

Ecology response 18 8 25 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.

Gregg Chapman

18/8/25

Ecology

A bat roost appraisal is still required. This must include all aspects of the roof, roof slates and tiles, loft spaces and any cellar spaces.

The amended proposed site details have removed cherry laurel as requested. Four silver birch trees have been added to the plan between the car park, the site boundary wall and the retaining wall. There is a note that says shrubs to remain near the proposed birch trees, but shrubs are not shown in this area of the plan. The plan states that each tree would have an enabled 4m² root space, but It is not clear that these trees could survive in this location. The tree officer and the landscape officer should be consulted.

Surface water drainage

A surface water drainage strategy is required which can demonstrate that it protects the River Itchen SAC and SSSI from pollutants and sediments during the construction and operation phases and complies with DM 6. The site is approximately 50 m from the River Itchen and this information has not been provided. A linear slot drain, and a soakaway are proposed, but it is not clear whether a soakaway will function properly in this location.

Lighting

Outdoor bollards have been proposed, but no specifications have been given. The latest updated lighting guidance note (GN08/23) should be followed. This is available at [Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting | Institution of Lighting Professionals \(theilp.org.uk\)](https://www.theilp.org.uk/Guidance/Note%208%20Bats%20and%20Artificial%20Lighting)

Biodiversity net gain

The latest version of the small sites metric shows one photo of vegetated garden which is no longer present on site. This area appears to have been cleared of vegetation and a drainage trench has been dug. This represents unauthorised degradation of the site.

The metric validation check states that the Biodiversity Metric fails national validation requirements and there are three additional metric errors.

1. The metric must include dated site photographs for all baseline habitats listed in sheet "4. Supporting Information" of the Metric, because the walkover survey was not completed by a qualified ecologist. The date of all photographs must be given. Baseline habitat references 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 have no dated photos.

2. For *area habitats*, the total area of lost habitat was found to be 120.0 m², and the total area of created habitat was found to be 175.0 m². These areas should be equal.
3. For *area habitats*, the total baseline area (excluding trees, green walls and intertidal hard structures) is 819.14 m². This is less than the site area which is 1532.0 m². These areas should be equal.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist

11/8/25

I have reviewed the email correspondence and additional documents and am still not satisfied that the original ecological concerns have been addressed for this application.

Changes to the roof and the potential bat roost features seen in the photos have not been mentioned in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report by Arbtech (August 2025). The Arbtech report only addressed Biodiversity Net Gain, designated sites, amphibians and reptiles, birds and hedgehogs.

The section on bats only mentions trees as roosting habitat and not the building. There is either a failure of communication or the previous ecological advice has been ignored. The fourth paragraph of the ecology consultation response dated 23/6/25 states that **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.**

Although there was a habitat map that mentioned the building, there were no photos of the roof or the loft spaces at all. There was scaffolding in place around the building however. This is a glaring omission since we specifically required the PEA including the extent of habitat features for bats.

I do not accept this PEA as a valid assessment of the site because it does not consider the bat potential of the building, which was one of the original major ecology concerns for this application. As the presence of protected species is a material consideration, the application cannot be determined without information from a suitably qualified ecologist on whether or not the building has potential suitability for bats.

The section of the PEA report on great crested newts very clearly states that the rapid risk assessment result was AMBER: Offense likely and that the presence of great crested newts cannot be discounted on this site. The report recommends either a set of presence-likely absence eDNA surveys on nearby ponds or participation in the District Level Licensing scheme. The eDNA surveys of nearby ponds can only be done between mid-April and June. As the presence of

protected species is a material consideration, the application cannot be determined without this information.

Whilst there is a Survey/Habitat map provided in Appendix 1 of the PEA, there is no post development habitat map, no measurements of habitat areas for biodiversity net gain and a valid and correct metric has not been submitted as required, requested in the Ecology response of 23/6/25.

The Proposed Site Details plan proposes planting cherry laurel which is an invasive species and must not be planted in this area, close to the River Itchen corridor. There are "proposed wildlife houses" on the drawing, but no indications of where on the building these are proposed.

The Proposed Site Details plan shows Retaining wall works underway with no consideration to the potential for great crested newts to be affected by this work.

As previously mentioned on several occasions, continuing to work at this site without planning permission is increasing the risk of committing wildlife crime, towards bats and great crested newts.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist