



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT 6 OLD BATH ROAD SONNING



**Prepared for:
Mr L Kulasingam
6 Old Bath Road
Sonning
Reading
RG4 6SR**

28 May 2025

Ref: SPH/NP/PEA-25/20.05



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This report is valid for 12 months from the site inspection. The lifespan of this report may be subject to change if the site conditions change due to unspecified works that affect the site.



Executive Summary

Urban Tree Experts was commissioned by Mr L Kulasingam to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]), of 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning, Reading, RG4 6TA. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Tuesday 20 May 2025 at 10.30am, during daylight hours. An external and internal inspection of the property and link attached garage took place to look for signs of bats.

The preliminary ecological appraisal consists of a desk top study prior to the survey to review existing information about the site and its surroundings and to inform the design of subsequent bat surveys, if required. The desk top study was conducted based upon a minimum 2km search radius and it revealed that three statutory designated sites are located within, and three current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats have been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The landform to the north of the site is suitable for roosting, commuting or foraging bats and provides a rich and diverse habitats suitable for a wide range of bat species.

The DBW comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the property and link attached garage for bats, signs of bats and features suitable for use by roosting bats. This includes droppings, scratch marks, rubbing and staining at exit holes, live or dead bats and other features such as missing tiles, this list is not exhaustive.

The properties and link buildings suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and potential roost features were identified during the preliminary inspection. When combined with the data from the desk top study, this resulted in the property and link building being characterised as having a moderate potential¹ to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines², two dusk emergence surveys are recommended on the property and link building in order to determine the presence or absence of roosting bats within the building and inform appropriate mitigation if required. If bats are seen emerging from or re-entering the property during the surveys, a further activity survey and an EPSL will be required in order for the development to proceed legally.

No roosting features were identified on the garage and no further survey effort is required on this building.

¹ Table 4.1 Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition.

² Collins, J. (ed) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition).



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1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr L Kulasingam to conduct DBW of 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning, Reading, RG4 6TA to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The DBW is designed to:

- Identify the presence/likely absence of bats within the building.
- Provide information on previous bat ecological surveys/reports.
- Provide information on the status of bats using the buildings currently or previously.
- To add confidence where no bats are found, or to categorise the nature of a roost where evidence of bats are found.
- To establish whether further surveys, mitigation or an EPSL is required.

The preliminary ecological appraisal (bats) and report writing were carried out in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines 4th edition.

1.3 Proposed Works

The survey was commissioned in connection with a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council that will seek to make major alterations to the property and garage, see plans at Appendix 1.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The preliminary ecological appraisal for bats was undertaken by Nick Powell and the report written by Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv.

Nick holds a Class 2 Bat License (CLS-11742) and has been surveying bats for 3 years with various ecological consultancies and has received training in surveying techniques, bat detector use, bat biology, identification, acoustic monitoring, echolocation analysis and netting. Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI-64844). He has 35 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work.

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

2.1 Legislative Background

All species of British bat are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Under this legislation it is an offence to kill or injure a bat or interfere with any roosting or resting site. A bat roost is interpreted as "*any structure or place used for shelter or protection*" whether or not bats are present at the time. A summary of the main legislation and planning considerations are included at Appendix 2.

Seven species of bat are also Species of Principal Importance for nature conservation in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This places a duty on all government departments to have regard for the conservation of these species and on the Secretary of State to further, or promote others to further, the conservation of these species.



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3. Site Location and Description

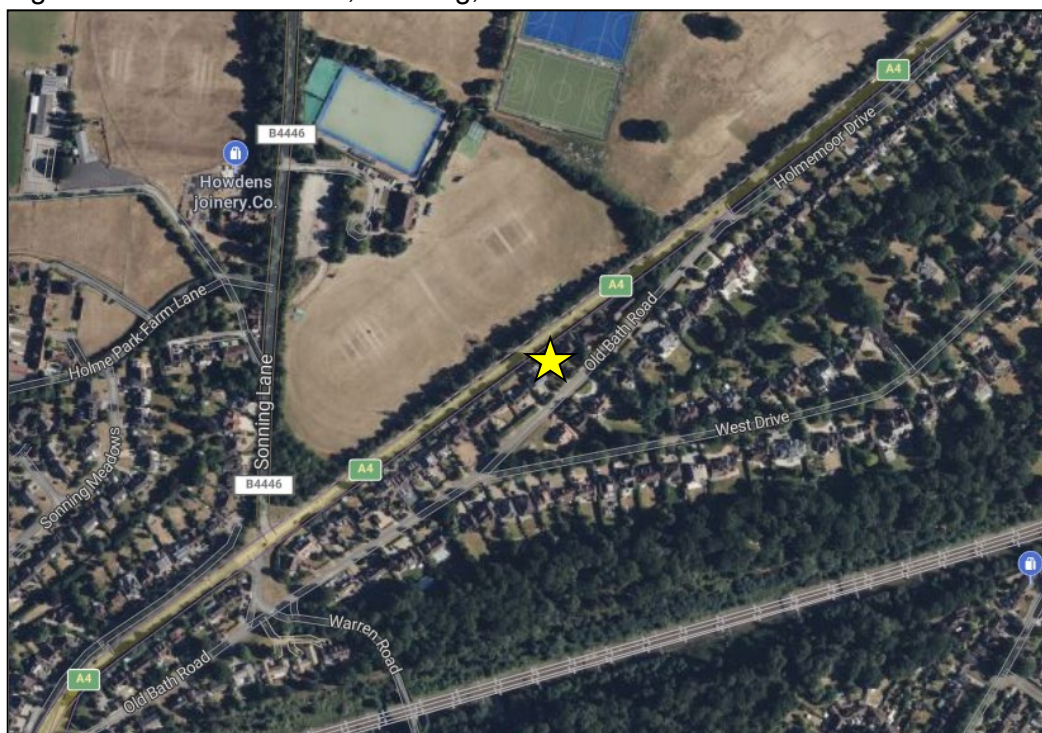
3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU75757451, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing maps.

Figure 1. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning, highlighted.



Figure 2. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning, overview of the immediate area.





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3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached, brick-built and part rendered/painted property with link attached garage. The front garden consists of a gravelled driveway/parking area and lawn with flower beds and shrubs, the rear garden is mainly laid to lawn with mature trees and shrubs on the boundaries, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is good ecological connectivity to the wider landscape.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

The client's agent has advised that, to their knowledge, no previous bat surveys have been undertaken on this property. Google Earth and MAGIC maps (magic.defra.gov.uk) websites were used prior to the survey to determine the suitability of the surrounding habitat to support roosting bats and to identify any statutory designated sites or EPSLs within 2km of the site. Due to the scale of the proposed development, and the very local impact that may occur, no data was sought from the local records centre at this time.

The property is situated in the village of Sonning, to the east of Reading and is sandwiched between the A4 (Bath Road) and Old Bath Road. To the north, and over the A4, is the improved grassland associated with Reading Hockey Club, Berkshire County Sport Club, Sonning Lawn Tennis Club and Sonning Recreation Ground which connect via tree lined roads and fields to the River Thames and Caversham Lakes/Sonning Marina. Further afield to the east is Sonning Gold Club and to the south, the tree lined main railway line. All these areas are within commuting distance for bats and provide good foraging habitat for a wide range of bats species.



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Alder Moors Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Highwood LNR and Ali's Pond LNR all lie within 2km of the site however there is only ecological connectivity to Ali's Pond LNR. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed that three current EPSLs for bats has been granted within 2km of the site, the details of which are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Current EPSLs for bats within 2km of the site

EPSL reference	Licence end date	Species on licence
2020-48093-EPS-MIT	02/2026	Common and soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared
2020-48353-EPS-MIT	02/2026	Soprano pipistrelle
2020-48694-EPS-MIT	12/2025	Common and soprano pipistrelle

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning, Reading, RG4 6TA was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 20 May 2025 at 10.30am. The weather conditions for the survey were dry and bright with a temperature of 21 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, endoscope and a ladder.

During the DBW an internal and external inspection of the property and link attached garage was carried out to identify any signs of occupation by bats and features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines. Features investigated included:

- Construction of the building – soffits, loft space, tiles/slates, lead flashings etc.
- Building condition – structure of roof and walls.
- Internal conditions – microclimate stability, draughts etc.
- Access points – potential entry and exit points for bats.
- Roosting points – cracks and crevices, between underlay and roofing tiles/slates.

Field signs that would indicate the presence of bats were searched for. These included:

- Bat droppings on the floor and walls of the building.
- Feeding remains (particularly butterfly and moth wings).
- Evidence of urine and/or oily staining around possible roost entrances.
- Presence of areas cleared of cobwebs.
- Where a breathable roofing membrane has been fitted staining on the membrane may suggest use by bats.
- Odour can sometimes suggest the present of bats.
- Squeaking and chattering can reveal bats roosting between the tiles and roofing underlay.

Buildings or structures that were not to be affected by the current proposals or with no bat roosting potential were not inspected.

4.3 Constraints

Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the homeowner and there were no constraints to the survey.



5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property and link attached garage were examined for signs described in section 4.2. Windowsills, exposed features around the windows, fascias and walls were inspected for any evidence of bat droppings or staining.

The property is a detached, brick-built and part rendered building that is in a fair condition externally. The multi pitched roof is covered in tiles, some of which, on the front hipped section over the bay window and on the catslide section and attached pitched section are raised or missing leaving gaps that could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species, see examples at Figure 4 below. There is missing mortar on the southwest section of the roof of the main property (see Figure 5 on page 9) however, it will be difficult due to the presence of the neighbouring property and hedge to survey this roof section. The majority of the rest of the ridge and hip tiles are firmly attached with no gaps that crevice dwelling bat species could exploit however there is missing mortar from the ridge tiles and gaps in tiles on the south facing roof at the eastern end of the house, see Figure 6 on page 9. The verges are well sealed with no missing mortar, see Figure 7 on page 10. The soffits and fascias are tight to the wall with no gaps that could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species (see Figure 8 on page 10), except for those under the overhang of the pitched roof of the front bay, see Figure 9 on page 11. The part pitched part flat roof of the linked building to the garage is covered in a combination of tiles and bitumen felt (see Figure 10 on page 11), the tiles are lifted and have moved leaving gaps that could be exploited by roosting bats, see Figure 11 on page 12.

Figure 4. Example of raised/missing tiles. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25





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The pitched roof of the link attached garage is covered in well fitted tiles, none of which are broken or slipped, and the ridge tiles are securely mortared, see Figure 12 on page 12. There is no missing mortar from the verges (see Figure 13 on page 13), and the fascias are tight to the wall and offer no roosting opportunities for bats.

No bats or evidence of bats were recorded during the external inspection of the property or link attached garage although there are various features on the property and link building that provide potential crevice roosting opportunities for bats.

Figure 5. Southwest roof section with missing mortar. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25



Figure 6. Example missing mortar from ridge tiles and moved tiles. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25





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Figure 7. Example sealed verges. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25



Figure 8. Example sealed soffits/fascias. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25





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Figure 9. Gaps in soffits of overhang over bay window. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25



Figure 10. Roof of link attaching building. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25





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Figure 11. Raised tiles on link building. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25



Figure 12. Well fitted roof and ridge tiles on garage. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25





Figure 13. Sealed verges on garage. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25



5.2 Internal Inspection

An internal inspection of the property and link attached garage was undertaken and examined for any signs of bats (as described in section 4.2).

The loft of the main property was accessed via a loft ladder and is in a fair condition internally. The loft space is not lit, partially boarded and insulated (see Figure 14 on page 14) and the roof tiles are lined with bitumen felt, some of which was torn/hanging, see Figure 15 on page 14.

There is no loft space in the link building, internally the tiled section is lined with membrane and the flat roof section with a meshed tarpaulin, see Figure 16 on page 15.

There is no loft space in the garage, with the building being open to the rafters and the roof tiles lined with bitumen felt, all of which was in a good condition with no rips or tears, see Figure 16 below.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the loft space or link attached garage.



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Figure 14. Example loft space in property. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25



Figure 15. Hanging bitumen felt in loft. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25





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Figure 16. Internal view of linking building roofs. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25



Figure 17. Internal view of garage roof. 6 Old Bath Road, Sonning. 20.05.25





6. Evaluation

The bat roost potential of the features within the site have been assessed with reference to the following criteria and include seasonal variation where increased or decreased probability may arise. Where features are present, they are **highlighted in bold**.

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be higher where structures:

- are of a pre-20th Century construction;
- are in a lowland rural setting;
- **have woodland, mature trees, species-rich grassland and/or water nearby;**
- have large dimension roof timbers with cracks, joints and holes;
- have numerous crevices in stonework and structures;
- **have an uneven roof covering with gaps, though not too draughty (some sections);**
- have hanging tiles or roof cladding, especially on south-facing walls;
- **have a roof warmed by the sun;**
- are disused or little used; largely undisturbed;
- provide appropriate hibernation conditions, such as abandoned mines, tunnels, kilns, or fortifications; or
- **Recent and historical records of bat roosts in the general area.**

The likelihood of bat roosts being present will be lower where structures:

- are in an urban setting with little green space;
- are subject to heavy disturbance (constant movement due to draughts and noise, also unstable microclimate);
- have a small, cluttered roof void (particularly for brown long-eared);
- **are of a modern construction with few gaps or crevices that bats can fly or crawl through (though pipistrelle bats may still be present);**
- are comprised of prefabricated steel or sheet materials; (some sections);
- are active industrial premises.

Please note that the above list provides generic screening criteria only and there are exceptions to consider.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Interpretation

The combined evidence from the desktop study and the internal and external inspection of the property and link attached garage provides a high level of confidence in support of the opinions set out in this report.

The various raised/missing roof tiles and missing mortar from the ridge tiles provide potential roosting opportunities or access into the building for bats and the presence or absence of bats could not be determined without further survey effort. When combined, the crevice-like features and surrounding habitat that is suitable for foraging, commuting and roosting bats result in the property being classified as having a moderate potential to support roosting bats.



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Based on the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, it is recommended that two dusk emergence surveys are undertaken on the property and link building in order to establish the presence/absence of bats. The features identified will require 4 survey positions, 2 of which need to be equipped with bat detectors/night vision cameras and 2 of which with night vision cameras only, in order to cover all the potential bat roosting features.

Surveying the southwest section of the roof of the main property will not be possible due to the close proximity of the boundary/neighbouring property and hedge therefore we recommend that a static bat detector be installed in the loft space of the main property at the start of the survey period to provide further data to support the survey effort.

If bats are seen emerging from or re-entering the property during the surveys, a further activity survey and an EPSL will be required in order for the development to proceed legally.

No roosting features were identified on the garage and no further survey effort is required on this building.

7.2 Contingency Plan

If, for whatever reason, there is a time delay of greater than 12 months between this survey and the commencement of work, then the survey should be repeated as the condition of the buildings may change and bats may start roosting at the site.

8. References

Collins, J (ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
HM Government (2017) Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (as amended).
HM Government (1981) The Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended).
HM Government (2006) Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.
Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004). Bat Workers' Manual (3rd Edition). Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

9. Queries

Any queries regarding this report should be addressed, in the first instance, to Urban Tree Experts:

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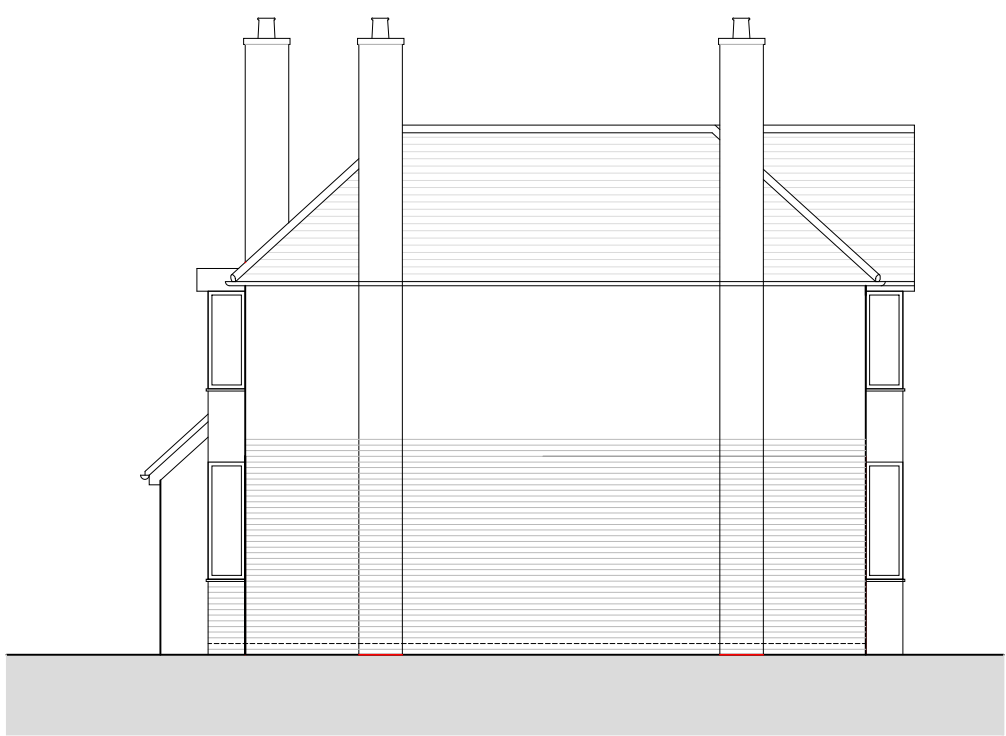
APPENDIX 1



EXISTING SOUTH ELEVATION
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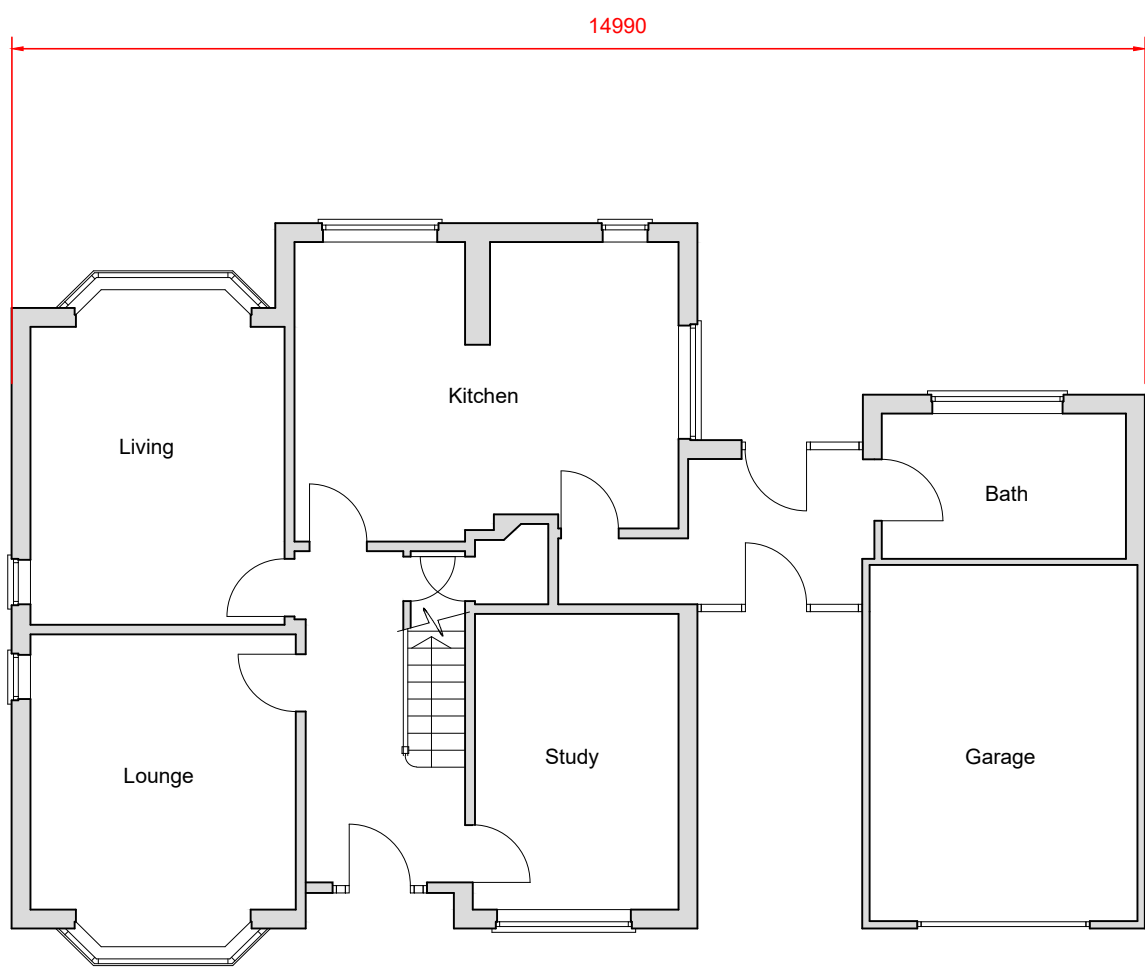
EXISTING EAST ELEVATION
SCALE 1 : 100



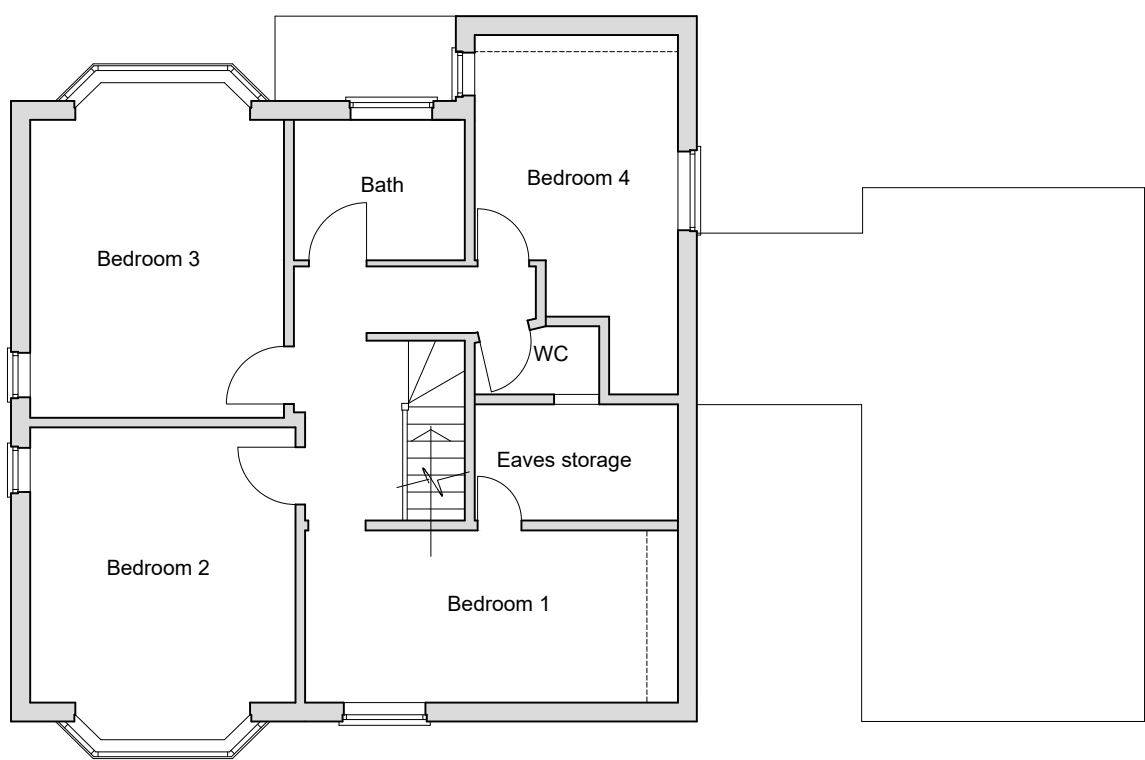
EXISTING WEST ELEVATION
SCALE 1 : 100



EXISTING NORTH ELEVATION
SCALE 1 : 100



EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1 : 100



EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1 : 100



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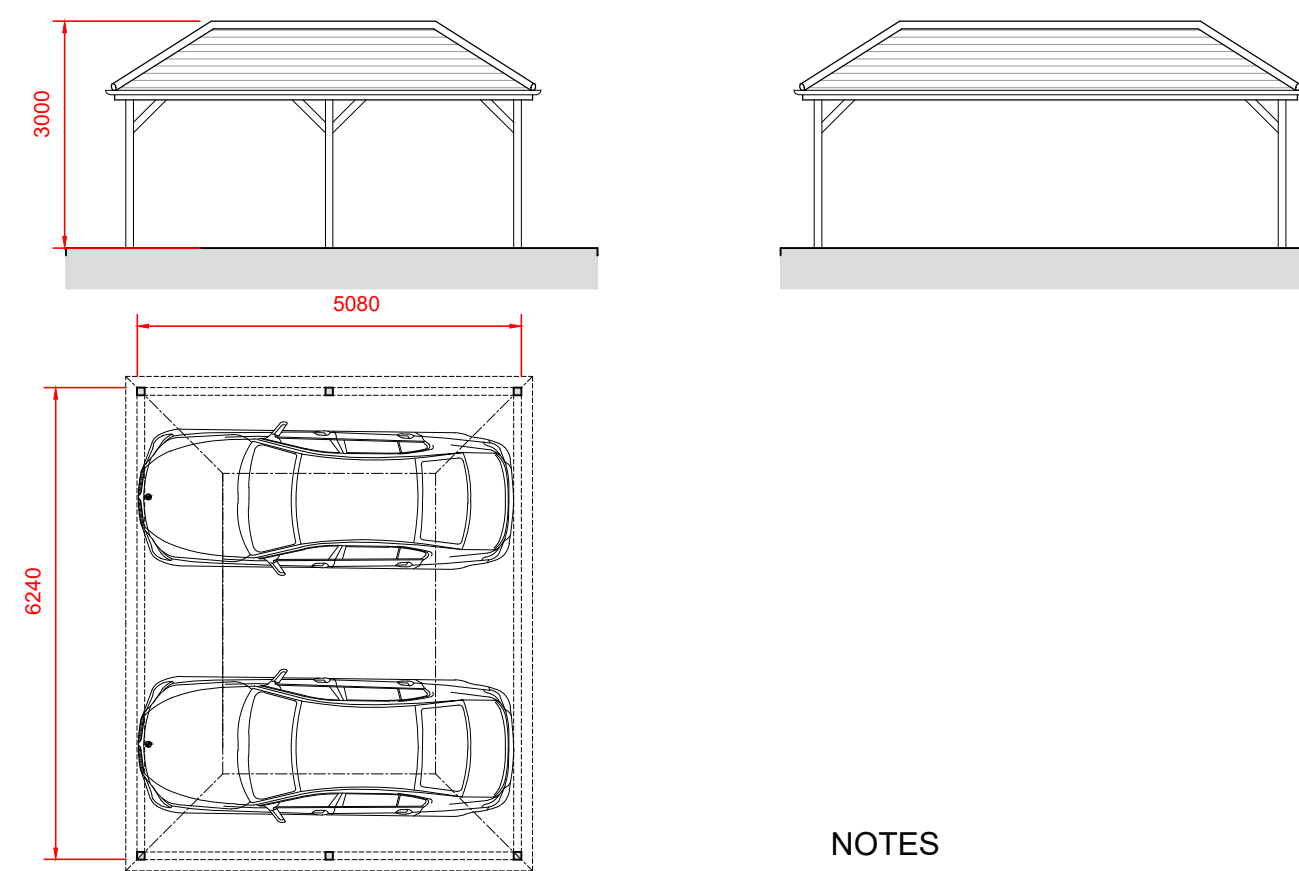
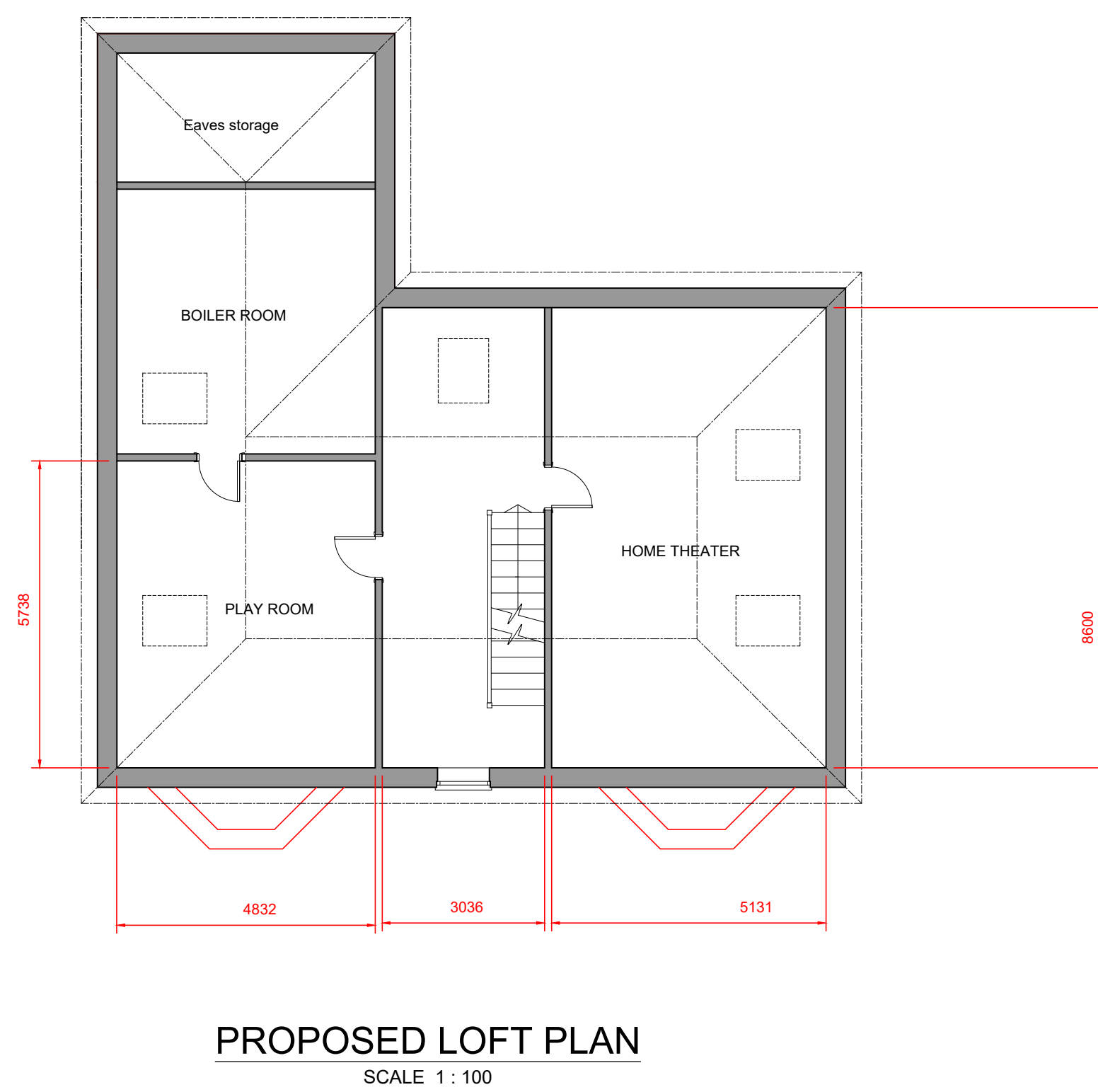
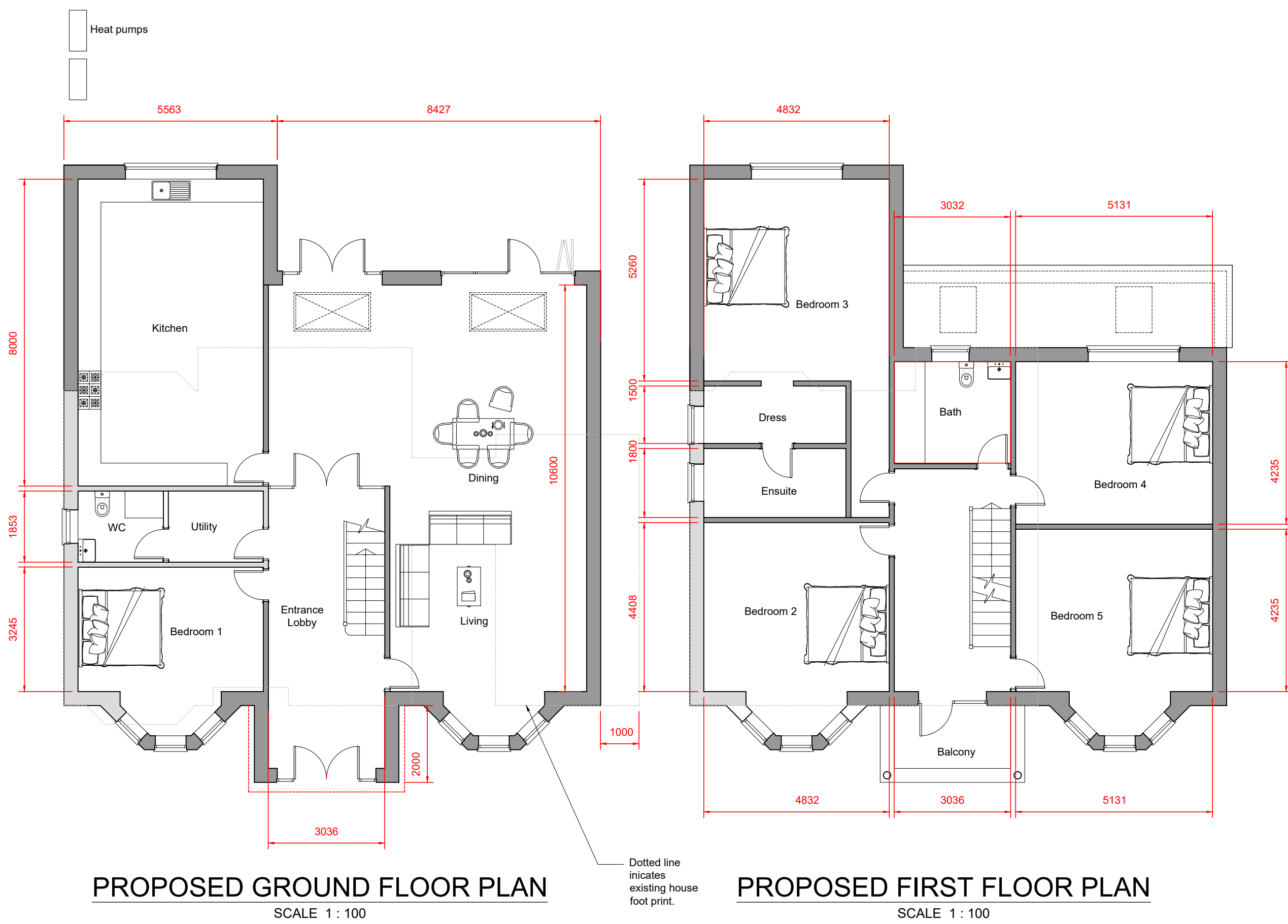
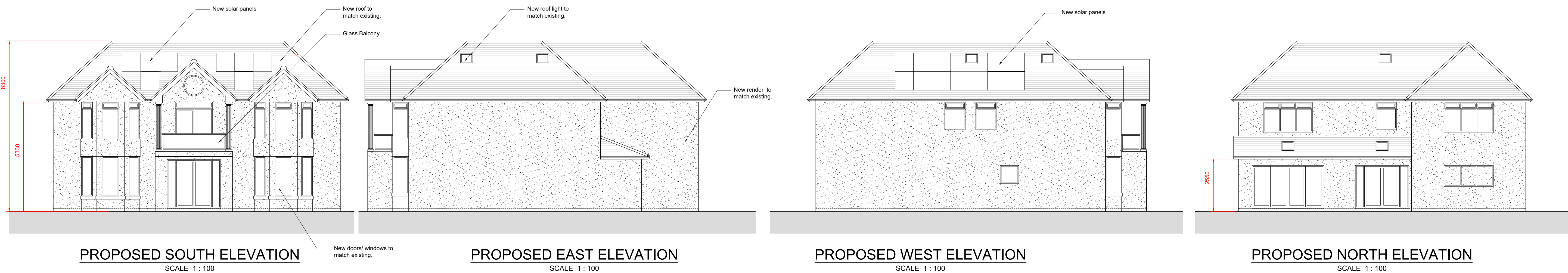
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2 Storey side and change in front facade

Location:
6, Old Bath Road, Sonning, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 6TA

Drawing Title:
EXISTING PLANS AND ELEVATIONS

Date: APR 2025 Sheet Size: A1 Drawn: SK

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Project:
2 Storey side and change in front facade

Location:
6, Old Bath Road, Sonning, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 6TA

Drawing Title:
PROPOSED PLANS AND ELEVATIONS

Date:
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Note : Retain the existing walls and foundations wherever it is required.

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APPENDIX 2

In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of bats to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating bats, to hibernate or migrate.
- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

Planning Considerations:

Government guidance to Local Planning Authorities stipulates the need to consider biodiversity and protected species during the consideration of planning applications. The NPPF makes clear that the planning system should help minimise the impacts that development can have on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. In addition, the ODPM Circular 04/2005 states *“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision”*.

Policy CP7 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (planning policy relating to the site) states *“Development which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and*

- i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or*
- ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided”*.

Developments that compromise the protection afforded to bats or roosts under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 will require a European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England (NE).

NE, the government’s statutory conservation advisory organisation, is responsible for issuing EPS licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations.

Three tests must be satisfied before this licence (to permit otherwise prohibited acts) can be issued:

- Reg 44(2)(e) – the derogation is “in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment”.
- Reg 44(3)(a) – there is “no satisfactory alternative” to the derogation.
- Reg 44(3)(b) –the derogation is “not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range”.

Tests (a) and (e) can be met with the issue of planning permission for the proposed works. Test (b) is determined by NE’s ecology department that requires the development of a suitable mitigation strategy that would ensure that any bats present on site, are retained at the same population level or better.