

Ecology response for F/26/100809 The Orchard, 5 Westgate Mews, Kenilworth Gardens, Southampton, SO30 3RE

Construction of 8No. detached dwellings with associated amenity space, parking and landscaping

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3/2/26

Summary: A discrepancy in the site area has generated potential errors in the biodiversity metric and surface water drainage requirements. Please re-consult ecology once the exact site area has been agreed and all documents have been edited to reflect the correct site area.

Ecology: more information required

This site is in an amber impact risk zone for great crested newts. There are records of bats, notable invertebrates, adders, sand lizards, slow worms, common lizards, and grass snakes nearby. There are also records of badgers and hedgehogs in the wider area. The vegetation around the site has potential to be used by nesting birds. The site is adjacent to Telegraph Woods and functionally connected to Telegraph Woods SINCE and the Utilita Bowl site.

Four trees and two storage containers are proposed to be removed. There were several fruit trees on site as part of the domestic garden. There is no evidence of this being a traditional orchard in recent history.

I have reviewed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report and the Reptile Mitigation Report both by Ecosupport (December 2025). The trees and storage containers proposed to be removed were assessed to have negative bat roost potential. The garden was assessed to have moderate potential for commuting and foraging badgers, low potential for foraging and commuting bats, low potential for common reptiles with a low population of common reptiles (moderate if un-managed), negligible potential for great crested newts, low potential for nesting and breeding birds and low potential for dormice.

The mitigation and enhancement recommendations in section 6 of the PEA Report and in section 6 of the Reptile Mitigation Report are appropriate and must be implemented. This includes:

Bats:

Any lighting must comply with the guidelines in Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at night by the ILP and BCT.

An updated preliminary bat roost appraisal must be done once the trees to be removed have been finalised, and the recommendations of the ecologist must be followed with regards to further investigations.

Nesting birds:

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). If this is not possible then vegetation can be cleared 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.

The precautionary working methods for dormice listed in section 6.9 must also be followed.

A precautionary working method must be used to prevent harm to wildlife such as badgers and hedgehogs that could be using this site. 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 must be covered at night or be fitted with a small animal escape ramp
- 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 animals found on site should not be handled but be allowed to move away to a place of safety on their own.

Reptiles

- Passive dispersal towards a designated reptile receptor area and a destructive search for reptiles targeted in the area where the slow worm was found will be required.
- A reptile fence must be installed to prevent reptiles from re-entering the site during construction.
- Vegetation must be maintained at a low level on site to prevent suitable habitat from re-growing before the start of building works.
- A permanent fence will be used to protect the reptile receptor area after construction has been completed.

Biodiversity enhancements: The locations of biodiversity enhancements must be submitted on a plan together with the exterior lighting design and approved by the LPA to ensure that they are in the correct positions and elevations. The enhancements are shown on the Landscape Plan but the lighting details are not included.

Swift bricks, bat bricks and insect bricks have been recommended for each building, however only the Green and Blue Bird Block Nest box is shown on the Landscape Plan. This is not specifically a swift nest box. Other birds can use swift nest boxes when swifts are not in residence, but swifts cannot use this box.

Bird boxes must not be located on the southern elevations. They need to be cool so that nestlings do not become overheated.

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>)

Bat boxes/bricks should be exposed to the sun for at least part of the day. Two of the proposed bat brick locations (in the line of 3 houses) would be shaded by the houses to the south.

The Bat Conservation Trust recommends installing a bat brick/box at least 4m 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>)

- Each garden must have **at least 2** hedgehog gaps (13 x 13 minimum) in the baseboards of any closed board fences to allow free passage of small animals through the gardens. Concrete gravel boards are mentioned in the Drainage Technical Note (Levels and Retaining Strategy page 9). Gravel boards with hedgehog gaps must be specified. There are several companies that sell concrete gravel boards with pre-formed holes. Bespoke hedgehog access should be designed into the brick retaining walls which separate some of the properties so that hedgehogs are able to access all of the gardens.
- Two hedgehog homes are recommended in the retained buffer on the southern boundary, with appropriate ongoing maintenance to be provided.

Planting Plan:

Native hedgerow species are listed in a text box on the planting plan but are shown as a line of trees rather than a hedgerow. It is not clear whether these areas will be managed as trees or hedgerow. The hedges shown on the plan are all privet *Ligustrum vulgare*.

Landscape Maintenance:

The plan specifies mowing the wildflower meadow at 40-60 cm in July August and November in the first year and at 70 mm in April, July and October in years 2-5 and presumably ongoing. Additional information needs to be provided to explain about how to encourage spring and autumn flowers. The information provided by the RHS on this webpage Wildflower Meadow Maintenance | RHS Advice under (3) When to cut your meadow and (5) Looking after annual wildflower areas should be included in the 5 year plan.

The seeds need to form and drop to re-grow the annual plants, otherwise they will need to be re-seeded annually, which is not specified in the plan.

Leaving the cuttings on the ground for a few days allows the seeds to drop and then removing the cut material will keep soil fertility low. This will encourage the growth of wildflowers rather than nutrient indicators such as nettles and thistles.

Biodiversity Net Gain: more information required

The site area is given as 0.5 ha in the application form and 0.45 ha in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The area measurements for the site must be consistent. It is not clear where this discrepancy originates, but the site area used to calculate the metric must conform to the site area as stated on the application form.

The metric error report generated by Mycelia software states that *The net gain for area habitats is -32.58%. It must be at least 10.0%. There is a net gain of 15.27% in hedgerow habitats but hedgerow habitats and area habitats are not interchangeable. There is a shortfall of 0.89 area biodiversity units.*

The BNG Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan by Ecosupport (December 2025) states that *BNG units need to be purchased from an off-site provider.*

At least 0.31 units of this must be individual trees and 0.01 units of scrub in order to satisfy the trading rules as above.

The management and monitoring prescriptions are satisfactory but this report will also need to be revised when the metric is re-done to reflect the adjusted site area.

Surface Water Drainage: more information required

I have reviewed the Levels and Drainage Technical Note and the proposed indicative Drainage Strategy both by MJA Consulting (December 2025).

Infiltration testing was not successful, so soakaways cannot be used on site.

The site area is given as 0.5 ha on the application form.

The Drainage Technical Note states that *The proposed development and surface water drainage strategy ...incorporates a suitable level of SuDS for the size of development (<0.5Ha).*

The site area cannot be both 0.5 ha and <0.5 ha.

EBC local plan policy DM6 states b. *On other sites of between 0.5 hectares and 1 hectare, SuDS schemes should include at least two forms of naturalised filtration.*

Permeable paving is acceptable as one form of filtration for the surface water drainage from the roofs, drives and the flatter sections of the main access road but an additional form of filtration is required, and **all** of the surface water on site must be treated by **two** forms of naturalised filtration before discharge off site (outside the red line boundary) to accord with DM6.

An attenuation tank is not considered a naturalised form of filtration. The applicant is encouraged to incorporate features such as rain gardens which can provide an additional level of filtration. Rainwater should be harvested for use in gardens, for flushing toilets and

other grey water uses to minimise the volume of water to be discharged off site. Storage tanks for each house could be located under the parking areas.

Exceedance flow arrows must also be shown on the plan. The existing properties must not be at risk from flooding by the exceedance flows from this site.

The foul drainage pipes should not be laid over the surface water drainage pipes in case of leakage.

A flow rate of 3.8 l/s has been proposed but it is not clear how this has been calculated.

National standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) - GOV.UK states

3.18 The peak allowable discharge rate from the development to surface waters or sewers for the 50% AEP event shall be limited to the equivalent 50% AEP greenfield runoff rate, or 3 l/s/ha, whichever is the greater. Please provide more information on the appropriate greenfield runoff rate for this site and how it has been calculated.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist