

Ecology response for F/26/101188 Land adjacent to the former Roll Call public house, Woolston Road, Netley, Southampton, SO31 5FJ

Construction of a detached house with associated parking, access and landscaping

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9/6/26

Summary: The ecology recommendations are appropriate and should be implemented. A small sites biodiversity metric and infiltration testing for surface water drainage are required. Please re-consult ecology when these have been submitted.

Spear Pond Gully is located approximately 135 m to the south of the site. Another pond is located approximately 584 m to the east of the site within Priors Hill Brickworks SINC. The site is functionally linked at the east to Priors Hill Copse/Hound Grove SINC a (1a- ancient semi-natural woodland) and Priors Hill Brickworks SINC (1B/2B/3B-1B other woodland where there is a significant element of ancient semi-natural woodland surviving other woodland, 2B semi-improved or impoverished grasslands which retain a significant element of unimproved grassland and 3B Areas of Heathland which are afforested or have succeeded to woodland) and functionally linked at the west to Netley Farm Closed Landfill Site SINC (6a-notable plants).

The site is in a green impact risk zone for great crested newts. There are records of bats and hedgehogs nearby and slow worms in the wider area.

Biodiversity net gain

The application site is 0.2 ha. The application is claiming the self-build and custom build development exemption from 10% biodiversity net gain, however no net loss and some net gain is required by local plan policy DM 11 and the NPPF (December 2024) paragraphs 187d and 192 b. The proposal would result in loss of tussocky modified grassland (g4), tall forbs (16), bramble scrub (h3d), and mixed scrub (h3h).

It is not clear how much of these habitats would be lost to development. A small sites metric with pre- and post- development habitat plans will be required to quantify the amount of each habitat on site and to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity and some net gain.

Surface water drainage

The site and location plan shows a soakaway and permeable driveway are proposed. Soil permeability test results are required before a soakaway and permeable paving can be permitted. The soil testing should be done before determination in case other surface water drainage arrangements need to be investigated. Photos of surface water flooding along Woolston Road have been submitted by neighbours. All runoff must be dealt with on site and not be allowed to contribute to this existing problem.

Ecology

I have reviewed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report by Ecosupport (February 2026).

The PEA report states that there is potential to support commuting and foraging badgers and breeding and nesting birds. It states that there is low potential for foraging and commuting bats, but due to the records of bats in the area this could be moderate potential due to the scrub and trees surrounding the site. Since the boundary vegetation is proposed to be retained, bat activity surveys will not be required. There is tussocky grassland and scrub on site which could provide habitat for reptiles and amphibians.

The precautionary working methods for badgers and other terrestrial mammals and the sensitive habitat removal methods for reptiles and amphibians and nesting birds listed in the report are appropriate and must be conditioned.

In the unlikely instance that a GCN is found during any works, all works must immediately stop, and the project ecologist must be informed. Natural England will then need to be consulted.

Any vegetation to be removed to facilitate the development must be removed outside of bird nesting season (which is usually between the beginning of March and the end of August) or if this is not possible then only after being checked for nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist up to 24 hours before the start of works. If any active nests are found, work must stop and a 5 m buffer must be erected around the nest to protect it from disturbance until after the birds have fledged and left the nest.

It would be helpful if the report had page numbers and section numbers so that these could be referenced in the conditions.

Ecological enhancements recommended in the PEA report include an integrated bat brick and two integrated swift nest bricks. A bird box and a bat box are also proposed for retained trees. These are appropriate enhancements but must be supported with flowering plants for pollinators to attract insects as food for bats and birds.

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 recommendations on lighting during construction and during operation are appropriate and must be implemented. The locations of the proposed boxes and any exterior lighting required for security purposes must be shown together on an elevation plan to ensure that the areas around the bat boxes will be kept dark.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist