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Report for: XXX



Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

**Warnham Court Farmhouse,
Warnham**

Executive Summary

Warnham Court Farmhouse was surveyed for bats on 30 August 2025, 17:00–19:00, under light rain following a dry spell; temperature was 16°C. The property, dating from 1547 and restored in 1888, is a brick-built house with complex roof features and loft insulation. A Class 2 bat licence holder (CL15, CL18, CL47) and BCT Competency Level 4 ecologist conducted an external and internal inspection using professional equipment, including thermal imaging. Numerous structural features suitable for bats were identified, but no evidence of bat occupation was found (no guano, dead bats, staining). The site context shows good suitability for bats due to its proximity to connected habitats. There are no Special Areas of Conservation for bats within 10 km, though a licence was previously granted nearby for a brown long-eared bat roost site. The property is assessed as having high potential for future bat use but only low potential for hibernation. Recommended next steps include three emergence surveys between May and September, with full details to be confirmed by a bat ecologist; no hibernation survey is needed, and any works must avoid the November–March hibernation period.

Introduction

Background and Purpose

Leith Ecology Consulting Ltd. were commissioned to complete a preliminary roost assessment (PRA) for bats at Warnham Court Farm House, Church Street, Warnham, West Sussex, RH12 3DZ ('the property'). The request for support was made in response to the property owner's planning consultant to support a planning application which is proposed to include disturbance to the existing roof.

The purpose of this report is to determine the likely risk of the proposed development to bats and their breeding sites or resting places (roosts) and if necessary, recommend further surveys to support the development of avoidance or mitigation measures.

Proposed development

To be confirmed

Relevant Planning Policies and Legislation

All bat species in England are designated as European Protected Species (EPS) and are subject to strict legal protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to deliberately kill, injure, disturb or capture bats, or to damage or destroy their breeding sites and resting places, including when bats are not present. Additionally, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb bats while they occupy a place used for shelter or protection, or to obstruct access to such places.

Several bat species are listed as being of principal importance for nature conservation under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Planning authorities must consider the conservation status of all species of bat in their decision making, in line with statutory biodiversity duty and standing advice from Natural England.

Developers may require a bat mitigation licence from Natural England if an activity is likely to affect bats or their roosts. Planning proposals must be supported by appropriate survey evidence carried out by a suitably qualified and licensed ecologist following current industry guidance, including those published by CIEEM and the latest UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines. Surveys must assess the presence and conservation importance of roosts, flight routes, commuting and foraging habitats, and inform the design of avoidance, mitigation and, if necessary, compensation measures.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Local Planning Authorities to apply the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, mitigate, compensate) when considering schemes that may impact protected species, and to ensure no net loss of biodiversity. The planning decision must be informed by appropriate survey and assessment, and the implementation of suitable mitigation must be secured via planning conditions or legal agreements.

Recent updates in policy and practice, such as the Bat Earned Recognition scheme, enable proportionate licensing routes for development affecting bat roosts, provided developers partner with accredited ecological consultants. Site management and monitoring plans may be required to ensure mitigation measures are successful, and that enhancements for bats are maintained over the long term.

Methodology

The assessment employs a systematic approach to evaluate the ecological implications of a proposed development project.

The methodology consists of the following steps:

Site Boundary Definition

The assessment begins with the review of the proposed development's redline boundary or areas of interest. This information can be provided in various formats, including postcodes, grid references, or simple drawings/pictures.

Desk based assessment

A desk-based assessment was conducted to gather existing ecological information for the project site and its surrounding area. This assessment relied on a review of readily available online resources and aerial imagery to identify potential ecological features and constraints. The assessment was complemented by the professional judgement and ecological expertise of experienced consultants, a 2km search area was applied given the small scale of the proposed development.

The following sources were used to inform the desk-based assessment, species data reported where less than ten years old:

- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website
- The National Biodiversity Network species atlas website
- Google™ Earth Pro

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

The PRA was completed on 30 August 2025 and comprised a detailed inspection of the proposed development area through direct internal and external access affording close examination of potential bat entry/exit points, potential roosting sites and evidence of occupation (droppings, dead bats etc.). To ensure a thorough search, the following survey aids were used: high-power torch, endoscope and close-focusing binoculars.

The PRA was completed in line with current best practice by a competent bat ecologist holding a Natural England Level 2 CL18 bat survey licence.

Quality Assurance

All bat survey work and data analysis were subject to robust internal quality assurance procedures, including review by a senior ecologist experienced in bat ecology. The methodology for bat surveys was developed in accordance with or exceeding the standards set by CIEEM, the latest UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines (2025), DEFRA, Natural England standing advice, and Horsham District Council's planning requirements for protected species surveys. Surveys were designed and executed using recognised bat survey protocols, ensuring compliance with current legislation and best professional practice, and supporting reliable assessment outcomes for planning decisions.

Limitations

The external inspection was conducted during the main bat activity season, which is optimal for detecting field signs and assessing potential bat usage of the site. Although the survey was undertaken during rainfall, evidence such as bat guano, staining, or feeding remains is unlikely to have been significantly degraded or washed away, particularly where sheltered features are present. However, sustained or heavy rain can sometimes obscure more ephemeral evidence, which should be acknowledged.

Direct elevated inspection of all roof features was not possible due to the extensive number of potential bat access points and the physical layout of the building. This restricted close visual assessment of certain timber detail, gaps beneath eaves, and other elevated features that may be used as bat entry or exit points. As a result, the suitability of some features was assigned conservatively and additional targeted survey effort may be recommended if works are proposed in these areas.

Full internal inspection of the southern loft void was limited by extremely restricted roof space and the obstruction posed by the central chimney structure. This prevented a comprehensive search for bat

evidence and a complete assessment of internal roosting potential in that zone. Where internal access is constrained, there remains a small risk that existing bat roosts or field signs may not have been observed. This limitation is offset by the application of precautionary assessment and may inform recommendations for further survey or ongoing monitoring prior to development.

Results

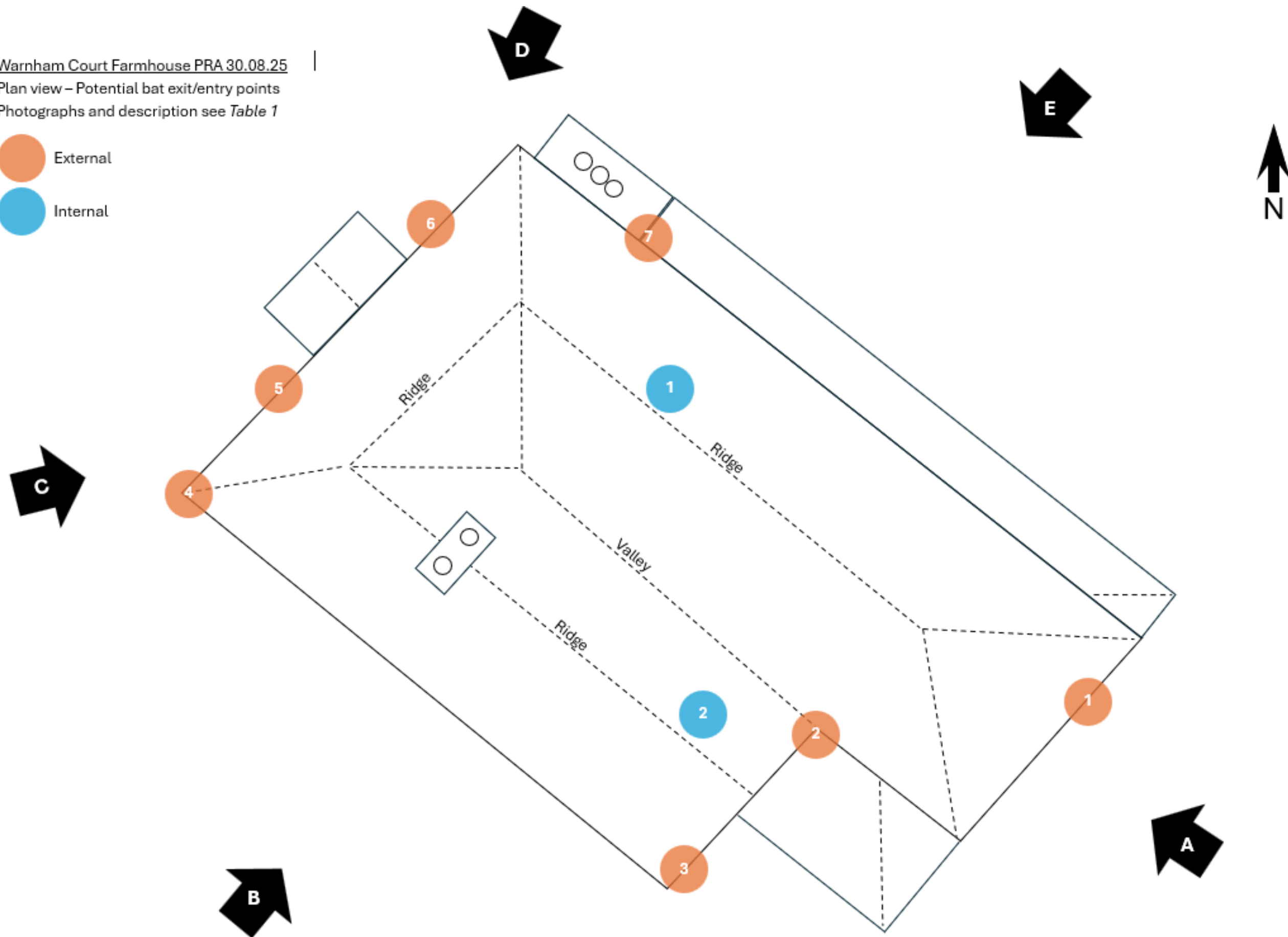
The survey results are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Survey Results

Building information	
History of bat use	Tenants do not know of roosting bats within the building but often see foraging bats in the evening, commenting that may originate from nearby derelict barn
Site type	House
Age (approximate age of construction)	Original construction 1547, restored 1888 (sourced from house inscription)
Wall construction	<i>Material</i> – Brick <i>Structure</i> – Unsure re. cavity wall, unlikely due to property age <i>Cavity wall insulation</i> – unlikely, see above re. structure <i>Cladding</i> – none on ground floor; hanging tiles on first floor; part pebbledash render on eastern elevation
Roof Covering	<i>Covering</i> – Stone <i>Lined with</i> – board and bituminous sheeting <i>Insulation</i> – insulation on floor of loft voids; blown-in (loose) in northern loft; and fibreglass in southern loft void
External inspection	Completed from ground-level with the aid of close-focussing binoculars. Potential bat exit/entry features are numerous and varied from first floor upwards to ridge tiles including gaps beneath hanging tiles, flashing, exposed rafters, stone roof tiles, spalled render etc. Building schematic, photos and description provided within Appendix 1. No evidence of bats was found e.g. guano (droppings), dead bats, oil staining etc.
Internal inspection	Access was gained throughout northern loft void; extensive evidence of rat and mouse were observed including runs and droppings. Access was gained to the eastern end of the southern loft void; evidence of rat and mouse droppings were observed. Building schematic, photos and description provided within Appendix 1. No evidence of bat occupation was found.
Limitations	External inspection was completed during the main bat active season, although raining during the survey, it's unlikely that guano or similar evidence would be weathered away. Direct elevated inspection was not completed due to the extensive nature of potential bat exit/entry points. Full internal access could not be completed

	within the southern loft void due to the restricted roof space around the central chimney structure.
Property context	
Local habitat	The property is located to the northwest of Horsham town in the small village of Warnham. The house and garden are well connected to adjacent vegetated gardens and in close proximity to the wider landscape with interconnected treelines, hedgerows, watercourses, tree belts and woodland blocks within a farmed landscape offering good suitability for roosting, commuting and foraging bats.
Designated sites for bats	No Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for bats are present within 10km of the property. (https://magic.defra.gov.uk accessed 31.08.25).
Granted Bat Licences	A single licence was granted for the damage and destruction of a brown long-eared roost site in 2017 approximately 500m to the north of the property. (https://magic.defra.gov.uk accessed 31.08.25).
Potential suitability assessment	
High – A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site. (see Table 4.1 – BCT, 2018¹). The property offers low potential for hibernating bats.	
Further survey	
At the time of writing, specific information regarding desired development were not available, however, works impacting potential bat exit/entry features and roost sites detailed in this PRA are likely to require: Three emergence surveys between May and September, with at least two of the surveys between May and August, it is recommended that surveys are spaced at least three weeks apart. No further hibernation surveys are recommended; however, works should be programmed to avoid the main hibernation period as individuals may be present and vulnerable during November to March inclusive. Full proposal details should be reviewed by a bat ecologist to finalise a detailed survey programme.	

¹ Collins J (ed) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.



Appendix 1. Photographs from survey 30 August 2025



Viewpoint A



Viewpoint B



Viewpoint C



Viewpoint D



Viewpoint E



External note 1 – gaps at eaves, beneath hanging tiles and flashing detail



External note 2 – gaps at eaves, beneath hanging tiles and roof stone tiles



External note 3 – Spalled pebbledash render between timbers



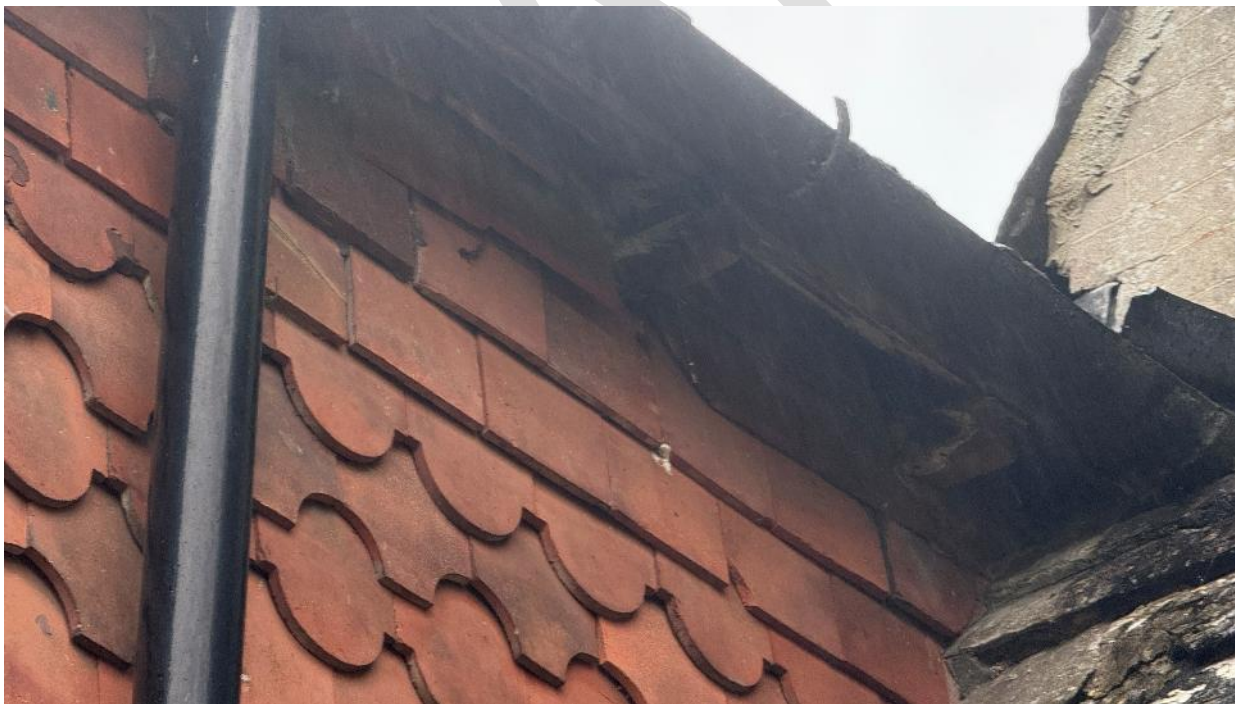
External note 4 – Missing gutter leading to heavily water damaged corner, gaps beneath hanging tiles and roof stone tiles



External note 5 - gaps at eaves, beneath hanging tiles and roof stone tiles



External note 6 - gaps at eaves, beneath hanging tiles and roof stone tiles



External note 7 – extensive gaps at eaves and beneath hanging tiles



External note 7 – view beneath shelter running length of north east aspect illustrating roof tile detail



Internal note 1 – king post roof showing blown-in insulation



Internal note 1 –blown-in insulation with extensive rodent runs and droppings



Internal note 1 – Heavy cobwebbing (left) and woodworm (right)



Internal note 2 – king post roof showing change in roof level and fiberglass insulation



Internal note 2 – disused wasp nest at eastern end