



BIODIVERSITY SURVEY AND REPORT

Proposal : Single-Storey Rear Extension
at

Address : 7 Castle Lane, Haverhill, CB9 9NG

1. Introduction

This Biodiversity Survey and Report (BSR) has been prepared to accompany a planning application for a single-storey rear extension at 7 Castle Lane, Haverhill.

The proposed works involve the construction of an 8.0 metre-wide, 4.0 metre-deep, 2.7 metre-high flat-roofed extension with timber cavity wall construction and Hardie plank external cladding. The extension will create an open-plan living, kitchen, and dining space on one side and a bedroom and bathroom on the other.

This report evaluates the existing ecological value of the site, identifies potential impacts on biodiversity, and sets out mitigation and enhancement measures to ensure compliance with national and local biodiversity policy.

2. Site Description and Baseline Conditions

2.1 Location and Context

The property is situated within a residential area of Haverhill, surrounded by urban housing and private gardens. The plot includes a modest rear garden with a mix of lawn, paving, and domestic planting, bordered by timber fencing and neighbouring gardens.

The surrounding area primarily comprises residential dwellings with limited ecological corridors, but occasional mature trees and hedges provide foraging and nesting potential for local fauna.

2.2 Existing Structures and Vegetation

- The existing house is a two-storey brick building with a small rear conservatory to be replaced by the proposed extension.
- The roof of the existing structure is of concrete tiles with no visible evidence of cracks, crevices, or entry points suitable for bats.
- The rear garden supports amenity grassland and small ornamental shrubs, with no mature trees on-site.
- There is no evidence of invasive or protected plant species such as Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, or Himalayan Balsam.

2.3 Surrounding Habitat and Connectivity

The wider Haverhill area includes:

- Urban gardens and small green corridors with trees and hedgerows.
- The nearest semi-natural habitat is along the Stour Brook Corridor, approximately 300 metres west of the site, providing limited ecological connectivity.
- The local landscape supports common urban wildlife including birds (blackbird, robin, starling), small mammals (hedgehogs, mice), and invertebrates.

3. Survey Methodology

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken on-site in October 2025 by a suitably assessor.

The assessment included:

- A visual inspection of the building and garden for signs of protected species (bats, birds, reptiles, amphibians).
- A desk study review of publicly available data (Magic Map, DEFRA, Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service).
- Consideration of habitat type, vegetation structure, potential roost/nesting features, and proximity to water or woodland.

No intrusive survey methods (e.g., trapping or netting) were required given the limited ecological potential of the site.

4. Survey Findings

4.1 Protected Species

| Species Group | Findings | Potential Impact |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Bats | No evidence of roosting. The extension site is confined to modern brick and uPVC structures with tight fittings. Low bat activity is expected in rear gardens at dusk for foraging. | Negligible impact. Lighting controls recommended. |
| Birds | No nesting sites affected. The works are confined to the rear ground floor area. Occasional garden birds may nest in nearby shrubs. | Low risk; avoid vegetation removal in nesting season (March–August). |
| Hedgehogs | Species likely present locally in gardens. No barriers to movement identified. | Minor temporary disturbance; opportunity to enhance habitat. |
| Reptiles & Amphibians | Garden is fully enclosed with short lawn and paving. No ponds or refugia nearby. | No impact expected. |
| Invertebrates | Typical garden invertebrates (bees, butterflies). | Temporary habitat loss from small soil disturbance. |

4.2 Habitats

The site supports only low-value urban habitats, including:

- Amenity grass (low ecological value)
- Ornamental shrubs (low ecological value)
- Hardstanding and built surfaces (negligible value)

No priority habitats as defined under the UK Habitat Classification or Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 were recorded.

5. Assessment of Potential Impacts

5.1 Construction Phase

- **Temporary disturbance** from noise, vibration, and light during works.
- **Minor habitat loss** within a small rear garden area (<32m²).
- **Soil compaction and disturbance** in working areas may temporarily reduce local invertebrate activity.

5.2 Operational Phase

- The extension will not introduce any impermeable surface beyond existing garden footprint, ensuring negligible increase in surface runoff.
- The Hardie plank cladding and timber cavity wall construction present no long-term risk to fauna.
- If exterior lighting is installed, directional and low-lux LED fittings should be used to avoid light spill into adjacent gardens or potential bat flight lines.

6. Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

To ensure compliance with Biodiversity Net Gain principles, the following measures are recommended:

6.1 Construction Phase Mitigation

- Works to avoid nesting bird season (March–August), or a pre-start check by a competent ecologist if unavoidable.
- Limit working hours to daytime only to reduce light and noise disturbance to bats and nocturnal wildlife.
- Use of protective fencing to demarcate working areas and avoid unnecessary vegetation loss.

6.2 Operational and Long-Term Enhancements

1. **Bat Box Installation**
 - Install one bat roosting box (e.g., Schwegler 1FR or equivalent) on a north/east-facing wall of the main dwelling.
2. **Bird Nesting Boxes**
 - Provide one bird box suitable for species such as robin or blue tit, placed under eaves or within the garden.
3. **Hedgehog Access Gap**
 - Ensure 13cm x 13cm hedgehog gaps at the base of garden fencing for wildlife movement between gardens.
4. **Native Planting**
 - Incorporate native flowering plants and shrubs (e.g., lavender, dogwood, hawthorn) to support pollinators.
5. **Sustainable Drainage (SuDS)**
 - If feasible, direct rainwater runoff to a small permeable soakaway or rain garden to reduce surface runoff and enhance biodiversity.

7. Legislative Compliance

The proposal complies with the following legislation and policy requirements:

- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)**
- **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017**
- **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (Section 40 – Biodiversity Duty)**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023)** – Paragraph 186: Development should provide net gains for biodiversity.
- **West Suffolk Local Plan – Policy DM12:** Protection of biodiversity and geodiversity.

8. Conclusion

The proposed single-storey rear extension at 7 Castle Lane, Haverhill will have no significant adverse effects on local biodiversity.

The site currently supports low ecological value, and with the recommended mitigation and enhancements, the development will achieve a net positive contribution to biodiversity at a domestic scale.

The proposed measures—such as installing nesting and roosting boxes, maintaining wildlife permeability, and using native planting—ensure full compliance with **local and national biodiversity requirements**.