



ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

TO: Amanda Cue
FROM: Helen Forster
DATE: 24 December 2024
SUBJECT: 20241003 Hopehill Campsite, 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.

We have reviewed the submitted ecological information and we advise that sufficient information has been provided to determine the planning application.

Protected/Notable Species

The ecological information has detailed that a peak count of 3 common pipistrelles have been recorded roosting within the building and at least 2 roosting locations have been identified within the building. In addition the report confirmed that there was evidence of brown long eared bats roosting within the loft space.

The report has detailed the following:

- Common pipistrelle day roost x 2 individual bats from the gap in the eaves at the northern elevation. These bats could be roosting in the gap itself or within the loft void.
- Common pipistrelle day roost x 1 individual bat from the northwest corner, between the ridge and the roofing material.
- Brown long-eared day roost (multiple individuals judging from the number of droppings) at the ridge beam at the north-west end of the barn

The bat surveys were carried out at the end of the survey season and therefore it is possible that the surveys were too late to record a brown long eared maternity roost. However we are satisfied from reviewing the submitted site plans that the loft space will be retained and therefore brown long eared bats can continue to roost.

It is possible that the site supports a maternity roost and therefore additional bat surveys may be required to implement to inform the EPS licence. However as the loft will be retained we are satisfied that as it has been demonstrated that the loft will be retained the surveys are not required to inform the planning decision.

A European protected species mitigation (EPSM) licence will be required to carry out the proposed development due to the impacts upon roosting bats. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2018 requires Gravesham DC the competent authority, to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive in the exercise of their functions. As such, Gravesham BC must consider whether it is likely that an EPSM Licence from Natural England will be granted, and in so doing must address the three tests when deciding whether to grant planning permission for the proposed development. The three tests are that:

1. Regulation 55(2)(e) states: a licence can be granted for the purposes of *“preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment”*.
2. Regulation 55(9)(a) states: the appropriate authority shall not grant a licence unless they are satisfied *“that there is no satisfactory alternative”*.
3. Regulation 55(9)(b) states: the appropriate authority shall not grant a licence unless they are satisfied *“that the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.”*

Gravesham BC need to be satisfied that the application adheres to the first two tests. Details of mitigation strategy has been provided to try and address test 3 and provide the necessary mitigation measures to maintain bats at a *“favourable conservation status”*. In summary, this includes the supervised removal of suitable roosting features, the avoidance of impacts from lighting and noise.

While we are satisfied with the principle and that GBC can be satisfied that the favourable conservation status will be maintained we advise that insufficient information has been provided to inform the detailed mitigation strategy. We advise that the final mitigation strategy includes the following:

- Incorporation of roost features within the building
- Avoidance of the maternity season to carry out the works.
- Measures to ensure that no light will enter in to the loft from the rooflights with sun pipes

We advise that if planning permission is granted we recommend the following condition:

Prior to works commencing within the site an updated bat mitigation strategy must be submitted to the LPA for written approval. The plan must include the following:

- *Updated bat emergence surveys (if required)*

- *Overview of mitigation required*
- *Detailed methodology to implement the mitigation.*
- *Plans demonstrating that the bat mitigation will be incorporated in to the building.*
- *Details of any monitoring required.*

The plan must be implemented as approved.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning applications for major development (unless exempt^{1,2}) submitted on or after 12th February 2024 in England, will have to deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain. It is a requirement for minor applications, unless exempt, submitted on or after the 2nd April 2024.

Having reviewed submitted information, we consider this application to fall under mandatory biodiversity net gain so that mandatory biodiversity net gain of 10% will apply.

Any application which is required to achieve a 10% BNG must submit the following information as a minimum³:

- confirmation that the applicant believes that planning permission, if granted, the development would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition;
- the pre-development biodiversity value(s), [either on the date of application or earlier proposed date \(as appropriate\)](#);
- where the applicant proposes to use an earlier date, this proposed earlier date and the reasons for proposing that date;
- [the completed metric calculation tool](#) showing the calculations of the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on the date of application (or proposed earlier date) including the publication date of the biodiversity metric used to calculate that value;
- a statement whether activities have been carried out prior to the date of application (or earlier proposed date), that result in loss of onsite biodiversity value ('[degradation](#)'), and where they have:
 - a statement to the effect that these activities have been carried out;
 - the date immediately before these activities were carried out;
 - the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on this date;
 - the completed metric calculation tool showing the calculations, and
 - any available supporting evidence of this;
- a description of any [irreplaceable habitat](#) (as set out in [column 1 of the Schedule to the Biodiversity Gain Requirements \(Irreplaceable Habitat\) Regulations 2024](#)) on the land to which the application relates, that exists on the date of application, (or an earlier date); and

¹ [Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain#para11)

² [The Biodiversity Gain Requirements \(Exemptions\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain#para11)

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain#para11>

- plan(s), drawn to an identified scale and showing the direction of North, showing onsite habitat existing on the date of application (or earlier proposed date), including any irreplaceable habitat (if applicable).

We advise that sufficient information has been provided with regard to mandated BNG. The metric has detailed that currently the proposal will result in a loss of 100% BNG for habitats and the information details that less than 1unit will be required to be purchased from an offsite provider to achieve BNG.

It is our view that habitat enhancements could be carried out within the wider blueline boundary to achieve a BNG of habitats of over 10%. We are satisfied that details can be provided within the biodiversity Gain plan. However we highlight that any habitat enhancements implemented within the blueline boundary must be secured via a legal agreement.

If planning permission is granted, local planning authorities are encouraged to use suggested paragraphs for Biodiversity Gain Information on the written decision notice which are available to download here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/663251d969098ded31fca800/BNG_Decision_Notice_Text.odt. The applicant should submit a biodiversity gain plan form⁴ along with supporting information once planning permission has been granted to demonstrate in more detail how the proposed biodiversity net gain will be delivered.

If you have any queries regarding our comments, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Helen Forster MCIEEM
Biodiversity Officer

This response was submitted following consideration of the following documents:

- Bat emergence Survey; Arbtech; August 2024
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal; Arbtech; May 2024
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment; Arbtech; June 2024
- PROPOSED LAYOUT PLAN & ROOF PLAN; Concept World; December 2023

⁴ [Biodiversity gain plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/Biodiversity_gain_plan_-_GOV.UK.pdf)