

BIODIVERSITY SURVEY AND REPORT

Address: 78a Eastheath Avenue, Wokingham
Proposal: Erection of a part single, part two storey side extension to the dwelling, incorporating a new front entrance porch, together with associated alterations to the existing fenestration.
Local Planning Authority: Wokingham Borough Council

1. Executive Summary

This report has been prepared to satisfy the biodiversity validation requirements for the proposed development at 78a Eastheath Avenue, Wokingham, comprising the erection of a part single, part two storey side extension to the existing dwelling, incorporating a new front entrance porch, together with associated alterations to the existing fenestration.

The proposed side extension is designed as a bolt-on addition abutting the flank wall of the existing dwelling. To achieve a weather-tight and visually coherent junction between the new extension and the host building, it will be necessary to remove a localised section of the existing fascia, soffits, and roof tiles along the side elevation. These works meet the trigger for a bat survey under Wokingham Borough Council's Local Validation List (September 2025).

Notwithstanding this, the dwelling was constructed and completed in early 2018, making it approximately eight years old. This report sets out a detailed assessment of bat roost potential having regard to the age, construction type, and condition of the building, and concludes that the roost potential of the affected features is negligible. It is therefore contended that a formal Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) conducted by a licensed ecologist would reach the same conclusion, and that no further emergence surveys would be required. Proportional enhancements are proposed to align with local and national biodiversity objectives.

2. Site Context and Proposal

The application site consists of a semi-detached residential dwelling at 78a Eastheath Avenue, Wokingham, constructed and completed in early 2018. The surrounding area is characterised by residential development with maintained gardens, street trees, and boundary hedgerows and fencing typical of a suburban setting.

The proposed works comprise a part single, part two storey side extension and the relocation of the existing entrance porch from the side elevation to the front elevation of the dwelling, together with associated alterations to fenestration. The extension is a bolt-on addition connecting to the flank wall of the existing dwelling. To achieve the structural and weather-tight junction between the new extension roof and the host building, a localised section of the existing fascia boards, soffits, and roof tiles along the side elevation will be removed and reinstated or replaced as part of the works. It is

confirmed that the removal of tiles, fascia, and soffits is limited to the side elevation junction area only, no works will take place within the existing loft void, the main roof structure and covering remains largely intact and undisturbed, and no trees, hedgerows, or boundary vegetation will be removed.

3. Protected Species Assessment

Bats and Roosting Habitats

Wokingham Borough Council's Local Validation List (September 2025) requires a bat survey for householder applications where development includes works affecting an existing roof, including soffits, fascia boards, and roof tiles. It is acknowledged that the localised removal of tiles, fascia, and soffits along the side elevation to form the extension junction meets this trigger.

However, the assessment of roost potential must be considered carefully in the context of the building's age, construction type, and condition. The Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition, 2023) establish a suitability classification system ranging from negligible to high, and where a building is assessed as having negligible roost suitability, no further emergence surveys are required, and a planning application can be supported on that basis alone. The relevant considerations at this site are as follows.

The dwelling was constructed and completed in early 2018 and is approximately eight years old. Buildings of this age and construction type are characterised by modern roofing materials, tightly fitted interlocking concrete or clay tiles, continuous uPVC fascias and soffits, intact sarking felt underlays, and machine-finished timber components. These features collectively provide no gaps, cracks, or voids of the type that bats require to access a roost. Bats are creatures of established habit and roosting opportunity, and it takes considerable time, and typically many decades for the deterioration and weathering of building fabric to create the access points and thermally suitable micro-environments associated with occupied roosts. An eight-year-old modern suburban dwelling does not present those conditions.

The tiles, fascia, and soffits to be temporarily disturbed are located along the side elevation junction only, a limited and specific area of the building. Even in older properties, the fascia and soffits on a side gable elevation away from the more thermally stable ridge and eaves of a rear or front roof slope and represent a low-probability roosting location. In a modern dwelling of this age, the probability is negligible.

There is no known history of bat activity at the property, no existing records of roosting bats in the immediate vicinity of the site, and the surrounding suburban environment, whilst capable of supporting foraging bats, does not present the landscape features most strongly associated with commuting or roosting bat populations, such as woodland edges, watercourses, or veteran trees in close proximity to the dwelling.

On the basis of the above, it is the considered assessment of this report that the roost potential of the affected features is negligible, in accordance with the BCT Good Practice Guidelines classification. A formal PRA conducted by a licensed ecologist would be expected to reach the same conclusion, confirming negligible suitability and requiring no further emergence surveys. It is therefore contended that this report, read alongside the documented age and construction of the dwelling, provides

sufficient evidence to satisfy the Council's validation requirement without the need for a separate PRA.

Nesting Birds

There is no planned removal of trees, hedgerows, climbing vegetation, or overhanging planting. The eaves and guttering of the main roof are not being modified or disturbed beyond the localised side elevation junction. The relatively recent construction of the dwelling means the roofline is modern and intact, with no established gaps or cavities of the type that attract nesting birds over time. Should any works fall within the core bird nesting season (March to August inclusive), a check of the affected areas for active nests should be carried out immediately prior to commencement by a competent person, and works should not proceed if an active nest is found until the young have fledged.

Other Protected Species

Given the suburban character of the site, the modern construction of the dwelling, and the limited and localised scope of the works, no significant risk to other protected species is anticipated. The development footprint is confined to the side of the dwelling and does not involve the disturbance of established soil habitats, log piles, or dense vegetation that might otherwise warrant further survey work.

4. Mitigation and Biodiversity Net Gain

Whilst the project has no direct impact on existing habitats or protected species, the following proportional enhancements are proposed in accordance with local biodiversity objectives and the requirements of the Environment Act 2021. It is also noted that in accordance with the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, householder applications are exempt from the mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements.

Wildlife Lighting

Any new external lighting associated with the development will be downward-pointing and PIR-sensored to minimise light spill and protect nocturnal foraging corridors used by bats and other wildlife in the vicinity of the site.

Nesting Opportunities: One integrated swift brick or woodcrete bird box will be incorporated into the fabric of the new side extension at an appropriate height and aspect, providing a permanent enhancement for local bird populations including species of conservation concern such as the house sparrow and starling.

Planting: Where new boundary or garden planting is introduced in association with the development, native species of known wildlife value should be selected, such as hawthorn, holly, or native flowering perennials, to enhance the ecological connectivity and foraging resource of the site.

5. Conclusion

The proposed side extension at 78a Eastheath Avenue requires the localised removal of existing tiles, fascia, and soffits along the side elevation to form the junction with the host dwelling. This meets the trigger for a bat survey under Wokingham Borough Council's Local Validation List (September 2025), and that trigger is acknowledged.

However, having regard to the age and construction of the dwelling, which was completed in early 2018 and is approximately eight years old, the roost potential of the affected features is assessed as negligible in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition, 2023). Modern construction of this type and age does not present the access points, voids, or thermally suitable conditions associated with bat roosting. A formal PRA conducted by a licensed ecologist would be expected to confirm negligible suitability, requiring no further emergence surveys.

The works do not affect any trees, hedgerows, or established vegetation, and the risk to nesting birds is low, subject to the pre-commencement nest check recommended above. The development is compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024), Chapter 15, and the proportional enhancements proposed demonstrate a positive commitment to biodiversity. It is respectfully submitted that no further ecological survey work is necessary and that this report provides sufficient information to satisfy the Council's validation requirements.