



Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT 5 WALDEN AVENUE ARBORFIELD



**Prepared for:
Mr B Chikkanna
5 Walden Avenue
Arborfield
Reading
RG2 9HR**

6 March 2025

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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 B Chikkanna to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]), of 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield, Reading, RG2 9HR. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Tuesday 25 February 2025 at 1.40pm, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property and outbuilding 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 no 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 immediate surrounding habitat provides suitable habitat for roosting, commuting or foraging bats with tree and hedge lined agricultural fields, copses, woodland and the River Loddon which provide 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 buildings 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 outbuildings suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and potential roost features identified during the preliminary inspection on both these buildings. When combined with the data from the desk top study, this resulted in the property and outbuilding 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 and outbuilding in order to establish the presence or absence of bats. If bats are recorded roosting during this survey, further survey effort and mitigation will be required in order for the proposed development to proceed legally.

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 B Chikkanna to conduct a DBW of 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield, Reading, RG2 9HR 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 buildings.
- 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 is seeking to make alterations to the main property and demolish the existing outbuilding, 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.



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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 building is located at Grid Reference SU75506729, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Promap.

Figure 1. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield, highlighted.



Figure 2. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield, 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 dwelling with attached garage and detached outbuilding. The remainder of the site comprises a gravelled driveway/parking area, a front garden that is mainly laid to lawn (see cover photograph) and a rear garden, which is mainly laid to lawn with patio area and mature tree mainly on the rear boundary, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers some foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is excellent ecological connectivity to the wider landscape.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25



4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

The client has advised that, to their knowledge, no previous bat surveys have been undertaken on this site. A online search of the local planning authorities planning portal revealed a bat survey conducted on the property in 2008 by a gentleman called Alastair Driver. 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 a rural area, surrounded by improved grassland and agricultural land. Approximately 1km to the west is the River Lodden and 1.45km to the northeast is the tree lined freshwater lake of Bear Wood Lake plus Bearwood Lake golf course. Hedgerows line many of the fields and there are various copses (Rounds Copse and Hazletons Copse) situated close by. These areas provide good roosting, foraging and commuting habitat for bats and are within travelling distance for bats and there is good ecological connectivity from the site to these areas.



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There are no statutory designated sites within 2km of the proposed development site and one 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
2022-62924-EPS-MIT	04/2028	Common and soprano pipistrelle

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield, Reading, RG2 9HR was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 25 February 2025 at 1.40pm. The weather conditions for the survey were bright with a temperature of 7 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, endoscope and a ladder.

During the DBW, an external and internal inspection of the property, attached garage and outbuilding 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 buildings – 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 buildings.
- 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 client and there were no constraints to the survey.



5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property and outbuilding 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/painted building that is in a good condition externally. The multi pitched roof of the property is covered in tiles, none of which were missing or broken, see Figure 4 on page 9. Despite the roof tiles having a slight convex profile it is not felt that the gaps are large enough to be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species. The ridge and hip tiles all well cemented in with no missing mortar (see Figure 5 on page 9) and the verges and valleys are sealed offering no roosting potential, see Figure 6 on page 10. There are a couple of rear, single storey extension with flat rooves covered in well fitted bitumen felt with no rips or tears that could be exploited by bats, see Figure 7 on page 10. The majority of the wooden fascias are all tightly fitted with no gaps however, there are gaps between the wall plate and fascias on the 2 flat roof extensions which could allow crevice dwelling bat species roosting opportunities or allow bats to climb up and over the wall tops and into the loft space, see Figure 8 on page 11. The lead flashing around both chimney stacks is well fitted with no gaps. On the rear elevation is a dormer window, the roof of which is covered in well fitted tiles with no missing mortar from the ridge tiles and the sides covered in hanging tiles, all of which are well fitted providing no roosting opportunities, see Figure 9 on page 11.

The attached garage/rear ensuite is also constructed of brick that has been rendered and painted and is also in a good condition. Its mono pitched roof is covered in well fitted bitumen felt with no rips or tears or gaps what could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species, see Figure 10 on page 12.

The single storey outbuilding is constructed of bricks with a hipped roof, see Figure 11 on page 12. The majority of the clay roof and ridge tiles are flush with no gaps or missing mortar however, on the bottom of the rear elevation the tiles have moved and the wooden fascia is rotten – these features could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species, see Figure 12 on page 12.

No bats or evidence of bats were recorded externally on the property, garage or outbuilding although there were gaps within the fascias on the flat roof extensions of the property and rear roof of the outbuilding which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats externally or provide access into the building for roosting bats.



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Figure 4. Example roof tiles. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25



Figure 5. Example sealed ridge and hip tiles. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25





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Figure 6. Example sealed verge. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25



Figure 7. Rear, flat roof extensions. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25





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Figure 8. Example gap between fascia and wall plate on rear extensions. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25



Figure 9. Dormer window on rear elevation. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25





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Figure 10. Bitumen covered roof of garage/ensuite. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25



Figure 11. Outbuilding. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25

Figure 12. Rear view of moved tiles and rotten fascia on outbuilding. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25





5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The majority of the loft space has been converted into habitable accommodation leaving under eaves storage areas which were accessed through doors. The under eaves storage areas are uncluttered, not lit, partially boarded and insulated, see Figure 13 below. The roof tiles are lined with a membrane all of which that could be seen appeared to be tightly fitted and had no rips or tears in which roosting bats could utilise, see Figure 14 below. The garage/ensuite do not have any loft space. The roof of the garage is clad in well fitted timber and the ensuite is plastered and painted and neither have any features in which roosting bats could exploit internally, see Figure 15 on page 14. Internally the outbuildings roof is open to the rafters and the tiles unlined, see Figure 16 on page 14.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the under eaves storage areas or outbuilding however on the outbuilding there are gaps on the rear elevation which could allow bats access into the building.

Figure 13. Example under eaves storage area. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25



Figure 14. Membrane lining to tiles in eaves storage areas. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25



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Figure 15. Internal view of garage roof. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25



Figure 16. Interior of outbuilding. 5 Walden Avenue, Arborfield. 25.02.25





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;**
- **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

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the survey. However, there are a small number of gaps within the fascias on the flat roof extensions of the property and rear roof of the outbuilding which provide crevice like features suitable for bats to roost and may provide access into the buildings for bats and the presence or absence of bats could not be determined.

Based on the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, one dusk emergence survey needs to be undertaken on the property and outbuilding, between May and August, in order to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats in these buildings. The features identified will require 2 survey positions all equipped with bat detectors and night vision cameras and 1 survey position equipped with a night vision camera only in order to cover the potential bat roosting features.



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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 building may change and the site may become more suitable to support roosting bats.

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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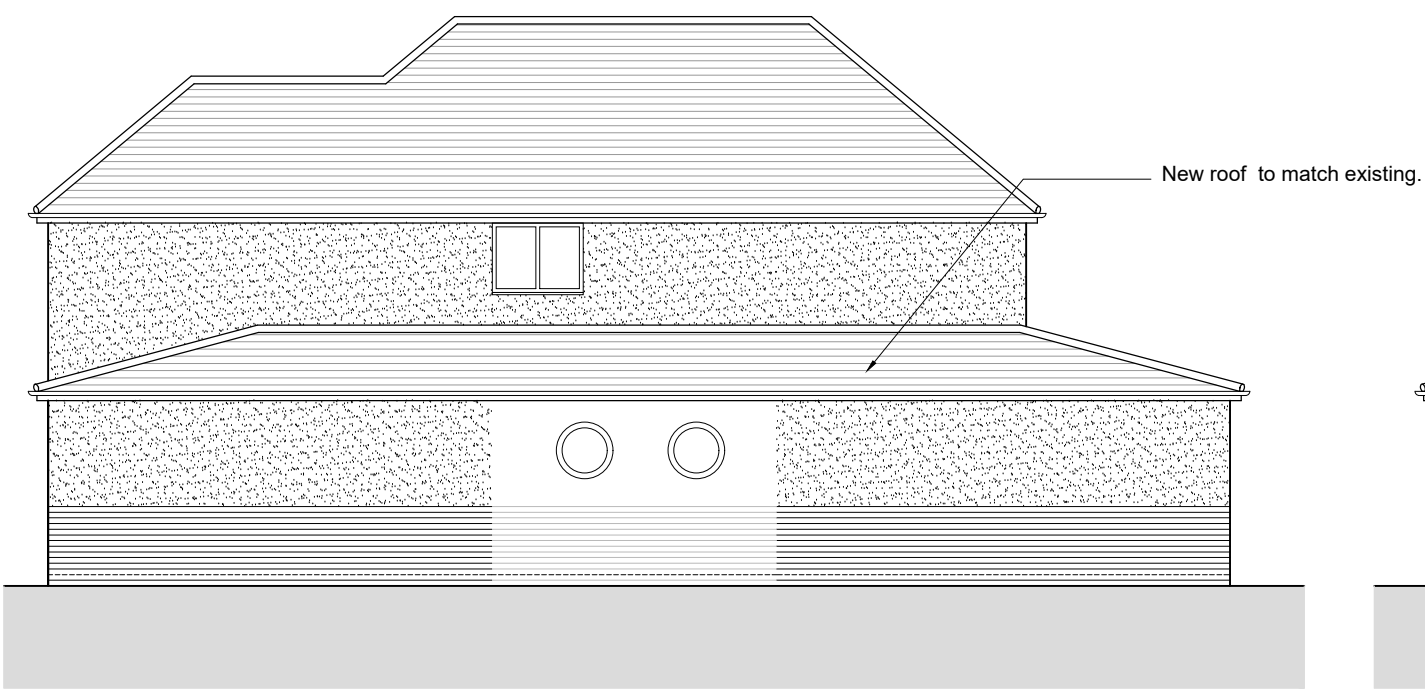
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APPENDIX 1



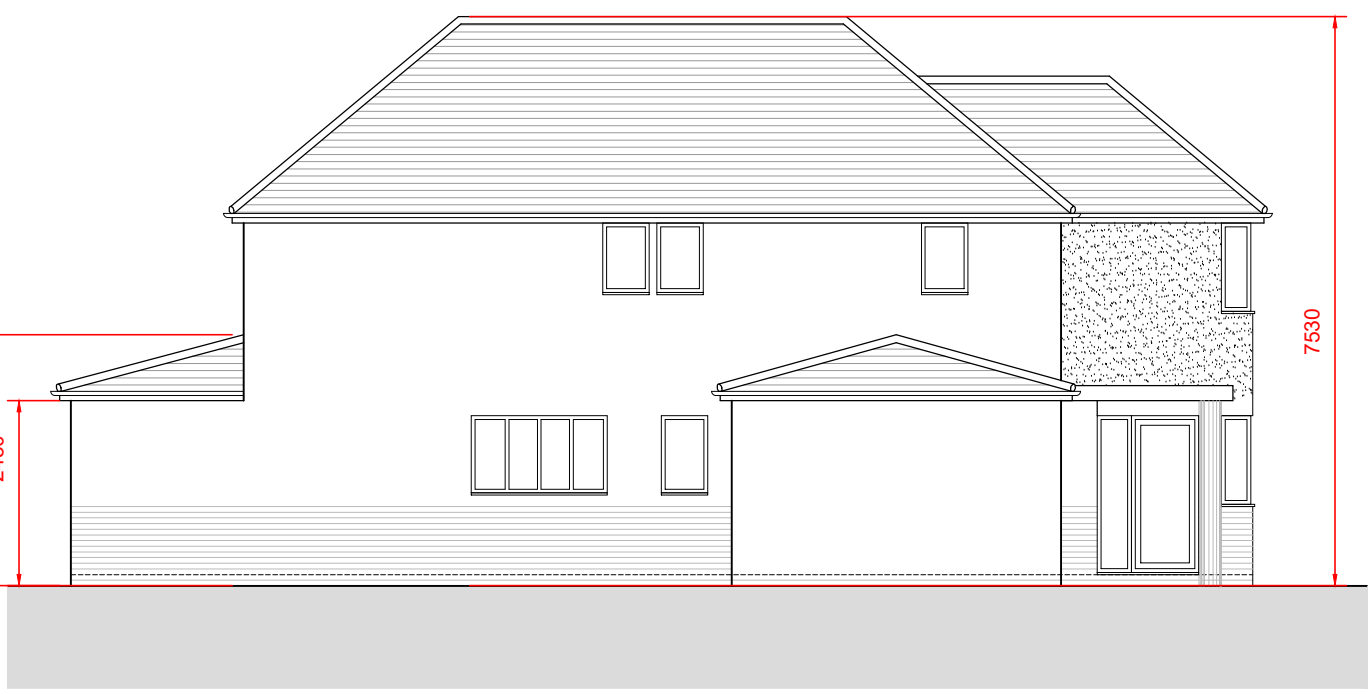
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PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATION
SCALE 1 : 100



PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION
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PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION
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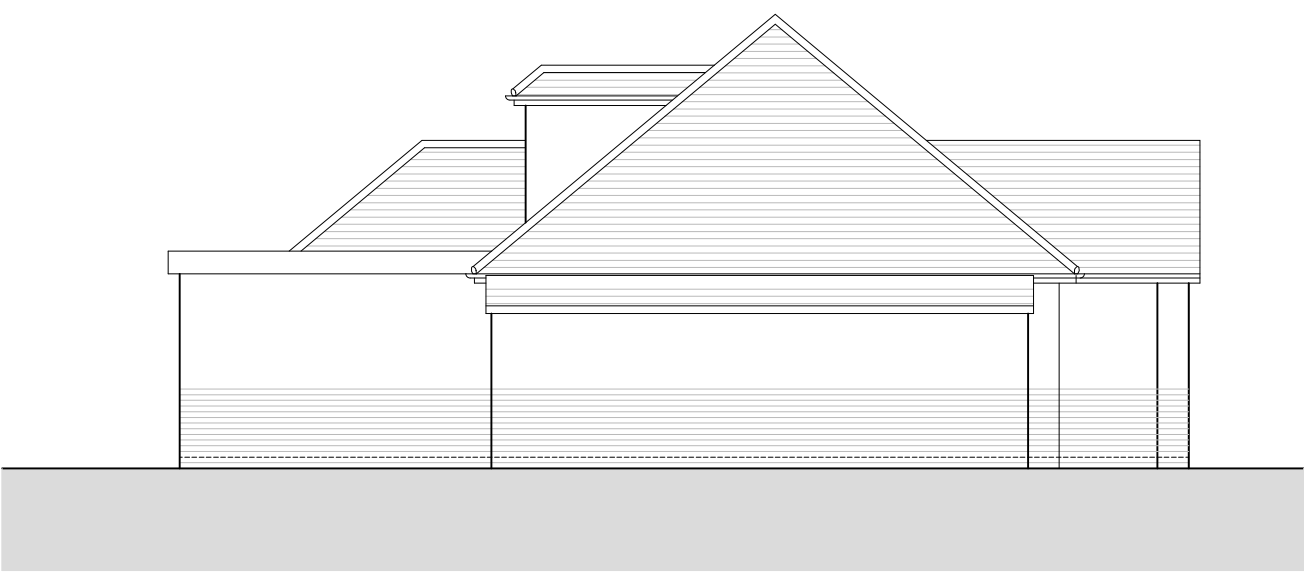
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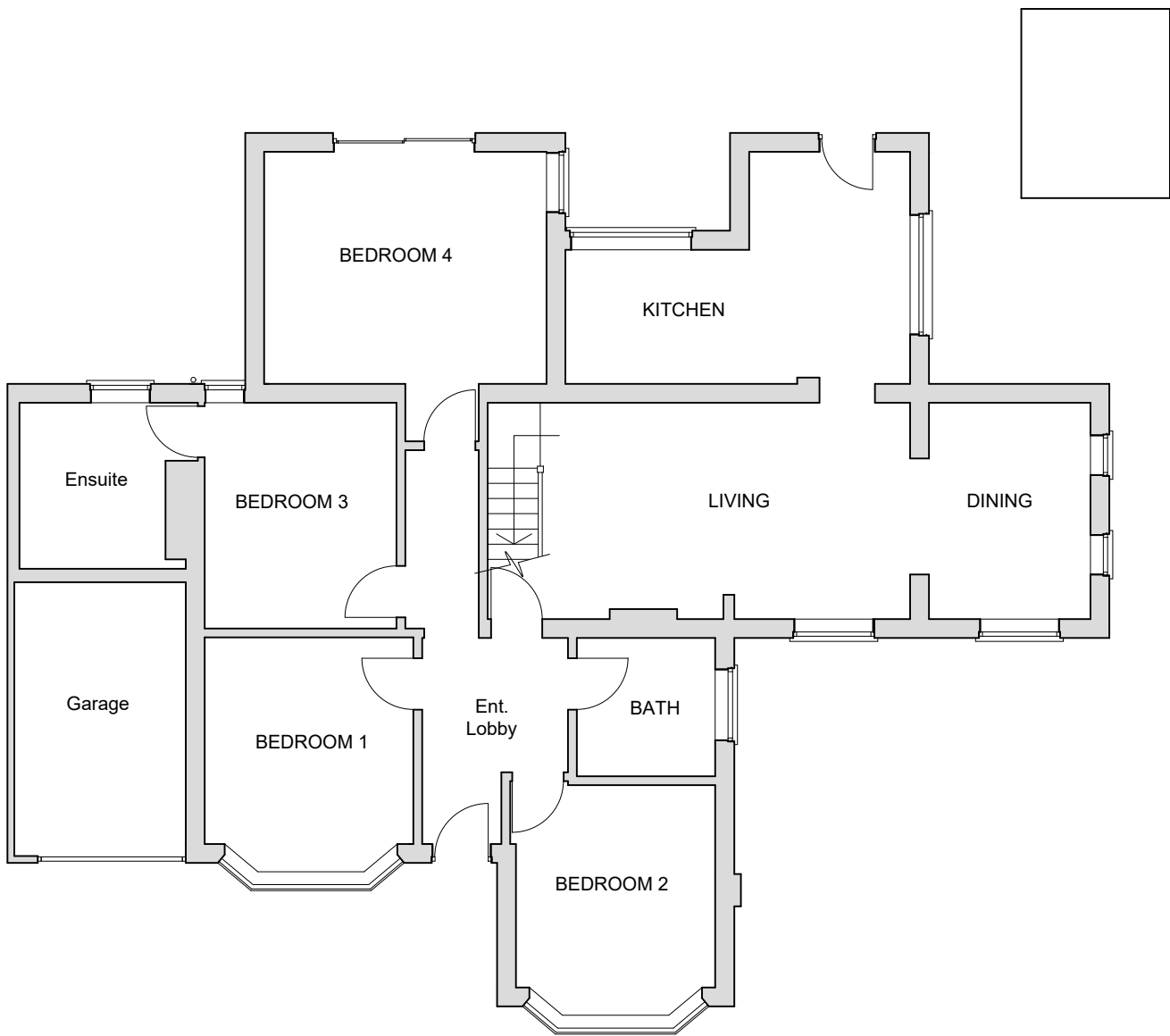
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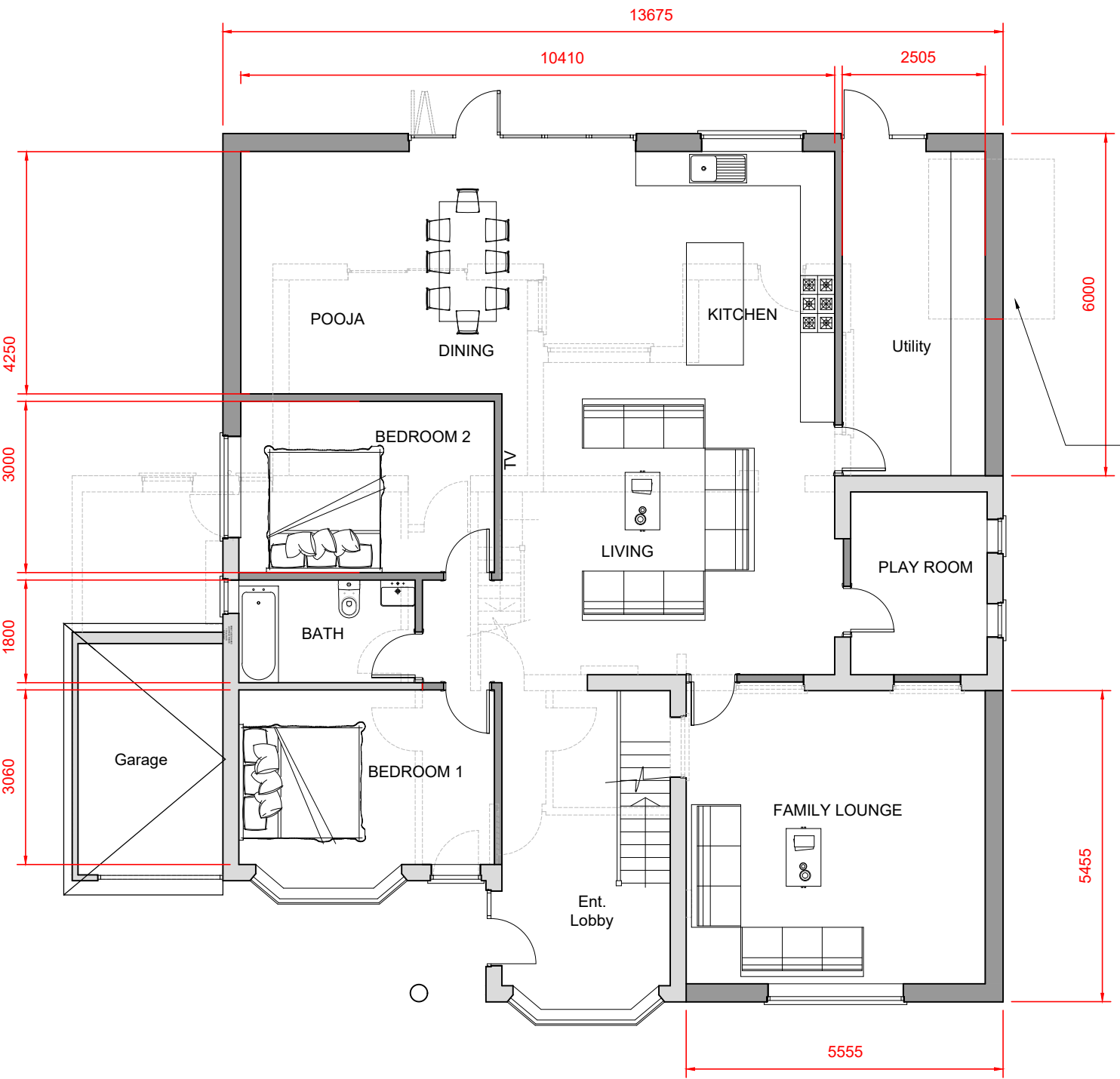
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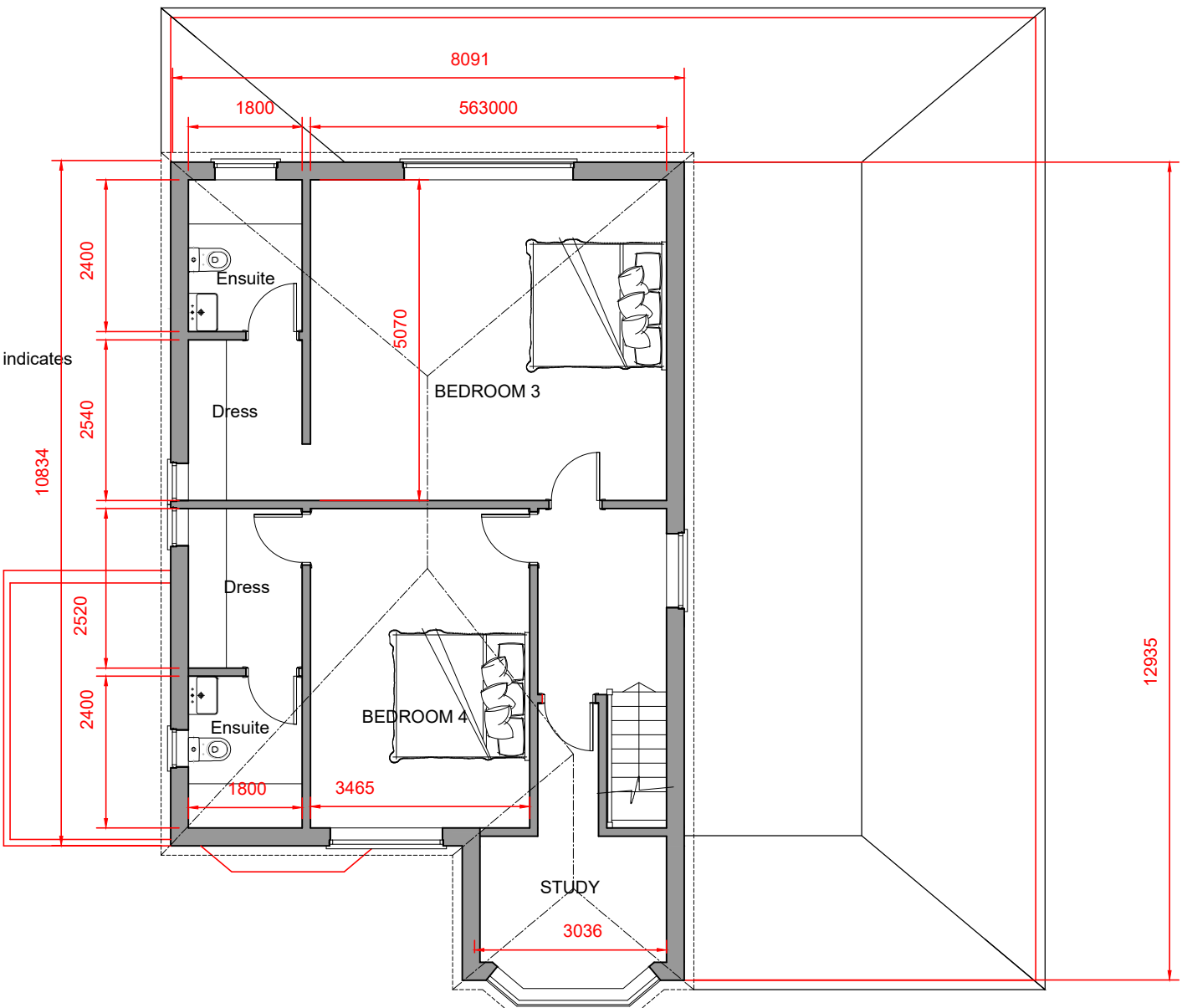
EXISTING NORTH ELEVATION
SCALE 1 : 100



EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1 : 100



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1 : 100



**PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR OR LOFT
PLAN**
SCALE 1 : 100



NOTES

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Client:
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Project:
Single storey rear extension.

Location:
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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.