

**77 Albert Road
Caversham Heights
Reading
Berkshire
RG4 7AW**

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Report prepared by Jake Morgan; reviewed by Conor Watson ACIEEM

Ref: R3404/b

April 2023



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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Duncan Moir to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment at 77 Albert Road in Caversham Heights, Reading. The assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a part two-storey, part single-storey rear extension.
- 1.1.2** All British bat species are fully protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitat Regulations') (as amended). A survey of the exterior and interior of the property was undertaken on the 29th March 2023 by Conor Watson ACIEEM registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL17 and assistant ecologist Jake Morgan.
- 1.1.3** No evidence of roosting bats was found externally or internally during the building inspection. Externally, the property possesses external features that resemble potential roosting sites confined to hanging tiles on the gable ends where tiles were slightly lifted, slipped or missing. Therefore, the property is considered to be of low potential suitability for roosting bats.
- 1.1.4** The survey findings demonstrate that the planning will impact hanging tiles where potential roosting sites have been identified. Therefore, the proposals could result in the damage or destruction of a bat roost and in the absence of mitigation, may lead to bats being disturbed and/or harmed if present at the time. Further survey is required to determine if bats are present and if present, to characterise the status of the bat roost(s). The further survey should comprise one evening emergence survey that should be undertaken in the period between May and August (Collins 2016).
- 1.1.5** If roosting bats are present, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence or if applicable, the registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) may be required to permit the lawful damage/destruction of a bat roost(s) and to permit the disturbance of any bats present at the time of the work. In the long-term, replacement access and/or roosting opportunities may need to be created and/or reinstated in the property as part of the EPS licence. Access and roosting opportunities should be created corresponding to the positioning of roosting sites identified during the emergence and/or re-entry surveys.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mr Duncan Moir to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment at 77 Albert Road in Caversham Heights, Reading.

2.1.2 The assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for a part two-storey, part single-storey rear extension (refer to existing and proposed elevations in **Appendix 3**).

2.2 Legislative Background

2.2.1 All British bat species are fully protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitat Regulations') (as amended). In summary, the legislation combined makes it an offence to:

- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat;
- Deliberately, 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; or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species; and
- Deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

2.2.2 The government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence 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 have been met:

- **Regulation 55(9)(a)** - there is "no satisfactory alternative" to the derogation;
- **Regulation 55(9)(b)** - the derogation "will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range"; and
- **Regulation 55(2)(e)** - the derogation is for the purposes of "preserving public

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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”.

- 2.2.3** Local authorities have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3e) of the Habitat Regulations to have regard to requirements of the Habitats Directive in the exercise of their functions. They must therefore consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by applications where survey findings show that an EPS mitigation licence is necessary before granting planning permission.
- 2.2.4** EPS mitigation licence application can be submitted once all the necessary planning consents have been granted. Natural England aims to issue a decision on EPS mitigation licence applications within 30 working days of submission.
- 2.2.5** Licensable projects affecting small numbers of seven commonly occurring species occupying roosts of low conservation importance may fall under the remit of the ('Low Impact') Bat Mitigation Class Licence WML-CL21 (BMCL). The BMCL permits 'Registered Consultants' or accredited agents appointed by them to carry licensable operations on site on behalf of clients following registration of sites with Natural England at least 15 working days before the work days before the work is due to start.
- 2.2.6** Survey data supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or the registration of the site under the BMCL must be up to date i.e. have been conducted within the current or most recent optimal survey season i.e. May to August. Therefore, if surveys show bats are present and licensable work is delayed until during or after the next survey season, updated surveys will be required to support an application or site registration.

2.3 Site Location and Context

- 2.3.1** The property is a detached residential dwelling located on the south-western side of Albert Road in Caversham Heights, Reading (OS grid reference: SU 70635 75649).
- 2.3.2** The dwelling is in a suburban setting neighbouring St Andrews Church and surrounded by residential properties with gardens and trees. Small parcels of broadleaved woodland are present in residential gardens approximately 280m south, 360m east and 480m west of the dwelling. The River Thames, a well-known commuting and foraging corridor for bats, is less than 800m to the south of the

dwelling.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Building Inspection

3.1.1 A survey of the exterior and interior of the property was undertaken on the 29th March 2023 by Conor Watson ACIEEM registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL17 (Registration Number: 2020-44817-CLS-CLS) and assistant ecologist Jake Morgan.

3.1.2 The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars, a high power (1 million candle power) torch looking for signs of occupation by bats and features that could offer potential roosting sites following standard survey guidelines (Collins 2016; Mitchell-Jones 2004; Mitchell-Jones & McLeish 2004).

3.1.3 The following may indicate the presence of a bat roost within a building:

- Bat droppings (these can be found externally, especially in sheltered areas such as window sills, underneath roost entrances or internally within a roof space);
- Piles of insect remains e.g. moth wings (these may be indicative of regular feeding sites used by species such as brown long eared bat);
- Staining at roost entrances or within the roost (urine and oil from fur can leave stains on timbers when bats are gathered for long periods); and
- Bats (live or dead).

3.1.4 Residential buildings may offer potential roosting sites in a number of locations – favoured locations include:

- Under roof, ridge and hip tiles, especially when loose or lifted tiles are present, or sections of mortar are missing;
- At the gable ends – access is typically gained at the roof apex via gaps in the soffits or under roof tiles;
- At the eaves – gaining access via gaps between the soffits and wall; and
- Within an enclosed roof space – long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.) for example, will often cluster at the ridge beam.

3.2 Survey Constraints

3.2.1 There were no significant constraints because full external and internal access was available throughout the survey and the weather conditions included light rain and

an air temperature of 7°C.

- 3.2.2** It should be noted that it is not always possible to inspect all potential roosting locations during a survey and therefore an absence of bat evidence does not necessarily equate to evidence of bat absence.

4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1** Photographs of the house are presented in **Appendix 1** and a plan of the external and internal survey findings with associated target notes is shown in **Appendix 2**. The survey findings from the exterior and interior of the house are described as follows:

4.2 External Survey

- 4.2.1** The detached house was of brick wall cavity construction with white render, a pitched roof, a front porch and attached garage (**Photographs 1 & 2**).
- 4.2.2** The pitched roof was covered in large, interlocking concrete tiles that were flat and ridge tiles that were securely mortared; lead flashing was tight around the base of the chimney stack (**Photograph 3; Target notes 1 & 2**). The sloping front porch roof was covered in flat overlapping roof tiles (**Photograph 4; Target note 3**). The gable and porch roof verges were fully mortared (**Photographs 5; Target note 4**). Both gable ends were clad in hanging tiles that were mostly flat; however, there were a few potential points of bat ingress where tiles were slightly lifted, slipped or missing (**Photographs 6 & 7; Target notes 5 & 6**). The wall render met the soffit so the eaves were fully sealed (**Photograph 8; Target note 7**). The attached garage had a bituminous flat roof with tight uPVC fascias (**Photograph 9; Target notes 8 & 9**).
- 4.2.3** No evidence of roosting bats was observed during the external inspection of the property.

4.3 Internal Survey

- 4.3.1** The property had one roof void with an approximate floor-to-ridge height of 1.5 metres which was accessible via a first floor loft hatch (**Photograph 10**). The void was of 'cut and pitch' roof construction and lined with hessian reinforced bitumen felt that was mostly intact, other than a cobwebbed gap by the chimney and a tear near the ridge (**Photographs 11 & 12; Target notes 10 & 11**). The floor was insulated with fibreglass under partial boarding, but the eaves were empty (**Photograph 13; Target note 12**). Both gables featured breezeblock cavity walls; the front gable blockwork was tight to the timber rafters whereas the rear gable blockwork had been mortared around its edges (**Photographs 14 & 15; Target notes 13 & 14**). The rear

gable end had a boiler attached to its blockwork and a few small wasp nests at its apex (**Photograph 16**).

4.3.2 The attached garage was of single-skin brick construction and accessible through an external door. The ceiling was lined with timber boarding and heavily cobwebbed (**Photograph 17; Target note 15**).

4.3.3 No signs of roosting bats were observed during the internal inspection of the property.

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Status

- 5.1.1** No evidence of roosting bats was found externally or internally during the building inspection. The absence of bat droppings inside the roof void of the house indicates that primarily void-dwelling species, such as long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.) are unlikely to be present.
- 5.1.2** Externally, the property possesses external features that resemble potential roosting sites confined to hanging tiles on the gable ends where tiles were slightly lifted, slipped or missing. Small crevice-dwelling species that typically occupy such features include the widespread pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and small *Myotis* species. Roosts supporting pipistrelle (*Pipistrelle* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* bat species are considered to be of low to moderate conservation importance (subject to the type of roost present, i.e. non-breeding roosts supporting individual or small numbers of bats through to maternity roosts supporting large numbers of female bats) (Mitchell-Jones 2004).
- 5.1.3** Taking into account the absence of evidence of bat occupation, the quantity and scale of the potential roosting sites and the suburban nature of the surrounding habitats, the property is considered to be of low potential suitability for roosting bats.

5.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

- 5.2.1** The survey findings demonstrate that the planning proposals for a for a part two-storey, part single-storey rear extension (refer to existing and proposed elevations in **Appendix 3**) will impact hanging tiles where potential roosting sites have been identified. Therefore, the proposals could result in the damage or destruction of a bat roost and in the absence of mitigation, may lead to bats being disturbed and/or harmed if present at the time.
- 5.2.2** Further survey is required to determine if bats are present and if present, to characterise the status of the bat roost(s). The further survey should comprise one evening emergence survey that should be undertaken in the period between May and August (Collins 2016).
- 5.2.3** If roosting bats are present, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence or if applicable, the registration of the site under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence

(BMCL) may be required to permit the lawful damage/destruction of a bat roost(s) and to permit the disturbance of any bats present at the time of the work. An EPS licence can be issued by Natural England if the three licensing tests (detailed in **Paragraph 2.2.2**) have been met by the proposals.

- 5.2.4** To meet one of the licensing tests, it would be necessary to demonstrate that the 'favourable conservation status' of bats using the property is maintained throughout and after the completion of the work by employing mitigation measures during the work, by providing compensatory roosts in the short-term and ensuring that roosting sites are retained on site in the long-term. Indicative and provisional mitigation proposals are summarised in **Section 5.3** below. **N.B. the preparation of a detailed mitigation strategy necessary for the submission of an EPS mitigation licence should be based on the findings of the further survey.**

5.3 Indicative and Provisional Mitigation Proposals

- 5.3.1** If further survey demonstrates that an EPS mitigation licence is required, under the terms of the licence or BMCL (if applicable) the commencement of work affecting bat roost(s) will be timed to avoid the periods when bats are most susceptible to disturbance, i.e. winter hibernation season for all roosts (mid-November to February) to avoid disturbing torpid bats and outside of the peak summer breeding season (May to mid-September) where evidence of a maternity roost is recorded. **N.B. the current survey information does not indicate that a maternity roost is present.**
- 5.3.2** Replacement roosting opportunities would be provided so that they are available to bats in the short-term, i.e. prior to and during the work by erecting woodcrete bat boxes on a mature tree or a purposed-built pole before the work starts.
- 5.3.3** A 'soft strip' approach to the work affecting bat roosts would be adopted, i.e. the careful removal of hanging tiles associated with the roost(s), by gloved hands and with hand-held tools under the supervision of a licensed ecologist or the Registered Consultant if working under the BMCL. In the event that bats are discovered during the course of the work, the licensed ecologist or Registered Consultant would capture the bat(s) and transfer it/them directly to one of the bat boxes erected in advance of the works.
- 5.3.4** In the long-term, replacement access and/or roosting opportunities may need to be created and/or reinstated in the property as part of the EPS licence. Access and

roosting opportunities should be created corresponding to the positioning of roosting sites identified during the emergence and/or re-entry surveys.

6 REFERENCES

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

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

Richardson, P. (2000). *Distribution Atlas of Bats in Britain and Ireland 1980 – 1999*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



1. Front of house viewed from northeast.



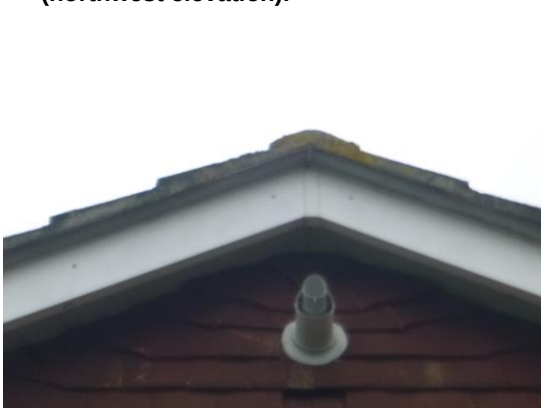
2. Rear of house viewed from southwest.



3. Large, interlocking concrete roof tiles (northwest elevation).



4. Flat overlapping roof tiles on front porch (front elevation).



5. Fully mortared gable verge (rear elevation).



6. Missing and slipped hanging tiles on rear gable (rear elevation).



7. Slightly lifted hanging tile at front gable apex (front elevation).



8. Fully sealed soffits at eaves (northwest elevation).



9. Bituminous flat roof and tight uPVC fascia on attached garage (rear elevation).



10. Roof void viewed from front gable end.



11. Cobwebbed gap in felt by chimney (roof void).



12. Tear in bitumen roofing felt (roof void).



13. Fibreglass floor insulation (roof void).



14. Blockwork tight to timber rafter at front gable end (roof void).



15. Mortar around edges of blockwork at rear gable end (roof void).

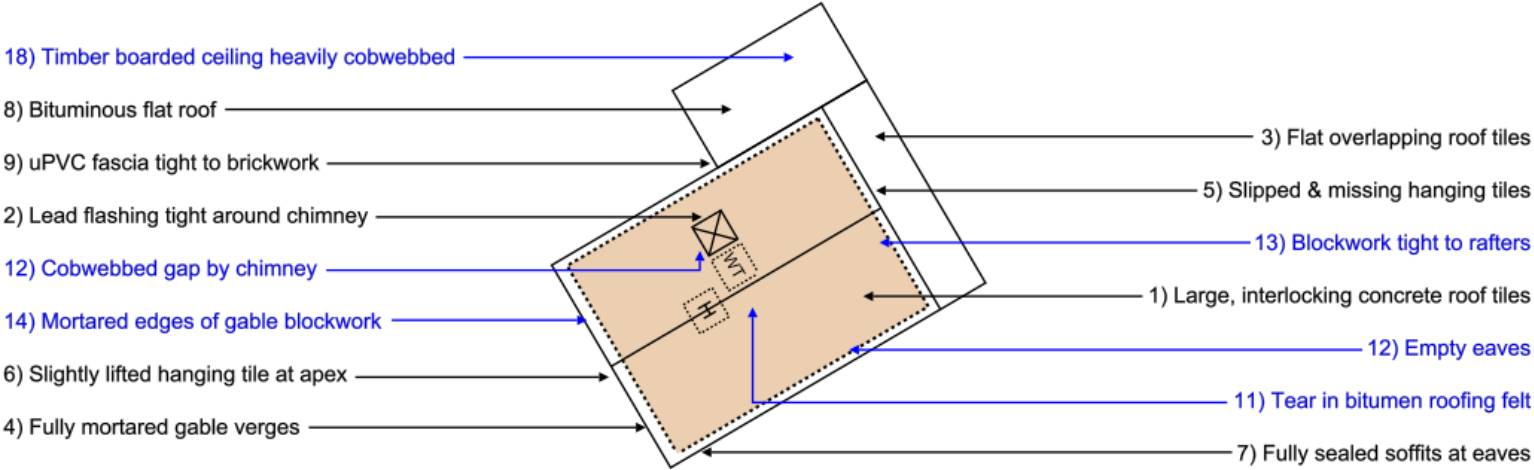


16. Small wasp nests at rear gable apex (roof void).



17. Garage interior.

APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT PLAN



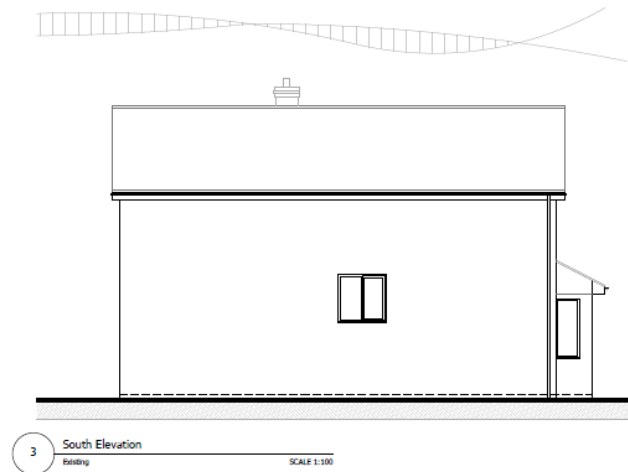
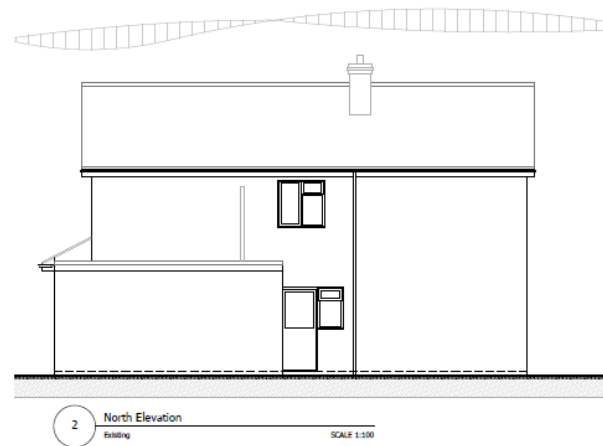
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JM/CW	April 2023	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Plan								

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APPENDIX 3 – EXISTING AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS

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Revision	Date	Initial



This drawing has been prepared with building survey information prepared by Ground Surveys Ltd, March 2020

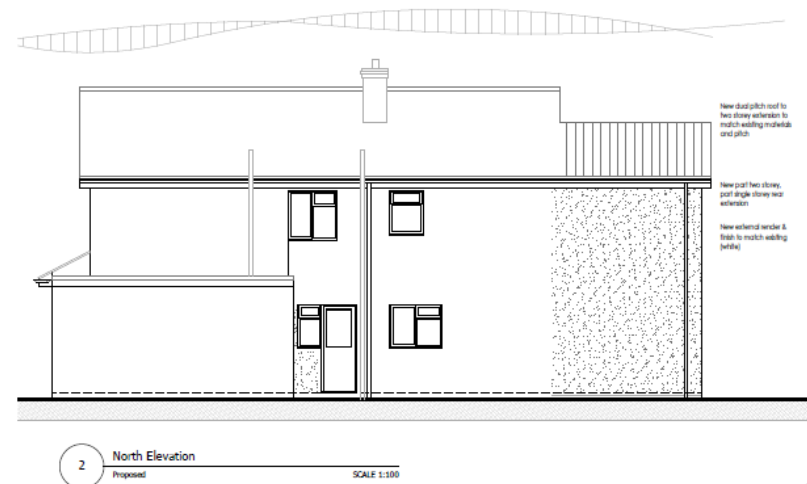
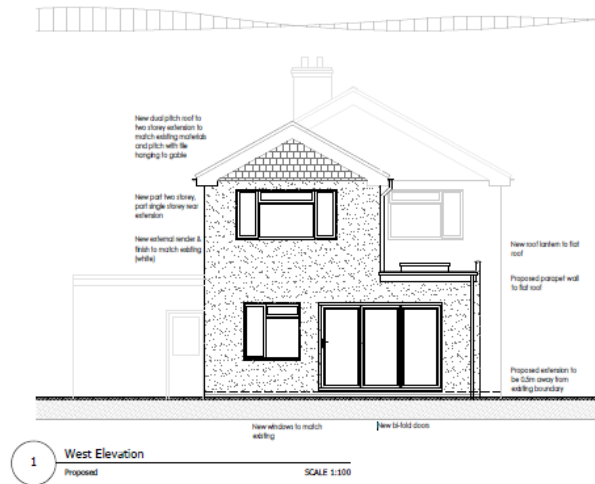
PLANNING

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77 Albert Road, Caversham,
Reading RG4 7PE
Drawing Title
Existing Elevations

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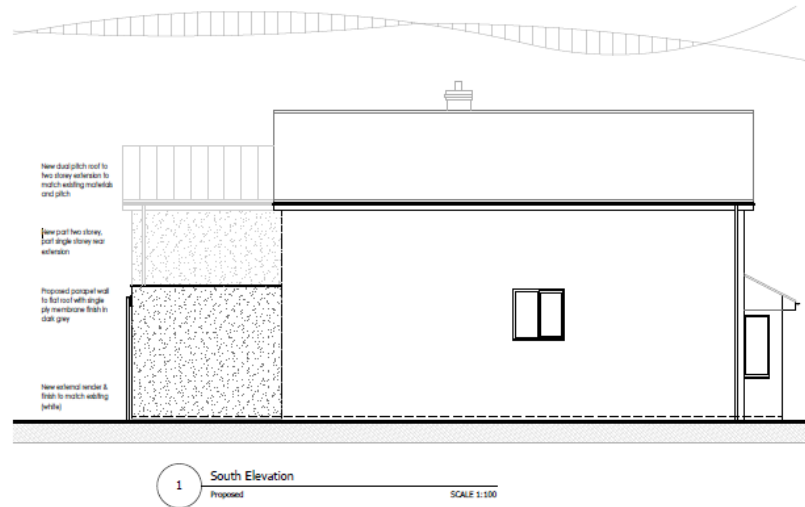
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PLANNING

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77 Albert Road, Caversham,
Reading RG4 7PE
Drawing Title
Proposed Elevations
Sht 1
Date
06.12.2022
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Project No
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Revision
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PLANNING

Project
77 Albert Road, Caversham,
Reading RG4 7PE

Drawing Title
Proposed Elevations

Sht 2

Date 06.12.2022	Scale As Noted @ A3	Drawn by SJ
Project No 161	Drawing No 007	Revision -



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