



ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

TO: *Amanda Cue*

FROM: *Philippa Bromley*

DATE: *13 August 2026*

SUBJECT: *20250942: Bocoda Hill Farm House, Meopham*

The following is provided by Kent County Council's Ecological Advice Service (KCC EAS) for Local Planning Authorities. It is independent, professional advice and is not a comment/position on the application from the county council. It is intended to advise the relevant planning officer(s) on the potential ecological impacts of the planning application and if sufficient/appropriate ecological information has been provided.

Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant or other interested parties may have must be directed in every instance to the planning officer, who will seek input from the EAS where appropriate and necessary.

SUMMARY: SUFFICIENT INFORMATION

We have reviewed the information submitted by the applicant and advise that sufficient ecological and biodiversity net gain information has been provided for determination. Recommended condition wording is provided below.

This planning application is for the conversion of the existing stables block to a dwelling with a residential garden. The existing hay store extensions on the south side of the stable block will be removed, and stud wall relocation and roof works will also be undertaken.

PROTECTED SPECIES

In our previous advice note (December 2025), we noted that the timber stable block, existing hedgerows, mature trees and grassland areas present on and around the site indicated ecological value and the potential for protected and priority species to be present on-site. We therefore advised that an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) be undertaken.

Bats

The applicant has since submitted a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and a follow-up bat survey. The PEA assessed the stable block and hay store as having low suitability for roosting bats and recommended a single emergence survey. No evidence of roosting

bats was recorded, and the report concludes that no further bat surveys or roost mitigation is required. We are satisfied that sufficient information has been provided regarding roosting bats and advise that the recommended precautionary mitigation measures are secured via condition if planning permission is granted, please see Appendix A.

Artificial Lighting

Lighting in the vicinity of a bat roost or along commuting/foraging routes could result in disturbance resulting in roost abandonment, which is an offence under Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Artificial lighting has been shown to be particularly harmful to bats along river corridors, near woodland edges and near hedgerows. Local authorities have a duty to ensure impacts upon legally protected species are avoided and impacts upon bats are a material consideration in any planning permission under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024.

Therefore, to mitigate against potential adverse effects on biodiversity, the Bat Conservation Trust/Institute of Lighting Professionals '*Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night*' should be consulted in the lighting design of the development.

We advise that the incorporation of sensitive lighting design for biodiversity is submitted to the local planning authority and secured via an attached condition with any planning permission. Please see Appendix A for suggested condition wording.

Other Species

We are satisfied that impacts on other species likely to be present can be addressed via a precautionary mitigation approach. We suggest that a Precautionary Works Method Statement is secured via condition, if planning permission is granted. Please see Appendix A for suggested condition wording.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG)

Under the Environment Act 2021 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), all planning applications¹ for development (unless exempt^{2,3}) must deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), shown via use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric prior to commencement of any development.

The applicant considers the proposals to be exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain under the self-build exemption. For this exemption to apply, the proposals must:

- consist of no more than 9 dwellings;
- on a site that has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares; and
- consist exclusively of dwellings that are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015

¹ All planning applications for major development (unless exempt) submitted on or after 12th February 2024 in England, and all minor applications (unless exempt), submitted on or after the 2nd April 2024.

² Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

³ The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 (legislation.gov.uk)

It is not within our remit to verify that the proposed dwelling(s) meet the definition of self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in the 2015 Act. The LPA should therefore ensure that the proposals meet the definition and that a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain does not apply.

Government guidance on self-build and custom housebuilding indicates that *“[in] considering whether a home is self-build or custom build home, relevant authorities must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have primary input into its final design and layout ... Off-plan housing, homes purchased at the plan stage prior to construction and without input into the design and layout from the buyer, are not considered to meet the definition of self-build and custom housing”*.

A recent appeal decision⁴ indicates that a *“suitably robust mechanism such as a planning obligation/legal agreement or other means”* is necessary to properly secure a development as self-build and to prevent it reverting to an open market dwelling where a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain would otherwise apply.

ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS

The proposed development provides opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife, such as native species planting and the installation of integrated bat/bird nest boxes. This is in accordance with Paragraph 193 of the NPPF that *“opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity”*. We note that the PEA has provided enhancement recommendations.

We advise that measures to enhance biodiversity are secured as a condition of planning permission, if granted. Please see Appendix A for suggested condition wording.

Philippa Bromley
Biodiversity Officer

This response was submitted following consideration of the following documents:

- Existing Site Plan (Jeremy Isherwood, June 2025)
- Proposed Site Plan (Jeremy Isherwood, June 2025)
- Proposed Stables Block Conversion to Dwelling Plan (Jeremy Isherwood, June 2025)
- Planning Statement (Jeremy Isherwood, August 2025)
- OS Plan (Jeremy Isherwood, June 2025)

⁴ APP/P4415/W/24/3356246 - 38 Goose Lane, Wickersley, Rotherham, S66 1JS.

Appendix 1: Suggested Condition Wordings

LIGHTING PLAN

Suggested Condition Wording:

Prior to occupation, a lighting design plan for biodiversity shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The plan shall show the type and locations of external lighting, as well as the expected light spill in lux levels, to demonstrate that areas to be lit shall not adversely impact biodiversity. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the approved plan and shall be maintained thereafter.

Reason: To limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light in accordance with the NPPF 2024, paragraph 198(c). With consideration for bats and other nocturnal wildlife in accordance with the NPPF 2024, paragraph 187(d).

PRECAUTIONARY WORKS METHOD STATEMENT

Suggested Condition Wording:

From commencement of works (including site/vegetation clearance), and for the duration of construction, all mitigation for individual trees and hedgerows and protected species shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 9 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, EC532-R01-PEA, Adonis Blue Environmental Consultants, June 2026.

BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

Suggested Condition Wording:

Prior to any works above slab level, a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Plan shall include full details of the biodiversity enhancements to be implemented on-site. The Plan shall be based on the details contained in section 10 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: EC532-R01-PEA (Adonis Blue Environmental Consultants, June 2026) and shall include:

- A detailed, scaled soft landscaping plan, planting schedule and relevant habitat management measures;*
- Provision of 2 suitably placed bat and 2 bird boxes, with the exact locations, make and model and height from ground level shown on scaled plans suitable for construction. In the case of building mounted boxes, scaled elevation plans shall be provided. Boxes for breeding birds shall be targeted at S41 priority species and/or red/amber listed species as listed within the latest British Trust for Ornithology Birds of Conservation Concern report. Boxes shall be building integrated and/or constructed of woodcrete to ensure durability. The numbers and types of bat and bird boxes shall be chosen with reference to site ecological survey data, the published Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy and BS 42021:2022 'British Standard for integral nest boxes';*

The Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and all features shall be retained in that manner thereafter.

Reason: To protect and enhance biodiversity in accordance with paragraphs 187 and 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024), and in order for the Council to comply with Part 3 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

EVIDENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION - BEP

Suggested Condition Wording:

Within six months of first use of the development hereby approved, a completion report produced by a suitably qualified ecologist and including photographic evidence of the implementation of the approved biodiversity enhancement measures as required by condition X (the BEP condition) shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval. The approved measures shall be thereafter retained.

Reason: To protect and enhance biodiversity in accordance with paragraphs 187 and 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024), and in order for the Council to comply with Part 3 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.