



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

ECOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT (BATS) AT WILLOW TREE HOUSE WOKINGHAM



**Prepared for:
Mr & Mrs Stack
Willow Tree House
St Anne's Drive
Wokingham
RG40 1PB**

4 September 2025

Ref: SPH/BAS-25/26.08



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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 & Mrs Stack to carry out a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]) and a dusk emergence survey at Willow Tree House, St Anne's Drive, Wokingham, RG40 1PB. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The DBW 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 two statutory designated sites are located within, and one current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats has been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The landform to the rear of the site with woodland that connects to nature reserve provides a rich and diverse habitat suitable for a wide range of bat species.

A search of the Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire Bat Group records confirmed 12 different species within the 2-kilometer search radius, including *Myotis sp.*

The initial site visit was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 19 August 2025 at 10am, when an external and internal inspection of the property took place to look for signs of bats.

The property is in a good condition externally. There are areas of moved/raised hanging tiles on the dormer windows and a section of missing mortar from the rear ridge tiles of the property which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats, and the presence or absence of bats could not be determined without further survey effort.

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

In line with best practice guidelines², a single separate dusk emergence survey is required on the property in order to establish the presence or absence of bats and the amount of effort is considered proportionate to the property and risk associated with the proposed works.

The dusk emergence survey was conducted on Tuesday 26 August 2025. A number of bats were seen and heard foraging in and around the site throughout the survey and none were seen emerging from or re-entering the property to roost.

This report confirms the findings of the survey, completed by an experienced licensed bat ecologist, in accordance with current best practice guidance where possible, and outlines any ecological constraints or issues with the proposed works.

The combined evidence from the DBW and activity survey provides a high level of confidence in support of the opinions set out in this report. No bats or evidence of bats were observed during the DBW, and no bats were seen entering or emerging from the property during the activity survey. This indicates that the property has not been used as a roost by bats and that an EPSL from Natural England (NE) is not required.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr & Mrs Stack to carry out a DBW at Willow Tree House, St Anne's Drive, Wokingham, RG40 1PB to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council. Following a DBW, Urban Tree Experts was commissioned to conduct a dusk activity survey upon the property in accordance with best practice guidelines.

1.2 Survey Scope

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 building 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 surveys were commissioned in connection with a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council that will seek to construct single storey rear and front extensions, raise the height of the existing roof, convert the loft into habitable accommodation and internal alterations, see plan at Appendix 1.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

The DBW was completed by Nick Powell. The emergence survey was conducted by Katie Holmes with two remote cameras, and the report was compiled by Simon Holmes MSc. CEnv, a Natural England licensed bat ecologist.

Simon Holmes MSc. Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and Science and Education license (SCI64844). He has 35 years' experience of carrying out bat surveys and bat conservation work.

Katie holds a Class 2 Bat License (CLS-35124) and has been surveying bats for 12 years with various ecological consultancies and has received training in surveying techniques, bat detector use, bat biology, identification, acoustic monitoring, echolocation analysis and netting.

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.



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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.

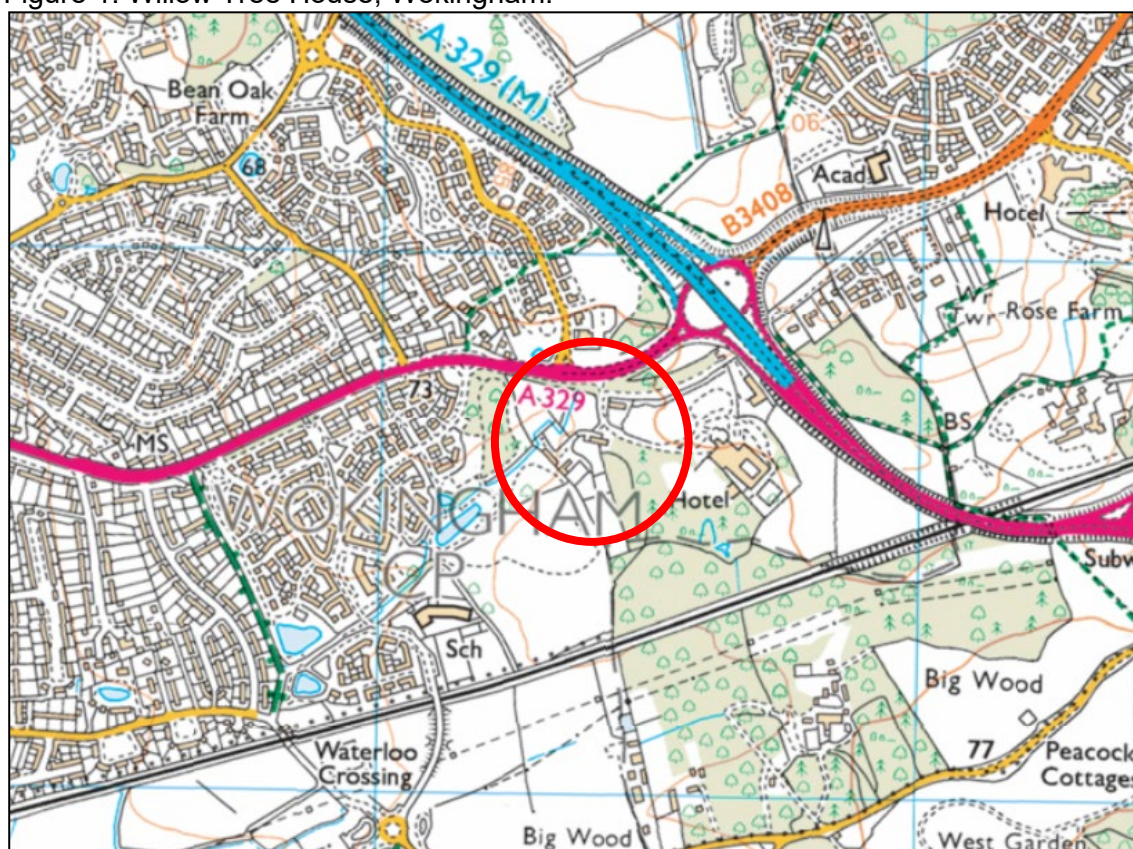
Seven species of bat are also Species of Principal Importance for nature conservation in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This places a duty on all government departments to have regard for the conservation of these species and on the Secretary of State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

3. Site Location and Description

3.1 Site Location

The property is located at Grid Reference SU83416865, see Ordnance Survey (OS) extract at Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Willow Tree House, Wokingham.





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3.2 Site Description

The site comprises a detached, brick-built and rendered/painted property with front and rear dormers. The remainder of the site comprised a gravelled front parking area surrounded by mature trees/hedgerows and a large rear garden that is mainly laid to lawn with mature trees on the boundaries, see Figure 2 below. The site itself provides good foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is direct ecological connectivity to the wider landscape.

Figure 2. Rear garden. Willow Tree House, Wokingham. 19.08.25



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

The clients have advised that, to their knowledge, no previous bat surveys have been completed on the 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.



4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 19 August 2025 at 10am. The weather conditions for the survey were overcast with a temperature of 20 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, an endoscope, binoculars and a ladder.

During the DBW an internal and external inspection of the property 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 or lead flashing.

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, this is not always a reliable indicator.
- 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 with no bat roosting potential and that were unsuitable for roosting bats were not inspected in detail. The various wooden buildings in rear garden were not inspected as they will not be affected by the proposed works.

4.3 Dusk Survey

The dusk emergence survey was conducted on the evening of Tuesday 26 August 2025. The survey was at a time of year when bats are known to be active with weather conditions suitable for the bat survey and insect prey abundant.

The surveyor/remote cameras were stationed around the property (as shown in Figure 3 on page 8), to ensure the features identified in the DBW could be observed. A screenshot from the video cameras is included at Appendix 3.

During the surveys bat activity was monitored using three BatLogger M bat detectors together with three Sony Handycam night shot video cameras with high intensity IR lamps. The detectors and cameras were fitted with SD cards for recording bat activity, allowing for later analysis with Kaleidoscope Pro 3 software, VLC media player and DVC-Scan.



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Figure 3. Willow Tree House, Wokingham. Surveyor/remote camera locations.



During the survey no bats were seen emerging from and/or returning to the property to roost. In total 4 species of bat were recorded and identified foraging to the rear of the site. A simple summary of the bats recorded can be seen in Table 2 on page 14. The most frequently used flight paths of common pipistrelle are not shown as all the bats were foraging to the rear of the surveyor. The weather conditions and surveyor details from the survey can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Surveyor details/weather conditions for bat activity survey conducted at Willow Tree House, Wokingham.

Date:	26 August 2025
Surveyors and locations	(A) Remote camera/batlogger (B) Katie Holmes (C) Remote camera/batlogger
Weather Conditions (Start)	Temperature 19.8°C, Cloud cover 25% Humidity 66.7% Dry with Wind Beaufort 1-2
Sunset/Sunrise	20:02
Start time	19:45
Finish Time	21:40
Duration	01:55
Weather Conditions (Finish)	Temperature 17.2°C, Cloud cover 10% Humidity 71.7% Dry with Wind Beaufort 0-1



4.4 Constraints

Full access to the site during the visits was made possible by the client. During the DBW a thorough inspection of the loft could not take place due to the low ridge height and partial boarding. There were no constraints to the activity survey.

5. Survey Findings

5.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

The property is situated on the eastern edge of Wokingham. To the north and east are the grounds associated with the Hilton Hotel, to the west is a housing development currently under construction and to the south, and with direct ecological connectivity via the rear garden, is a large area of woodland which connects to Buckhurst Meadows, all of which are likely to provide good habitat for roosting, commuting and foraging bats. Further to the south lies the main railway line and agricultural fields/improved grassland.

Wykery Copse Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Farley Copse Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lie within 2km of the proposed development site however there is limited ecological connectivity to these statutory designated sites due to the intervening built environment and major infrastructure.

A search of the Magic interactive website revealed that one current EPSL for bats has been granted within 2km of the site, the details of which are provided in Table 1 below.

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

EPSL reference	Licence end date	Species on licence
2019-43804-EPS-MIT	08/2025	Common and Soprano pipistrelle

5.2 External Inspection

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

The property is a detached, brick-built building with integral garage that is in a good condition externally. The half-hipped roof with single-storey elements and dormers on front and rear elevations (see Figure 4 on page 10) are covered in slate tiles, all of which are close fitted and in a good condition affording no roosting opportunities, see Figure 5 on page 10. The majority of the ridge tiles and hip tiles are all tightly fitted and had no gaps in which roosting bats could exploit however, on the rear elevation there is a section of missing mortar which crevice dwelling bat species could exploit for roosting, see Figure 6 on page 11. The verges are sealed with no gaps (see Figure 7 on page 11), as is the lead flashing around the chimney stack and rear Velux windows. There are hanging tiles on both dormer windows, the majority of which are tightly fitted however, on three corners some of the tiles have moved leaving gaps that could be used by roosting bats, see Figure 8 on page 12. The soffits and fascias are tight to the wall and have no visible gaps in which bats could use for roosting, see Figure 9 on page 12.

No bats or evidence of bats was observed during the external inspection of the property but externally there are features on the property which could be utilised by crevice dwelling bat species for roosting.



Figure 4. Rear view of property. Willow Tree House, Wokingham. 19.08.25



Figure 5. Example sealed roof/ridge and hip tiles. Willow Tree House, Wokingham. 19.08.25





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Figure 6. Missing mortar from ridge tiles on rear elevation. Willow Tree House, Wokingham. 19.08.25



Figure 7. Example sealed verges. Willow Tree House, Wokingham. 19.08.25





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Figure 8. Moved hanging tiles on dormers. Willow Tree House, Wokingham. 19.08.25



Figure 9. Example well fitted soffits/fascias. Willow Tree House, Wokingham. 19.08.25





5.3 Internal Inspection

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

The loft was accessed through a hatch, via a ladder. The loft is lit, partially boarded and insulated and is being used for personal storage, see Figure 10 below. The roof tiles are lined with insulation, see Figure 10 below.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the property and internally there appeared to be no roosting opportunities for bats within the building.

Figure 10. Loft space and Kingspan insulation to roof tiles. Willow Tree House, Wokingham. 19.08.25





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5.4 Dusk Survey

During the activity survey no bats were seen emerging from and/or returning to the property to roost.

In total 4 different species were recorded and identified foraging and commuting around the site. The calls detected and recorded from the survey provided identification of common pipistrelle, *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle, *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, noctule, *Nyctalus noctule*, and brown long-eared, *Plecotus auritus*. The longest and most frequently recorded calls and observations were from the common pipistrelle bat. A simple summary of the bats recorded can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Summary of bat calls recorded in the vicinity of Willow Tree House.

Date	Surveyor Position	Time	Seen	Heard	Species	Comments
26/08/25	A	19:45 – 21:40	N	Y	Common and soprano pipistrelle and noctule	Between 20.22 and 21.27, 32 common pipistrelle, 5 soprano pipistrelle and 2 noctule calls were recorded. The remote camera did not record any bat activity.
26/08/25	B	19:45 – 21:40	Y	Y	Common and soprano pipistrelle, noctule and brown long-eared (BLE)	At 20.14 (12 minutes after sunset) a very faint call from a common pipistrelle bat was heard. A minute later, at 20.15, a soprano pipistrelle bat was seen and heard entering the site to the left of the surveyor, it is assumed that it emerged from one of the trees. Thereafter, common and soprano pipistrelle bats were seen and heard foraging almost constantly in and around the site until survey end, mainly along the tree lines on the garden boundaries to the sides and behind the surveyor. At 22.00 and for 1 minute, foraging calls from a noctule were heard. A number of calls from a BLE bat(s) were heard between 21.08 and 21.25, the bat(s) were not seen.
26/08/25	C	19:45 – 21:40	N	Y	Common and soprano pipistrelle, noctule and BLE	Between 20.15 and 21.30, 69 common pipistrelle, 27 soprano pipistrelle and 2 noctule calls were recorded. The remote camera did not record any bat activity.

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;**
- **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;



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6. Evaluation continued

- provide appropriate hibernation conditions, such as abandoned mines, tunnels, kilns, or fortifications; or
- **Recent or historical records of bats on the site, or 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); or
- are active industrial premises.

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

7. Conclusions/Interpretation

- 7.1 The calls detected and recorded from the survey provided identification of common pipistrelle, *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle, *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, soprano pipistrelle, *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* noctule, *Nyctalus noctule*, serotine, *Eptesicus serotinus*, and BLE, *Plecotus auritus*, foraging and/or transiting across the site. The longest and most frequent calls were from common pipistrelle bats.
- 7.2 The property has features suitable for crevice dwelling bats to roost however, no bats were seen emerging from or returning to the property to roost. The surveyor observations provide a high level of confidence in the species detected during the survey at Willow Tree House.
- 7.3 Pipistrelle bats are one of the first emerging bat species after sunset, frequently emerging within 20 minutes after sunset. Noctules are also known to emerge early. As the first (faint) call from a common pipistrelle was heard at 12 minutes after sunset, and a soprano pipistrelle heard and seen at 13 minutes after sunset, the bats are most probably roosting in the vicinity but did not emerge from the property. Whilst no bats were seen emerging from or returning to the property to roost, this does not mean that they will not be present in the future as bats are known to be transient and use a wide variety of crevice like features opportunistically.
- 7.4 A number of calls from a BLE bat(s) was heard by the surveyor, this is unusual as the BLE bat is commonly referred to as the 'silent' bat as the calls are very quiet and difficult to detect as they prefer to hunt using their hearing and sight.
- 7.5 The survey conditions were good, with warm weather, a variety of insects flying and the bat calls and field observations were, in our opinion, considered average given the surrounding habitat however the adjacent building site is likely to have changed bat foraging behaviour.



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- 7.6 The bat calls and field observations provide a high level of confidence in support of the opinions as set out in this report. Bat activity was dominated by pipistrelle *sp.* bats with up to 2 being seen foraging around the site during the survey.
- 7.7 The cumulative evidence leads me to conclude that bats are not roosting at Willow Tree House, and the property has a negligible potential to support roosting bats therefore an EPSL is not required.
- 7.8 All bats and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

8. References

Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition).

Bat Workers Manual – Mitchell-Jones & McLeish 2004.

Bat Mitigation Guidelines – Natural England 2006.

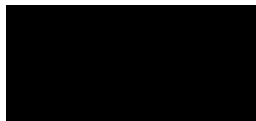
The Conservation and Habitat Regulations – 2017.

9. Queries

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

Telephone: 01189 762902
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

Urban Tree Experts
Bramley House
Newnham Bridge
Tenbury Wells
WR15 8NX



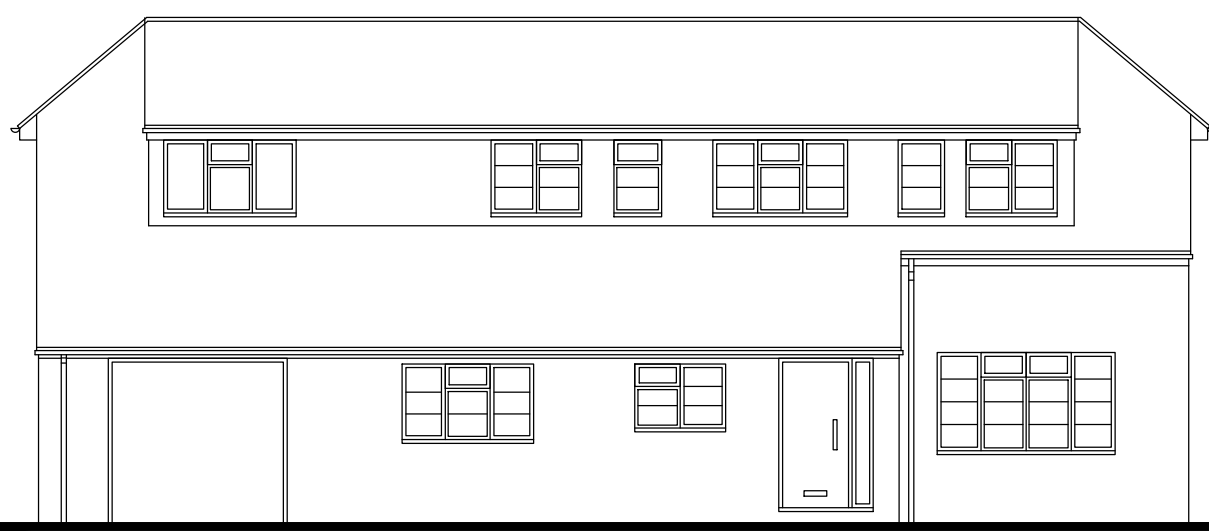
Simon Holmes, MSc. CEnv.
Consultant, Urban Tree Experts
Bat License CLS-CLS- 17637 & 17638



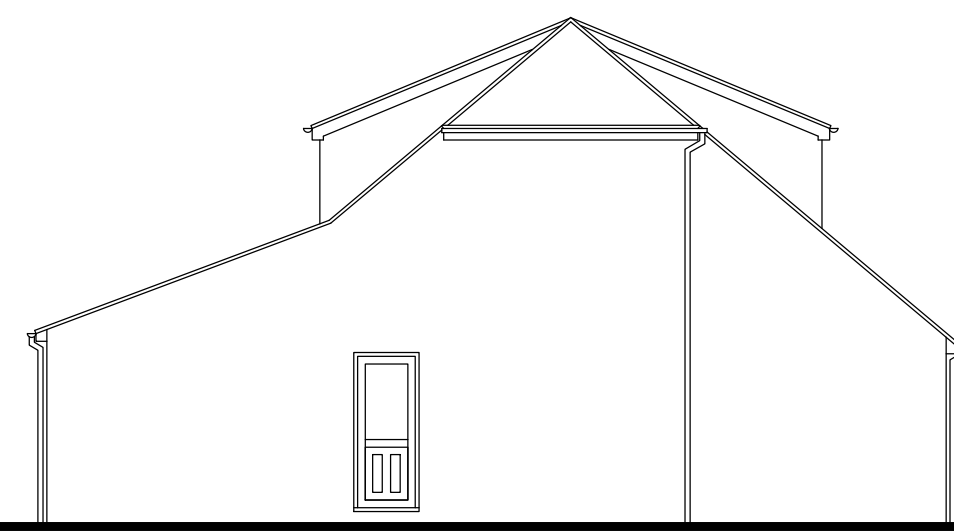
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APPENDIX 1



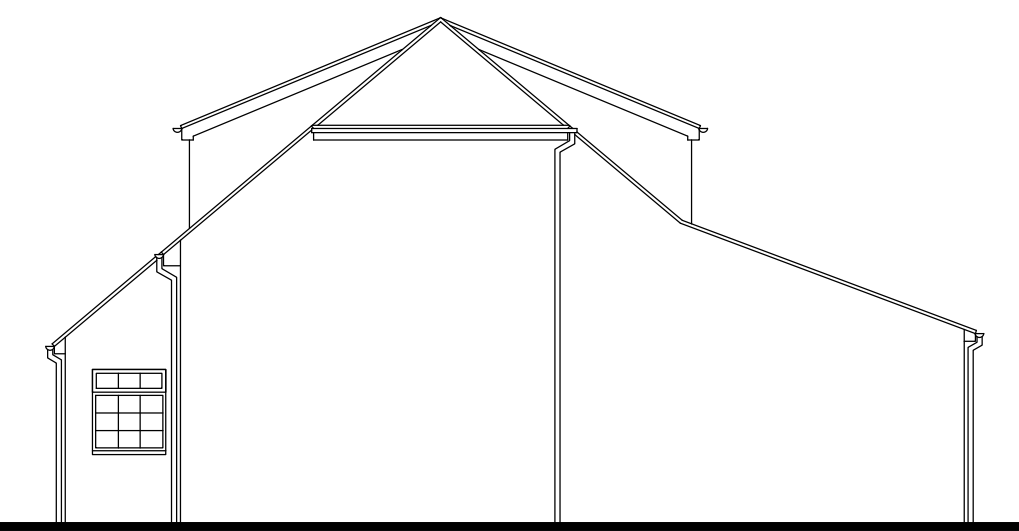
Existing North Elevation



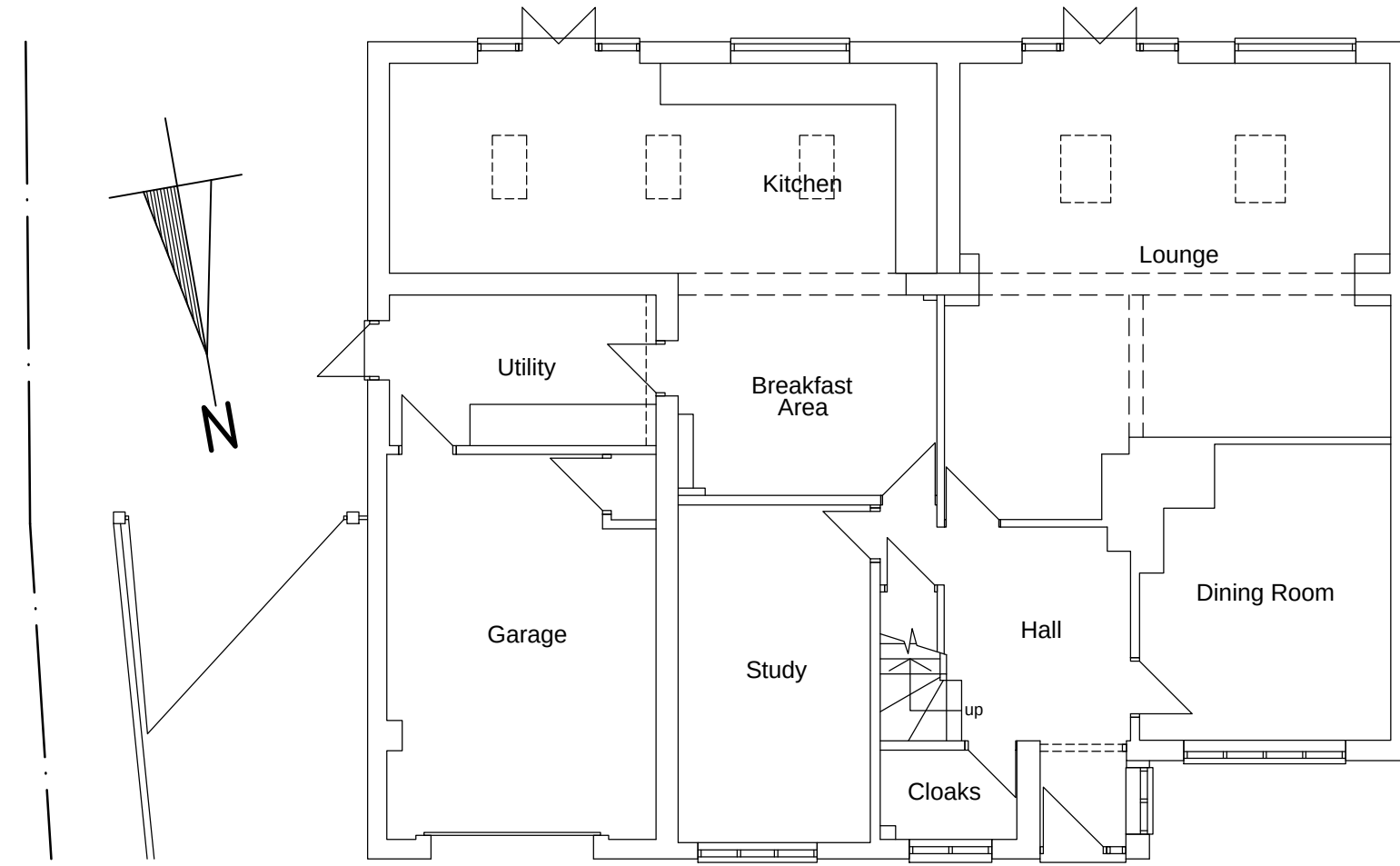
Existing East Elevation



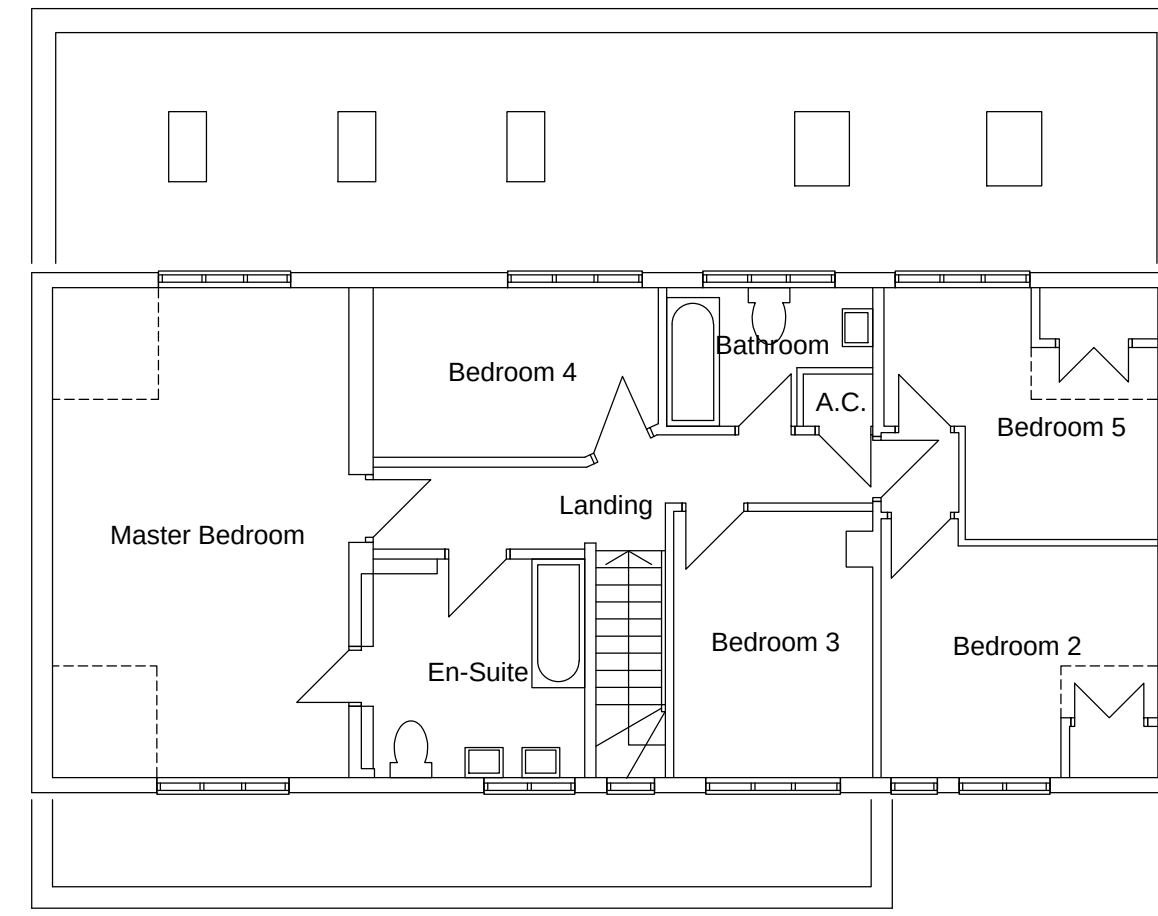
Existing South Elevation



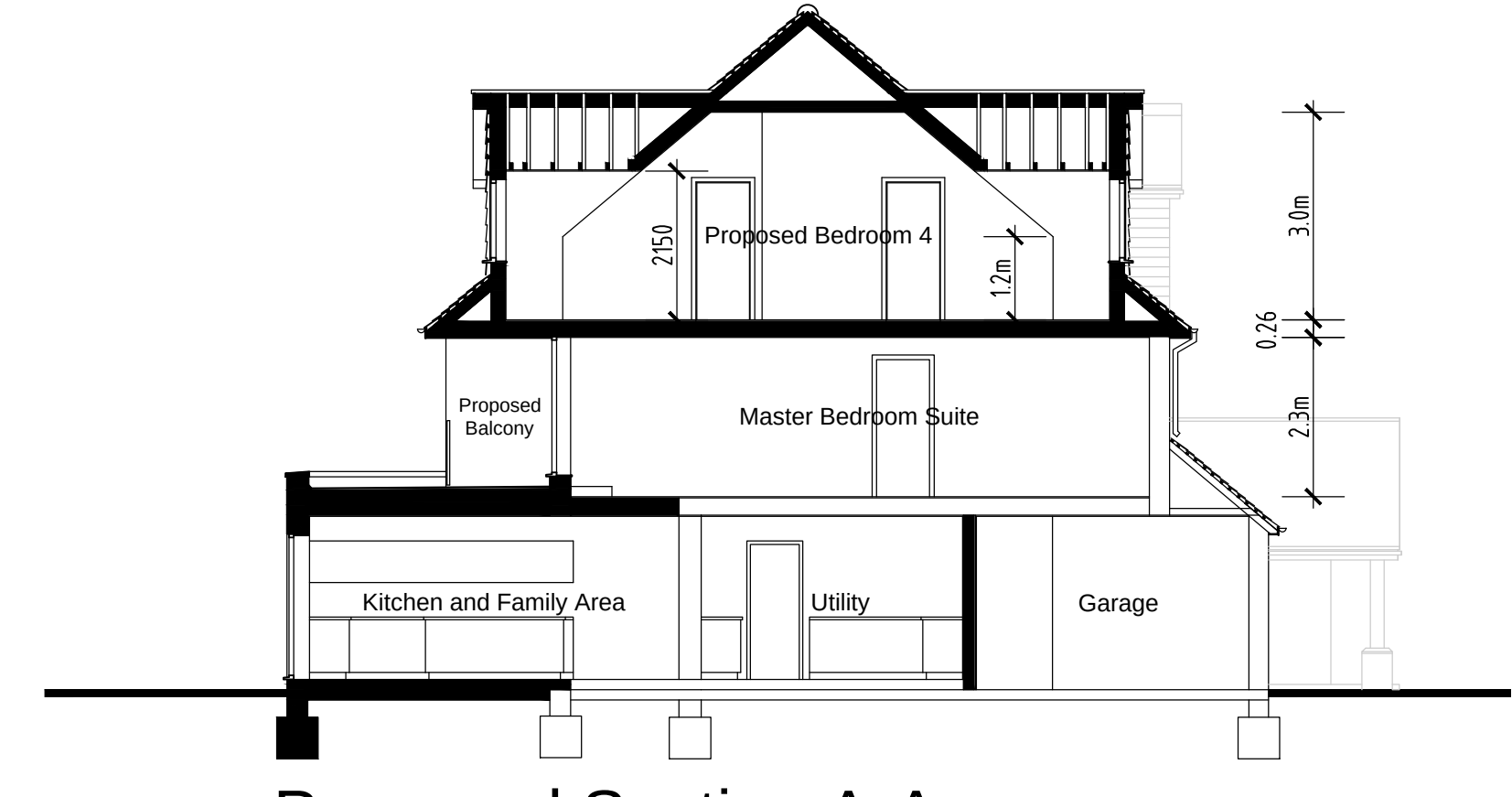
Existing West Elevation



Existing Ground Floor Plan



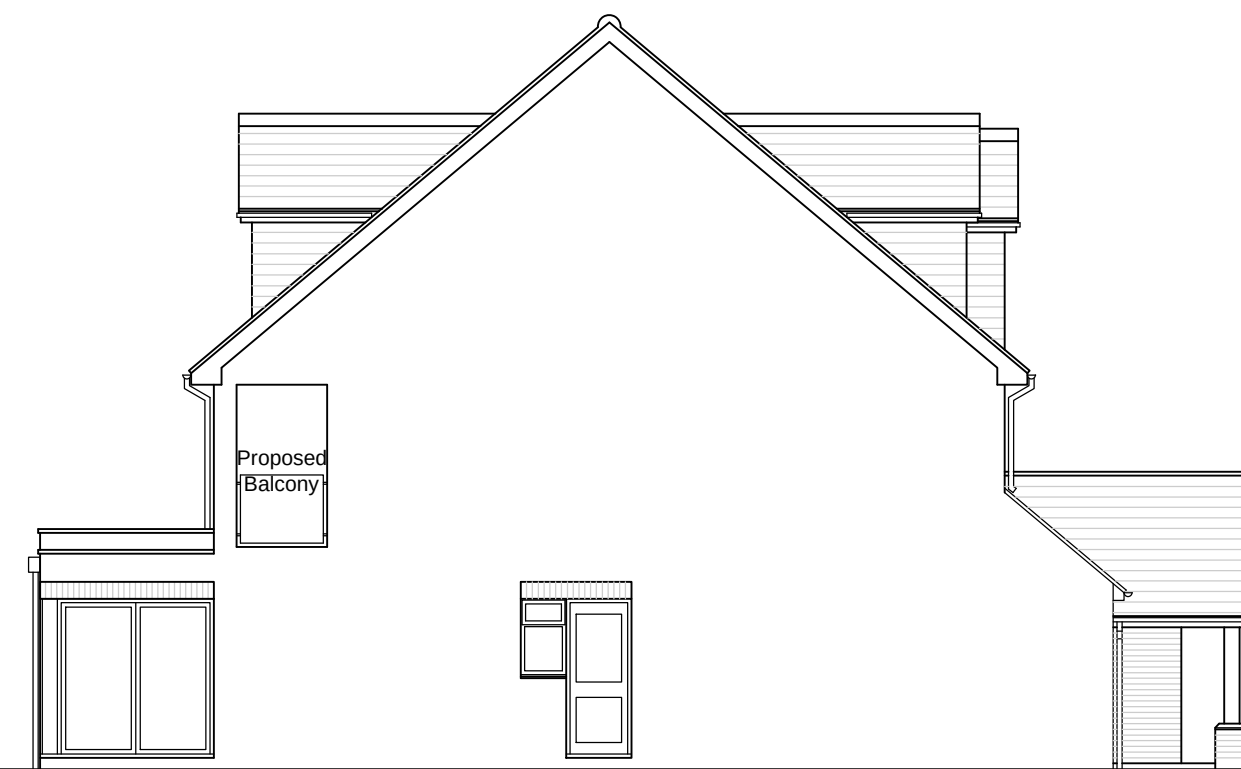
Existing First Floor Plan



Proposed Section A-A



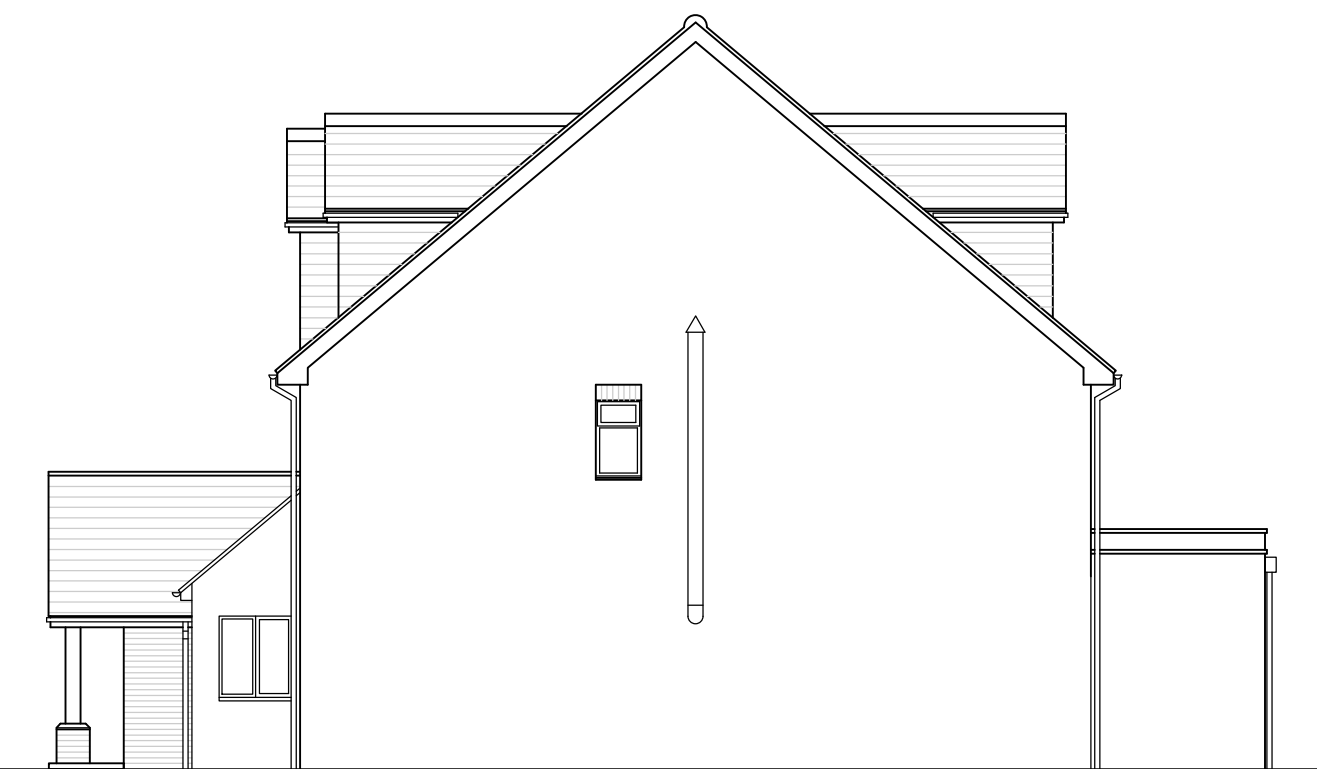
Proposed North Elevation



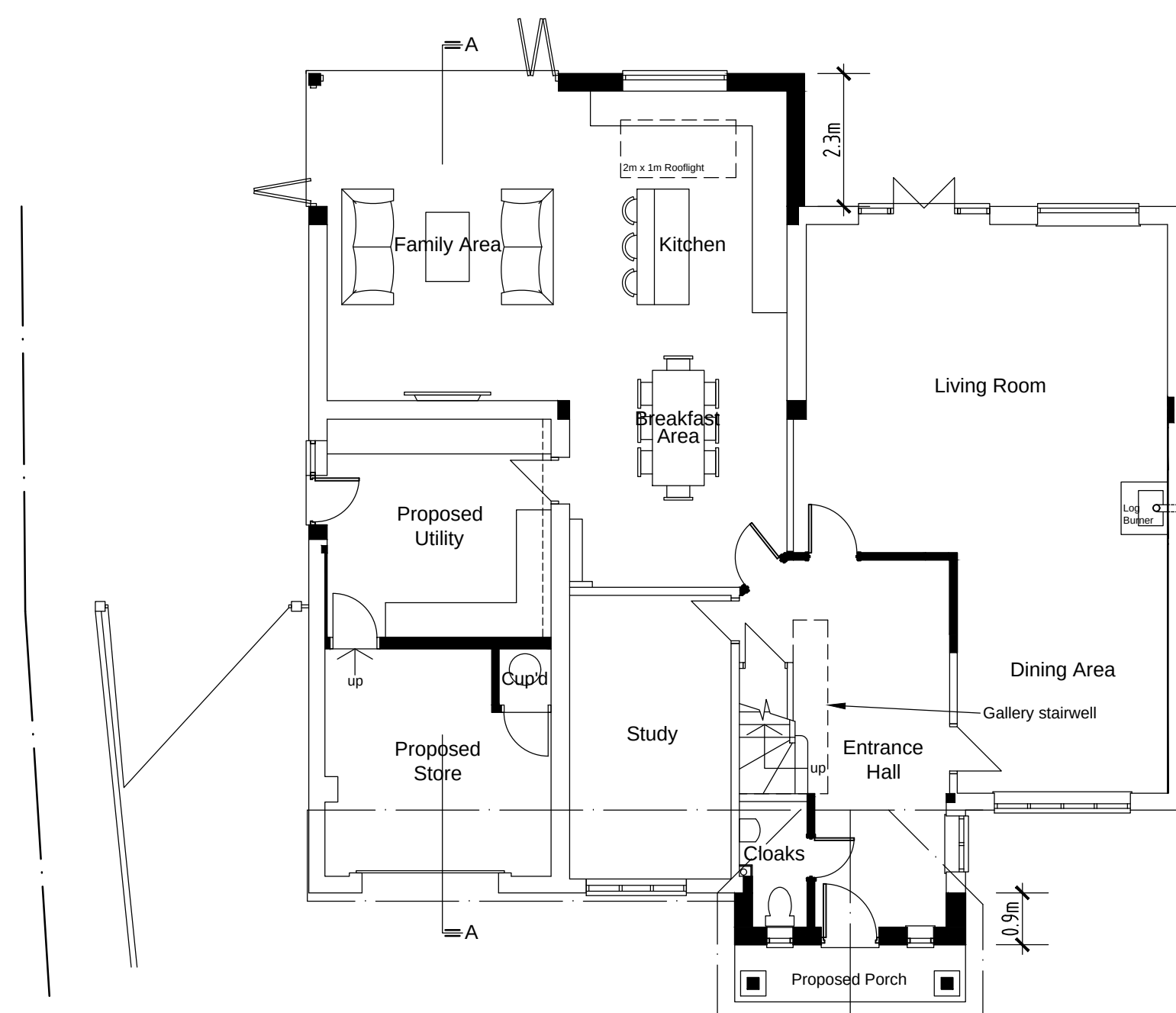
Proposed East Elevation



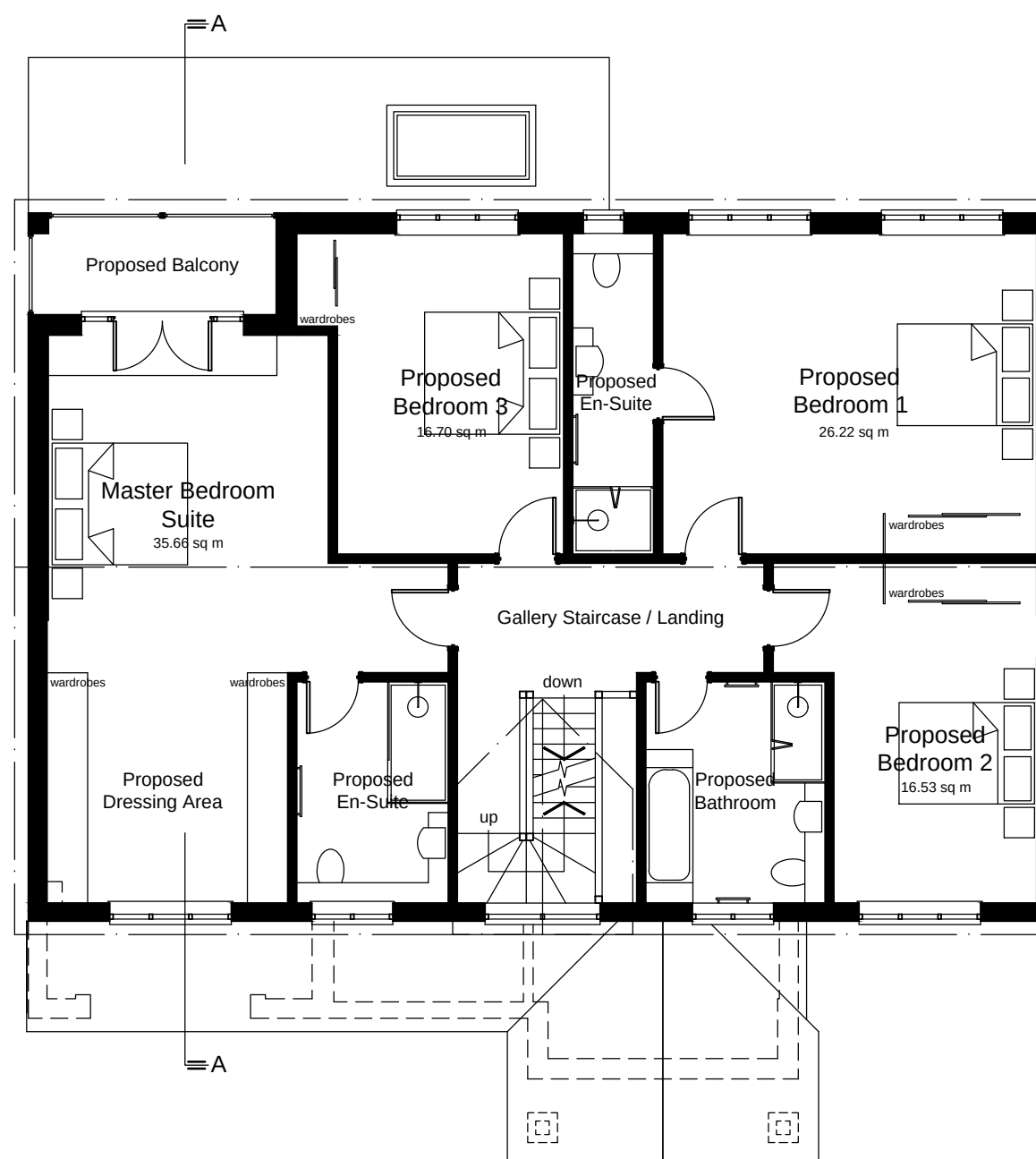
Proposed South Elevation



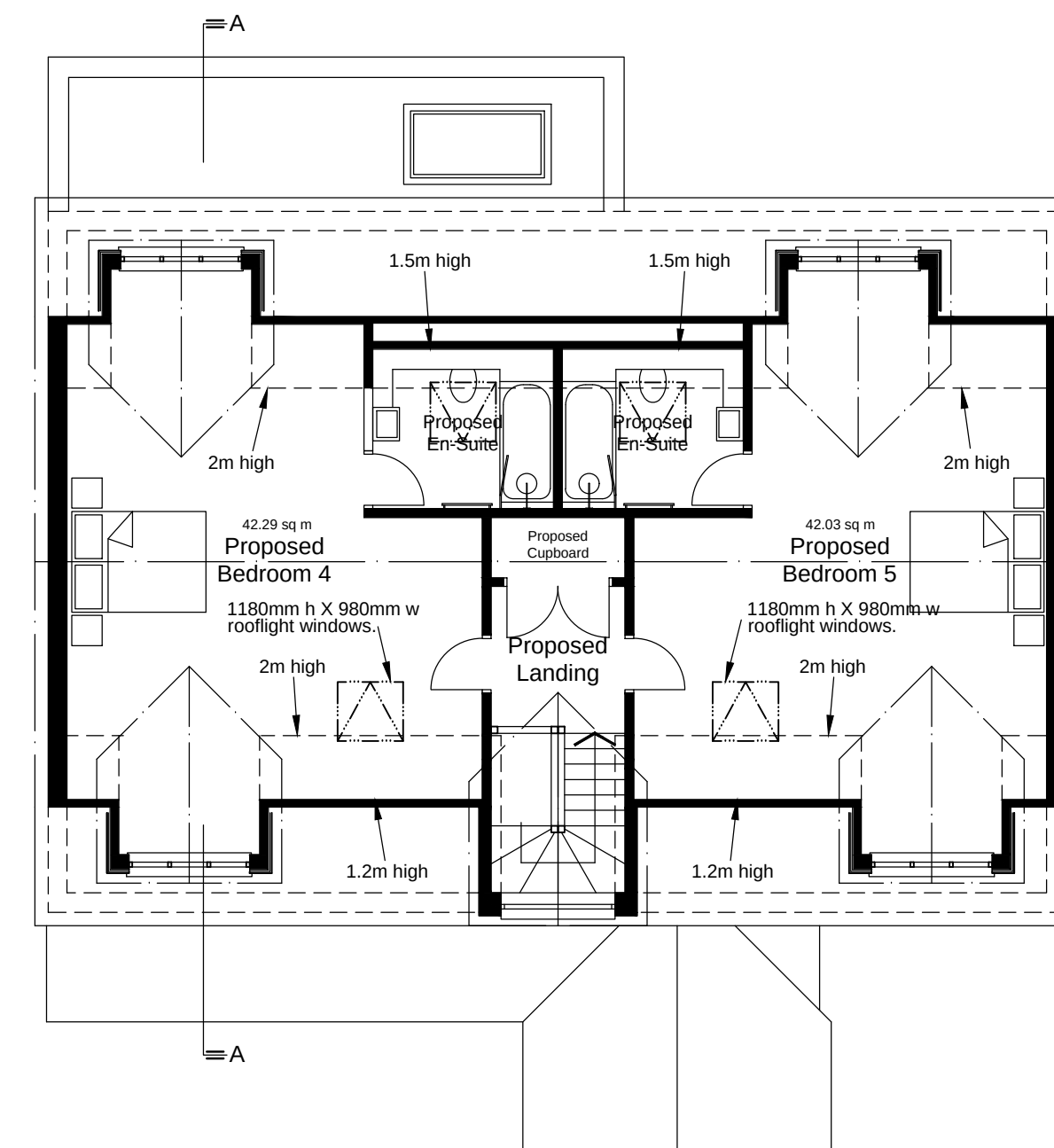
Proposed West Elevation



Proposed Ground Floor Plan

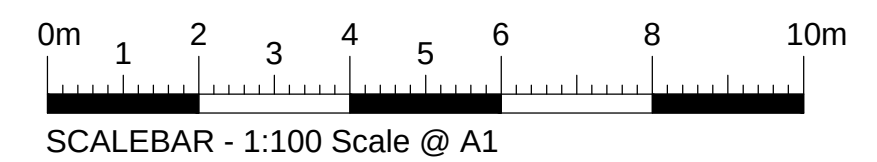


Proposed First Floor Plan



Proposed Second Floor Plan

NOTE: CONSTRUCTION DESIGN MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS (CDM)
Martin Butler Partnership Limited does not undertake the role of lead consultant as defined by the CDM Regulations 2015 unless specifically appointed to do so. It is assumed that the Client or lead Contractor will undertake this role or alternatively a competent and qualified person is appointed to fulfil these duties.



SCALEBAR - 1:100 Scale @ A1

Proposed Single Storey Rear and Front Extensions,
Raising of Existing Roof, Loft Conversion and Internal
Alterations to 'Willow Tree House'

Client
Mr and Mrs Stack,
'Willow Tree House',
St. Annes Drive,
Wokingham,
Berkshire, RG40 1PB.

Description
Existing and Proposed Floor Plans
and Elevations and Proposed
Section A-A.

MARTIN BUTLER PARTNERSHIP LIMITED

28 Broad Street
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 1AB
Tel: 0118 989 0990

Date: 24/07/25
Drawn: AB
Checked: ----

Scale
1:100

Project No.
22503-2

Drawing No.
01

Revision



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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.



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

APPENDIX 3

Willow Tree House, St Anne's Drive, Wokingham, RG40 1PB
Screenshots from night vision cameras

A



B



C

