Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (DBW) AT 15 ST ANDREWS ROAD CAVERSHAM

Prepared for:
Mr & Mrs Dhanjal
15 St Andrews Road
Caversham
Reading
RG4 7PH

16 April 2024

Ref: SPH/NP/PEA-24/09.04

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

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1. Introduction
1.1 Instruction
1.2 Aims and Objectives
1.3 Proposed works
1.4 Surveyor Background and Experience

2. Legislation and Planning Policy
2.1 Legislative Background

3. Site Location and Description
3.1 Site Location
3.2 Site Description

4. Survey Methodology
4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search
4.2 Daylight Survey
4.3 Constraints

5. Survey Findings
5.1 External Inspection
5.2 Internal Inspection

6. Evaluation

7. Conclusions
7.1 Interpretation
7.2 Contingency plan

8. References

9. Queries

Appendix 1
Appendix 2

©2024 Urban Tree Experts
All rights in this report are reserved. No part of it may be reproduced, edited or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature, without our written permission. Its content and format are for the exclusive use of Mr & Mrs Dhanjal and their agents in dealing with this site. It may not be sold, lent, hired out or divulged to any third party not directly involved in this site without the written consent of Urban Tree Experts. It may be reproduced as part of a planning application.

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 & Mrs Dhanjal to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal (daytime bat walkover [DBW]), of 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7PH. This is to support a forthcoming planning application to Reading Borough Council.

The site visit was carried out on Tuesday 9 April 2024 at 11.30am, during daylight hours. An external and internal inspection of the property 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 the property is situated close to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and that one other statutory designed site is situated within, and one current European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats have been granted within 2km of the proposed development site. The immediate surrounding habitat does not provide suitable habitat for roosting, commuting or foraging bats, due to the dense urban environment.

The DBW comprised a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the building 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 buildings suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and no potential roost features were identified during the preliminary inspection. When combined with the data from the desk top study, this resulted in the building being characterised as having a negligible potential[1] to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines[2], no further survey effort is required.

[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 & Mrs Dhanjal to conduct a DBW of 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7PH to support a forthcoming planning application to Reading 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 Reading Borough Council that will seek to construct various single storey extensions, see plans attached 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 Powell. Nick commenced surveying bats in 2022 and holds a Class 2 Bat License (CLS-11742) and has received training in bat ecology and surveying, bat detector use, acoustic monitoring/sonogram analysis, architectural terms for bat workers, bats and development, H & S awareness for bat workers, legislation for bat workers, British bats their ecology and conservation, surveying trees for bats, Bat ID and handling, bat biology. Simon holds Class 3 (CL19) and 4 Bat (CL20) Licenses (Nos. 17637 and 17638) and a Science and Education license (SCI64844). He has 35 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 1.

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 SU 7076 7571, see Figure 1 below. An overview of the immediate area is shown on Figure 2, courtesy of Bing Maps.

Figure 1. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham, highlighted.

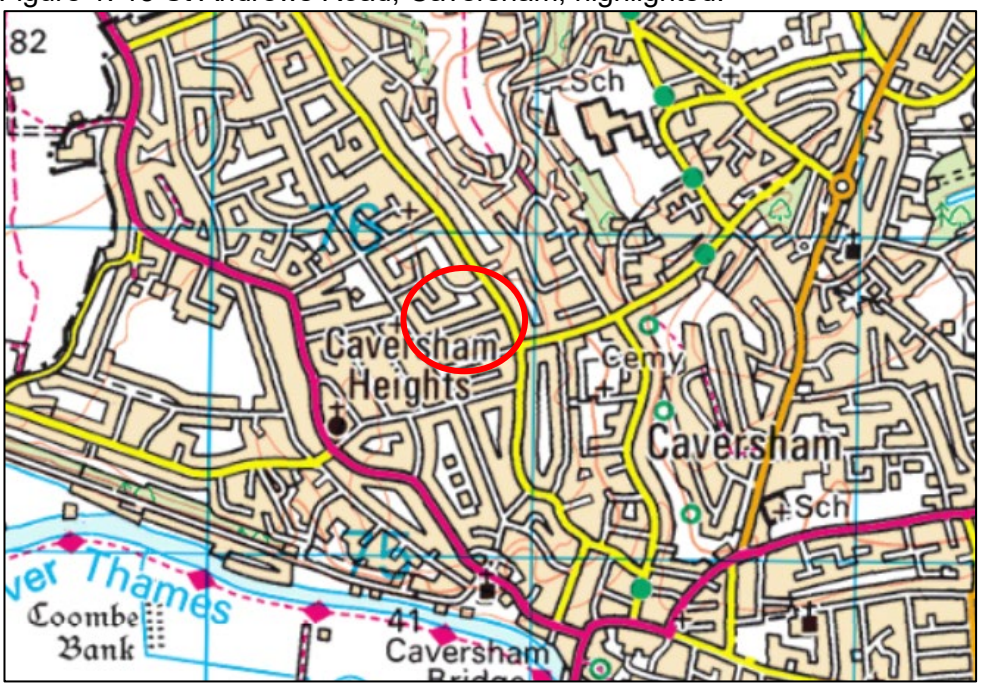
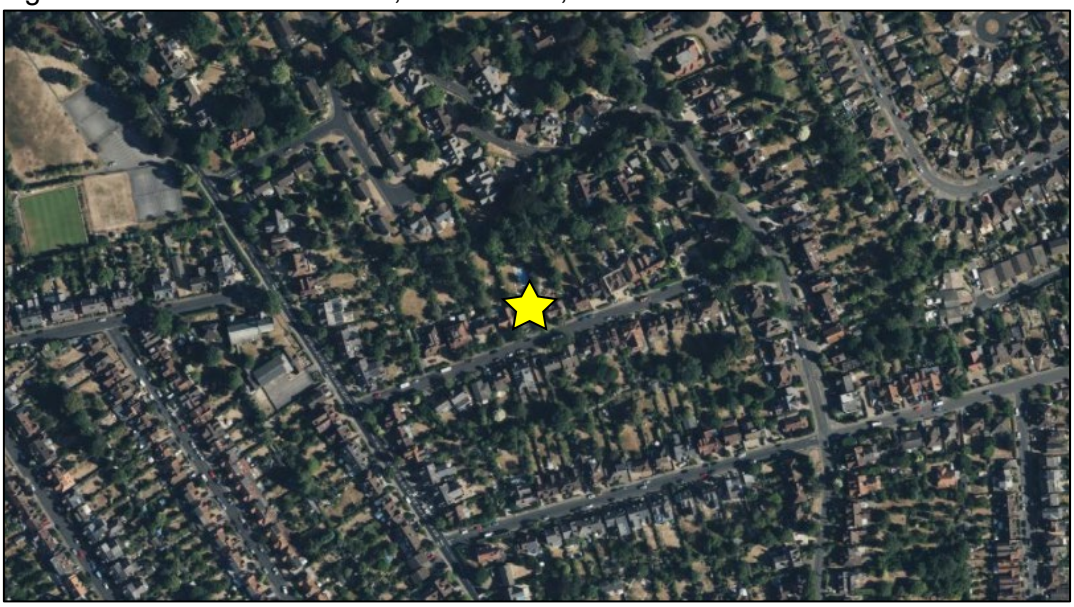


Figure 2. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham, overview of the immediate area.



3.2 Site Description

The application site comprises a detached, brick-built and part rendered two storey property with integral garage and rear single storey extension. The remainder of the site comprises a gravelled/paved driveway/parking area with shrubs/hedges on the boundaries, see cover photograph. To the rear of the property is a mature garden containing a patio seating area, swimming pool and lawn with shrubs and mature trees on the boundaries, see Figure 3 below. The site itself offers some foraging and commuting habitat for bats however, due to the dense urban environment that surrounds the property, there is limited ecological connectivity to the wider landscape.

Figure 3. Rear garden. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

4. Survey Methodology

4.1 Pre-Survey Data Search

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 urban 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 the urban conurbation of Caversham, in Reading, and is adjacent to properties and gardens of varying size and style. The site is surrounded by dense housing and infrastructure and although most have gardens and vegetation, are unlikely to provide suitable habitat for foraging bats. To the southeast lies the public open space (POS) of Balmore Walk park and gardens, to the north east Bugs Bottom POS and to the north west Albert Road park POS and Caversham bowling club, all of which provide good habitat for bats and are within commuting distance for bats. Further afield, lie a golf course and areas of farmland, parkland and woodland, all of which are likely to provide good habitat for bats, although there is limited ecological connectivity to these areas from the site.

Clayfield Copse Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies to the northeast and just within 2km of the proposed development site. A search of the Magic interactive website revealed that one current EPSL for bats has been granted within 2km of the site, the details of which are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Current EPSLs for bats within 2km of the site

EPSL reference	Licence end date	Species on licence
2017- 29064-EPS-MIT	09/2027	Soprano pipistrelle bat

4.2 Daylight Survey

The DBW of 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7PH was carried out by Nick Powell on Tuesday 9 April 2024 at 11.30am. The weather conditions for the survey were overcast and a temperature of 8 degrees. Equipment used included a high-powered torch, a digital camera on a telescopic pole, endoscope and a ladder.

During the DBW an internal and external inspection of the property 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 building– 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 building.
- 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.

4.3 Constraints

Full access to the site during the visit was made possible by the client. There was no access to the remaining loft space in the pitched roof rear extension or ‘lean-to’ style roof in front of the garage and above the rear patio door but given the excellent condition of the rooves externally this was not though to be a constraint to the survey.

5. Survey Findings

5.1 External Inspection

The external features of the property 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, brick-built and part rendered two storey house with integral garage and rear single storey extensions (see Figure 4 below), all if which are in a good condition. The multi pitched roof is covered in composite tiles, none of which are missing or broken, see Figure 5 on page 9. The ridge and hip tiles are sealed with no missing mortar or gaps which roosting bats could exploit, as are the valleys (see Figure 6 on page 9), and the lead flashing around the chimney stack is well sealed (see Figure 7 on page 10) and the fascias and soffits are tightly fitted to the wall with no gaps, see Figure 8 on page 10.

The pitched roof on one rear extension is also covered in close fitted composite tiles, none of which are missing, and the ridge tiles are sealed with no missing mortar, see Figure 9 on page 11. The verges are sealed and the soffits/fascias are tight to the wall with no gaps, see Figure 10 on page 11. The 'lean-to 'style rooves are also covered in close fitted composite tiles, the lead flashing affixing them to the property has no gaps or splits and the Velux windows are sealed with no gaps that could be exploited by crevice dwelling bat species, see Figure 11 on page 12.

On the eastern elevation is the integral garage with 'lean-to' style roof covered in close fitted tiles. The lead flashing is sealed to the walls with no gaps, (see Figure 12 on page 12.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the external inspection of the property and there were no visible roosting opportunities for bats or access into the building for roosting bats.

Figure 4. Rear view of property. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

Figure 5. Example of roof tiles. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

Figure 6. Example ridge, hip and valleys. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

Figure 7. Tightly fitted lead flashing. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

Figure 8. Example sealed soffits and fascias. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

Figure 9. Example roof and ridge tiles on rear pitched roof extension. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

Figure 10. Example sealed verges and soffits/fascias on rear pitched roof extension. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

Figure 11. Sealed Velux windows and lead flashing on 'lean-to' style extension. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

Figure 12. Example roof tiles and lead flashing on garage. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

5.2 Internal Inspection

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

The loft of the property was accessed via a loft ladder and was in a good condition internally. The loft is being used for person storage however this did not hinder the inspections. The loft was lit, partially boarded and insulated, see Figure 13 below. The roof tiles are lined with timber sarking, all of which appears to be in a good condition with no gaps, see Figure 13 below.

Internally in the pitched roof rear extension, the ceiling was boarded/plastered and painted and there was no access to the remaining loft space, see Figure 14 on page 14. There was also no access to the 'lean-to' style roof in front of the garage or above the rear patio doors.

No bats or evidence of bats was recorded during the internal inspection of the loft space and internally there appeared to be no roosting opportunities for bats within the loft.

Figure 13. Example loft space and timber sarking. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

Figure 14. Example boarded/plastered/painted ceiling in rear pitched roof extension. 15 St Andrews Road, Caversham. 09.04.24

6. Evaluation

The bat roost potential of the features within the site 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 list on the previous page provides generic screening criteria only and there are exceptions to consider.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Interpretation

The combined evidence from the desktop study and the internal and external inspection of the property provides a high level of confidence in support of the opinions set out in this report. There were no bats or evidence to indicate bats have roosted at the property and no visible features externally or internally on the building in which bats could access the building to roost.

Informed by the results of the survey and the factors highlighted in Section 6, it is concluded that there is negligible potential for roosting bats within the property. Based on recommendations in the Bat Workers Manual and the Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines, no further survey effort is required.

7.2 Contingency Plan

In the unlikely event that bats are found during the proposed works, all work must stop, and advice sought from Urban Tree Experts or another licensed bat ecologist.

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 buildings may change and bats may start roosting at the site.

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

DRG. REMAINS COPYRIGHT OF THE ARCHITECT.
DIMENSIONAL DISCREPANCIES TO BE REFERRED
TO THE ARCHITECT
~~DO NOT SCALE~~

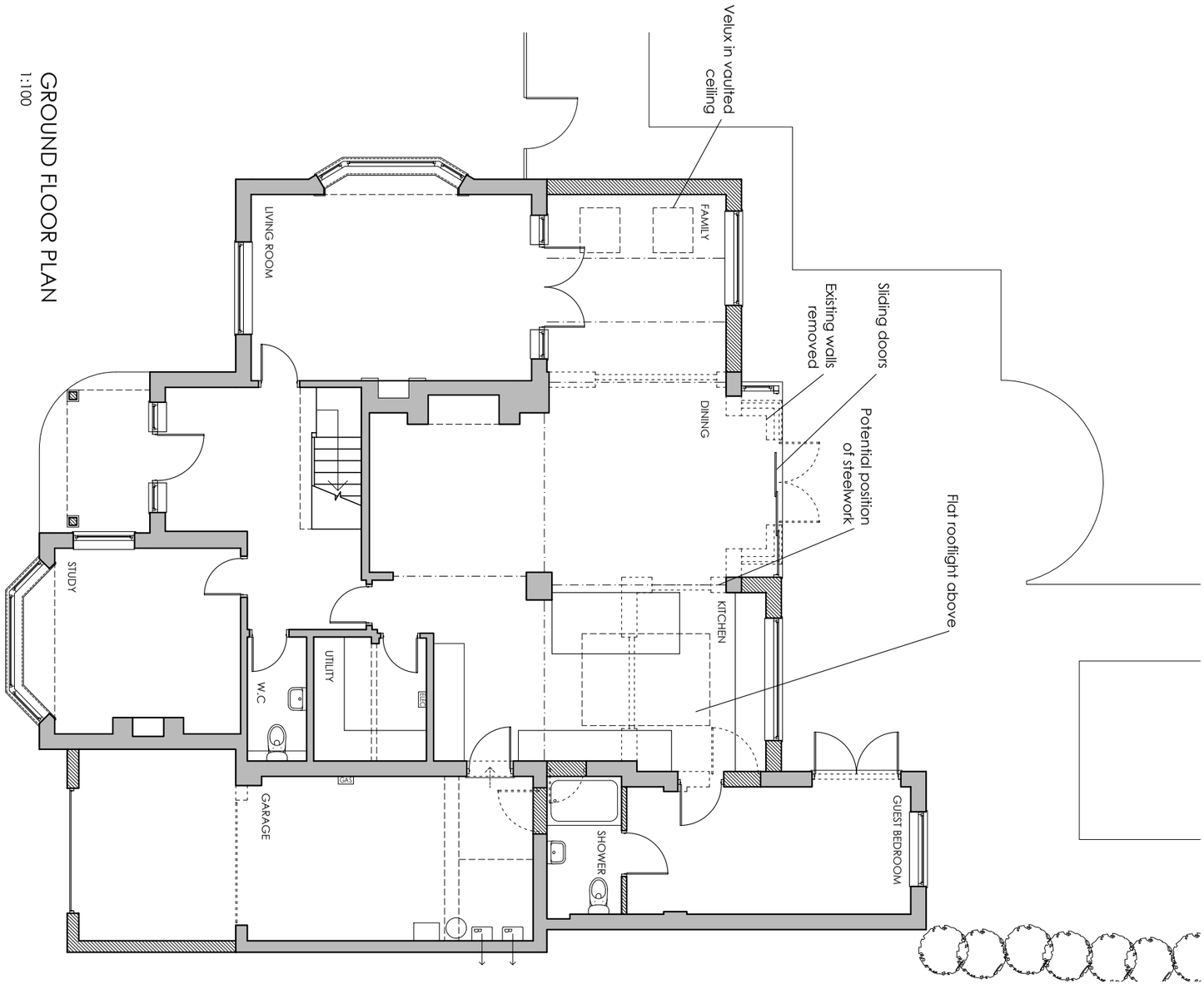
DATE

REVISION A3 Drawing

Scale 1:100

0m 10m

DRAWING STATUS ■ PRELIMINARY ☐ FOR APPROVAL ☐ CONSTRUCTION



CLIENT	JOB TITLE		DATE
Mr & Mrs Dhanjal	Proposed Extension		March 24
-	15 St. Andrews Road		SCALE
-	Caversham		1:100
DRG TITLE	JOB No.	DWG No.	REV.
Proposed Plans	2352	06	-

anne owen architects

Anne Owen Architects Ltd
24 Springfield Park, Twyford, Reading RG10 9JH
+44(0)118 932 0846 / 07788 262602
anne@annethearchitect.co.uk
www.annethearchitect.co.uk
Director: Anne Owen BA(Hons) BArch RIBA
Company Registered in England & Wales No. 8861202

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 CS36 of the Reading Borough Core Strategy states *"Development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest (including protected species and their habitats) found within the application site into their schemes. On sites with recognised biodiversity or geological value, development will not be permitted where there would be a direct or indirect adverse impact on the site, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that: -*

i. The need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and
ii. Appropriate compensation, impact minimisation, mitigation and compensation 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.