

Ecology response for F/23/96082 OLD OAK FARM, WINCHESTER ROAD, FAIR OAK, EASTLEIGH, SO50 7HD

Removal of two mobile homes and accompanying buildings and replacement with two new self-build dwellings, creation of new paddock area, improvements to access sight lines, and new landscaping of site frontage.

Summer Sharpe

11/10/23

I have reviewed the Updated Ecological Appraisal report by Aluco Ecology Ltd. (April 2023). The site is in an amber risk zone for great crested newts. The report states that there is suitable terrestrial habitat for great crested newts on site but although there are two ponds within 250 m of the site, neither pond is suitable for great crested newts and they are unlikely to be present on site.

Precautionary working methods are required to prevent harm to reptiles, amphibians, badgers, dormice, hedgehogs, and nesting birds which could potentially use this site. These are outlined in the report and can be conditioned as part of a CEMP. The timing of any vegetation clearance would need to be planned with consideration of the different requirements of all of these species and would need to be done in stages to avoid disturbance during nesting and hibernation times. A reptile receptor area will need to be established in advance of any work. This must be shown on a plan. An ecologist will be required to supervise the destructive search for reptiles, to check for nesting birds if any vegetation clearance cannot be done outside of nesting bird season, and to determine the appropriate positions of bat and bird boxes. Swift nest boxes should be considered, if possible, as they can be used by other birds when swifts are not in residence. Built-in boxes are preferred to externally mounted boxes as they do not require maintenance and cannot fall off.

If the plans change and the eastern boundary tree line would be affected by the development, then a phase 2 dormouse survey will be required. This would have to be done before determination as the presence of protected species is a material consideration but is not required by the current plans.

Sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 of the report propose appropriate mitigation for loss of some of the poor-quality grassland habitat, creation of new and higher quality grassland and garden habitat and enhancement of existing habitats.

The potentially invasive species Field Horsetail and Thorn Apple are mentioned in section 5.3.5. They must not be allowed to spread either on site or off site and should be controlled or eradicated if possible.

Planting additional native shrubs and bird boxes (one built into each house or on two suitable trees in the garden) are proposed as mitigation for loss of a small amount of woody/scrub habitat which would be removed to build these proposed dwellings. The varieties of native

shrubs selected must provide flowers, fruit and seeds and be managed for wildlife. Conifers should not be planted on site.

Bat boxes are required for each dwelling, and garden plants must include a variety of plants for pollinators as well as night-scented flowering plants to attract moths as food for bats. The retained grassland outside the developed area must be managed to develop an irregular tall edge habitat to provide habitat suitable for reptiles as explained in section 5.3.16. Any closed board fencing must have holes cut into the baseboards (13 x 13 cm minimum) to allow the free movement of hedgehogs across the site. Timber post and rail fencing has been proposed which would not create a barrier for hedgehogs.

These proposals can be conditioned in a Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan (BMEP) produced by an ecologist. This must show the locations of the bird and bat boxes, dark corridors on site, details of any exterior lighting (only if required for safety or security), planting areas with plant species lists, and management plans and schedules for biodiversity features. Sedum roofs have been proposed for both houses and these could also be part of a biodiversity enhancement plan. The recommended biodiversity enhancements are summarised in section 5.4.1 of the report. The Landscaping Strategy Plan contains most of this information, so this same plan could be annotated with specific bat and bird box positions, proposed exterior lighting and plant species lists.

Ponds have been mentioned in the Design Access Statement and shown on the Landscape Strategy Plan but not in the Updated Ecological Appraisal report. If wildlife ponds are desired by the applicants, they can be added to the landscaping of the domestic gardens but are not required for mitigation or enhancement. If ponds are added they should be planted with native pond and emergent plant species.

The PTP O & M plan by Aqua Callidus (September 2023) provides information on the sewage treatment plants but page 3 of the manual for this plant states that rainwater from roofs and yards and infiltration water must not be added to this system. Other than sedum roofs mentioned in the DAS, information on surface water drainage has not yet been provided.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist