

21 Leith Close
Crowthorne
Berkshire
RG45 6TD

Preliminary Roost Assessment

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Mrs Lathwell to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at 21 Leith Close in Crowthorne, Berkshire. The survey was commissioned to accompany a householder planning application submitted to Wokingham Borough seeking consent for a rear extension.
- 1.1.2** No evidence of roosting bats was found externally or internally during the building inspection. The absence of bat droppings inside the void spaces indicates that primarily void-dwelling species, such as long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.), are unlikely to be present. The bungalow lacked any features suitable for roosting bats.
- 1.1.3** The bungalow is considered to be of negligible potential suitability for roosting bats. The development proposals are considered highly unlikely to result in the death, injury or disturbance of bats; the damage or destruction of a bat roost; or the obstruction of access to a bat roost. As such, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required for the planned works to go ahead lawfully.
- 1.1.4** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the demolition work, the work will stop immediately and a licensed ecologist will advise how works should proceed; this may require a EPSML to permit the work to continue lawfully.
- 1.1.5** This report contains information regarding a mobile species so it will likely be valid for less than 12 months (CIEEM 2019).

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Mrs Lathwell to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at 21 Leith Close in Crowthorne, Berkshire.

2.1.2 The survey was commissioned to accompany a householder planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for a rear extension (refer to proposed elevations in **Appendix 4**).

2.2 Site Location and Context

2.2.1 The property is a semi-detached bungalow on Leith Close – a residential Close in Crowthorne, Berkshire (central OS grid reference: SU83496510).

2.2.2 The bungalow is in a modern housing estate. It is situated immediately to the north of wooded margin of Oaklands Lane, which provides wooded corridor to the east and west linking with the extensive open space of East Berkshire Golf Course about 600m to the east. The lake, woodland and heathland of Heath Lake Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is about 235m to the north west.

2.2.3 Overall, the nearby habitats are high suitability for commuting and foraging bats adapted to roosting in suburban environments.

2.3 Report Objectives

2.3.1 The aim of the PRA is to ascertain if there is evidence of the presence of bats and/or potential for roosting bats to be present, and therefore whether further survey and/or mitigation would be required for future proposed development activities.

3 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND

3.1 Relevant Legislation

3.1.1 In England and Wales, all bat species found in the wild are fully protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA) and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); the regulations are commonly referred to as the Habitat Regulations and hereafter referred to as such. The Habitat Regulations refer to European Protected Species (EPS) and all species of bats in the United Kingdom (UK) are EPS. Although the UK left the European Union on the 31st January 2020 and is therefore no longer tied to European legislation, the Habitat Regulations have been retained in their current format.

3.1.2 The legal framework underpinned by the WCA and Habitat Regulations makes these specific actions an offence as follows:

- Deliberately kill, injure, capture or take a wild bat;
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, to rear or nurture their young, to hibernate or migrate, or to significantly affect local distribution or abundance;
- Damage or destroy a place used by a bat for breeding or resting; and
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place used by a bat for shelter or protection.

3.2 Planning Policy

3.2.1 The biodiversity duty imposed through the Environment Act 2021 states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) must consider what action they can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. Government planning policy, such as the ODPM Circular 06/2005, requires LPAs to account for the conservation of protected species when considering and determining planning applications.

3.2.2 The ODPM Circular 06/2005 states that *‘the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat.’* This policy means that in instances where there is a reasonable likelihood of bats being present and affected by a development, surveys must be undertaken to inform a mitigation strategy to be agreed prior to granting planning permission.

3.3 Mitigation Licensing

3.3.1 The government's statutory nature conservation body, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations. An EPS mitigation licence can be issued if the following three tests derived from Regulation 55 have been satisfied:

- (2)l – the derogation is for the purposes of '*preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.*'
- (9)(a) – there is '*no satisfactory alternative*' to the derogation; and
- (9)(b) – '*the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.*'

3.3.2 LPAs have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3)(e) of the Habitat Regulations to consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by planning proposals affecting EPS before granting planning permission. If an EPS mitigation licence is necessary, a licence can be sought once all the necessary planning consents have been granted. Natural England aims to issue a decision on licence applications within 30 working days of submission.

3.3.3 The Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) scheme allows ecologists to apply to become Registered Consultants to use this licence for low conservation status roosts, i.e. roosts comprising small numbers of seven commonly occurring species. A site registration form must be completed as a condition of the licence and submitted to Natural England at least three weeks before the licensable activities are due to start; Natural England aims to register sites within two weeks of submission.

3.3.4 Baseline survey information supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or BMCL site registrations must be up-to-date and have been completed within the current or most recent optimal season. A suitably experienced ecologist will be required to undertake a site walkover/check within three months prior to application/registration submission to confirm that conditions have not changed since the most recent survey.

4 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

4.1 Desk Study

4.1.1 A desk-based study for bats was undertaken to collate and review existing information about the site and the surrounding land. The study utilised the following open access resources:

- OS maps and Google Earth – maps and satellite imagery were used to identify potential flight-paths and foraging habitats for bats;
- MAGIC – examined to locate granted European Protected Species licences; and
- pre-existing bat survey reports – any available reports were obtained from the client or relevant planning portal.

4.2 Building Inspection

Survey Details

4.2.1 A detailed inspection of the exterior and interior of the bungalow was undertaken on the 20th February 2025 by John Wenman- registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 (Registration no. CL18 2016-23859-CLS-CLS) - in accordance with good practice guidance (Collins 2023). The equipment used during the inspection comprised binoculars, a high-power (1 million candlepower) LED torch, a headtorch, ladder and PPE (facemask, gloves etc.). The inspection involved a systematic search of the exterior and interior of the structure during daylight hours to compile information on potential and actual bat access points; potential and actual bat roost sites; and any evidence of bat presence.

External Survey

4.2.2 Frequently used bat access points and/or roost sites include (but are not limited to) spaces:

- behind hanging tiles, weatherboarding, soffit boxes and barge boards;
- under lead flashing (particularly around chimneys) and roof tiles/slates; and
- in existing bat boxes.

4.2.3 It is important to note that the two most abundant and widespread bat species, common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), typically only require gaps measuring 15mm by 20mm to gain access to a roost inside a building.

4.2.4 The external survey involved a systematic search for evidence of bats including:

- live or dead specimens;
- droppings;
- urine marks;
- fur-oil staining; and
- squeaking noises.

4.2.5 It should be noted that bats can be present in a building while leaving no visible signs externally and wet weather has the potential to wash any evidence away. The search for evidence was focused on (but was not limited to) the ground, windowsills, windowpanes and walls (including cladding and hanging tiles); particularly in places near to potential bat access points and/or roost sites.

Internal Survey

4.2.6 The internal survey comprised a systematic search for evidence of bats on the upper floors of the building (i.e. checking the exterior from windows) and inside the roof and eave spaces. Evidence of bats found during an internal inspection can include:

- live or dead specimens;
- droppings;
- urine marks;
- fur-oil staining;
- feeding remains (i.e. moth wings);
- squeaking noises;
- bat-fly (Nycteribiid) pupal cases; and
- odour.

4.2.7 It should be noted that only specimens or droppings can be relied upon in isolation to confirm the presence of a bat roost.

4.2.8 Frequently used roosting locations within the roof include (but are not limited to):

- the apex of the gable end or dividing walls;
- the top of chimney breasts;

- ridge and hip beams;
- mortise and tenon joints;
- behind purlins; and
- between tiles and roof lining.

Survey Limitations and Validity

- 4.2.9** There were no significant survey limitations because PRAs can be carried out at any time of year under any weather conditions and the building was fully accessible.
- 4.2.10** It should be noted that it is not always possible to inspect all potential roost sites during a survey, particularly for bat species which typically roost in hidden crevices. Therefore, an absence of bat evidence found during a survey does not necessarily equate to evidence of bat absence in a building.
- 4.2.11** This report contains information regarding a mobile species so it will likely be valid for less than 12 months (CIEEM 2019).

5 SURVEY RESULTS

5.1 Desk Study

5.1.1 The nearby tree lined Oaklands Lane provides continuous habitat that could be used as bat flight paths and feeding habitat also connecting to additional high-quality foraging habitats at the golf course and Heath Lake SSSI to the west for any bats roosting locally.

5.1.2 Bat mitigation licences that have been granted within the last 10 years inside a 2 kilometre radius of the property are detailed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Bat mitigation licences granted within a 2km radius of the property (Source: MAGIC).

Case Reference of Granted Licence	Species on the Licence	Licensable Issue	Licensable Works	Distance (m)
2016-25037-EPS-MIT	BLE, S-PIP	06/09/2016	Destroy resting place	850m
2015-7775-EPS-MIT	C-PIP	11/03/2015	Destroy resting place	1150m
2015-8440-EPS-MIT	BLE	28/04/2015	Damage resting place	1870m
2016-24162-EPS-MIT	C-PIP	18/07/2016	Destroy resting place	1150m
2020-45346-EPS-MIT	C-PIP, S-PIP	30/03/2020	Damage and destroy resting place	2000m
2018-33541-EPS-MIT	C-PIP, S-PIP	15/03/2018	Destroy resting place	1610m
2018-33861-EPS-MIT	BLE	14/03/2018	Destroy resting place	2000m
2017-31130-EPS-MIT	WHISK	06/09/2017	Destroy breeding site	1150m
2017-31789-EPS-MIT	S-PIP	19/10/2017	Destroy resting place	1890m

5.2 Building Inspection

5.2.1 The findings from the external and internal inspections carried out for the property are shown in Figure 1 and as follows:

External Survey

- 5.2.2** The property is a semi-detached, modern brick cavity wall built bungalow with a front gable and rear conservatory (**Photographs 1 - 2**).



Photograph 1. The bungalow viewed from the front (north west)



Photograph 2. The bungalow viewed from the rear (south east) showing conservatory to be replaced by the extension.

- 5.2.3** The concrete pantiles were all in place and tightly fitted on both the front (north western) and rear (south eastern) roof slopes. The ridge tiles and mortar beneath were intact also (**Photograph 3**). The tile ends to the front and rear of the roof were filled with insect mesh (**Photograph 4; Target note 2**).
- 5.2.4** The painted soffits were tightly fitted to the brickwork to the front and rear (**Photograph 5**). The conservatory was sealed tightly to the soffits where it joined the bungalow (**Photograph 6**).



Photograph 3. Tightly fitted pantiles and ridge.



Photograph 4. Insect mesh filling tile ends above the gutter



Photograph 5. Intact soffits tightly fitted to the brickwork.



Photograph 6. The conservatory sealed to the soffits.

- 5.2.5** The side (north eastern) gable had two integrated vent bricks with small openings unsuitable for bat access (**Photograph 7; Target note 1**). The verge mortar the side and front gables was intact (**Photographs 7 & 8**). An alarm box to the front gable had a narrow gap behind, which showed no evidence of the presence of bats.



Photograph 7. The vent bricks and intact verge mortar on the side gable



Photograph 8. The alarm box on the front gable with a narrow gap behind

Internal Survey

- 5.2.6** The building had one roof voids extending throughout the roof. The space had an height of approximately 2m and the roof was formed of trussed rafters (**Photograph 8**). The roof lined by bitumen and hessian felt, which was intact throughout and cobwebbed at the ridge (**Photograph 9**). The floor was mostly boarded and had fibre glass beneath, which was visible in small areas.



Photograph 8. The roof void showing the trussed rafters.



Photograph 9. The intact bitumen felt cobwebbed at the ridge.

- 5.2.7** The brickwork and blockwork on the gables and party wall was intact and sealed to the felt with no daylight visible (**Photograph 10; Target notes 6 & 7**). The vent bricks in the side gable were visible internally and a boiler was mounted to this wall.

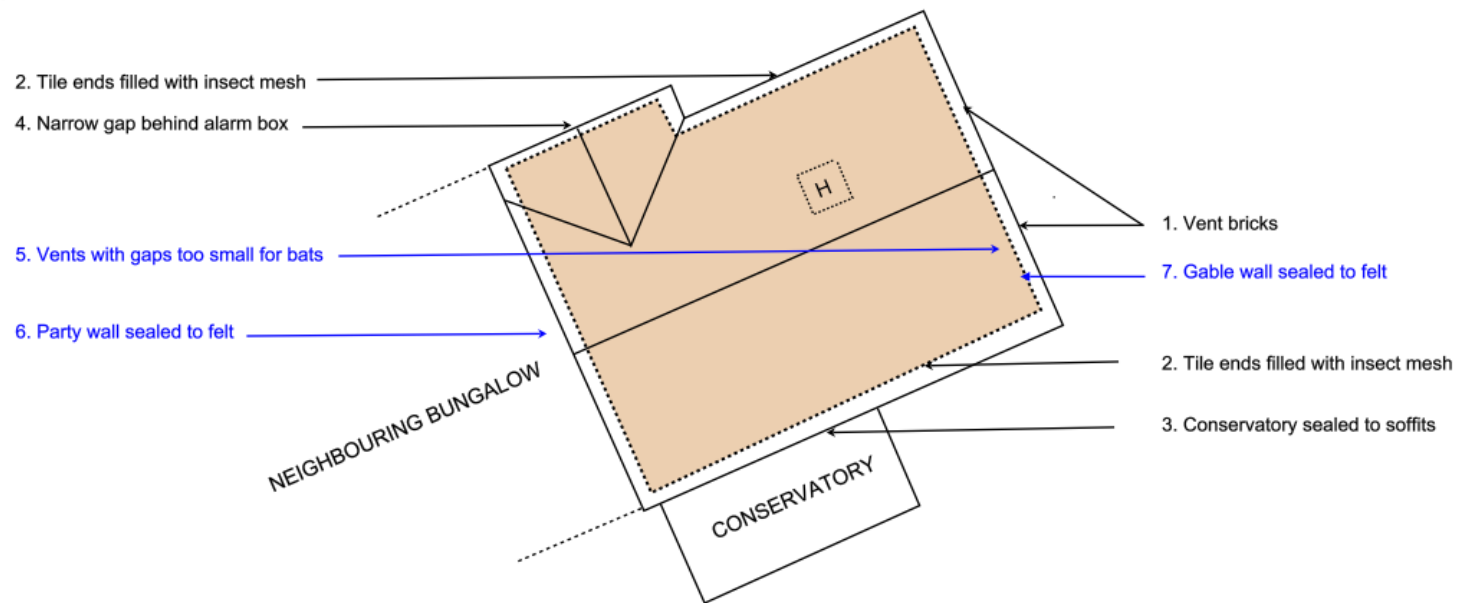


Photograph 10. The felt sealed to the blockwork at the gable end and party wall.



Photograph 11. The vent bricks in the side (north east facing) gable.

- 5.2.8** No bats or evidence of bats was visible within the roof void.



 Roof void
 H Loft hatch
 WT Water tank
 n. External target note
 n. Internal target note

Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	21 Leith Close Crowthorne	
JW	Feb 2025	Not to scale	Figure 1 - Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Assessment of Potential Roost Suitability

6.1.1 The nearby tree lined Oaklands Lane linking the property to more extensive semi-natural open spaces to the west, provides continuous habitat that could be used as flight paths and feeding habitat for any bats roosting locally. The search of granted bat mitigation licences identified four species known to be roosting within a 2km radius of the property: common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*pipistrellus pygmaeus*), brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) and whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*).

6.1.1 The roof void had sufficient space for internal flight and suitable conditions for supporting individual or small numbers of void-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*). However, no bat droppings were found internally so the presence of void-dwelling bats is considered highly unlikely.

6.1.2 The bungalow was of modern construction and lacked access points or crevice roosting sites suitable for roosting bats. A narrow gap behind the alarm box to the front showed no evidence of use by bats when inspected and it is considered unlikely that it would provide sufficient space, shelter, protection and conditions for opportunistic use by individual crevice-dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*pipistrellus pygmaeus*) bats. Therefore, the property is considered to be of negligible suitability for bats overall (see **Appendix 1** for potential suitability categories).

6.2 Assessment of Impacts and Recommendations

6.2.1 The development proposals seek consent for a rear extension replacing the conservatory. The survey findings demonstrate that these proposals are highly unlikely to result in the death, injury or disturbance of bats; the damage or destruction of a bat roost; or the obstruction of access to a bat roost. Therefore, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required to allow the development proposals to proceed lawfully

6.2.2 In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the demolition work, the work will stop immediately and a licensed ecologist will advise how works should proceed; this may require a EPSML to permit the work to continue lawfully.

7 REFERENCES

CIEEM (2019). *Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys*. CIEEM, Winchester.

Collins, J (ed.) (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Mathews F., Kubasiewicz L.M., Gurnell J., Harrower C.A., McDonald R.A., Shore R.F. (2018). *A Review of the Population and Conservation Status of British Mammals*. A report by the Mammal Society under contract to Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage. Natural England, Peterborough.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. & McLeish, A. P. (2004). *Bat Workers' Manual (3rd edition)*. JNCC, Peterborough.

Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). *UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats*. CIEEM, Ampfield.

APPENDIX 1 – POTENTIAL SUITABILITY CATEGORIES FOR ROOSTING BATS

The categories detailed in **Table 2** below are derived from the '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*' (Collins 2023) and provide guidance for assessing the potential suitability of buildings (and other structures) for roosting bats. These categories are applied using professional judgement and irrespective of whether the presence of a bat roost has been confirmed during a survey, as additional bat roosts could be present which have not yet been discovered.

Table 2. Categories for potential suitability of buildings (and other structures) for roosting bats.

Potential Suitability	Category Justification
None	A building (or structure) that has no features likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of cracks, crevices or voids that could provide suitable shelter).
Negligible	A building (or structure) that has no obvious features likely to be used by roosting bats, but in this case a small element of uncertainty remains as bats will occasionally use small and apparently unsuitable features. This category may also be used where a bat could potentially roost due to one attribute, but it is considered unlikely due to another attribute (e.g. a feature that is subject to constant illumination from artificial lighting).
Low	A building (or structure) that has one or more potential roost sites suitable for opportunistic use by individual bats at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites for bats do not provide sufficient space, shelter, protection, conditions and/or surrounding suitable habitat to be used regularly or by large numbers (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for a maternity colony and not a classic hibernation site).
Moderate	A building (or structure) that has one or more potential roost sites suitable for regular use by individual bats, or small non-breeding groups, due to sufficient space, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. However, these potential roost sites for bats are unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status with regards to the type of roost only (i.e. maternity colonies and classic hibernation sites).
High	A building (or structure) that has one or more potential roost sites suitable for use by large numbers of bats more regularly and for longer periods of time due to sufficient space, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These potential roost sites for bats are capable of supporting high conservation status roosts (i.e. maternity colonies and classic hibernation sites).

APPENDIX 2 – DEFINITION OF BAT ROOST TYPES

The potential suitability of a building in conjunction with any evidence of bat presence is used to provide an initial assessment of likely roost type and importance. The types of roost considered are based on the following Natural England definitions:

- Day roost – a summer resting place used by individual bats, or small non-breeding groups, during the day;
- Night roost – a resting place used by individual bats on occasion, or by a whole colony regularly, during the night;
- Feeding perch – a resting place used by individual bats, or a few individuals, primarily for short periods of feeding during the night;
- Transitional roost – a place used by a few individual bats, or occasionally small groups, for a short period of time upon waking from hibernation or in the period prior to hibernation;
- Maternity roost – a place used by small to large groups of female bats to give birth and raise their young to independence;
- Hibernation roost – a place used by individual bats, or in groups, during winter where there is a constant cool temperature and high humidity; and
- Satellite roost – a place used by a few individuals to small groups of breeding female bats found in close proximity to the main nursery colony throughout the breeding season.

The importance of a bat roost is underpinned by the conservation status of the suspected species (i.e. the distribution/rarity of a species in a specific geographic location) and the type of roost (i.e. not all roosts have the same level of importance in supporting the local bat population). Further roost characterisation surveys may be required to fully determine the importance of a confirmed roost to allow for a robust impact assessment.

APPENDIX 3 – FURTHER SURVEY RATIONALE

In cases where no evidence of use by bats is found during a building inspection but the possibility of their presence cannot be ruled out, further presence/likely absence survey is likely to be required if the development proposals will impact potential roost sites. Emergence surveys are carried out to establish the presence or likely absence of roosting bats in buildings (and other structures) and these are designed in accordance with the '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*' (Collins 2023) detailed in **Table 3** below.

Table 3. Recommended further survey for establishing presence/likely absence of roosting bats in buildings (and other structures).

Potential Suitability	Further Survey
None	No further surveys are required.
Negligible	No further surveys are required.
Low	A minimum of one dusk emergence survey visit should be undertaken in the period of May to August. However, if all areas (including cracks, crevices and voids) can be thoroughly inspected and no evidence of use by bats is found, then emergence surveys may not be required. In cases where a complete inspection cannot be carried out, professional judgement and proportionality should be applied when assessing the impacts of the development proposals.
Moderate	A minimum of two dusk emergence survey visits should be undertaken in the period of May to September, with at least one of the surveys between May and August; the survey visits should be spaced at least three weeks apart.
High	A minimum of three separate dusk emergence survey visits should be undertaken in the period of May to September (inclusive), with at least two of the surveys between May and August; the survey visits should be spaced at least three weeks apart.

In cases where the PRA and/or further survey establishes the presence of roosting bats in a building (or structure), this will likely trigger the need for roost characterisation to collect sufficient information to inform the impact assessment and mitigation strategy. The roost characterisation comprises information collected during the PRA, emergence surveys and by other methods, such as DNA analysis of bat droppings, and ultimately aims to determine the bat species roosting; the number of bats the roosts support; the roost access points; the locations of the roosts and the types of roost present. This information is crucial when applying for planning permission and/or a European Protected Species mitigation licence.

The scaling of this drawing cannot be assured
Revision Date Initial

1 South Elevation
Proposed 1:100

2 East Elevation
Proposed 1:100

PLANNING

Project: 21 Leith Close, Wokingham, RG3 4AJ
Drawing: Proposed Elevations
Scale: As noted @A3
Drawing No: 008
Revision: -

A3

The scaling of this drawing cannot be assured
Revision Date Initial

1 North Elevation
Proposed 1:100

2 West Elevation
Proposed 1:100

PLANNING

Project: 21 Leith Close, Wokingham, RG3 4AJ
Drawing: Proposed Elevations
Scale: As noted @A3
Drawing No: 009
Revision: -

A3

