

Ecology response 12 5 25 for F/25/99188 Willow Mead, Wildern Lane, Hedge End, SO30 4RB

Construction of 2No. semi-detached two-bedroom retirement bungalows

Gary Osmond

12/5/25

I have reviewed the Great Crested Newt Survey report by Aluco (May 2025). Both of the nearby ponds tested negative for great crested newts so it is unlikely that they would be present on site. The report proposes a mitigation statement for protected and notable species which can be conditioned prior to site clearance and construction as explained in the March 2025 Ecological Appraisal report and in the ecology response of 7/5/25. Enhancement of the hedging along the northern boundary is also recommended.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist

7/5/25

The footprint for these bungalows is similar to the footprint for the for 4 flats previously refused in the previous application F/23/95982.

Ecology

This site is in an amber impact risk zone for great crested newts. Merlin Gardens pond to the south of the site is linked to Wildern Nature Park SINC and Local Nature Reserve by vegetation in the adjacent domestic gardens between Coltsfoot Close and Merlin Gardens. There are records of common reptiles, amphibians, and hedgehogs in Wildern Nature Park (110 m to the south of the site) so it is possible that they could be using this connected site also.

I have reviewed the Updated Ecological Appraisal by Aluco Ecology (March 2025). Within the red line boundary, the site consists of hardstanding used as parking, bramble scrub and a strip of ruderal ephemeral vegetation.

The area on the southern edge of the site is outside the red line boundary of this application, is at a lower level and contains vegetation indicative of wetter soil conditions during the winter.

There is a mostly native species garden hedge along the north-eastern boundary and off site within the adjacent garden to the north.

The site has potential habitat for nesting birds, commuting and foraging bats, hedgehogs, amphibians and common reptiles. There are records of stag beetles in the local area. A reptile survey in 2023 did not record evidence of reptiles. The two ponds within 500 m of the site are both assessed to be poor quality for great crested newts. Since there has been no significant change since the previous surveys, reptiles and amphibians can both be presumed absent, although precautionary working methods must be used.

If any protected species are found at any time, all work must stop, and Natural England must be called for advice.

A precautionary working method must be submitted and agreed by the local planning authority. It should include:

All building materials to be stored on hard standing or on pallets, as far as possible from hedgerows, scrub or potential habitat.

Any excavations or open pipes must be covered at night or be fitted with a small animal escape ramp, such as a slanted rough board.

No fires can be lit on site.

Waste must be stored in a skip and not be allowed to accumulate in piles which could be used by wildlife. Any chemicals and fuels must be stored carefully and away from potential wildlife habitat.

Any lighting if required must be directed away from vegetation.

Any animals found on site should not be handled but be allowed to move away to a place of safety on their own.

Any vegetation to be removed to facilitate the development 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.

Sensitive removal of vegetation and an initial topsoil strip of the site to ensure that no reptiles or amphibians would enter the site from adjacent areas. The recommended precautionary working method statement is written in full in Technical Appendix 4 on pages 38 and 39 of the Ecological Appraisal report (March 2025). This is appropriate and can be conditioned in a CEMP.

The CEMP will also need to contain specific pollution control measures to prevent any surface water runoff, chemicals, fuel or sediment from entering Merlin Gardens Pond or any of the adjacent properties.

Section 5.3.1 of the report states that the strip of land retained to the south west and south east of the development was proposed as a potential mitigation area in the ecological report by So Ecology (2023) commissioned for the previous application F/23/95982. This report states that that land is not under the control of the applicant, so an alternative reptile mitigation area will need to be identified and secured before determination in case any reptiles are found during the vegetation removal and topsoil strip.

Any external lighting of the site, and changes as a result of the scheme should consider potential for impacts on retained/created vegetation features and aim to keep dark corridors

on vegetation features as far as possible, having regard to best practice guidance on lighting and bats (ILP & BCT, 2023).

Two bat bricks are recommended to be built in on the southwestern elevation. Section 5.3.4 recommends swift bricks on the north-easterly face of the new dwelling. Since it is a single storey building and unlikely to attract swifts, a built-in sparrow terrace would be a better option in this case, but sparrows can also use swift bricks.

Biodiversity net gain

I raise a holding objection based on the following:

Analysis of the Statutory Metric for this application confirms that there is a decrease in area habitats of -75.15% and no net gain for hedgerow habitat. Ten percent net gain is required for both of these habitats if they are both within the red line boundary. There is a net loss of 0.12 biodiversity units (BU) of medium distinctiveness (Heathland and shrub-Bramble scrub) and a net change of 0.022 BU for low distinctiveness habitats reported.

Section 6.8 of the report states that a total of 0.15 habitat credits will be required to achieve 10% biodiversity net gain.

Hedgerow units: Analysis of the metric states that 10% net gain is also required for hedgerow units. This is also highlighted on the headline results tab of the metric.

Section 6.6.1 of the report states that the only baseline habitats present on site are bramble scrub, ruderal/ephemeral habitat and developed land sealed surface. However, in section 4.3.8 it states that *a mostly native species garden hedge is present along the northeastern boundary although the majority of the 20 m long hedge is off site to the north in the adjacent garden*. Section 4.3.9 states that *a further short length of non-native fir hedge is present at the eastern end of the northeastern boundary. The edge along the site is around 5m*. UK Hab guidelines for linear features state that 5m is the minimum mapping unit for linear features, so if a hedgerow is 5m or longer it does need to be included.

If there is hedgerow within the red line boundary, then it must be considered in the metric and 10% net gain in hedgerow habitat will be required. If the hedgerow is not within the red line boundary, then 10% net gain in hedgerow units would not be required.

Further information is required on how much of each hedgerow is on site, within the red line boundary.

If 10% biodiversity net gain is not possible on site, and off-site biodiversity units are proposed to be purchased, the applicant must show that they have located suitable units and that they are available for purchase. Statutory credits are only meant as a last resort, if suitable units cannot be found.

Purchase of biodiversity units must be agreed before determination, with proof of purchase required post-determination.

Surface water drainage

I have reviewed the drainage strategy by AquaCallidus (March 2025). Permeability testing results show that the permeability of the clay soil is very low and not suitable for soakaways.

The existing surface water drainage system for the larger adjacent development is proposed to be used, however there are concerns from the residents of those flats that the proposed drainage components will be located too close to their buildings. The site levels are such that water will need to be pumped to an attenuation tank in this proposal to drain into an existing surface water sewer at Tamarisk Road. Is there no closer surface water sewer on Wildern Lane? Is it possible to store and use rainwater in a large underground tank on this site for flushing toilets and watering the garden to reduce the amount of water discharged into the surface water sewer? A large rainwater tank could be located under the car parking area or in the rear gardens of the bungalows.

Water quality: The SuDS Simple Index Approach worksheet has been included in the drainage report. The pollution hazards for the parking areas have not been considered.

A catch pit and leaf guard has been listed as the treatment component for roof drainage. A catch pit upstream of the attenuation storage to intercept sediment is not sufficient. This does not provide filtration for total suspended solids, metals or hydrocarbons. A catch pit and leaf guard are not listed in table 26.3 on page 569 of the SuDS manual. They are also not listed in the SuDS component chart in the SuDS operation and maintenance sheet included in this drainage report. There is no evidence given that shows that a catch pit and leaf guard can remove the hazards given for residential roof drainage.

Local plan policy DM6 is more stringent than the Ciria SuDS guidance. DM 6 states that on sites of less than 0.5 ha, non-naturalised SuDS, eg. permeable paving will be considered where justified.

Tanked permeable paving would be an acceptable method of filtration for the parking areas and roof drainage on this site, with water discharged to the attenuation tank after filtration, and then discharged to the surface water sewer at the 2 l/sec rate.

The site slopes towards a public footpath. What measures have been considered to avoid flooding on the footpath during exceedance events? Exceedance flow arrows must be shown on the drainage diagram.

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