

Ecology response for F/24/97352 Croft Farm, Winchester Road, Botley, SO32 2BX

Erection of detached bungalow with associated parking, access and landscaping

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6/6/24

This site is in a green impact risk zone for great crested newts. There are records of great crested newts, common toads, bats, badgers and nesting swifts in the area. Vegetation which could be used by nesting birds, reptiles, badgers, and hedgehogs would be impacted by the proposal.

I have reviewed the PEA report by Arbtech (September 2022). There are some discrepancies in the report. It is 22 months old and now out of date. A precautionary working method for reptiles, badgers, and hedgehogs was recommended. A low impact lighting strategy was recommended both during construction and for the completed development.

In section 1.1 the report states it was based on survey work done in October 2021, but in section 2.2 it states the survey was undertaken in August 2022.

Great crested newts have been scoped out in this report, but I think there was insufficient effort in the desk study to support this.

A drainage ditch to the southeast of the site shown in Table 3, which was listed as standing water. A habitat suitability index for great crested newts is required for this feature and for any ponds within 600 m and their possible presence must be reconsidered.

In Table 4 the report states that aerial imagery showed no ponds within 500 m of the site however our eGIS map shows at least 4 ponds near this site. One is 360 m to the west near Bubb Lane, one is approximately 379 m to the northeast along Snakemoor Lane at Oaktree Lodge, another pond is 400 m to the northeast, and a 4th pond is 640 m to the northeast at the corner of Snakemoor Lane and Stapleford Lane. Additional ponds are shown to the south on the Magic OS colour map.

In the desk study only the MAGIC database was used, and the nearest record of great crested newts was reported to be 1960 m northwest of the site. The local records centre records were not obtained. Our HBIC database contains a record of great crested newts at the pond 360 m to the west near Bubb Lane.

An updated ecology report is required, with an update walkover survey and full consideration for the possible presence of great crested newts.

Surface water drainage information is also required to be shown on the site plan.

As required in the previous applications:

Any closed board fencing must have 13 x 13 cm gaps in the baseboards to allow free passage of small mammals such as hedgehogs.

In the unlikely event of any bats being found during demolition or construction, all work must stop immediately, and Natural England must be informed. 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>.

In the unlikely event that a reptile is found on site, all work in that immediate area must stop and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

The site area is 0.2 ha so this application does qualify for the self-build exemption for providing 10% biodiversity net gain but some biodiversity enhancements are still required in accord with Local Plan policy DM 11 and NPPF paragraph 180.

A bat brick and a swift brick or bird nest box may be appropriate for this building.

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/>

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>

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