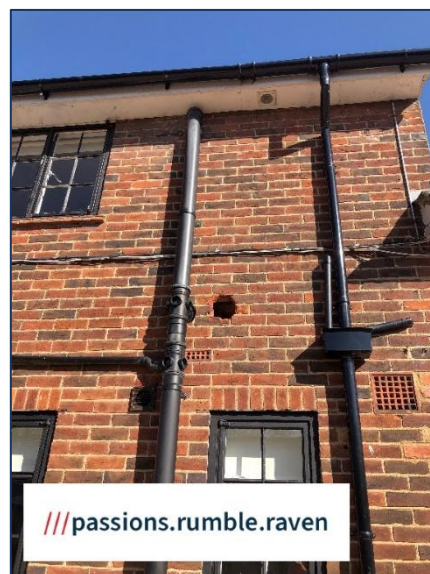


Figure 26. Hole in brickwork leading into a cavity wall.

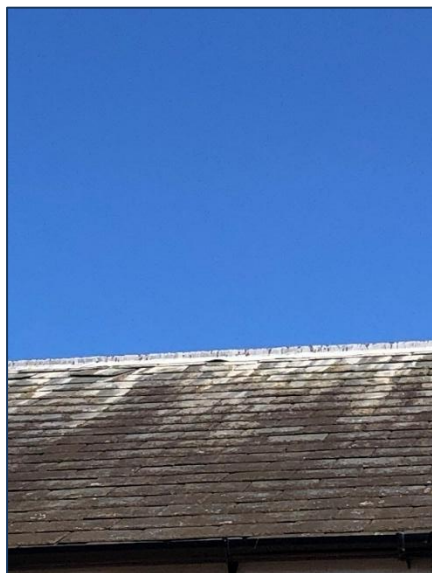


Figure 28. Lifted lead flashing

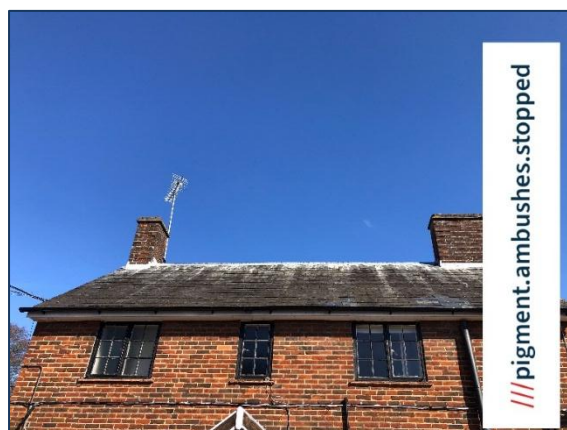


Figure 27. Lifted tiles across entire roof

The Old Cottage East Side:

Figure 29. Eastern aspect of the cottage.



Figure 30. Slipped tiles around chimneys, providing crevices.

The Old Cottage North Side:

Figure 31. North aspect of the cottage.

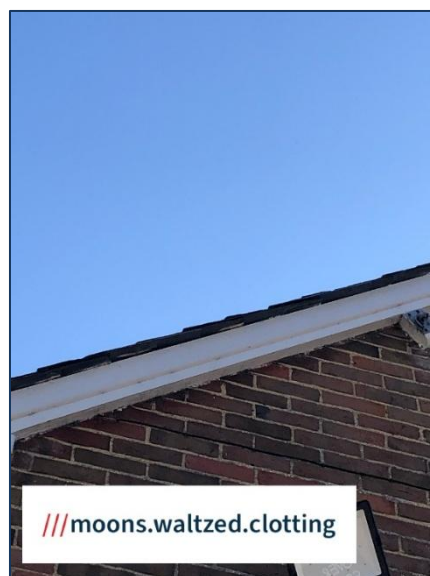


Figure 32. Small gaps between soffit and tiles, widest approx. 3cm.

The Ball Room:



Figure 33. The Ballroom, east aspect.

The Building Interiors:



Figure 34a and b. Boiler room interior.



Figure 35 and b. The old stable interior.



Figure 35a and b. The old stable's deteriorated ceiling.



Figure 36. The rotten, wooden ceiling boards of the old stable.

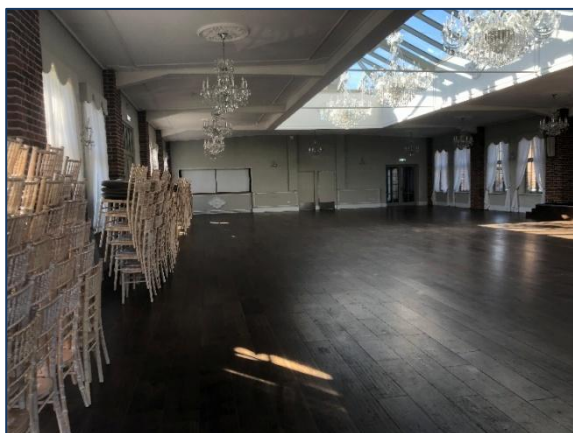


Figure 37a and b. The ballroom interior.