Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW)
AT
109 READING ROAD
FINCHAMPSTEAD

Prepared for:
Mr B Parsons
109 Reading Road
Finchampstead
Wokingham
RG40 4RD

21 April 2026

Ref: SPH/NP/PEA-26/07.04

Offices in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Worcestershire
Tel: 0118 976 2902

Bramley House
Newnham Bridge
Tenbury Wells
Worcestershire
WR15 8NX
Tel: 0118 976 2902
Email: info@batsurveys-uk.com

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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 Parsons to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]), at 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4RD. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Tuesday 7 April 2026 at 12.20pm, during daylight hours. An internal and external inspection of the property and 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 two statutory designated sites are located within, and no current European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) for bats has been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The landform surrounding the site is suitable for roosting, commuting or foraging bats and provides a rich and diverse habitats for a wide range of bat species.

The DBW comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the property 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 property's suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and potential roost features identified during the preliminary inspection. There are slipped/raised roof tiles on the front and rear elevations resulting in gaps which could provide potential roosting opportunities for bats or access into the building, and the presence or absence of bats could not be established without further survey effort. When combined with the data from the desk top study, this resulted in the property being characterised as having a low potential[1] to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines[2], a single separate dusk emergence survey is required on the property 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).

1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Urban Tree Experts was instructed by Mr B Parsons to conduct a DBW at 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4RD 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 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 survey was commissioned in connection with a forthcoming planning application to Wokingham Borough Council that will seek to construct a two-storey side extension following demolition of the existing garage/rear extension/covered walkway, see plans at Appendix 1.

1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

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

Nick holds a Class 2 Bat License (CLS-11742) and has been surveying bats for 4 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 (SCI64844). He has 36 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.

3. Site Location and Description

3.1 Site Location

The building is located at Grid Reference SU76846307, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead, highlighted.

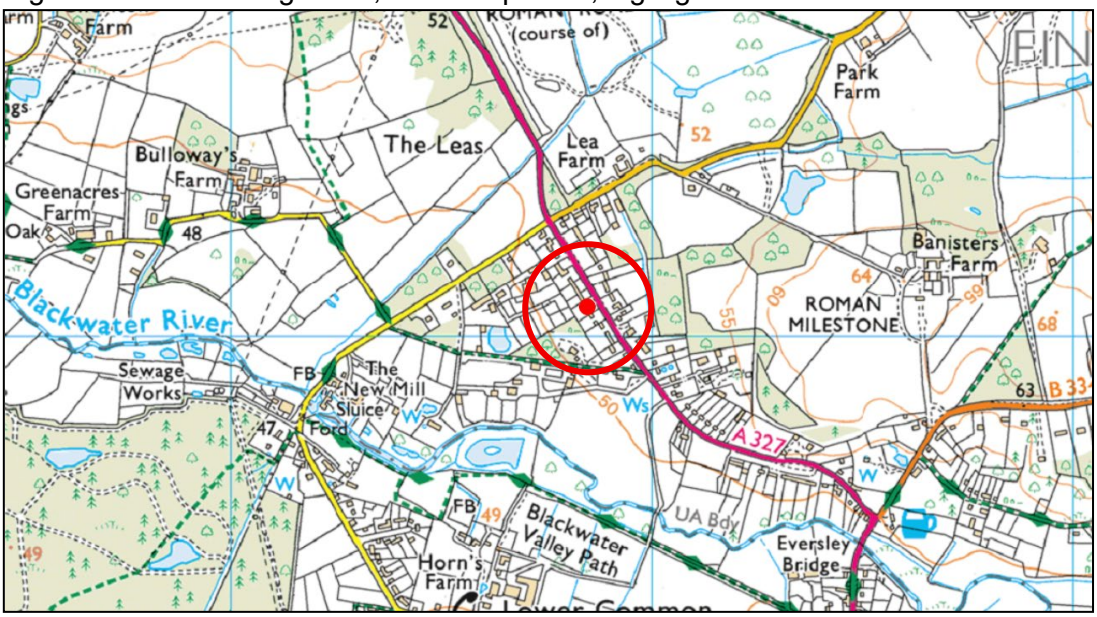


Figure 2. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead, overview of the immediate area.

3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached two-storey brick built, and part rendered dwelling with attached garage. To the front is a gravelled driveway/parking area with lawn and, to the rear, the garden is mainly laid to lawn with patio area and mature trees on the rear boundary, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers some foraging and commuting habitat for bats and there is ecological connectivity to the wider landscape via the garden network.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

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. 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 suburban area, 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 semi-rural area to the west of Finchampstead village with properties and gardens of differing sizes and styles to the north and south. The back garden connects directly to a tree lined area of improved grassland and thereafter tree and hedge lined agricultural fields. To the west is a large, freshwater lake, the Long River and more tree/hedge lined agricultural fields. All of these areas are likely to provide good habitat to support roosting, commuting and foraging bats and are directly connected to the site.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) and Bramshill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lie within 2km of the proposed development site and there is ecological connectivity from the site to these designated sites.

A search of the Magic interactive website revealed no current EPSLs for bats have been granted within 2km of the site, however there are 10 expired ones.

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW at 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4RD was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 7 April 2026 commencing at 12.20pm. The weather conditions for the survey were dry and bright with a temperature of 16 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 and 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 property – 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 property.
- 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. This included the wooden shed in the rear garden as it will not be affected by the proposed works.

4.3 Constraints

Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client. A thorough inspection of the loft space of the property could not be undertaken due to no boarding and thick insulation.

5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property and 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, two-storey, brick-built and part rendered building with attached single storey garage with rear extension, see Figure 4 below. The cross-pitched roof is covered in tiles, some of which, on the front and rear elevations have raised or slipped and may afford roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling bat species, see examples at Figure 5 on page 9. The ridge tiles are sealed with no missing mortar and the lead flashing on the flat roof section of the property is flush with no gaps that could be exploited by roosting bats, see Figure 6 on page 9. The verges are sealed, however the tiles on the rear valley section have moved leaving gaps, see Figure 7 on page 10. The pitched roofs of the 3 dormer windows are covered in well fitted tiles and there is no missing mortar from the ridge tiles, see Figure 8 on page 10. The front and sides of all the dormer windows are covered in hanging tiles and there are gaps where the hanging tiles meet the uPVC soffits (see Figure 9 on page 11) however only the dormer window on the side elevation is being affected by the proposed works. The uPVC soffits and fascias are tight to the wall with no splits or gaps, see Figure 10 on page 11.

The flat roofs of the garage/rear extension/covered walkway are covered in well fitted bitumen felt with no rips or tears (see Figure 11 on page 12) and the fascias are tight to the wall and offer no roosting opportunities, see Figure 12 on page 12.

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

Figure 4. Rear view of property. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

Figure 5. Example slipped/raised roof tiles on main dwelling. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

Figure 6. Example flat roof section of property and flush lead flashing. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

Figure 7. Example moved tiles in rear roof valley. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

Figure 8. Example sealed roof and ridge tiles on dormers. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

Figure 9. Example gaps between hanging tiles and soffits on dormer window on side elevation. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

Figure 10. Example sealed uPVC soffits/fascias. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

Figure 11. Well fitted bitumen felt on garage/rear extension roofs. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

Figure 12. Example sealed fascias on garage. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The loft void over the property was accessed via a ladder and was in a good condition internally. The loft was not lit, not boarded and insulated (see Figure 13 below) and a thorough inspection could not be conducted due to the lack of boarding and thick insulation covering the joists. The roof tiles are lined with a combination of bitumen felt, tar paper and timber sarking on the flat roof section, see Figure 13 below.

Internally the ceilings of the garage/rear extension and walkway are boarded to the edges and offer no roosting potential, see Figure 14 on page 14.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the building.

Figure 13. Internal view of loft space. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

Figure 14. Internal view of garage/rear extension ceilings and covered walkway. 109 Reading Road, Finchampstead. 07.04.26

6. Evaluation

The bat roost potential of the features within the section of the building to be affected by the proposed works 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 were recorded during the survey of the property however, there are raised/slipped roof tiles which provide crevice like features suitable for bats to roost and the presence or absence of bats could not be determined without further survey effort. The building was assessed as having a low potential to support roosting bats.

Based on the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, one dusk emergence survey needs to be undertaken on the property, between May and August, in order to establish the presence of absence of roosting bats in the building. The features identified will require 2 survey positions equipped with observers, bat detectors and night vision cameras and 1 survey position with night vision camera and bat detector located on the garage roof in order to cover the potential bat roosting features. A ladder will be required in order to access the roof over the garage to install the camera and detector.

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

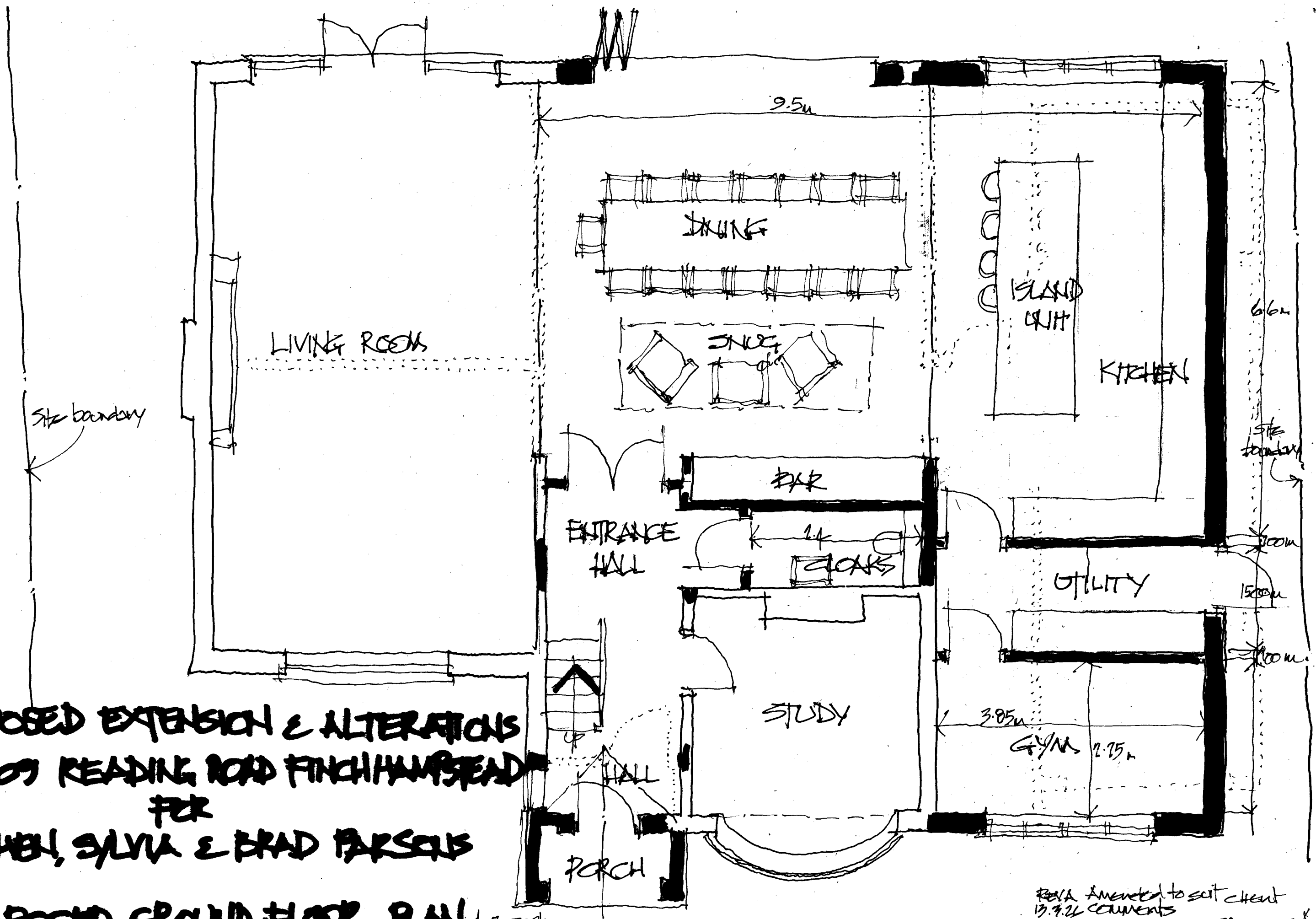
Any queries regarding this report should be addressed, in the first instance, to Urban Tree Experts:

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
Natural England Licence CLS-CLS-17637, CLS-CLS-17638

APPENDIX 1



PROPOSED EXTENSION & ALTERATIONS
TO 109 READING ROAD FINCHHAMPSTEAD
FOR
STEPHEN, SYLVIA & BRAD PARSONS

PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN 1:50 scale

REV A Amended to suit client
13.3.26 comments

SK07 A
15th Jan 26

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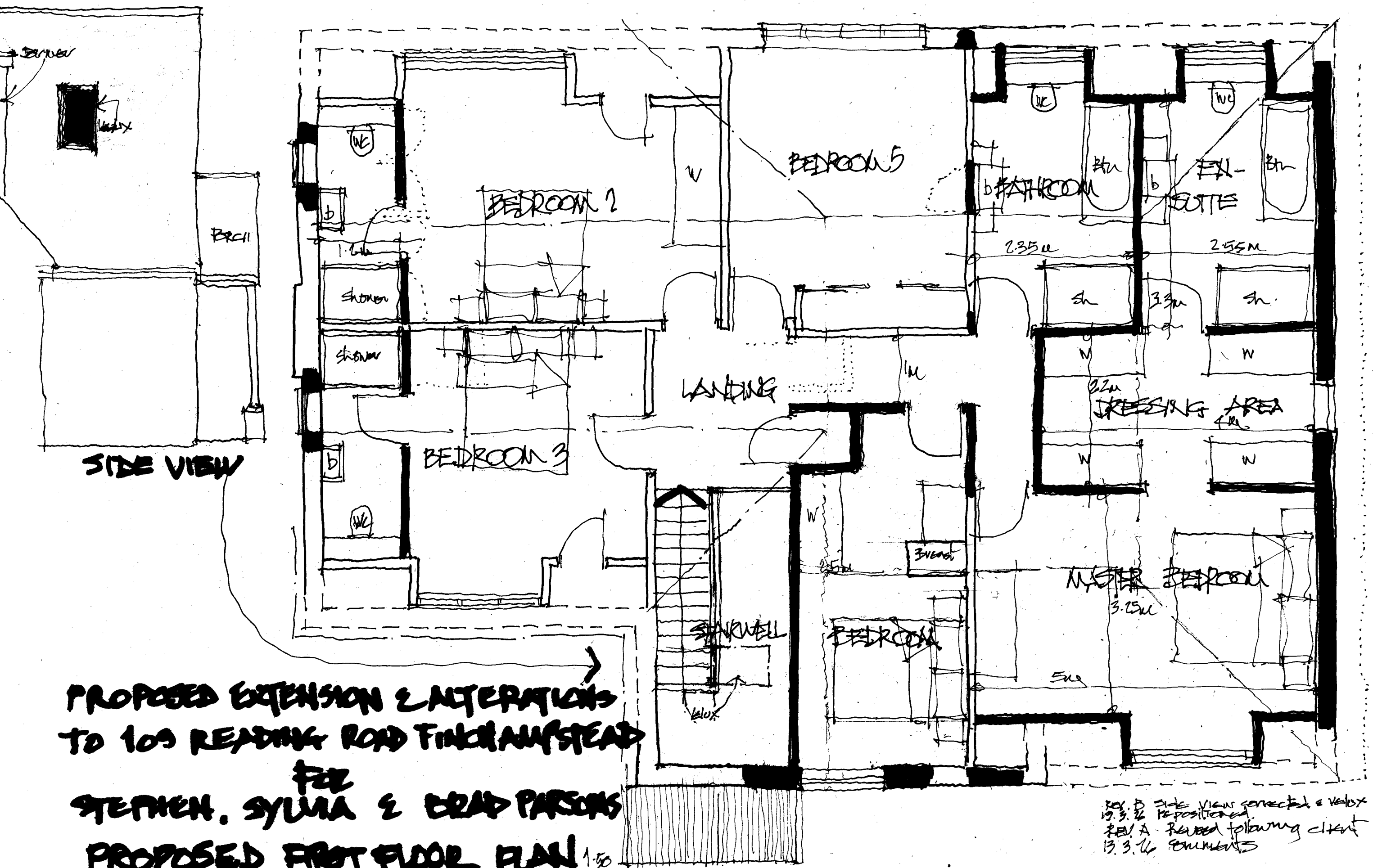

PROPOSED EXTENSION & ALTERATIONS
TO 109 READING ROAD FINCHAMPSTEAD
FOR
STEPHEN, SYLVIA & BRAD PARSONS
PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN 1:50

Rev. B Side view corrected & velux
19.3.26 repositioned
REV. A Revised following client
13.3.26 comments

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SK08 B
19th Jan 2026

PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION 1:50 SCALE

PROPOSED EXTENSION & ALTERATIONS TO 109 READING ROAD FINCHAMPSTEAD FOR STEPHEN, SYLVIA & BRAD PARSONS.

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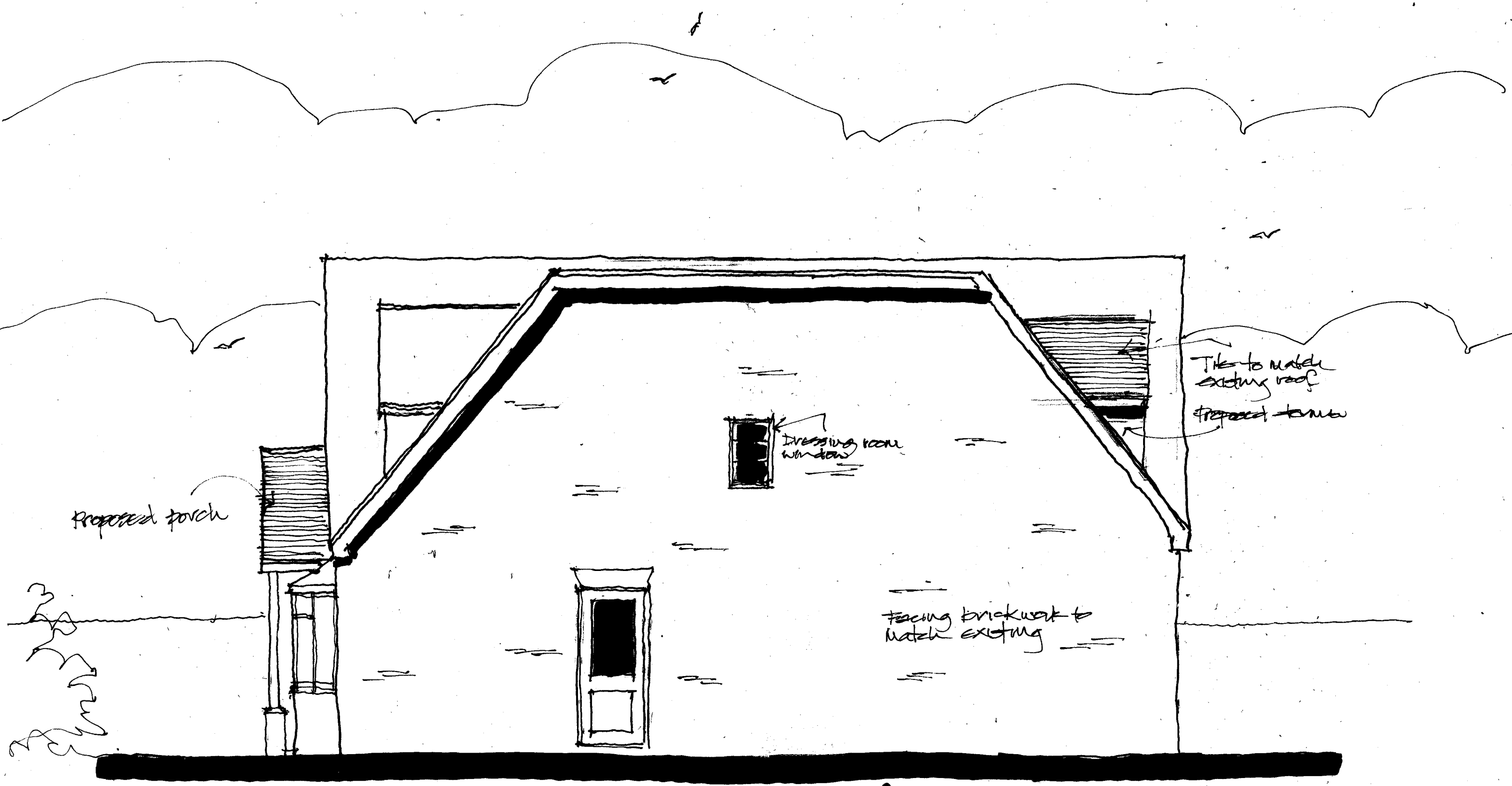
TEL 01189 890990 EMail mbp.ltd@ntopenworld.com

REV. A Garage door replaced 13.3.26 with window

SK09 A
19th Jan 2026



PROPOSED SIDE EXTENSION 1:50 Scale

PROPOSED EXTENSION & ALTERATIONS TO 109 READING ROAD

FINCHAMPSTEAD FOR STEPHEN, SYLVIA & BRAD PARSONS

Rev B 19.3.26 First floor window added

Rev A 13.3.26 Door repositioned

MARTIN BUTLER PARTNERSHIP LIMITED

SK11 B

20th Jan 2026

TEL 01189 090990 Email mbpltd@ftopenworld.com

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.