

**12 Midwinter Close
Tilehurst
Reading
Berkshire
RG30 6HZ**

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Ref: R2703/a

February 2021



1 Diesel House, Honey Hill, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 3BL
Telephone: 0118 3271810 Mobile: 07979 403099 E-mail: info@wenman-ecology.co.uk
www.wenman-ecology.co.uk

John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales with registered number OC339057.
Registered office: 100 New Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, RG45 6JP where you may look at a list of members' names.

1	INTRODUCTION	3
1.1	Background.....	3
1.2	Legislative Background.....	3
1.3	Site Location and Context.....	5
2	SURVEY METHOD.....	6
2.1	Building Inspection.....	6
2.2	Survey Constraints.....	6
3	SURVEY FINDINGS	7
3.1	Introduction	7
3.2	External Survey.....	7
3.3	Internal Survey.....	7
4	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	9
4.1	Assessment of Bat Roost Potential.....	9
4.2	Impact of Proposals and Recommendations	9
5	REFERENCES	10
	APPENDIX 1 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS.....	11
	APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS.....	15
	APPENDIX 3 – PROPOSED PLANS.....	16

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Judy North to undertake a survey for the presence of bats within the house at 12 Midwinter Close in Tilehurst, Reading.

1.1.2 The survey was commissioned in connection with a planning application to be lodged with Reading Borough Council seeking consent for the demolition of the existing side extension and the erection of a double storey side extension to the existing building (refer to proposed plans and elevations in **Appendix 3**).

1.2 Legislative Background

1.2.1 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 affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species;
- Deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

1.2.2 The government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species licences 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, and;
- **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”.

- 1.2.3** 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 planning proposals affecting European Protected Species before granting planning permission.
- 1.2.4** If a European Protected Species 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.
- 1.2.5** 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), which would enable consultants registered by Natural England, or accredited agents appointed by them, to carry licensable work under the Class Licence once sites have been registered in advance with Natural England. Registration forms must be submitted at least three weeks before work is due to start, and if acceptable, Natural England aims to register sites within two weeks.
- 1.2.6** Survey data supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or the registration of the site under the Low Impact Class Licence (WML-CL21) 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.

1.3 Site Location and Context

- 1.3.1** The property is situated at the end of the cul-de-sac Midwinter Close, within the suburb of Tilehurst in Reading, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 67347 73933).
- 1.3.2** The house is bordered by other residential properties and their associated gardens on all sides. There are areas of woodland located approximately 145 metres and 290 metres northwest of the site, adjacent to an area of allotments. There are multiple Local Nature Reserves near to the site; Blundells Copse approximately 340 metres to the south, Louisehill Copse approximately 430 metres to the east, Round Copse approximately 490 metres due east and McIlroy Park approximately 560 metres to the east. The sites include deciduous woodland, ancient and semi-ancient woodland, and areas of open grassland.
- 1.3.3** Overall, the habitats in the surrounding area provide good habitat for commuting and foraging bats, adapted to living in an urban environment.

2 SURVEY METHOD

2.1 Building Inspection

2.1.1 A survey of the interior and exterior of the house was undertaken by an ecologist registered under Natural England bat survey Class Licence CL18 and an assistant ecologist on the 8th February 2021.

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

2.1.3 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);
- Bats (live or dead).

2.1.4 Residential buildings may offer potential roosting sites in a number of locations, favoured locations include:

- Under roof, ridge, hip or hanging tiles, especially when loose or lifted tiles are present, or sections of mortar are missing;
- Under sections of raised lead flashing;
- 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;
- Within an enclosed roof space – long-eared bats (*Plecotus* sp.) for example, will often cluster at the ridge beam.

2.2 Survey Constraints

2.2.1 Full access was available to the interior and exterior of the house, and therefore there were no significant constraints to the survey.

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1** 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 house are described as follows:

3.2 External Survey

- 3.2.1** The detached house was of modern cavity wall construction with a pitched roof. There was a half pitched, half hipped single storey side extension on the western side of the house with a small bay window on the second storey above the extension, and an attached garage on the eastern side (**Photographs 1 & 2**).
- 3.2.2** The roof of the house and side extension were covered with interlocking S-shaped roof tiles, which were all in place and fitted tightly (**Photograph 3; Target note 1**). The mortar between the hipped tiles was intact on the side extension (**Photograph 4; Target note 2**). The ends of the tiles were blocked with a plastic filling on the western elevation of the house and side extension, with the tiles above the bay window blocked with chicken wire (**Photographs 5 & 6; Target notes 3 & 4**). The vented soffit was intact and flush to the wall around the whole of the house (**Photograph 7; Target note 5**). The mortar and cloaking tiles were intact on the verge of the front elevation of the house and the side extension, with some crumbling mortar at the south-eastern corner of the house (**Photographs 8 & 9; Target notes 6 & 7**). The front porch featured a mono-pitched roof with tight interlocking roof tiles, that were open at the end and had a section of lifted lead flashing on the eastern corner (**Photographs 10 & 11; Target notes 8 & 9**). There was a section of lifted lead flashing where the garage joined the rear of the house (**Photograph 12; Target note 10**).
- 3.2.3** No evidence of bats was visible on the exterior inspection of the house at the time of the survey.

3.3 Internal Survey

- 3.3.1** The roof void extended throughout the main roof space, with a ridge height of approximately 1.5 metres and the roof was of trussed rafter construction, which made the void cluttered (**Photograph 13**). The roof was lined with hessian and bitumen felt, with pieces of polystyrene creating vents in between the layers of felt (**Photograph 14; Target note 11**). There were two flue pipes in the roof space,

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with one made of asbestos, and both had loose bitumen felt around the top of the pipes (**Photograph 15; Target note 12**). The floor was covered with fibreglass insulation, which filled sections of the eaves on the western part of the void, with the eaves open on the eastern side of the void and the wall plate was visible (**Photographs 16 & 17; Target note 13 & 14**). The ridge was moderately cobwebbed, as were the gables which were constructed of blockwork, with the southern gable featuring cobwebbed gaps between the blocks and the roof felt (**Photograph 18; Target note 16**). The northern gable had some paper backed insulation at the apex behind the rafters (**Photograph 19; Target note 17**).

3.3.2 No evidence of bats was visible within the roof void at the time of the survey.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Assessment of Bat Roost Potential

4.1.1 There were no evidence of bats found during the internal or external survey of the house. The house had limited features suitable for use by crevice-dwelling bat species such as the pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and/or small *Myotis* species, including gaps behind areas of lifted lead flashing and at the ends of the unblocked interlocking roof tiles of the porch on the front elevation.

4.1.2 The most abundantly encountered crevice-roosting species are the pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and less commonly encountered are the smaller *Myotis* species such as the whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*) and Brandt's bat (*Myotis brandtii*). Roosts supporting a small number of non-breeding, commonly occurring species such as common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) are considered to be of low conservation importance (Mitchell-Jones 2004).

4.2 Impact of Proposals and Recommendations

4.2.1 The proposed works includes the demolition of the existing side extension and erection of a double storey extension, with an intersecting pitched roof towards the centre of the existing roof (refer to plans in **Appendix 3**).

4.2.2 The existing extension had tightly fitted roof tiles and offered no potential roosting sites for bats, as did the small section of the roof directly affected by the new extension. It is considered unlikely therefore that the proposed works will lead to the loss of or damage to bat roosts, or the disturbance of bats occupying roosts.

4.2.3 In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during 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 or confirmation of the site's registration under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence CL21 (if applicable) may be required to permit the work to continue lawfully.

5 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 the house viewed from the north.



2. Rear of the house viewed from the south.



3. Tight interlocking S-shaped roof tiles.



4. Intact hip mortar.



5. End of roof tiles blocked on side extension.



6. End of roof tiles above bay window covered in chicken wire.



7. Tight vented soffit along eaves of the house, flush to the brickwork.



8. Intact mortar and under cloaking tiles on verge of the main roof.



9. Broken mortar under verge tile on the south-eastern corner.



10. Unblocked verge tiles on porch roof on the front elevation.



11. Lifted lead flashing on the eastern elevation of the porch roof.



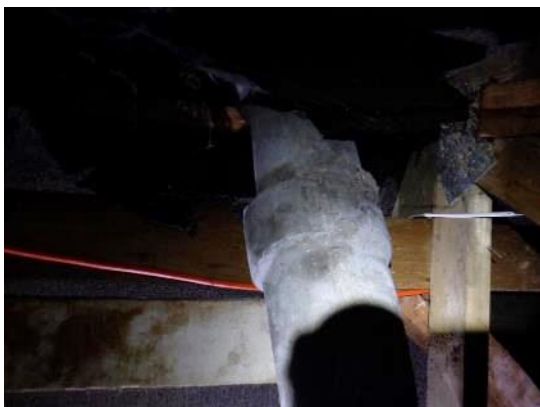
12. Lifted lead flashing on rear elevation where the garage joins the house.



13. Roof void with trussed rafter construction.



14. Hessian and bitumen felt covering roof, with pieces of polystyrene between the layers.



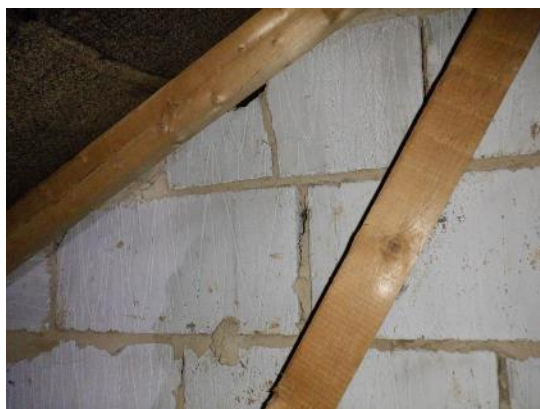
15. Asbestos flue pipe with loose roofing felt around the top.



16. Eaves filled with fibreglass insulation on eastern side of the void.



17. Open eaves and top of wall plate visible on the western side of the void.

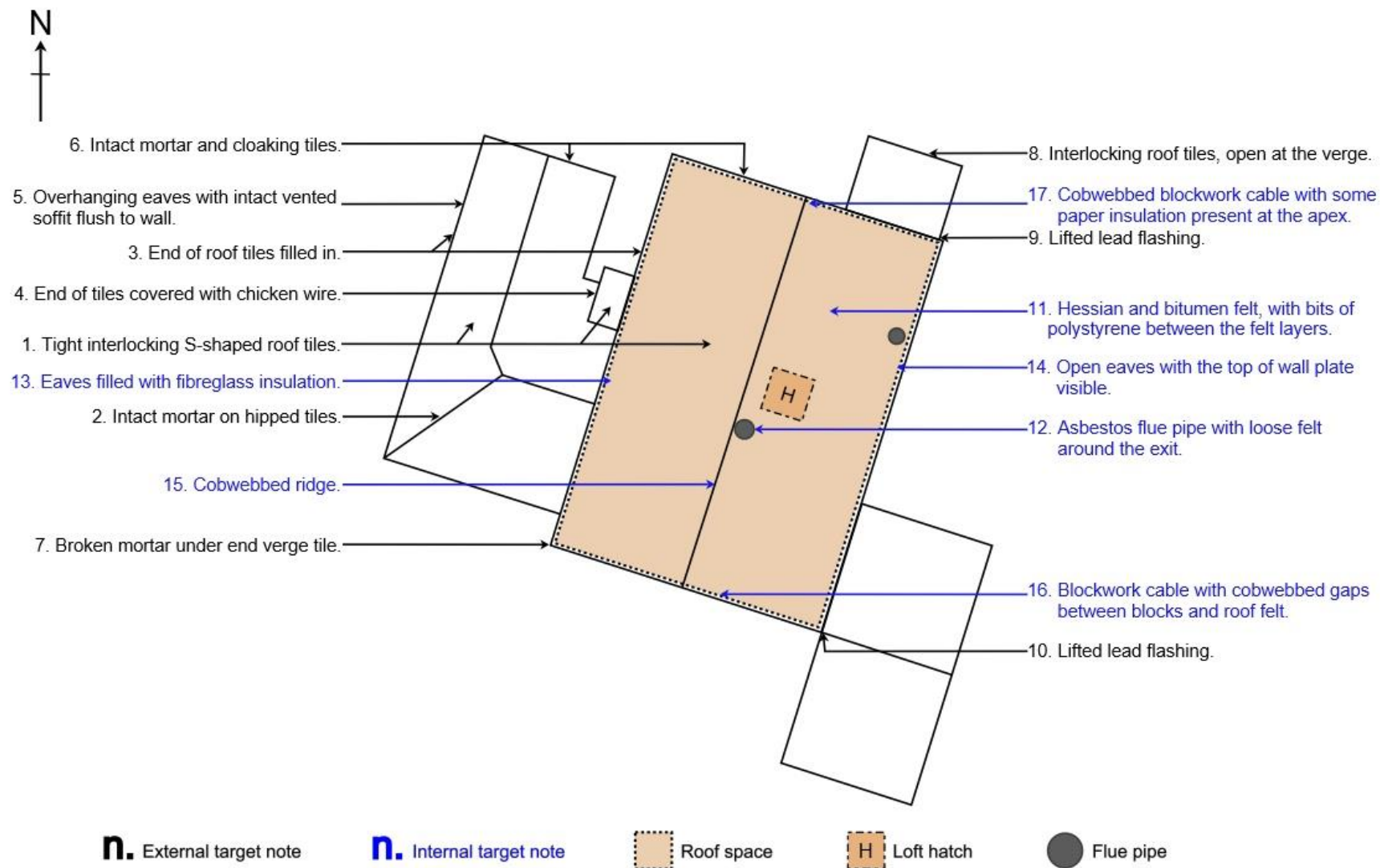


18. Cobwebbed gaps at the top of the blockwork at the southern gable



19. Cobwebbed blockwork at the northern gable, with paper bitumen present at the apex behind the rafters.

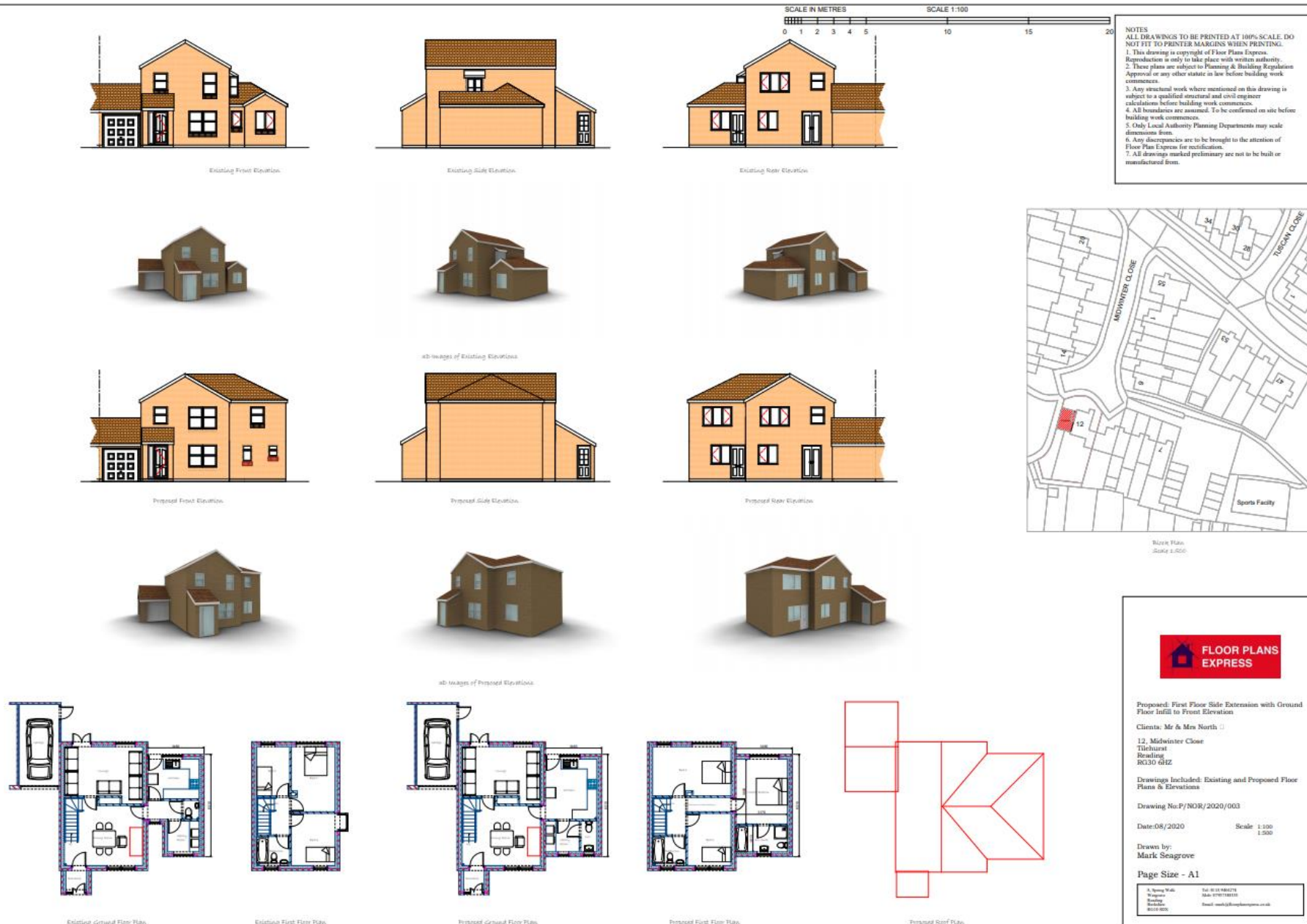
APPENDIX 2 – PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT FINDINGS



Drawn by:	Date	Scale:	12, Midwinter Close, Tilehurst, RG30 6HZ	
MP	February 2021	Not to scale	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Findings	

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APPENDIX 3 – PROPOSED PLANS



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