

**28 Sheridan Avenue
Caversham
Reading
Berkshire
RG4 7QD**

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Ref: R2859/a

August 2021



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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mrs Laura Fisher to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment at 28 Sheridan Avenue in Caversham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 71022 75847). The assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for the construction of a ground floor side extension, a lower ground floor rear extension, and a hip-to-gable roof alteration with the addition of a rear dormer window (Application Number: 210803).
- 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'). A survey of the interior and exterior of the property was conducted on the 20th July 2021 by an ecologist registered under the Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL17 and an assistant ecologist.
- 1.1.3** The property showed no evidence of the presence of roosting bats. The cobwebs along the ridge and absence of bat droppings inside the roof void indicates that primarily void-dwelling species, such as the long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.), are highly unlikely to be present. The property, including the garage and shed, lacked external features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bats, such as pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* species. Overall, the property is considered to have negligible bat roost potential.
- 1.1.4** The property showed no signs of use by bats and lacked suitable bat roost features and as such, the planning proposals are considered highly unlikely to lead to the disturbance of bats or lead to the damage or loss of a bat roost during the works. A European Protected Species Mitigation Licence would not be required to allow the works to go ahead lawfully.
- 1.1.5** In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the building work, the work must stop immediately and a licensed ecologist should be called to site to attend to the bat(s) and provide further advice on how to proceed; work must continue only once further written advice has been received. At this point, a European Protected Species licence may be required to permit the work to continue lawfully.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Mrs Laura Fisher to undertake a preliminary bat roost assessment at 28 Sheridan Avenue in Caversham, Berkshire.

2.1.2 The assessment was commissioned to accompany a planning application submitted to Reading Borough Council seeking consent for the construction of a ground floor side extension, a lower ground floor rear extension, and a hip-to-gable roof alteration with the addition of a rear dormer window (Application Number: 210803). RBC Ecology Consultations commented on the application: *'given the location of the house, and the extent of the works, there is a risk that the proposals may affect roosting bats and a bat survey report will need to be provided before this application can be determined.'*

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'). 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 significantly affect 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 Mitigation Licences (EPSML) that would permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations. A 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 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. The Council must therefore consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by applications where survey findings show that an EPSML is necessary before granting planning permission.

2.2.4 EPSML applications can be submitted once all necessary planning consents have been granted and Natural England aim to issue a licence decision within 30 working days.

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 Bat Mitigation Class Licence WML-CL21 (BMCL). The BMCL permits ‘Registered Consultants’ or accredited agents appointed by them to carry out licensable operations on site on behalf of clients following the registration of sites with Natural England at least 15 working days before the work is due to start.

2.2.6 Survey data supporting EPS 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 located on the eastern side of Sheridan Avenue in Caversham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 71022 75847).

2.3.1 The property is set in an suburban area amongst other residential properties. There is nearby deciduous woodland at Beech Wood approximately 200m to the northeast of the site and at the Caversham Cemetery 270m to the southeast of the site. An

area of semi-improved grassland is mapped approximately 360m to the north of the property at Bugs Bottom. These nearby habitats provide good quality commuting and foraging opportunities to bats roosting locally.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 Building Inspection

3.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the property was conducted on the 20th July 2021 by an ecologist registered under the Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL17 and an assistant ecologist.

3.1.2 The survey was undertaken with the aid of binoculars and a high power (1 million candle power) torch, searching for 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;
- Under sections of raised lead flashing;
- Beneath lifted barge boards;
- 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 survey constraints because full access was available to the interior and exterior of the property.

4 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1** Photographs of the property 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 property are described as follows:

4.2 External Survey

- 4.2.1** The semi-detached house was of modern brick cavity wall construction and had a hipped roof covered in tight overlapping tiles with fully mortared hip and ridge tiles offering no visible roosting opportunities for bats (**Photographs 1, 2 & 3; Target notes 1 & 2**). Similarly, the small hipped gable end over the front bay window had tight roof tiles and fully mortared hip tiles (**Photograph 4; Target note 3**). The lead flashing around the chimney was tightly fitted and all soffits were sealed to the brickwork (**Photographs 5 & 6; Target notes 4 & 5**).
- 4.2.2** The single-storey side garage had single-skin brick walls with a corrugated asbestos cement roof offering very limited suitable opportunities for roosting bats (**Photograph 7; Target note 6**). An alley between the garage and house had a corrugated uPVC roof and concrete steps leading down to the rear garden (**Photograph 8; Target note 7**). The garage had a gap of limited extent behind its barge board that was closely inspected and cobwebbed (**Photograph 9; Target note 8**).
- 4.2.3** There was a neglected pre-fabricated concrete shed in the rear garden (**Photograph 10; Target note 9**). The shed had a pitched roof covered in old bitumen roofing felt, a missing door and a broken windowpane. Two undercroft doors to the rear of the house were tightly secured (**Photograph 11; Target note 10**).
- 4.2.4** No evidence of roosting bats was observed at the time of the external inspection of the buildings.
- ### **4.3 Internal Survey**
- 4.3.1** The roof void covered the two-storey footprint of the house and was accessible via a first-floor loft hatch. The void had an approximate floor-to-ridge height of 2m and was of 'cut and pitch' hipped roof construction. The roof was lined with mostly intact paper-backed bitumen roofing felt and the ridge was heavily cobwebbed, which can

indicate a lack of void-dwelling bat activity (**Photographs 12 & 13; Target notes 11 & 12**). There was daylight visible through roofing felt corresponding to the front hipped end above the bay window (**Photograph 14; Target note 13**). The floor was insulated with foil-wrapped fibreglass and the eaves were mostly exposed (**Photograph 15; Target notes 14 & 15**). The party wall was part brick, part breezeblock and there were gaps either side of the chimney and behind the end rafter leading into the neighbouring roof void (**Photographs 16, 17 & 18; Target notes 16, 17 & 18**). There was poison bait and a couple of small wasp nests inside the roof void.

4.3.2 The single-storey side garage and pre-fabricated shed were of simple construction and offered no potential bat roost opportunities (**Photographs 19 & 20**). The undercroft rooms were used for storage and no potential bat access was found (**Photograph 21**).

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 Potential/Status

5.1.1 The property showed no evidence of the presence of roosting bats. The cobwebs along the ridge and absence of bat droppings inside the roof void indicates that primarily void-dwelling species, such as the long-eared bats (*Plecotus* spp.), are highly unlikely to be present.

5.1.2 The property, including the garage and shed, lacked external features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bats, such as pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* species. Overall, the property is considered to be of negligible bat roost potential.

5.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

5.2.1 The planning proposals are for the construction of a ground floor side extension, a lower ground floor rear extension, and a hip-to-gable roof alteration with the addition of a rear dormer window (refer to existing and proposed elevations in **Appendix 3**). The property showed no signs of use by bats and lacked suitable bat roost features and as such, it is considered highly unlikely to lead to the disturbance of bats or lead to the damage or loss of a bat roost during the works. A European Protected Species mitigation licence would not be required to allow the works to go ahead lawfully.

5.2.2 In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the course of the building work, the work must stop immediately and a licensed ecologist should be called to site to attend to the bat(s) and provide further advice on how to proceed; work must continue only once further written advice has been received. At this point, a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence may be required to permit the work to continue lawfully.

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 property viewed from west.



2. Rear of property viewed from east.



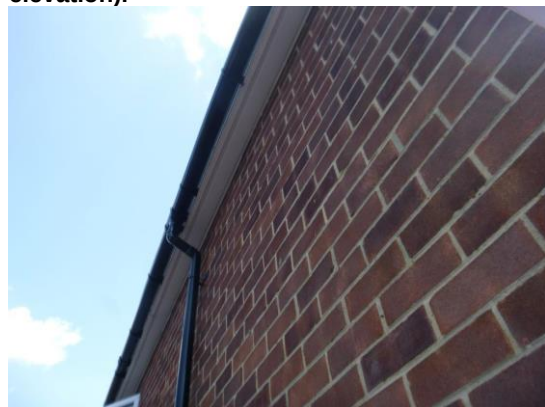
3. Flat overlapping roof tiles and fully mortared hip and ridge tiles (front/northwest elevation).



4. Tight hipped end above bay window (front elevation).



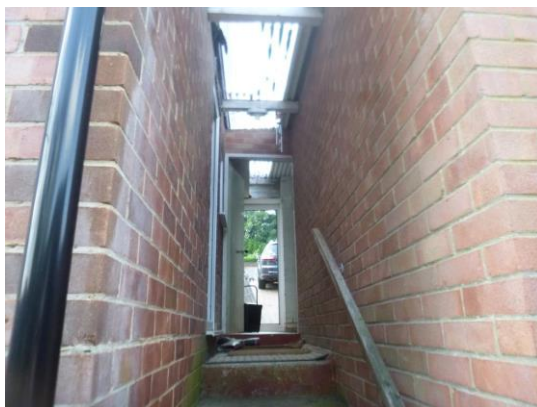
5. Tight lead flashing around chimney (front elevation).



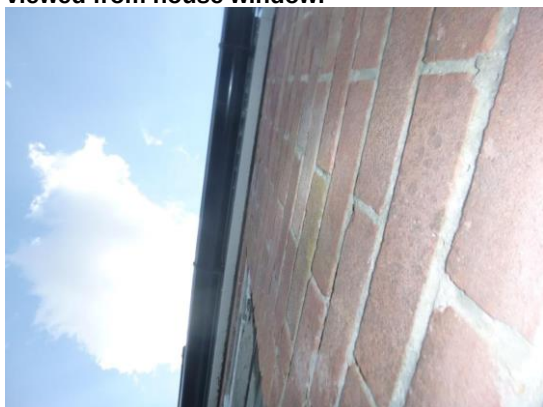
6. Sealed soffits (northwest elevation).



7. Corrugated asbestos cement roof on garage viewed from house window.



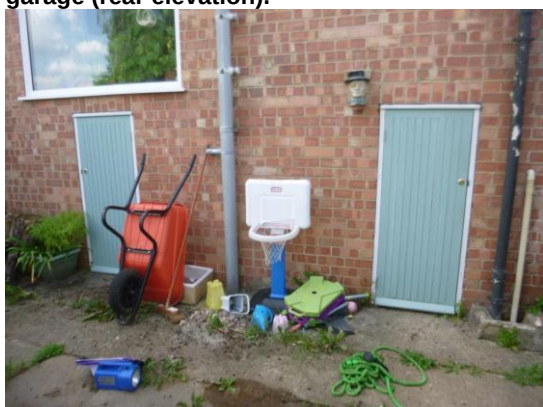
8. Alley between garage and house (rear elevation).



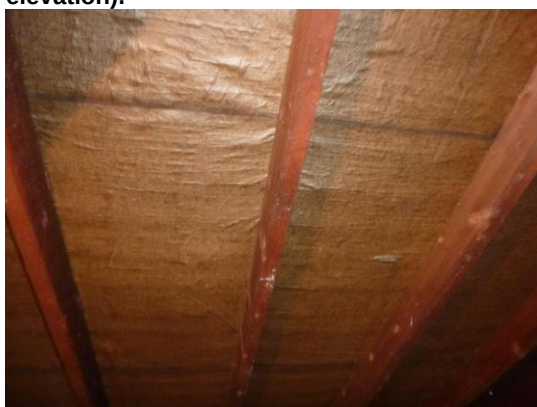
9. Gap of limited extent behind barge board on garage (rear elevation).



10. Neglected pre-fab shed (southeast elevation).



11. Tightly secured undercroft doors.



12. Intact paper-backed bitumen roofing felt.



13. Heavily cobwebbed ridge.



14. Daylight visible at front bay window.



15. Foil-wrapped fibreglass floor insulation and exposed eaves.



16. Party wall and chimney.



17. Gap into neighbouring void next to chimney.



18. Gap behind end rafter at party wall.



19. Garage interior.

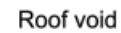
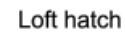
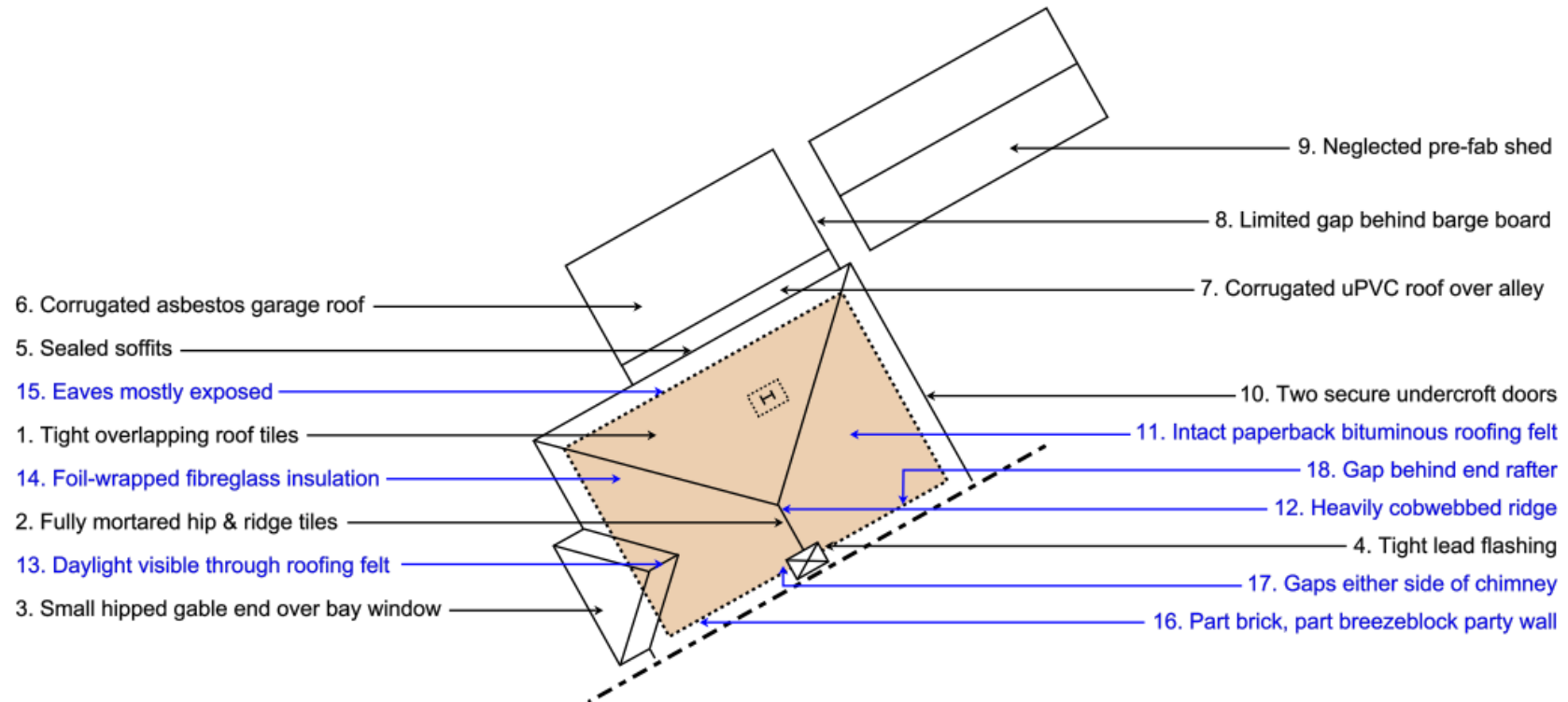


20. Pre-fab shed interior.



21. Undercroft interior.

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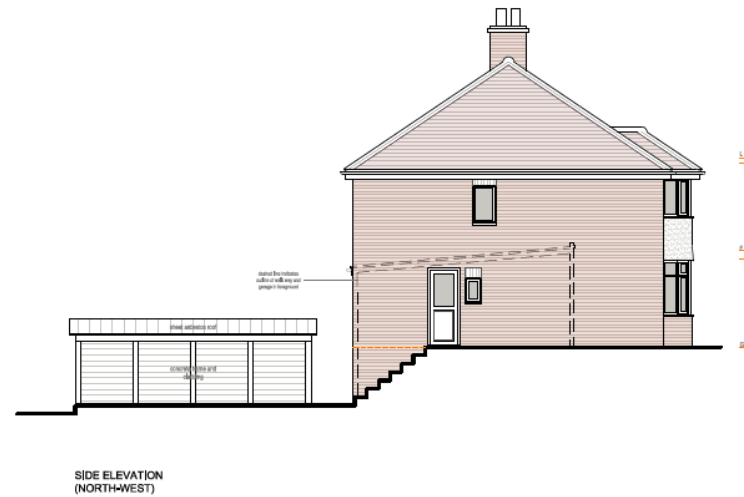
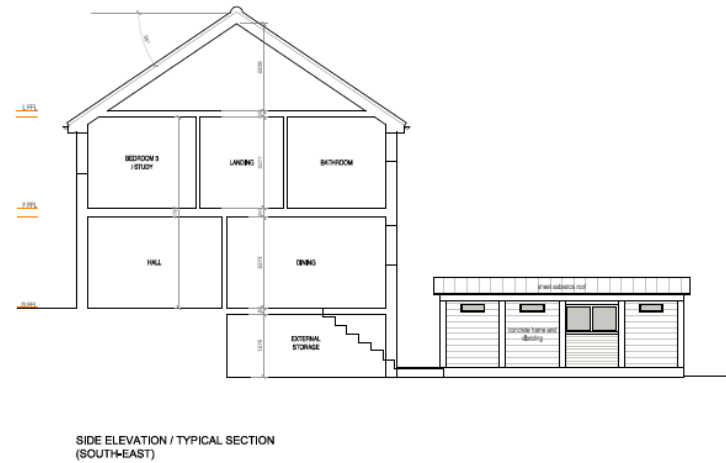


n. Internal target note

Drawn by:	Date:	Scale:	28 Sheridan Avenue Caversham	
CW	August 2021	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

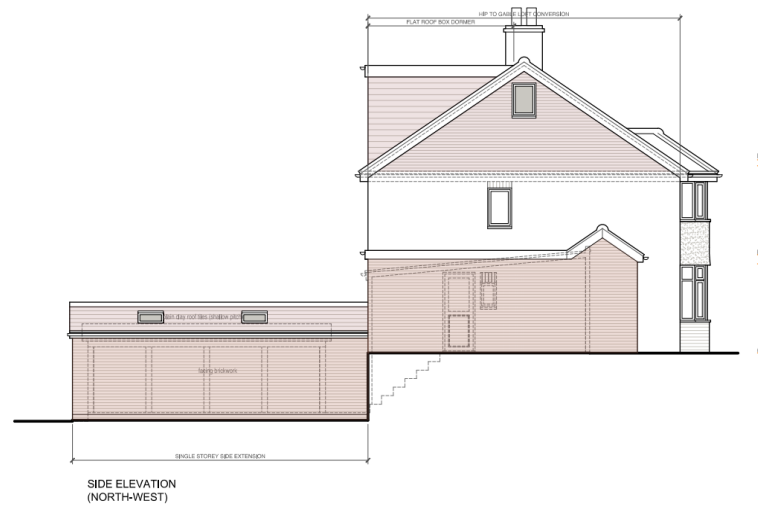
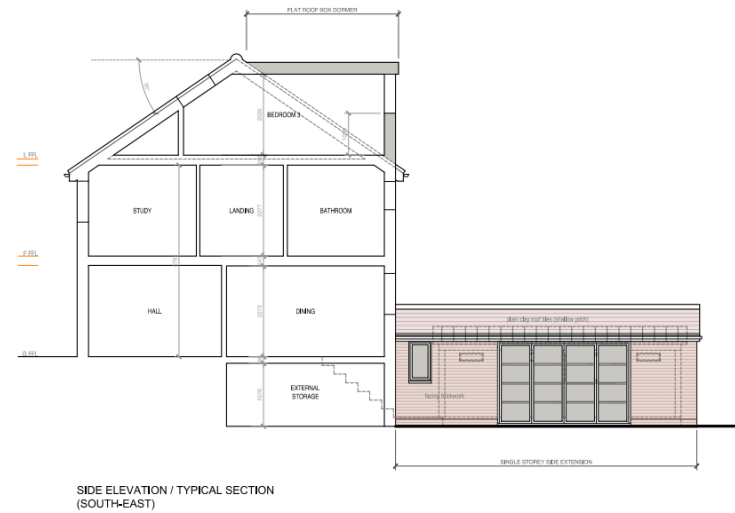
APPENDIX 3 – EXISTING AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS

Existing elevations:



John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP

Proposed elevations:



John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP