

Ecology response for H/23/95918 1 Lakewood Close

Demolition of existing single-story rear existing to create Single-storey rear extension with chimney flue, alterations to the fenestration, bbq area & hard landscaping.

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This site is within a red great crested newt impact risk zone and very close to Hiltingbury Lakes SINC.

There are no existing records of great crested newts in this area, however there are many records of hedgehogs and stag beetles and some records of common toads. Nesting birds including swifts, and bats are also present in this area.

I have reviewed the Preliminary Roost Assessment by Arbtech (October 2022) and the Biological Mitigation and Enhancement Plan by Ecological Surveys Ltd (August 2023).

Evidence of roosting bats was found, with 2 bat droppings behind corner hanging tiles on the southwest elevation, however the proposed works in this application to the rear of the building on the northern elevation should not disturb this bat roost feature. The PRA report states that there are also gaps in the corner tiles on the northwest elevations, and a gap in the verge tiles and slipped roof tiles on the northwest elevation.

To avoid any potential disturbance for bats, works must be done in the winter months (November through March) when bats are least likely to be present. Contractors must be made aware of the possible presence of bats on site, and where potential roost features are located.

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 proposed enhancements are appropriate. Built-in bat and bird boxes are preferred as they do not require maintenance and cannot fall off, however as this is only a single storey extension other areas of the building may need to be considered to allow the boxes to be mounted at the correct heights. Swift nest boxes are recommended as they can be used by other birds when swifts are not in residence. Care must be taken when installing bat and bird boxes not to disturb the existing roost features in these hanging tiles. Exterior lighting must not be allowed in the area of the bat and bird boxes.

A precautionary working method must be followed for any vegetation clearance or landscaping work.

Any building products which need to be stored onsite should be kept on hard standing or stored on pallets, so they don't provide habitat for wildlife. Any trenches, holes or open pipes must either be covered at night or fitted with a slanted rough board as a small animal escape ramp. Any piles of soil must be covered at night so animals cannot burrow into it. If a great crested newt is found on site all works must stop, it must not be handled, and Natural England must be contacted for further advice. Any other amphibians or small mammals must not be disturbed but can be allowed to move away to a place of safety on their own.

Any vegetation clearance should be done outside of nesting bird season which is usually between 1st March and 31st August but can vary depending on the weather. If this is not possible then a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist should be done immediately before the start of work.

If evidence of an active bird's nest is found during construction, a 5 m buffer must be erected around the nest to protect it from disturbance until after the chicks have fledged and left the nest.

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> )

Additional information is available at:

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

<https://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/WAG16%20Bats%20updated%202022%20WEB.pdf> - Stars of the Night guide to attract bats into your garden

<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/>

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