

3rd November 2025

Planning Officer
Eastleigh Borough Council

Dear Ms Altman

F/25/100141. Land south east of Kings Copse Avenue, Hedge End. Residential development of 192 dwellings comprising houses and apartments, to include access, parking, landscaping and other associated works, along with off-site footway and bridleway improvements.

I am writing to you on behalf of Hampshire Swifts, a charity devoted to the conservation of Swifts in Hampshire and part of a national network of Swift groups throughout the UK.

As yet, no details of proposed ecological enhancements for birds have been provided with this application, though in their Ecological Impact Statement the contract ecologists ACD say (section 8.11) *"Bird boxes such as the Schwegler 1SP sparrow box/Vivara Pro WoodStone terrace are designed for colony nesting species, and each box contains two or three brood chambers respectively. These can be installed on/within the walls of completed buildings"*. This proposal does not meet current best practice guidance as regards type of bird boxes installed on buildings or accord with recent government guidelines in the National Planning Policy Framework (see below).

According to current best practice guidance as laid out in BS 42021:2022, bird boxes on buildings should be integral swift bricks and new developments should include at least 1 swift brick per home and from four to 10 on a small block of flats. See <https://knowledge.bsigroup.com/products/integral-nest-boxes-selection-and-installation-for-new-developments-specification-1?version=standard&tab=overview>.

Swift bricks are a universal integral nest brick for small bird species, including Red-Listed swifts and house sparrows (e.g. see NHBC Foundation: Biodiversity in New Housing Developments (April 2021) Section 8.1 Nest sites for birds, page 42: https://www.nhbcfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/S067-NF89-Biodiversity-in-new-housing-developments_FINAL.pdf). While a range of cavity nesting species can use swift bricks, swifts are not able to use house sparrow terraces.

Swift bricks are the only type of bird box specifically mentioned as valuable to wildlife in national planning guidance (NPPG Natural Environment 2019 paragraph 023). The National Model Design Code Part 2 Guidance Notes (2021) also recommends bird bricks (Integrating Habitats section on page 25 and Creating Habitats section on page 26).

The latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for England (<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf>) states in Paragraph 187 (d) on page 54 "Planning policies and decisions



should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:...incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs; The use of swift bricks is particularly important in this context because swifts rely on urban cavities for nesting, and the national loss of suitable nesting sites through building renovation has been part of the reason for the species' decline. Developments should include integrated nest boxes (commonly known as swift bricks) where possible, with the general aim across a development of a minimum of one nest box per unit. Nest boxes can provide important habitat for other species as well as swifts, such as starlings and sparrows. Extensive guidance is available on wildlife friendly features, including the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code which illustrate how well-designed places can support rich and varied biodiversity by facilitating habitats and routes for wildlife. More specific support for the selection and installation of swift bricks can be found in the British Industry Standard BS 42021:2022 the Future Homes Hub Homes for Nature Guidance, and the RSPB's Guide to Nestboxes."

We request that if this application is approved, there should be at least 1 swift brick per home on average across the development, and that this is secured by condition. Bird boxes/bricks and other species features are excluded from the DEFRA Biodiversity Net Gain metric, so require their own clear conditions.

According to Eastleigh Borough Council's Biodiversity Strategy 2024-34, swifts are one of its key species for nature recovery and one aim is to "Use the planning system to maximise species restoration opportunities (e.g inclusion of built-in habitat such as swift bricks". See <https://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/media/15850/1267010-biodiversity-strategy-2024-2034-update-aug-2025.pdf>

Yours sincerely

Prof Catharine Gale
Trustee