

Ecology response 13 2 25 for F/24/98611 78 CHALK HILL, WEST END, SOUTHAMPTON, SO18 3DB

Conversion of meeting room into a single dwelling

Clare Martin

13/2/25

I have reviewed the Ecological Impact Assessment by LC Ecological Services (February 2025).

The building was assessed to have moderate potential for roosting bats, low potential for foraging and commuting bats and nesting opportunities for house sparrows and swifts.

The woodland and hedgerows must be protected from accidental damage during building works.

No work is proposed to be carried out on the roof or within the roof void and the internal works are assessed as unlikely to impact on roosting bats. If plans change then at least two bat emergence surveys will be required with additional information as explained in section 7.12.

A precautionary working method to protect bats and nesting birds is required.

Any vegetation to be removed to facilitate the development (such as the ivy on the walls) 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.

On-going habitat management such as hedge trimming must be timed to take place between September and early February to avoid harming or destroying active birds' nests.

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>.

If external lighting is required, the guidelines in section 7.14 must be followed.

A CEMP/ Construction Method Statement has been included on the Proposed Work Compound plan and includes all required information.

The biodiversity enhancements listed in section 8.1 are appropriate.

This will include a bat box and a bird nest box installed on mature trees, a swift nest box added to the house, and the hedgerows will be enhanced or replaced with native species. Although it is not a native species, the small flower silverberry is particularly attractive to pollinators and birds so I don't think they should be removed.

Flower beds will be installed in the car park and on bare ground adjacent to the southern boundary to provide habitat for a variety of invertebrates. A stag beetle loggery will be built in the woodland as directed in section 8.3.

The proposed Elevations and Plans (Rev A) shows the swift nest box placed on the southern elevation and the bat boxes on the existing rear elevation next to the large windows, which might be too light due to light spill from the windows. They should be switched. Baby birds get too hot on southern elevations, but they are ideal for bats. I would recommend that the bat boxes be moved to the south elevation and the swift nest box to the north existing side

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>). Photos 10 and 11 show ideal elevations for swift nest boxes.

Removal of Wilson's honeysuckle has been recommended to allow native species to proliferate in the woodland understorey. I would also recommend the removal of the pendulous sedge as it spreads very easily (as shown in photographs 3 and 4), has little wildlife value and can be difficult to eradicate when in large clumps. An alternative planting scheme could be proposed in the northern area, but it is not required to be changed at this time.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist

23/1/25

I have reviewed the site photos. The rear garden has clumps of trees, some of which may have been coppiced, with scrub, ground vegetation and leaf litter. It could provide shelter for nesting birds, small mammals, reptiles and invertebrates. The larger trees might have potential bat roost features. The storage area under the building may be suitable for roosting and hibernating bats. A preliminary ecological appraisal and an assessment of the biodiversity baseline value are required before determination. The small sites metric may be able to be used.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist

23/12/24

Ecology raises a holding objection until the statutorily required information is provided.

The de minimus exemption is not valid in this case. It is the whole site that would be converted into a residential property, not just the building, therefore the whole site needs to be assessed for its baseline biodiversity value. The requirement for 10% BNG does apply to this site.

The impacts of a change to residential use would extend throughout the site and not be limited to the building and the side garden. The property will not be sold as a house with no amenity space, it will be a house on a plot of land, part of which is wooded and has the potential to provide habitat for protected species. Although the email from the agent states that no changes are proposed to the rear amenity space, it would be within the curtilage of a domestic garden and the trees/woodland could be impacted by the residents of the dwelling/ new owner of the property.

The area of the site is more than 25 metres squared. A rough measurement of the site made from the map is 1046 metres squared or 0.105 ha.

The site is adjacent to EBC land which is connected to a small strip of HCC land and then to West End Copse SINC, under town/parish council ownership. It is in a green impact risk zone for great crested newts, with nearby records of slow worms, bats, stag beetles, and badgers. Nesting birds and hedgehogs are likely to be using the garden. There could also be invasive plants.

We need a good set of photos of the building and all areas of the property to ensure that no habitat is cleared without adequate mitigation in place. If the internal work requires any work on the ceiling it could affect bats if they were using the loft space. Bat and swift nest boxes would be a good enhancement, the correct elevations are available.

A preliminary ecological appraisal may be required, but I would want to review photos first. The applicant must be reminded that the site must not be cleared before photos or a survey and any site clearance before a survey will result in the baseline ecological condition being taken from aerial photos of the land before the clearance. Aerial photos show that there are trees in the rear garden which are very close to the house and vegetation screening the property along Chalk Hill Road. The tree officer should also be consulted.

Biodiversity enhancements will be required in accord with Local Plan policy DM 11 and NPPF paragraph 180. A bat brick and a swift brick may be appropriate for this building.

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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>

Lisa Malter

Ecologist