

Ecology response for F/24/98148 191 LEIGH ROAD, EASTLEIGH, SO50 9DW

Two storey side and rear extension, addition of roof lights and rear dormer, elevational changes, and conversion of single dwelling to 8no. 1-bedroom flats.

David Huckfield

There are records of bats, stag beetles and hedgehogs near this site, and nesting swifts in the wider area. I have reviewed the photo of the house on Google maps. All the vegetation at the front and rear of the house would be removed and the garage would need to be demolished to enable this proposal. This would represent a net loss of biodiversity, which is contrary to EBC local plan policy DM 11 and NPPF paragraph 180. I raise a holding objection to the application on this basis.

Current site photos are required. On the application form, the applicant has responded No to the question *Are there trees or hedges on the proposed development site*. The imagery on Google maps dated 2024 shows a large hedgerow across the front of the property and additional vegetation in the rear garden. *In line with Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021 (which updates the Town and Country Planning Act 1990), if vegetation has been removed in advance of the planning application the pre-development biodiversity value for the site is to be taken to be its biodiversity value immediately before carrying out the clearance activities.*

The applicant is claiming the de minimus exemption for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain with the reason that this is a small site. That is not a sufficient reason. Development subject to the de minimus exemption is defined as *development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres (e.g. 5m by 5m) of onsite habitat, or 5 metres of linear habitats such as hedgerows.*

The site area is given as 358 sq. metres on the application form. A measurement of the area of all vegetation on site is required before the site can be considered for the de minimus exemption.

Although vegetation is screening the view of most of the building in the Google map photos, I can see some potential bat roost features on the roof.

A preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) is required to assess the buildings and the front and rear garden to determine whether the site would provide habitat for bats, nesting birds, hedgehogs and stag beetles.

The PEA report must also provide recommendations for biodiversity enhancements so that the site can provide at least some net gain rather than a net loss of biodiversity.

A bat box/brick and a swift nest box/brick 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/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.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://stagbeetles.ptes.org/how-to-build-a-log-pile/>

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