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PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEY

16-18 GROSVENOR ROAD

WREXHAM

NORTH WALES

FOR

Montpelier Estates

27th September 2015

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Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Bat biology**
- 3. Legislation**
- 4. Aims**
- 5. Study area**
- 6. Methodology**
- 7. Results**
- 8. Conclusions, Recommendations & Mitigation for Bats**
- 9. Nesting birds**
- 10. References**

Appendix 1 – Site plan

Appendix 2 – Site photos

Appendix 3 – Mitigation diagrams

1. INTRODUCTION

A bat and bird survey was undertaken on the 23rd September 2015, this is a repeat of a survey undertaken in June 2013. This survey was carried out by David Bennett, a licensed and experienced bat surveyor and ecologist (CCW & Natural England licenses) following a request by Montpelier Estates. The survey was requested to satisfy planning requirements in respect of any protected species issues for two properties located at 16-18 Grosvenor Road, Wrexham, North Wales. A planning consent will be sought to permit the redevelopment of the site and buildings.

2. BAT BIOLOGY

There are now 17 species of bat (breeding) in the UK, many of which can be found within this part of Wales. Each bat gives birth just once a year, early in summer, the females tending to gather together in a communal roost to give birth and bring up their young. This is the time when they are most likely to use buildings. By the end of the summer the roosts are often vacated for other more suitable hibernation sites such as caves, mines or trees. Hibernation sites are usually characterised by stable temperatures with a high level of humidity. When temperatures fall and food becomes scarce they hibernate and live off body fat stored during the autumn. During mild winters bats can still often be seen on an evening flying and looking for food. Bats use a variety of different structures for the purposes of roosting, these can include mature trees, caves, mines, buildings (old and new), bridges and tunnels.

Bats will generally cause no harm to buildings or the people that occupy the buildings. They can be very discreet and are often not noticed because of their preference to occupy tiny spaces, cracks and crevices in roof voids. Some species such as the brown long eared bat will utilise open loft areas for flying and moving around in. They will roost on bare exposed timber beams, typically beneath the ridge beam. The droppings produced are harmless (largely made up of insect fragments) and do not carry any disease although a very large roost can sometimes produce large quantities of droppings.

3. LEGISLATION

All of our species of domestic bat are protected under both UK and European legislation. In the UK they are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. The Habitats Directive has recently been superseded by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 which came into force on the 1st April 2010

To summarise it is illegal not only to intentionally kill, injure or take any bat but also too recklessly or intentionally damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection, or to disturb a bat while it is occupying such a place. A roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time. The reason for this is that bats have a tendency to remain loyal to certain roost sites, often over a long period of time.

The presence of a species protected under European or UK legislation is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal which, if carried out would be likely to result in disturbance or harm to the species or its habitat. Section 74 (2) of the CroW Act 2000 (now updated by Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 requires the publication of lists of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biological diversity. The list is regularly changed and updated and many bat species appear on it. NERC consolidates the requirements of the CroW Act in placing duties upon government agencies, including local authorities, to ensure the conservation of Biodiversity.

4. AIMS

The aims of the survey were:

1. To describe any evidence of protected species in the study area.
2. To assess the impact of demolishing/converting/renovating the buildings.
3. To suggest mitigation measures as appropriate.

5. STUDY AREA

16 Grosvenor Road

A large detached building (built in 1908) constructed in a traditional manner with load bearing brick walls supporting a pitched timber framed roof covered with slate (no underfelt is present). The property has a small basement which appears to have been used for storage. Despite the size of the building the two adjoining loft areas are quite small because the top rooms extend into the roof void. The sectional flat roof buildings previously found at the rear have now been demolished.

18 Grosvenor Road

A similar but more recent large detached building constructed in a traditional manner with load bearing brick walls supporting a pitched timber framed roof covered with slate (no underfelt is present). There is a small flat roof extension at the rear of the building.

Coach house

This is located at the rear of the site and consists of a small store/shed with the adjoining coach house. Both are constructed from brick with a pitched and slated roof without underfelt. There are some holes in the roof area of the small building and also some gaps in the walls, the coach house is in a better condition and supports a small <1 metre high roof void.

The site plan is shown in Appendix 1 and the photos are shown in Appendix 2.

6. METHODOLOGY

The buildings were subjected to an internal and external survey on the 23rd September the weather conditions were dry and clear. As much of the buildings as possible was searched (health and safety and access permitting) using a Cluson rechargeable lamp, a Seesnake endoscope (paying particular attention to the roof sections, ledges and any gaps in the brickwork). A search was made for bat droppings, staining, odour, old skeletons and feeding signs (such as wing casings etc). Other evidence such as bird's nests and other signs of nesting birds was also looked for both internally and externally.

7. RESULTS

16 Grosvenor Road

No evidence of bats was found anywhere inside or outside of the building. No droppings were apparent on the floor, roof and wall areas and there were no signs of feeding perches. The internal roof timbers are exposed but they do not support any features suitable for roosting bats. The two loft spaces are generally very dusty and covered with cobwebs. The presence of these cobwebs would have the advantage of catching any droppings from past roosting bats.

Externally the main building appears to be well sealed around the roof area with intact roof tiles and lead flashing. The eaves do offer some potential points of access and light can be seen when inside the roof voids. However, no evidence of bats was found on this occasion (or the previous occasion which was mid-summer) and all areas can be viewed down to the wall plate. Internally the fireplaces are all sealed and it looks like the chimney pots have been blocked or sealed.

The basement area was inspected and no evidence of bats was found although the cool conditions could be used for hibernation if the building remains unused for a period of time. Access is still available from the louvre entrance at the front as shown in the photo below.

18, Grosvenor Road

No evidence of bats was found anywhere inside or outside of this building. No droppings were apparent on the floor, roof and wall areas and there were no signs of feeding perches. The internal roof timbers are exposed but they do not support any features suitable for roosting bats. The loft space is generally quite dusty and covered with cobwebs, there are no signs of disturbance. The presence of these cobwebs would have the advantage of catching any droppings from past roosting bats. There are no obvious changes from the situation found during the previous survey.

Coach house/small brick shed

The smaller building adjoining the coach house is boarded up at the front. Internally the building is quite open and light and there is no evidence to suggest that bats are present. This section was previously used by a large number of pigeons and doves although at the time of this visit no birds were present. Evidence suggests that they had nested in there quite recently though.

The coach house is a larger building which is quite light internally from the window on the front elevation. An inspection hatch was cut into the roof during the previous visit to access the small void which is less than one metre in height. The void was inspected and as before it appears that there has been no disturbance in this area for a long period of time. The cobwebs are dense and hanging from the roof timbers suggesting no movement by bats or any other species. There is no underfelt or insulation which allows all areas to be viewed. There is some limited potential for bats to roost on top of the wall plate but given that there is no visual evidence inside or outside of the building the potential is low.

8. CONCLUSIONS, IMPACTS AND MITIGATION FOR BATS

No evidence suggesting a bat roost has been found during this survey and for the reasons suggested is thought unlikely and no further survey work is required. It therefore appears that there are no apparent issues relating to the proposed conversion/demolition in respect of bats at the present time. As outlined above it is often difficult to inspect every crevice or hidden section in a building (due to access or health and safety issues). In addition bats tend to be nomadic, which reduces the chances of finding bats on one or even several visits. This situation arises frequently when carrying out this type of survey. However, the survey has been completed to a good standard and it is not anticipated that any problems will occur. Carrying out the survey also puts in place demonstrable safeguards regarding the avoidance of illegal activities.

As a general note, some buildings offer potential for over-wintering and seasonal occupancy for individual bats. This use can be sporadic during the season and actual presence through emergence surveys cannot be fully confirmed. It is therefore recommended that the following precautionary recommendations should be undertaken as good working practice during the conversion/demolition phase.

- **All roof tiles should be removed by hand to ensure that no roosting, torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the proposed works.**
- **All door and window frames should be removed with care to ensure that no roosting, torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the proposed works.**
- **Structural members, lintel bearings, purlins or wall plates should be removed with care to ensure that no roosting, torpid or hibernating bats are injured during the proposed works.**

- In the event that bats were found during the demolition/conversion then all work should cease and Natural Resource Wales (Buckley office) and/or a licensed bat worker should be contacted for further advice.

The renovation of the original building, number 16, offers the opportunity to create and retain some bat friendly features. *Pipistrelle sp.* and other crevice dwellers such as *Myotis* bats will readily take to new and/or converted buildings as long as suitable access points and features are retained or created

To secure biodiversity enhancement in accordance with Welsh Assembly Government guidance TAN 5 it is recommended that the following features could be included to try and encourage bats to use the building.

Pictures of the examples are shown in Appendix 3.

- Install four Slateline bat access tiles to the south or west facing roof elevations (positioned above the attic areas). These will provide direct access into the roof voids.
- Create/retain some access under the eaves to the space leading into the roof void from the wall plate, a gap of 25-30mm is all that is required.
- Ensure any timber treatment is carried out using chemicals which are safe for bats (Natural England list). A certificate should be obtained as required.
- Where possible ensure any external lighting is low level and directional towards the ground.

9. NESTING BIRDS

All breeding birds are protected under Section 1(1) and 1(2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. This makes it an offence to damage, disturb, or obstruct access to nests during the bird breeding season (generally March to August).

No evidence of nesting birds was found in and around the two main buildings although there is some potential for birds under the eaves of number 16. The small brick building adjacent to the coach house previously supported a large number of doves/pigeons. This species can nest outside of the normal nesting season, especially in urban locations.

Other bird species have also nested in this building so any works should be undertaken between October and February to avoid any potential disturbance. If a nest was found (or in the course of being made) then all work should cease until the young have fledged – this applies to all bird species including pigeons and doves. Any removal of ivy from the coach house should also be undertaken during the winter months.

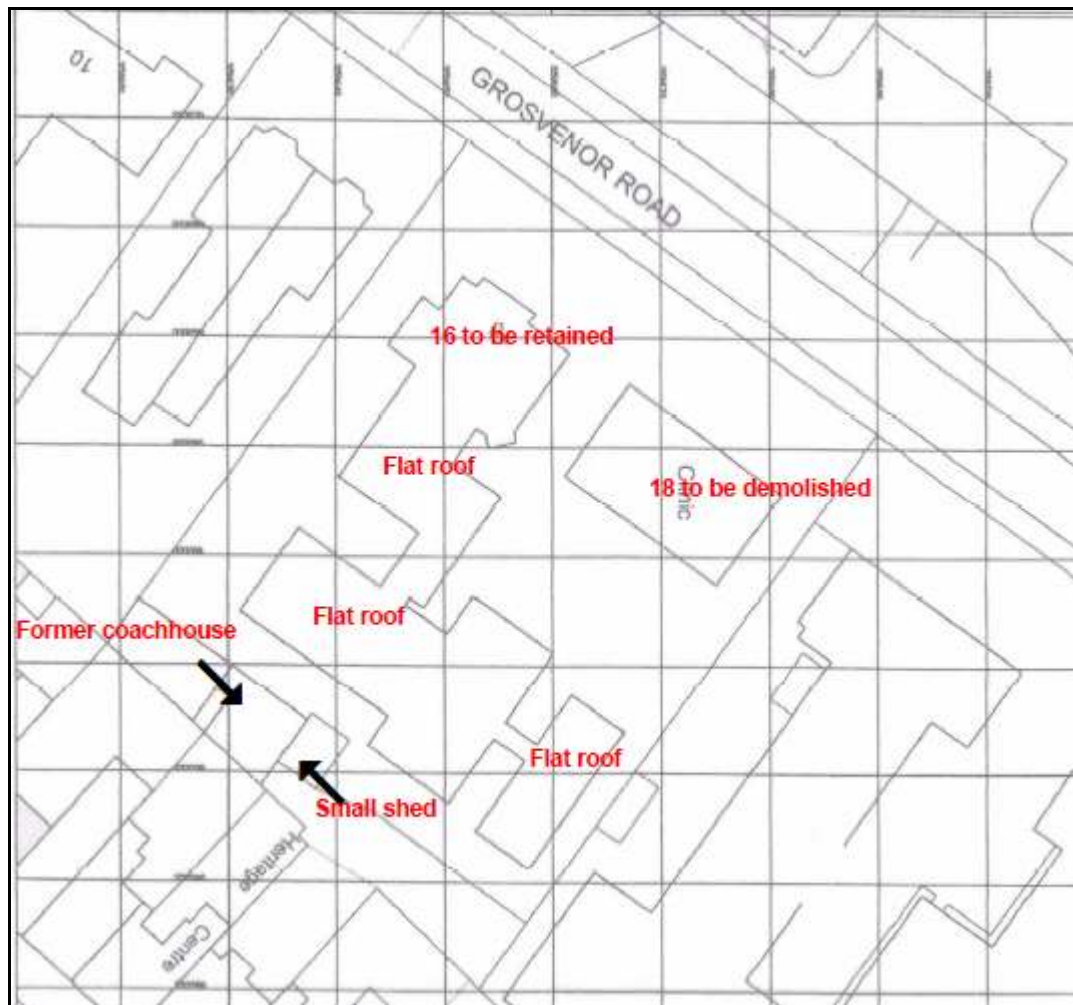
10. REFERENCES

BCT 2012 *Bat Survey Guidelines* London UK

Joint Nature Conservation Committee 2004 *Bat Workers Manual* JNCC Peterborough

Mitchell-Jones A J 2004 *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* English Nature Peterborough UK

Appendix 1 – Site plan – the flat roof sections shown on this plan have now been demolished



Appendix 2 – Site Photos

1. Front elevation of number 16 which will be retained



2. Front elevation of number 18 which will be demolished



3. All soffit areas of number 18 are well sealed



4. Intact soffits



5. Rear elevation of number 18



6. Roof areas of number 18 all intact with no missing tiles, gaps etc



7. Side elevation of number 16



8. Roof area of number 16 with rooms extending into the roof



9. Louvre entrance into the cellar/basement area



10. Side elevation of number 16



11. Rear elevation of number 16



12. The former coach house



13. Front elevation of the coach house – roof void shown



14. A hatch was previously cut into the ceiling to enable the sealed void to be inspected, the internal height is less than one metre.



15. The small brick/shed/store adjoining the coach house

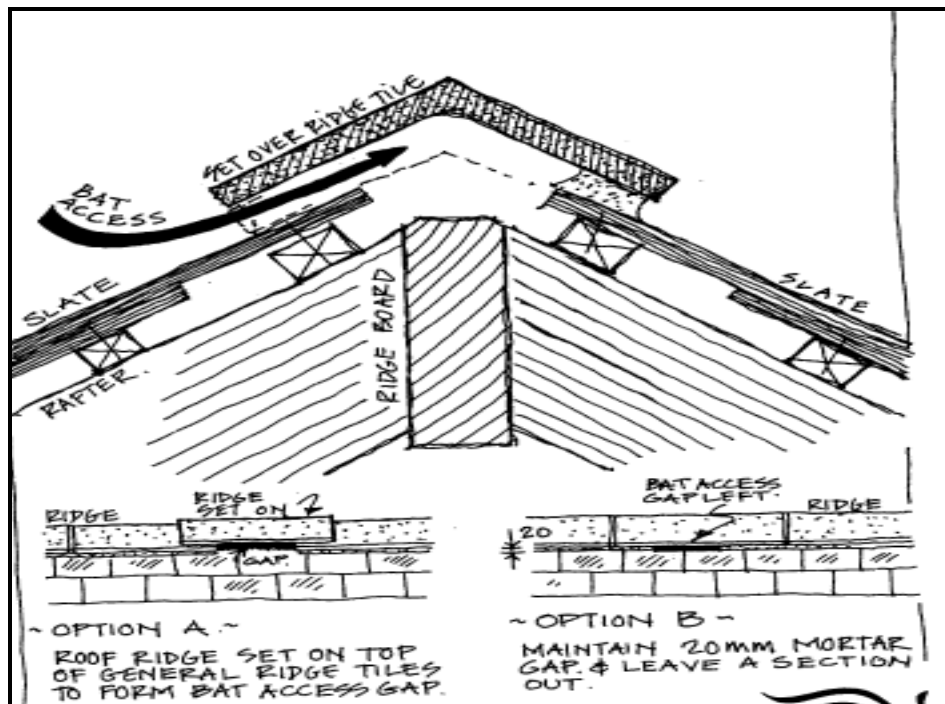


16. Sealed areas under the front gable of the coach house



Appendix 3 – Bat mitigation

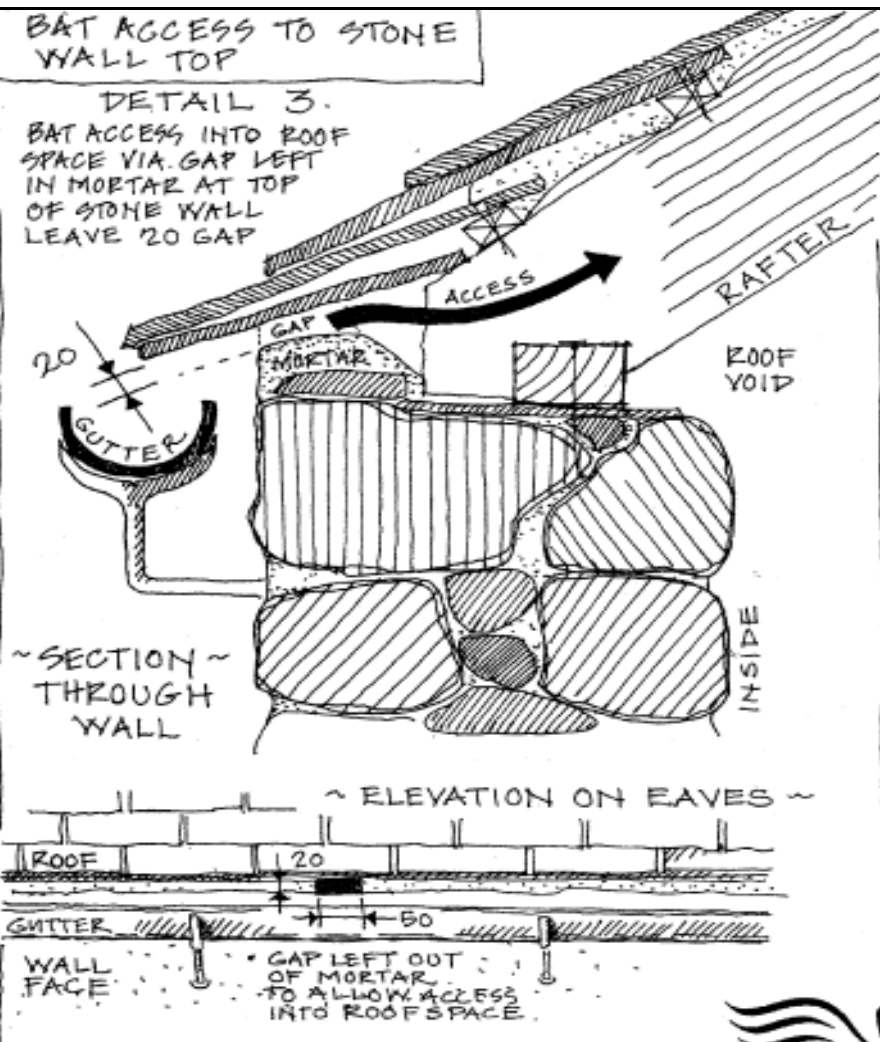
Slateline bat access tile



BAT ACCESS TO STONE WALL TOP

DETAIL 3.

BAT ACCESS INTO ROOF SPACE VIA GAP LEFT IN MORTAR AT TOP OF STONE WALL
LEAVE 20 GAP



~ SECTION THROUGH WALL ~

~ ELEVATION ON EAVES ~

ROOF

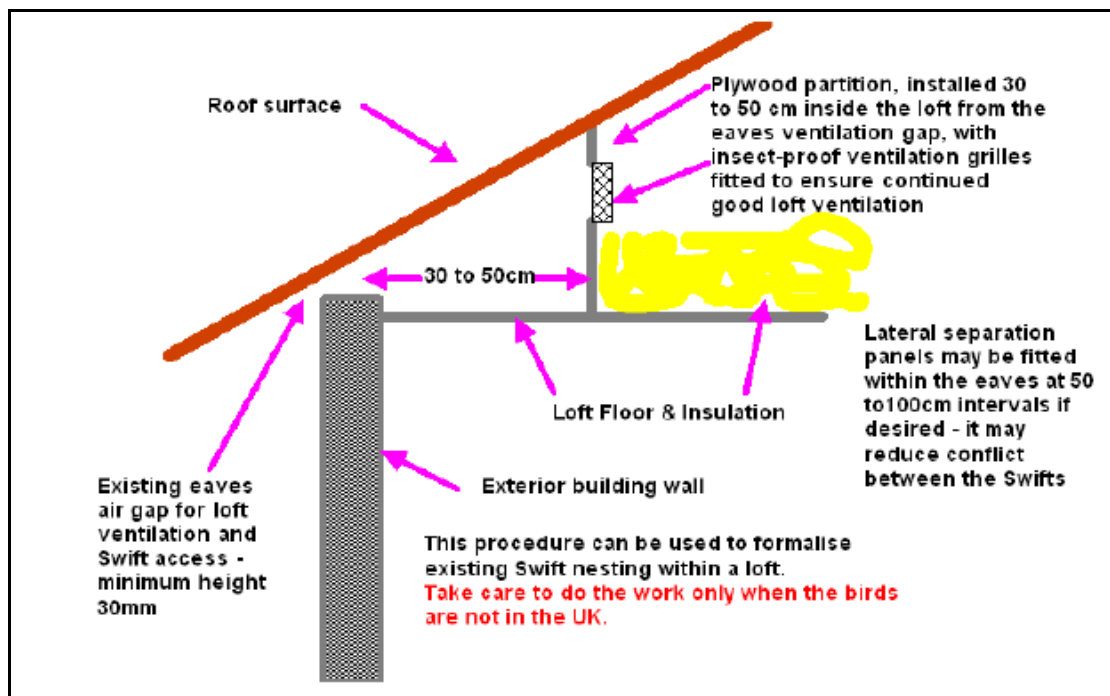
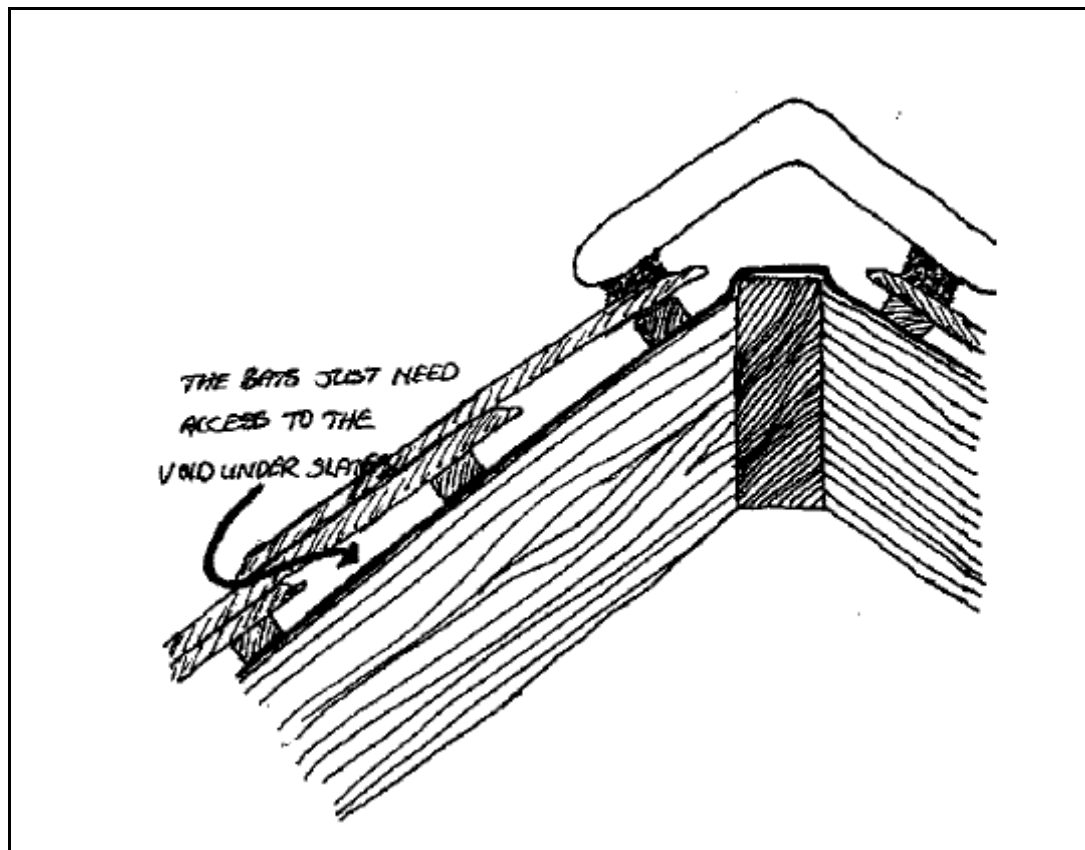
20

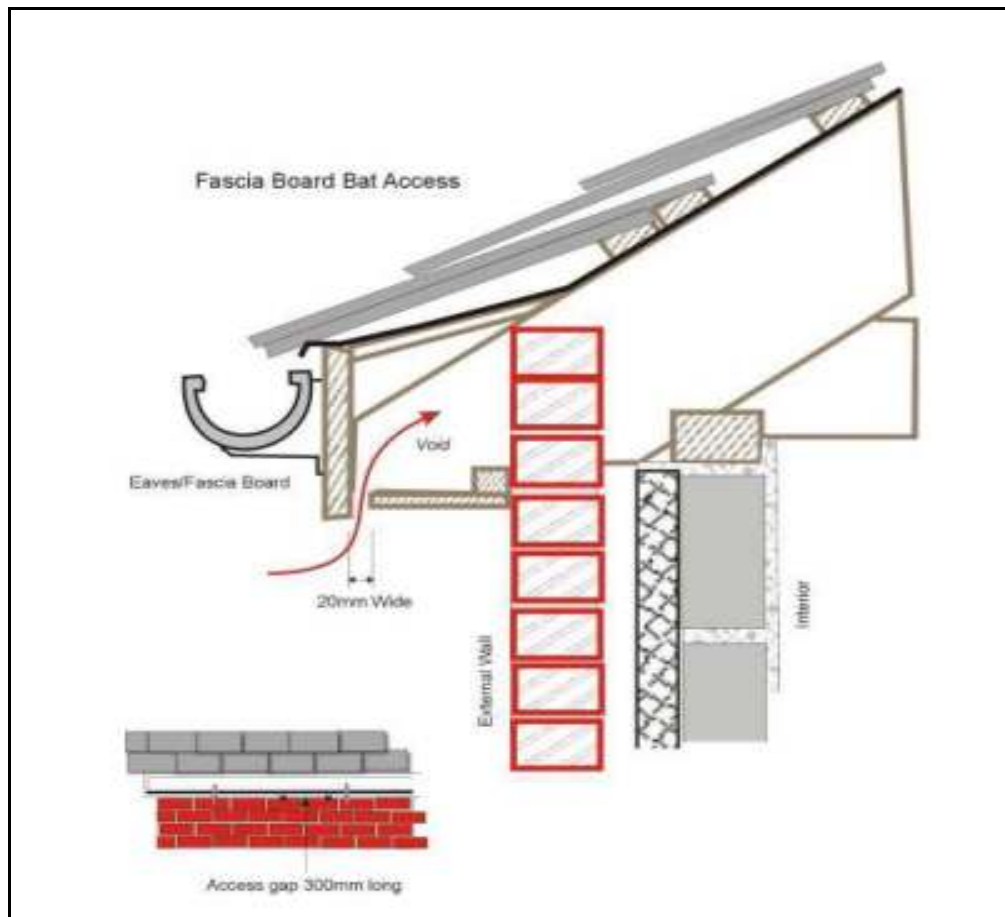
GUTTER

50

WALL FACE

GAP LEFT OUT OF MORTAR TO ALLOW ACCESS INTO ROOF SPACE





A backing board can be used to prevent access into the roof void/living area if desired.

