

Ecology response for F/23/95151 Land rear of Saxon Court, The Barn, Burnetts Lane, Horton Heath, SO50 7D

Erection of [1.no](#) 3-bedroom dwelling with associated amenity space and parking

Rachel Morris

19/6/23

Ecology

There are records of bats and hedgehogs in the vicinity of this site. It is located in an amber great crested newt impact zone, but there are no records of great crested newts nearby. There is a stream approximately 140 m to the north of the site and a balancing pond approximately 85 m to the west.

I object to this application on the grounds that it is not clear that this proposal is feasible due to the encroachment of the building on the root protection areas of a line of western red cedars along the eastern site boundary. The tree plan also mentions pruning these trees by about a metre up to the boundary line, which will affect their shape and their use as habitat for nesting birds. This line of trees will cause shading to the proposed dwelling and require more pruning as they grow.

If permission is granted the following information must be considered:

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment for The Barn by Arbtech (issue 2, April 2023) reports that hedgerows and scrub are proposed to be removed during construction. The rapid risk assessment score for great crested newts states that it is highly unlikely for great crested newts to be present on this site. The report states that the MAGIC database did not return survey records for great crested newts, but the HBIC data (which was not accessed by the consultants) does show records at Quobleigh pond which is approximately 600 m from this site. There are also HBIC records of grass snakes, common lizards, toads and slow worms in the wider vicinity of the site.

The report has recommended a **precautionary working method for great crested newts, other amphibians and reptiles**. This will include:

- site clearance outside of amphibian hibernation season (November through February)
- Site operatives must be given a toolbox talk which will include how to identify great crested newts and the common reptiles, and procedures to follow if reptiles or amphibians are found on site.
- A staged approach to vegetation clearance
- Rubble and vegetation piles to be dismantled by hand with debris stored on pallets or removed from site to deter animals from using these piles for shelter
- Chemical storage in locked containers and disposal according to COSHH regulations

- If any reptiles or amphibians are found on site including great crested newts all work must stop and suitably qualified ecological advice sought immediately.

Please could you add the following **informative for bats** to the decision notice:

In the unlikely event of any bats being found during demolition or construction, all work must stop immediately, and Natural England must be called. Additional information is available on the Bat Conservation Trust website at <https://www.bats.org.uk/advice/im-working-on-a-building-with-bats/ive-found-a-bat-during-works>.

The report also recommends

a low impact lighting strategy, and

scrub clearance to be done outside of the bird nesting season (March through 31 Aug) or only immediately after a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist. If there are any active nests all work must stop, and a 5 m buffer be erected to protect the nest from disturbance until the young have fledged and left the nest.

The photos in the report show that there are piles of construction materials, soil and some scrub which could be used by hedgehogs but that most of the vegetation has already been removed from the site. A shallow ditch is reported adjacent to the western boundary and the report states it is due to surface runoff on site.

a precautionary working method for hedgehogs

If hedgehogs are found on site, they must be allowed to move away to safety. If any hedgehogs appear to be in distress, a hedgehog rescue worker should be contacted. Information is available on the website of the British Hedgehog Preservation society at <https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/found-a-hedgehog/>.

Hedgehog holes (13 x 13 cm minimum) must be included in the baseboards of any closed board fences to allow the free passage of small mammals through the garden.

Biodiversity enhancements can be conditioned in a biodiversity enhancement/ soft landscaping plan. Enhancements recommended in the report include:

Soft landscaping to include habitat creation for amphibians, reptiles and hedgehogs

Planting of fruit bearing trees, native scrub and flowering species-rich grassland

Provision of basking areas, hibernacula and reptile refugia

Flowering plants for pollinators

Installation of bat boxes and bird boxes. The report recommends that these be placed on suitable trees but there is no evidence provided that there are any suitable mature trees

within the site boundary. Built in bat bricks and swift bricks are preferred as they do not need maintenance and cannot fall off. These should be built into the gable ends of the house.

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>)

Swift nest boxes are best positioned under the eaves or on walls facing north, northeast or north-west out of direct sunlight, five metres above the ground, with clear adjacent airspace so swifts can access them in a high-speed direct flight.

(<https://www.swiftconservation.org/Nestboxes%26Attraction.htm>)

The line of western red cedar trees along the south eastern boundary must be retained as a dark corridor and light spill from the house minimised.

Surface water drainage

The surface water drainage plan shows two soakaways to be created on site. It is not clear whether soakaways are feasible in this area. Infiltration test results or evidence of soakaways in use in adjacent properties are required.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist