

Ecology response for F/25/99311 Meller House, Oakbank Road, Bishopstoke, Eastleigh, SO50 6HF

Conversion of existing site of 21 dwellings to 15 dwellings including new roof, and extensions/alterations to the building, and associated works including landscaping, private amenity, refuse, cycle store and parking (part retrospective).

Gregg Chapman

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This site is in a red impact risk zone for great crested newts and is located approximately 50 m from the River Itchen SAC and SSSI (Itchen Navigation). There are records of bats and water voles nearby and hedgehogs in the wider area. The photo of the roof in the planning statement shows a potential bat roost feature in the form of missing tiles.

The Design and Access Statement states that *The site qualifies for BNG Small Site Metrics, and the calculator is attached*, but this is not correct. The application form states that the size of the site is under 25 square metres and has claimed the de minimis exemption from 10% biodiversity net gain, but no information has been submitted to justify this. On the same application form the site area has been given as 1620 square metres, however in the DAS the site area is listed as 1532 square metres.

The biodiversity checklist Appendix D was submitted, and the DAS claims that it raised no issue, but has been filled out incorrectly. The site is less than 2 km from a SAC (it is 50 m from the River Itchen SAC) and less than 100 m from a river (50 m from the River Itchen) and has features likely to support bat roosts. The small sites metric, which is different from the biodiversity checklist, has not been submitted. Appropriate professional advice is required.

A preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) is required to determine the extent of the habitat features for bats and the potential for species other than bats to be using this site. The ecologist doing the survey will determine the potential for bats to be using the building and provide a habitat map of the site. From this map we will be able to determine whether any habitat will be lost to development and whether or not the de minimis exemption from 10% biodiversity net gain does or does not apply.

Removal of overgrown shrubbery on site (as noted in the DAS) would have removed potential habitat for nesting birds.

The DAS states that the proposed works *requires a slight reduction in footprint (reduced by 35m²) and 115m² of sloping lawn would be replaced with block paving and a retaining wall (to preserve the stone perimeter wall). In compensation, 55m of new hedgerow will be planted to all new private amenity boundaries*. Removal of 115m² of sloping lawn and replacing it with block paving is removing potential habitat and increasing the paved area of the site.

Hedgerow is linear habitat and is treated differently than area habitat in the biodiversity metric. Addition of hedgerow does not compensate for loss of other habitat in this case.

Replacing lawn with paving will also affect surface water drainage and must be included in a surface water drainage plan. The building is proposed to use the same soakaways and rainwater downpipes, but the statement that *The new parking will have a sustainable urban drainage system with a permeable asphalt* is not sufficient. The surface water drainage system of the site as a whole must be shown on the plan and explanation of the proposed surface water drainage components is required. DM 6 states that on sites within 100 m of the River Itchen SAC (this site is 50 m from the SAC), SuDS schemes should include at least three forms of naturalised filtration.

The surface water drainage demonstrate that it conforms to the requirements of EBC policy DM6 and also demonstrate that the pollution hazards will be mitigated by the specific forms of filtration that are proposed in this plan. The simple index approach as explained on pages 568 and 659 of the Ciria SuDS manual must be used to confirm this.

Whether or not the requirement for 10% biodiversity net gain applies, some biodiversity enhancements will still be required in accord with Local Plan policy DM 11 and NPPF (December 2024) paragraphs 187d and 192 b. Bat boxes and swift nest boxes may be appropriate for this building, but must be sited on the correct elevations, at the correct heights and the bat boxes must be in dark locations. The statement that *housing for bats, swifts, sparrows, tits and bee/insects (one of each to the west, south & east elevations)* is not accurate. The ecologist completing the survey will be able to advise on the most appropriate locations for these features.

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](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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