

BIODIVERSITY REPORT

*Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Biodiversity Statement
in support of a Householder Planning Application*

Proposed Rear Extension and Internal Alterations

at

16 Alderman Willey Close

Wokingham, Berkshire, RG41 2AQ

Prepared by:

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1.0 Introduction and Purpose

This Biodiversity Report has been prepared in support of a householder planning application for proposed alterations and a rear extension at 16 Alderman Willey Close, Wokingham. It comprises a proportionate Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Biodiversity Statement based on a desk-based review of the site, the submitted drawings (Shakthi Consulting UK, Drawings 01–07 dated 28 April 2026) and publicly available ecological data sources.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Confirm the statutory position regarding the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement under Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- Identify any designated sites and protected or priority habitats that may be affected by the proposal.
- Assess the potential impact of the proposal on protected and priority species, with particular regard to roosting bats and nesting birds.
- Identify proportionate mitigation, avoidance and biodiversity enhancement measures, in compliance with the general biodiversity duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021).
- Demonstrate compliance with paragraph 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and relevant policies of the Wokingham Borough Local Plan.

Site Address	16 Alderman Willey Close, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG41 2AQ
Local Planning Authority	Wokingham Borough Council
Proposal	Single-storey rear extension and internal alterations (including conversion of existing integral garage to habitable accommodation, and insertion of two roof skylights to the existing rear pitched roof slope).
Application Type	Householder Planning Application
Approximate Site Area	Less than 0.05 hectares (residential curtilage of a single existing dwelling).
BNG Mandatory Requirement	Exempt — householder application (Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, Article 5).
Date of Report	April 2026
Prepared by	Shakthi Consulting UK

2.0 Legislative and Policy Framework

2.1 Legislation

The following legislation is relevant to the consideration of biodiversity matters in this application:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) — affords statutory protection to all wild birds, their nests and eggs while in use; and to specified species listed on Schedules 5 and 8.
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) — provides European Protected Species (EPS) status to all UK bat species, great crested newts, dormice and others. It is an offence to deliberately capture, injure, kill or disturb an EPS, or to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992 — protects badgers and their setts.
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, Section 40 — places a duty on public authorities, including local planning authorities, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising their functions. Section 41 lists species and habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.
- Environment Act 2021 — strengthens the Section 40 NERC duty (the strengthened "biodiversity duty"), and introduces the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) regime via amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2.2 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 came into force for major development on 12 February 2024 and for small sites on 2 April 2024. Where it applies, the requirement is for a minimum 10% measurable net gain in biodiversity value, secured for at least 30 years.

This application is exempt from the mandatory BNG requirement under Article 5 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, as it constitutes a "householder application" within the meaning of Article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. This exemption applies because the application is for development of an existing dwellinghouse, and within its curtilage, for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse.

The exemption will be declared on the planning application form. Notwithstanding the exemption from the formal BNG metric, this report identifies proportionate biodiversity enhancement measures consistent with the strengthened general biodiversity duty (Section 7 below).

2.3 National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, latest version) sets out the Government's planning policies for the natural environment. Paragraph 186 of the NPPF requires planning

decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, among other things, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. Paragraph 187 sets out a hierarchy for considering impacts: if significant harm cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for, planning permission should be refused.

2.4 Local Planning Policy

The relevant local plan policy is contained within the adopted Wokingham Borough Local Plan, in particular:

- Policy NE1 — Biodiversity and Geodiversity: requires development proposals to protect and enhance biodiversity, with consideration given to designated sites, priority habitats and priority species.
- Policy NE2 — Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area: requires avoidance and mitigation measures for net new residential development within the 400 m, 5 km and 7 km TBH SPA zones. This proposal does not create any net new dwellings and therefore does not engage Policy NE2.
- Policy NE3 — Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland: requires retention of trees and hedgerows of value, with appropriate replacement planting where loss is unavoidable.
- Borough Design Guide SPD — encourages the integration of biodiversity-friendly features such as integrated bird and bat bricks and native planting into new development.

3.0 Site Description

3.1 Location and Setting

The application site comprises a two-storey terraced family dwelling within an established residential close, located approximately 100 m east of Wokingham Railway Station. The wider setting is highly urbanised, consisting of modern (late 20th-century) terraced housing, paved access roads, the station car park and associated transport infrastructure. The site is not located within or adjacent to any designated nature conservation site.

3.2 Existing Habitats

Based on a review of the submitted site and floor plans (Drawings 01, 02 and 03), and consistent with the typical character of similar properties on the close, the site supports the following habitat types, classified using broad UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) categories:

- Buildings and hard standing — the dominant habitat type on site, comprising the existing two-storey brick dwelling with pitched tiled roof, the existing rear conservatory (to be demolished), the integral garage (to be converted), and associated paved areas. These are of negligible intrinsic ecological value, although the building itself is assessed separately for protected species potential at Section 4.0.

- Residential garden / amenity grassland — a small enclosed rear garden, typical of urban terraced housing, likely supporting amenity lawn, ornamental shrubs, and boundary fencing. Habitats of this type are of low to moderate ecological value but commonly support widespread garden bird species, invertebrates and occasionally hedgehogs.
- Boundary features — close-boarded timber fencing to side and rear boundaries, as indicated on the floor plans. No mature hedgerows or trees of significant ecological value are indicated within the curtilage.

3.3 Habitats to be Affected

The proposal will result in the following habitat changes:

- Loss of approximately 12–18 m² of residential garden / amenity grassland to the footprint of the new single-storey rear extension.
- Demolition of the existing single-storey rear conservatory (built structure of negligible biodiversity value).
- Alteration of part of the existing rear pitched roof slope to accommodate two roof skylights (1.6 m × 2.0 m each).

No priority habitats listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 are present within the site or will be affected. No trees protected by Tree Preservation Order, and no hedgerows protected under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997, are affected by the proposal.

4.0 Protected and Priority Species Assessment

4.1 Bats

All UK bat species are European Protected Species and are afforded the highest level of statutory protection. Buildings can provide roosting opportunities for a range of bat species, particularly in roof voids, beneath roof tiles, behind soffits and fascias, and in cavity walls.

The host dwelling is a modern (mid- to late- 20th-century) brick-built terraced property with a pitched, tiled roof. Modern terraced dwellings of this construction type are generally considered to have low suitability for roosting bats due to:

- Modern roofing felt and tightly fitted tiles, limiting access points beneath the tiles.
- Cavity wall construction with insulation, limiting access into wall cavities.
- Sealed and well-maintained soffits, eaves and fascias.
- Modern fenestration with no significant gaps suitable for crevice-dwelling species.

Nevertheless, individual bats can occasionally use even modern structures, and the proposed works to the rear roof slope (insertion of two skylights) constitute alterations that could, in principle, disturb a roost if one were present. In line with current best practice and the precautionary principle, the following approach is recommended:

- Prior to commencement of roof works, the applicant and contractor should undertake a careful visual inspection of the rear roof slope (externally and, where access allows, internally within the roof void) for evidence of bat use — droppings, urine staining, feeding remains, audible squeaking, or live bats.
- If any evidence or potential evidence of bat use is identified, all works must stop and a suitably qualified and licensed bat ecologist (registered with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, or holding a Natural England bat survey licence) should be consulted before works recommence.
- Where any doubt exists, a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) by a licensed bat ecologist should be commissioned in advance of the roof works. This is a single, relatively inexpensive survey that provides certainty for the applicant and the LPA.
- If a bat is encountered unexpectedly during construction, works must cease immediately and the Bat Conservation Trust National Bat Helpline (0345 1300 228) and Natural England should be contacted. Causing harm to a bat, or destroying a roost, even unintentionally, may constitute a criminal offence.

4.2 Nesting Birds

All wild birds, their active nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Urban gardens and the eaves, vents and roof spaces of houses commonly support nesting house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*, a Section 41 priority species), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*, also Section 41 priority), blackbird, robin, dunnock and similar widespread garden species.

The bird nesting season in the UK is conventionally taken as March to August inclusive, although nesting can occur outside this window. The following mitigation is recommended:

- Wherever practicable, works that could disturb potential nesting habitat — in particular alterations to eaves, soffits, fascias, and the rear roof slope, and removal of any boundary vegetation — should be undertaken outside the main bird nesting season (i.e. between September and February inclusive).
- If works are unavoidable during the nesting season, the relevant features should be inspected by the contractor (or, where appropriate, an ecologist) immediately prior to works to confirm the absence of active nests. If an active nest is found, works must stop in the immediate vicinity until the nest is naturally vacated.

4.3 Hedgehogs

The West European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) is a Section 41 priority species and was added to the IUCN Red List for Britain as Vulnerable. Hedgehogs are commonly present in urban and suburban gardens and can use boundary fencing and garden vegetation for shelter and movement.

Mitigation: Any temporary or new boundary fencing installed as part of the works should incorporate small hedgehog gaps (13 cm × 13 cm) at ground level to maintain landscape

connectivity between adjoining gardens, as recommended in the Wokingham Borough Design Guide and the Hedgehog Street campaign.

4.4 Other Species

Given the highly urbanised setting, the small scale of the works, the absence of water bodies on or immediately adjacent to the site, and the absence of mature trees, the likelihood of other European Protected Species (great crested newts, dormice, otters, water voles, badgers) being present or affected by the proposal is assessed as negligible. No further consideration is therefore required, save that should any unexpected protected species be encountered during the works, the precautionary stop-and-consult procedure described at paragraph 4.1 above should be followed.

5.0 Designated Sites

A desk-based review has been undertaken to identify statutory and non-statutory designated sites within the wider area. The site does not lie within, or immediately adjacent to, any statutory or non-statutory designated nature conservation site. The nearest designated sites are summarised in the table below.

Designated Site	Designation	Approx. Distance	Relevance to Proposal
Thames Basin Heaths SPA	European Special Protection Area	> 7 km south	Not engaged — no net new dwelling created. Wokingham's TBH SPA Avoidance Strategy is triggered by net additional dwellings, not householder extensions.
Loddon Valley Local Wildlife Sites	Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	> 1 km	No direct or indirect impact — small-scale householder works with no surface-water discharge changes.
Statutory SSSIs (nearest)	SSSI	> 5 km	Sufficient separation; no pollution or recreational pathway impact pathway.
Local Nature Reserves	LNR	> 500 m	No functional link to the application site.

Thames Basin Heaths SPA — Policy NE2 of the Wokingham Borough Local Plan requires avoidance and mitigation measures for net new residential development within defined linear distance zones (400 m, 5 km and 7 km) from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. The relevant trigger is the creation of a net additional dwelling. As this proposal does not create any net additional dwelling — it provides additional accommodation within a single existing dwellinghouse — Policy NE2 is not engaged, and no SAMM/SANG contribution is required.

6.0 Impact Assessment

The potential impacts of the proposal on biodiversity have been assessed as follows:

- Loss of habitat — minor loss of low-value amenity garden grassland to the footprint of the rear extension. Impact assessed as negligible at site level and below the threshold of significance.
- Disturbance to roosting bats — assessed as low risk given the modern construction of the building, but managed by the precautionary visual inspection protocol set out at Section 4.1.
- Disturbance to nesting birds — assessed as low risk, managed by timing of works and pre-works checks as set out at Section 4.2.
- Lighting impact — the new skylights and any new external lighting could in principle increase light spill onto adjoining gardens, with consequent disturbance to nocturnal species such as bats. Lighting should be specified in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust / ILP "Guidance Note 08/23 — Bats and Artificial Lighting", using warm-white LEDs (≤ 3000 K), directional/cowled fittings, and minimum necessary lumen output.
- Construction-phase impacts — minor and short-term; standard good practice will be followed to prevent pollution to drainage and to manage construction waste.

Subject to the mitigation set out in Section 4.0 and the enhancements set out in Section 7.0, the residual impact of the proposal on biodiversity is assessed as neutral at site level.

7.0 Biodiversity Enhancement Measures

In accordance with the strengthened general biodiversity duty (Section 40 NERC Act 2006, as amended) and paragraph 186 of the NPPF, the applicant proposes the following proportionate biodiversity enhancements to be incorporated into the development. These are deliverable at modest cost within the scope of the householder works:

- Installation of one integrated swift brick or sparrow terrace at first-floor level in the rear elevation (e.g. Manthorpe Swift Brick or equivalent), benefiting Section 41 priority bird species — swift, house sparrow, starling.
- Installation of one integrated bat brick or bat tube in the rear gable or rear elevation (e.g. Habitat or Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box), providing a permanent roost feature suitable for crevice-dwelling species such as common pipistrelle.
- Provision of hedgehog gaps (13 cm × 13 cm) at ground level in the rear and side boundary fencing, to allow hedgehog passage between adjoining gardens.
- Native and pollinator-friendly planting within any new or retained rear garden landscaping, selected from species of value to invertebrates (e.g. lavender, hebe, native climbers such as honeysuckle and ivy on rear-facing walls, and night-flowering species to support nocturnal foraging bats).

- Specification of external lighting in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust / Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 08/23, using warm-white LEDs (≤ 3000 K), directional / downward-cowled fittings, motion sensors, and avoidance of upward-directed lighting.
- Sustainable drainage — retention of permeable garden surfaces wherever possible, and avoidance of unnecessary additional hard-surfacing within the rear curtilage.

8.0 Conclusions

This Biodiversity Report has assessed the proposed rear extension and internal alterations at 16 Alderman Willey Close, Wokingham, with regard to the relevant biodiversity legislation, national planning policy, and local policy. The following conclusions are drawn:

- The application is a householder application and is exempt from the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement under Article 5 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.
- The site is highly urbanised, supports only low-value habitats, and lies well beyond any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designation. Thames Basin Heaths SPA Policy NE2 is not engaged as no net new dwelling is proposed.
- The principal protected-species consideration is the potential (assessed as low) for the existing rear roof slope to support roosting bats. A precautionary pre-works visual inspection protocol is proposed, with a clear escalation route to a licensed bat ecologist should any evidence of bat use be identified.
- Standard nesting-bird and hedgehog mitigation will be observed during construction.
- Proportionate biodiversity enhancement measures, including integrated bat and bird bricks, hedgehog highways, native planting and bat-sensitive lighting, are proposed and can be secured by planning condition if the Local Planning Authority considers this necessary.

On the basis of the above, the proposal accords with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the NPPF and with Policies NE1, NE2 and NE3 of the Wokingham Borough Local Plan. It is respectfully submitted that there is no biodiversity-based objection to the grant of planning permission, subject as appropriate to conditions securing the recommended mitigation and enhancement measures.

9.0 Limitations of this Report

This report is a proportionate desk-based Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared in support of a small-scale householder planning application. It has been prepared without a formal walkover survey by a qualified ecologist. Should the Local Planning Authority's ecologist require a more detailed Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA), bat emergence/re-entry survey, or other species-specific survey, the applicant is willing to commission such surveys from a

suitably qualified ecologist prior to the determination of the application or, where appropriate, to accept this as a pre-commencement planning condition.

This report is valid for a period of 12 months from the date of issue. Should the application be re-submitted or works commence outside this window, an updated review should be undertaken.

— End of Report —