

Ecology response for H/22/93949 5 LENNOX CLOSE, CHANDLER'S FORD, EASTLEIGH, SO53 1FR

Removal of Rhododendron hedge to replace with 2m tall timber fence and replant hedge behind the new fence at the rear garden (Kingsway)

Dorothy Hei-Tung-Hoh

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I have reviewed the site photos, and this is a very large dense hedge along the northern boundary of the site, which could provide cover for nesting birds and hedgehogs. It will take a while for a new hedgerow to develop to the point where it will provide shelter for nesting birds and hedgehogs, so mitigation for temporary loss of habitat will be required. Biodiversity enhancement will also be required. There is a stream that borders the property to the south, so a CEMP would be required to ensure that no pollutants (such as soil, vegetation, fuel or cement) are allowed to enter the stream.

Contrary to the description on the application, the design statement in the DAS by Genesis Design Studios (September 2022) proposes replacing the rhododendron hedge with a native species hedgerow. A hedgerow of native species that provide flowers, fruit and seeds that would benefit wildlife would be preferable to a rhododendron hedge.

Timing will be an issue due to bird nesting season (March through August) and hedgehog hibernation season (November through March). To avoid disturbance/harm to these protected species the only time that this hedge can be removed or disturbed without ecological supervision is in September or October.

No vegetation clearance shall occur on site during the bird nesting season (between 1st March & 31st August- this may change with climate change) unless supervised by an appropriately qualified ecologist.

Reason: To prevent harm to breeding birds.

If a qualified ecologist checks the hedge for nesting birds within 24 hours of planned removal this may be able to be done during nesting bird season, however if an active nest is found, work must stop and the area around the nest must be protected from any disturbance by a 5 m buffer until after the young have fledged and left the nest.

There are several records of hedgehogs very close to this property and they may be nesting or hibernating in the existing hedge.

Mitigation for temporary loss of hedgehog habitat is required. Moving the hedge would result in loss of leaf litter and ground cover, so the British Hedgehog Society recommends that *piles of dead wood and brash piles can be created in other areas around the site to mitigate for the removal of suitable nesting sites. These can be created behind hedges or out of the way for smaller developments with limited space.* Replacement habitat can include log

piles, leaf litter, dead wood and scrub. Hedgehog houses can also be made or purchased.

<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/hedgehog-homes/>

A precautionary working method for hedgehogs must be followed:

If hedgehogs are using the site they would be sheltering under dense vegetation or within long grass, dead leaves or piles of dead wood. These areas should be cleared by hand, not using a digger, to allow animals time to escape. Removal of potential habitat must not take place from November through March when animals may be hibernating. No fires can be lit on site.

Reason: To prevent harm to hedgehogs

Any permanent fencing that is erected at the property boundaries must have periodic holes (measuring 13cm by 13 cm minimum) at its base to allow the movement of animals, such as hedgehogs.

Reason: To promote habitat connectivity and extended foraging ranges.

*Rhododendron ponticum* is a non-native invasive species in the UK. It must not be allowed to spread into the wild. It spreads very easily by seeds so seed heads should be removed before moving the plants. It must be disposed of by a licensed contractor and not be allowed to spread into the wild where it out competes native plants and forms dense shade. It is very difficult to eradicate once spreading.

Reason: To avoid spreading a non-native invasive species into the wild.

Biodiversity enhancement is required, which can be conditioned. This would be in addition to the mitigation for temporary loss of habitat for hedgehogs and nesting birds.

Additional information is available at:

<https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/discover/in-your-garden/article/31>, planting for bats

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/plants-for-pollinators>

<https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/bat-boxes>

<https://www.hampshireswifts.co.uk/nesting>

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/nestboxes/nestboxes-for-small-birds/>

<https://www.swift-conservation.org/OurLeaflets.htm>

<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/hedgehog-homes/>

Lisa Malter

Ecologist