

Ecology response for F/23/94651 DERRY DACY, PEEWIT HILL, BURSLEDON, SOUTHAMPTON, SO31 8BL

Erection of replacement dwelling.

Rachael Morris

16/3/23

## **Ecology**

There are records of several species of bats, badgers, dormice, common lizards, slow worms and adders near this site. It is also designated as a red zone for great crested newts, with a pond on an adjacent property to the south of the site, and a stream running along the east side of the property which appears to drain a pond within Peewit Hill SINC to the northwest of the site.

**Previous application** F/22/93432 was refused on 6 September 2022. Two of the reasons for refusal were:

*Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the proposed development will not cause adverse harm to the biodiversity interests of the site and species (such as nesting birds, common lizards, badgers, and bats) which are protected by virtue of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended). The proposals are therefore contrary to Policy DM11 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 and*

*Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate a Biodiversity Net Gain and as such is contrary to Policy DM11 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036.*

## **Current application**

I have reviewed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report by Ecosupport (February 2023).

The report concluded that there were:

- *Moderate potential for roosting bats in dwelling*
- *Potential for foraging and commuting Badgers*
- *Low potential for reptiles (this would have been higher before vegetation clearance)*
- *Low potential for Hazel Dormouse (this would have been higher before vegetation clearance)*
- *High potential for breeding and nesting birds.*

Within Schedule 14 of the Environment Act, which sets out the biodiversity gain condition for development, measures are included that allow planning authorities to recognise any habitat degradation since 30th January 2020 and to take the earlier habitat state as the baseline for the purposes of biodiversity net gain. In order to ascertain the habitats present and their condition on 30th January 2020, aerial imagery or data sets from that time could be used. 30th January 2020 is the relevant date as it was the day the Bill entered Parliament.

The PEA report documents recent site clearance and removal of scrub and grassland habitats. This habitat is clearly visible on aerial photos available on Google Earth with the imagery date of 3/2022. Photos in the report show bare ground, large piles of rubble (imported) covering much of the northern portion of the site, disturbed ground with remnants of vegetation, and small areas of new growth coming up through the remains of dead vegetation.

Therefore, the vegetation on site was cleared and rubble deposited on site at some point between March 2022 and February 2023. Measurements of habitat to demonstrate biodiversity net gain must include the habitat that previously existed on site and was cleared in advance of this planning application.

There is evidence that a pond to the south of this site was also recently destroyed with disturbed ground where it had once been. It appears to be within the same land ownership but not within the red line boundary of this application.

Recent site clearance may have destroyed potential dormouse and reptile habitat.

The report recommends the following surveys on the remaining habitat to determine the presence of protected species on site:

One dusk bat emergence and one dawn re-entry survey as the building has moderate bat roost suitability. These can be done between May and August and must be done at least 2 weeks apart.

Reptile surveys using artificial refugia during the optimal survey season in April, May and September.

Precautionary working methods for badgers, dormice and nesting birds were also recommended.

The biodiversity enhancements recommended in the report were 2 bat bricks and a swift brick. Once the bat survey and reptile survey results have been reported, additional mitigation may be required. A landscaping plan will be required which demonstrates biodiversity net gain above the baseline habitat (in line with Policy DM11, NPPF and the Environment Act) and compensation for reptile and dormouse habitat lost as shown on aerial photos before the extensive vegetation clearance.

## **Surface water drainage**

The existing system of soakaways and permeable gravel will be satisfactory. Building control will need to approve the location and size of the soakaways.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist