

6 February 2023 Ecology response for F/22/93907 CHURCH FARM, HOUND ROAD, NETLEY ABBEY, SOUTHAMPTON, SO31 5FS

Extension of existing Gypsy and traveller site to provide an additional caravan pitch with day room

Alex Webb

6/2/23

A stable is not planned for this site.

There is a known population of slow worms at the cemetery adjacent to this property.

The site photos show that part of the site is mostly gravel with some sort of white (plastic?) mesh underneath. There is a large area of rough grassland with some patches of bramble shown to the south of this site. Some areas may be able to provide cover for slow worms which are a protected species. The areas of the site with building materials might provide good habitat for slow worms and other small animals as there are many crevices and basking sites available. The base boards of the closed board fencing do not appear to have any regular gaps, however slow worms, can use very small spaces and there are areas visible in the photos where slow worms could enter the site from adjacent properties. Slow worms must not be handled, because they shed their tails when stressed, which could leave them open to infection and death. Given the openness of the site, I don't think it would be an ideal habitat for reptiles, however there may be some individual slow worms using the site. If this application is permitted, a precautionary clearance method statement must be submitted to avoid causing harm to reptiles. It must include site clearance to be done only under ecological supervision. Any reptiles found must be safely transported by the ecologist to the retained reptile habitat in the adjacent cemetery.

The agricultural building could potentially support nesting birds such as swallows. A nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required before demolition. If any active bird nests are found, all work must stop, and a 5 m buffer must be constructed to protect the nest from disturbance until after the young have fledged and left the nest.

The photos show large areas of block paving on the adjacent site in the parking and day room areas. As previously requested, a surface water drainage plan and biodiversity enhancements will be required. Swallow nest boxes should be located under the eaves of the day room to mitigate for the loss of potential swallow nests in the agricultural building. Other enhancements could include planting flowering plants to attract pollinators and native plants which produce fruit and seeds to feed birds and other wildlife.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist

17/1/23

The DAS by Southern Planning Practice (July 2022) states that the application is for an additional caravan pitch with day room and stables however stables are not part of the description on this planning application and there are no stables shown on the proposed block plan for this application. If additional horses will be using this land or the adjacent field because of this proposed development, additional arrangements must be made for the disposal of horse manure and other waste products. If runoff becomes enriched with nutrients from horse manure it could change the nutrient balance of the site. This may also affect the surrounding sites depending on how it is managed. An earlier application, F/20/87928 was withdrawn but included the provision of stables. The ecology response for that application is still relevant to this one.

The DAS states that there is an existing septic tank and a toilet in the existing agricultural building. Surface water drainage plans for the day room, static mobile home, (and stables if they are part of this application) are required. The DAS states that *There would be no material increase in activity on the site as the applicant's son already lives with him on the existing plot and There would be no net increase in people living across the two pitches.* Realistically, having his own plot would enable the applicant's son to accommodate his own family or friends should he choose to do so at some point in the future, so the drainage systems must be able to accommodate the needs of a family group rather than just one person. Traffic generation might be expected to increase in the future as well.

Is any sort of formal paving planned for the parking area or under the static caravan? How will surface water runoff from this paving be managed?

There is a biodiversity sensitive area marked in pink on the cemetery grounds to the west of this site. This relates to application F/20/87685 to extend the cemetery. A population of slow worms were found on that site and may be present on this site if there is suitable habitat near the boundary. Please could you send site photos showing the current vegetation around the dis-used agricultural building? The aerial photos on Google maps show either bare earth or hardstanding on most of this site, but it is not clear what is on the western side of the site between the agricultural building and this biodiversity sensitive area. Slow worms are protected reptiles. The presence of protected species is a material consideration and must be determined before the application can be decided.

Biodiversity enhancements will also be required. A bat box on the gable end of and a sparrow terrace in the eaves of the day room building may be appropriate enhancements for this site.

The Bat Conservation Trust recommends installing a bat brick/box at least 4 m above the ground, away from artificial light sources, sheltered from strong winds and exposed to the sun for part of the day, facing south, south-east or south-west. ([https://www.bats.org.uk › our-work › putting-up-your-box](https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/putting-up-your-box))

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

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