

9<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Planning Officer  
Havant Borough Council

Dear Mr Christie

**APP/22/00439 | Redevelopment of southern section of site to provide 102 dwellings comprising 56 No. 2, 3 & 4 bed houses and 46 No. 1 & 2 bed flats with associated parking, landscaping, waste and cycle storage. New roundabout access from College Road. | The South Downs College, College Road, Purbrook, Waterlooville, PO7 8AA**

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.

*The purpose of this letter is to request that planning consent for the above-mentioned application, if granted, includes a requirement for multiple integral Swift bricks in the new dwellings, installed in accordance with best practice.*

In their Ecological Appraisal Pro Vision say “*The development provides the opportunity to install swift bricks at the eaves on the northern elevation of the new buildings. Groups of a minimum of four swift boxes will be installed under the eaves in shaded areas out of direct sunlight and away from windows. These bricks also provide nesting opportunities for sparrows as well swifts.*” This is welcome because current best practice guidance dictates that nest boxes should be integral swift brick types, as these are permanent, require no maintenance, have better temperature regulation with future climate change in mind, and are aesthetically integrated with the design of the development. However, no information is provided by Pro Vision on the number of integral swift bricks that will be provided. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and British Standard BS 42021:2022 Integral nest boxes recommend an average of 1 integral nest brick per dwelling. We request that integral Swift bricks are included in the proposed development in the same ratio. Swift bricks are a universal nest brick as they are readily used not just by Swifts but also by House Sparrows, Starlings (provided the entrance is large enough), Great Tits, Blue Tits and other species. Swift bricks should be installed in accordance with British Standard BS 42021:2022 Integral nest boxes.

The integration of nest sites for birds is in keeping with the following national policy and guidance:

- Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, states: “**Every public authority 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.**”



## Hampshire Swifts

- Section 174(b) of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019), states: “*“To promote and **enhance biodiversity** and geodiversity, plans should: ...identify and **pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity**...”*. This is explained further by the accompanying guidance notes (NPPF, Natural Environment Guidance, paragraph 023): “...relatively small features can often achieve important benefits for wildlife, such as **incorporating ‘swift bricks’** and bat boxes in developments...”
- Furthermore, the government’s support for such measures was stated explicitly in the accompanying government press release: “...expectations on how developers can protect specific species, including using **hollow swift bricks – which are installed into the walls of new build homes, allowing the birds to nest safely.** <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/brookshire-orders-house-builders-to-protect-wildlife>.”
- **NHBC Foundation: Biodiversity in new housing developments: creating wildlife-friendly communities (April 2021)** states: “Provision of integrated nest sites for swifts is through hollow chambers fitted into the fabric of a building while in construction. Although targeting swifts they will also be used by house sparrows, tits and starlings so are considered a ‘universal brick’” page 42).
- CIEEM (In Practice, June 2019) state: “resulting in an equal number overall of nest sites and residential units” (How Many Nest Bricks? page 40) <https://cieem.net/resource/the-swift-a-bird-you-need-to-help/>

**Swift, House Sparrow and Starling are all now red-listed because they are at high risk of extinction.** All 3 species are undergoing major declines caused mainly by the loss of nesting sites on existing houses due to re-roofing and replacement of soffits and fascias and the lack of nest sites in new buildings. Swifts, for example, have experienced a catastrophic decline of nearly 60% in the last 20 years and are continuing to decline at around 5% per annum. **All these species readily use Swift bricks when these are integrated into new developments.**

Integration of Swift bricks is very easy to include into routine building practices and results in a permanent, discrete, maintenance-free biodiversity enhancer which will provide much-needed breeding spaces for declining species of birds. Further information on Swift bricks, including advice on where they should be installed and how many to use can be obtained from Hampshire Swifts, [info@hampshireswifts.co.uk](mailto:info@hampshireswifts.co.uk).

Yours sincerely  
Catharine Gale  
Trustee of Hampshire Swifts