

Ecology response for F/26/101217 MELLER HOUSE, OAKBANK ROAD, BISHOPSTOKE

Part retrospective external alterations to the existing building, including replacement and insertion of windows and doors, roof alterations, partial reduction of part of the building, alterations to parking layout including enlarged car parking area, provision of bin and cycle storage, boundary fencing and gates, and associated works.

Gregg Chapman

21/5/26

It is not entirely clear which parts of the application are retrospective, and which are not.

Ecology

This site is in a red impact risk zone for great crested newts and is located approximately 50 m from the River Itchen SAC and SSSI (Itchen Navigation). There are records of bats and water voles nearby and hedgehogs in the wider area.

I have reviewed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal by Arbtech (August 2025) which was submitted for the previous application.

The DAS states that a DLL (*district level license*) has been applied for and the required fee paid by the applicant. The DLL correspondence must be submitted. The DLL procedure is: The first payment (stage 1) to NatureSpace is for a detailed site-specific assessment report to submit to the LPA alongside the planning application. At determination, planning conditions specific for great crested newts are added to any planning consent. After the application has been permitted the developer makes a stage 2 payment to NatureSpace and receives a certificate to submit to the LPA to discharge the planning condition. The developer can work under the District License once authorised by the LPA.

A precautionary working method is required to avoid harm to hedgehogs during construction. This can be included in a CEMP which should be provided before determination due to the 50 m distance of the site to the River Itchen SAC and SSSI (Itchen Navigation).

Biodiversity Net Gain

The DAS states that the Planning Act 2025 has moved the de minimis threshold to 0.2 ha, which is true, but the new de minimis threshold does not come into effect until 31 July 2026.

The Small Sites Biodiversity Net Gain metric has been submitted, however it is not valid due to the following errors flagged by the Mycelia software.

- For *area habitats*, the total area of lost habitat was found to be 115.0 m², and the total area of created habitat was found to be 0.0 m². These areas should be equal. The total baseline area of 115.0 m² is less than the site area which is 1532.0 m². These areas should be equal.

A total of 115 m² of unvegetated garden (area habitat) is proposed to be lost. The metric proposes to create 55 m of native hedgerow (linear habitat) in good condition to provide

0.22 biodiversity units. For the purposes of biodiversity net gain, area habitat and linear habitat are not interchangeable.

A valid small sites metric is required.

Ecological enhancements will still be required in accord with Local Plan policy DM 11 and NPPF (December 2024) paragraphs 187d and 192 b. Bat boxes and swift nest boxes may be appropriate for this building, but must be sited on the correct elevations, at the correct heights and the bat boxes must be in dark locations. The ecological consultant will be able to advise on the most appropriate locations for these features.

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))

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/>

www.bats.org.uk/resources/guidance-for-professionals/landscape-and-urban-design-for-bats-and-biodiversity

<https://ptes.org/my-garden/>

<https://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/foodplants.php>

Surface water drainage

A new soakaway is proposed to be added to the existing soakaways. A full width linear slot drain, linked to the soakaway is proposed where the extended car park meets the existing car park. The car park will be surfaced with permeable paving. This is acceptable.

A surface water drainage maintenance plan is required. This can be conditioned.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist