

Dear Ms J Burton,

APP/21/00033 - St Thomas A Becketts Church, Church Lane, Havant, PO9 2TU - Installation of a new septic tank to serve the church; drainage to the tank; a new path; and a timber shed.

Thank you for your consultation. The works to remove a section of overgrown hedgerow for the installation of a timber shed, has the potential to impact notable species: nesting birds, reptiles and hedgehog. The removed hedgerow is to be replaced by native species hedgerow planting (as shown in the proposed site plan). The installation of a new septic tank and new path will impact a small area of mown grassland, which will have limited ecological impact.

This development provides opportunities to enhance biodiversity. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages measures that would result in biodiversity gains; the 'environmental' dimension of sustainable development – the central tenet of the NPPF – is afforded equal emphasis to the 'economic' and 'social' dimensions. Additionally, Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 sets out that local authorities: 'must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. Section 40(3) clarifies that 'conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'. Given the nature of the development, I would suggest that in this case, the most appropriate enhancement would be for the applicant to install a hedgehog house at the base of the created hedgerow, leaving a band of grassland in-front of the hedgerow uncut over the summer months and leaving log piles at the base of hedgerows.

I would agree that the replacement planting is sufficient to mitigate for the loss of habitat, and I would recommend that the following advisory notes are added to the planning permission.

- To avoid any potential impacts to reptiles: It is recommended that any reptile habitat such as stored materials, debris, log piles or tree roots should be carefully cleared by hand during warmer months as if hibernating reptiles are disturbed they will die. Particular care should be taken when clearing the ground prior to any work and when leaving the excavated area/trenches overnight, sloping boards or steps should be provided to allow animals such as hedgehogs to escape. Trenches should be checked before works start each day for any wildlife that could be trapped. Any reptiles revealed should be moved to adjacent retained rougher / boundary habitat or allowed to move off on their own accord.
- Birds nests, when occupied or being built, receive legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is highly advisable to undertake clearance of potential bird nesting habitat (such as hedges, scrub, trees, suitable outbuildings etc.) outside the bird nesting season, which is generally seen as extending from March to the end of August, although may extend longer depending on local conditions. If there is absolutely no alternative to doing the work in during this period then a thorough, careful and quiet examination of the affected area must be carried out before clearance starts. If occupied nests are present then work must stop in that area, a suitable (approximately 5m) stand-off maintained, and clearance can only recommence once the nest becomes unoccupied of its own accord.
- The application should include measures to ecologically enhance the site. I would recommend the installation of a hedgehog house along the base of the section of hedgerow to be created and leaving areas of grassland uncut over the summer months such as 1.5m in-front of the hedges and places log piles at the base of hedgerows.

Reason; *In accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, NPPF, NERC Act and Policy CS 11 of the Havant Borough Core Strategy March 2011.*

Please do contact me if you require further information.

Kind Regards

Rebecca Harvey

Ecologist

Ecology Team

Economy, Transport and Environment Department
Hampshire County Council
Economy, Transport and Environment Department
Elizabeth II Court West
The Castle

Winchester, SO23 8UJ

Tel: 07784261826

Fax: 01962 832117

E-Mail: rebecca.harvey@hants.gov.uk

www.hants.gov.uk/biodiversity

Please note my work days are Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

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