

Ecology response for F/24/97288 57 CHURCH ROAD, BISHOPSTOKE, EASTLEIGH, SO50 6DN

Conversion of existing building into 2no. 2-bedroom apartments, with addition of first floor extension and roof terrace, elevational alterations, and insertion of 1no. rooflight and 2no. dormers to front roof slope.

David Huckfield

I have reviewed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment by Arbtech (February 2024). The site consists of a building and hardstanding, with gravel, bare ground and a path leading to the front of the property. The application form was dated 23/4/24 which is after the end of the temporary exemption for small sites from the requirement for 10% biodiversity net gain (as claimed on the application form). Small sites became eligible on 2 April 2024. However, there is less than 25m² of habitat which would be impacted by the development, so the de minimus exemption will apply. Local plan policy DM11 and NPPF paragraph 180 are still applicable, so biodiversity enhancements are still required (as discussed below), but 10% net gain is not required.

The report has identified numerous features which would be suitable for both void-dwelling and crevice-dwelling bat species. The report has not mentioned the basement, which may have potential to be used as a hibernation roost. The basement must be inspected for signs of past use by bats and potential to be used in future.

Three bat emergence/re-entry surveys are required to be done before determination, during the active bat season, which would correlate with the building having high bat roost suitability.

A bird's nest was found in the broken soffit box of the front porch, so work must only take place outside of the active nesting season (ie. can take place from September through February) or only immediately after a pre-works check for nesting birds done by a suitably qualified ecologist. If any active bird's nests are found all work must stop and a 5 m buffer must be erected around the nest to protect it from disturbance until after the young have fledged and left the nest.

A precautionary working method for commuting hedgehogs will be required (Any pipes or excavations to be covered at night or fitted with a slanted rough board as an escape ramp).

A CEMP is required and can be conditioned. It must include measures to reduce noise, lighting, dust, litter, construction traffic and surface water runoff.

Suitable mitigation and compensation for loss of potential roost features must be provided in the Phase II bat survey report.

In addition to mitigation and compensation, the report must also recommend biodiversity enhancements in accord with local plan policy DM11 and NPPF paragraph 180. This could include re-establishment of a front garden with flowering plants for pollinators and bat and bird roosting opportunities.

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/buildings-planning-and-development/bat-boxes/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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