

APP/16/00464 | Construction of 51 dwellings comprising 20 houses and 31 flats with associated landscaping, car parking, bin and cycle storage. | Land at the rear of 2-56, Blendworth Crescent, Havant

A nearby residential dwelling (situated only c.15m from the boundary of the application site) contains perhaps the largest known roost of serotine bats in the county (I am not aware of a larger one). Ongoing survey works by the Hampshire Bat Group have recorded a minimum of 28 bats roosting at this dwelling (although the true number may be greater due to issues with viewing all areas). As such, the development of the nearest significant area of greenspace to this roost may have impacts on the status of the roost. It is therefore imperative that adequate survey effort has been deployed to enable a robust assessment of impacts and adequate mitigation measures to be designed and implemented.

A series of two walked transects have been carried out during summer 2015. The timing is good as this would coincide with the peak breeding season for serotine bats. Very few serotine bats were observed/heard and so, based on these two surveys, the bulk of the application site does not seem to be used by high numbers of bats during July and August. It may well be that the site provides a useful area for juvenile bats later in the year (August onwards) or even for adult bats earlier on. There is essentially no previous information on the use of the site by serotine bats – the HBG studies concentrated on counting bats from the roost rather than investigating foraging/commuting routes. The bats observed in 2015 were recorded using the vegetated boundaries to the north and west.

Given the high importance of this roost (it is of County importance at least) I consider that it is essential to take a precautionary approach in relation to impacts. It is not unreasonable to infer that this site would be used by some or all of the bats from the roost, even if for a limited time period. Therefore, we should be looking to find an approach that minimises impacts such that the site remains suitable for use by bats in the future.

The submitted Bat Mitigation Strategy (EcoSupport, February 2016) does include some useful recommendations such as 'bat corridors' along the western boundary, the use of suitable native plantings to attract insects and the use of sympathetic lighting. Some of these measures are reflected on the submitted Landscape Plan, although I note that the landscape specification is not included within the online documents: it would be useful to view this document and to understand how and by whom any bat corridors and other native plantings will be managed. Perhaps the applicant can supply this information.

There is no lighting strategy submitted with the application. As lighting is perhaps the most significant of the potential impacts it will be essential that a fully-detailed strategy is secured by condition. The lighting strategy should include an assessment of predicted light spillage in three dimensions (i.e. showing heights) so that spillage onto adjacent trees can be judged. It should include full details of the lamp and luminaire types to be installed and how these have been chosen to avoid impacts.

Prior to the commencement of any development activities, a fully-detailed site lighting strategy for bats shall be submitted for approval to the Local Planning Authority. This strategy shall be informed by the recommendations detailed within the Bat Mitigation Strategy (EcoSupport, February 2016) unless otherwise agreed in

writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall then proceed in strict accordance with any agreed lighting strategy. Reason: to provide ecological protection and enhancement in accordance with the Conservation Regulations 2010, Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, NPPF, NERC Act 2006 and Policy CS 11 of the Havant Borough Core Strategy March 2011.

The submitted Bat Mitigation Strategy also includes details of bat enhancement measures such as bat roosting units on new dwellings. This is a useful additional measure and I would recommend that these are also secured by condition. Similarly, there are other ecological mitigation measures proposed for common reptiles and nesting birds and these can also be secured by condition.

Development shall proceed in accordance with the ecological mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures detailed within the Ecological Survey (EcoSupport, August 2015) and the Bat Mitigation Strategy (EcoSupport, February 2016) unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any such measures shall be implemented in accordance with the agreed details and secured in perpetuity, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Reason: to provide ecological protection and enhancement in accordance with the Conservation Regulations 2010, Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, NPPF, NERC Act 2006 and Policy CS 11 of the Havant Borough Core Strategy March 2011.

Overall, the application site is in a sensitive location due to the presence of a large breeding roost of a bat species. There must be robust measures in place to ensure that impacts are avoided during and after development.

I presume that HBG will continue to monitor this roost and therefore I would expect any noted changes (e.g. an obvious drop in bat numbers) to initiate discussions with the site owner/s as to possible remedial measures e.g. extend areas of darkened land.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Tristan

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