

14 April 2023

Our ref: 213316/ARB

Mr M Tredwell
The Ridge (Oatlands) LLP
Unit 17 Duchess Court
Weybridge
Surrey
KT13 9HN

Dear Mr Tredwell

16 - 18 OATLANDS DRIVE, WEYBRIDGE (PLANNING REF: 2022/3796)

Thank you for forwarding the comments received by Elmbridge Borough Council from Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT), dated 10 March 2023 in relation to the above site, which we have reviewed and can provide the following response. Please note a copy of the DEFRA Metric (excel spreadsheet) prepared will need to be forwarded to the Council so that they can run an audit on the assessment completed.

Badgers

Although no evidence of badgers was recorded on the site, standard control measures can be accommodated and detailed within the CEMP to safeguard mammals during the works and we included text on boundary treatment within the Ecology Report (paragraph 4.18) to allow movement throughout the site. A CEMP can be secured by appropriately worded condition (as suggested by SWT in their response.)

Bats

In summary, AA Environmental Limited (AAe) completed an initial assessment of the buildings in August 2021 (with a follow-up visual inspection in October 2022). These surveys were completed by an experienced and licensed ecologist and included a thorough internal and external inspection of the buildings. No evidence of bats or key roosting features were recorded on No. 18 and no further assessment was considered necessary. The internal attic/roof void within No.16 was accessed and checked for any evidence of bats with none recorded during the surveys. Externally the buildings were thoroughly checked searching for signs of bats and for key roosting features. The masonry constructed bungalow was in good condition and provided very limited roosting opportunities for bats but there was an area of cheek tile hanging present at the rear of the property. A thorough visual check of these areas was completed by getting up close using ladders. Despite a thorough visual check of these areas, only a few pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus sp.*) type droppings were found attached to the tile hanging.

Please note that it is AAe's policy that only an experienced and fully licensed ecologist will undertake initial site assessments, this is to ensure accuracy of the survey findings but also to determine the appropriate number of surveyors required in the event that further bat activity surveys are required. In addition, all bat activity surveys are led by a licensed ecologist and any assistants are also licensed or suitably experienced. The company is an established Ecological and Environmental Consultancy that has been practising since 2002¹.

The Bat Conservation Trust² Guidelines states that it is down to the professional judgement of the ecologist on how best to proceed when assessing structures and whether further surveys are justified. The guidelines go on to state that:

¹ Originally as a division within an engineering practice, then set up as a separate Limited Liability Partnership in 2007 and now as a Limited Company.

² Collins, J. (ed) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

If sufficient areas (including voids, cracks and crevices) of a structure have been inspected and no evidence found (and is unlikely to have been removed by weather or cleaning or be hidden) then further surveys may not be appropriate (Page 42).

Although no evidence of bats was recorded within the attic space of No. 16, the presence of the tile hanging on the rear dormer along with a few individual droppings found, it was considered necessary to carry out bat activity surveys to confirm the status of the roost at No. 16 (the bungalow was assessed to provide **moderate** roosting opportunities for bats). Two surveys were carried out (an emergence survey on the 11 August 2022 and a 2nd emergence survey combined with a pre-dawn survey on 2 and 3 September 2022). These surveys have been completed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines and based on professional judgement. At least one of the surveys was completed within the optimal period (i.e. between May and August), during suitable weather conditions with a minimum 2 week gap between each survey. These were supplemented with additional visual inspections with follow-up internal checks of the attic space completed on the evening prior to the activity surveys and a follow-up survey in October 2022, with no evidence of bats recorded.

The summer house was masonry constructed within the rear garden on No.16, with tightly fitted, timber cladding on the front gable and a pitched engineered tiled roof, which was well sealed. Internally there was a restricted roof void. No evidence of bats was recorded during the thorough internal and external inspection completed in 2021 or 2022. The roof tiles and timber cladding were generally well-sealed with any restricted gaps fully inspected and found to be covered in cobs and/or general debris. Internally the restricted roof void was fully accessed found to be well sealed and heavily cobwebbed throughout. Therefore, the summer house was assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities for bats and no further surveys were considered necessary.

We can confirm that based on our professional judgement (as qualified and licensed ecologists) that the survey effort undertaken to date is sufficient to determine the extent of the buildings use by bats in terms of species, numbers and types of roost to ensure that appropriate and proportionate mitigation can be delivered. The results of the various surveys confirmed that No. 16 is a day roost used by common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) bats. It is fully acknowledged that a licence³ will be required from Natural England to allow the demolition of the property and this can be secured via a suitably worded condition attached to planning.

Trees

The only tree assessed to be of **low** value was a single semi-mature ash tree (No.26 on the Tree Constraints Plan by Keen Consultants). As this tree requires felling, then this should be carried out by competent Tree Surgeons, who are fully conversant with current legislation protecting bats and their roosts. In the unlikely event of any bats being encountered, then works should stop immediately and Natural England or AAe contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided.

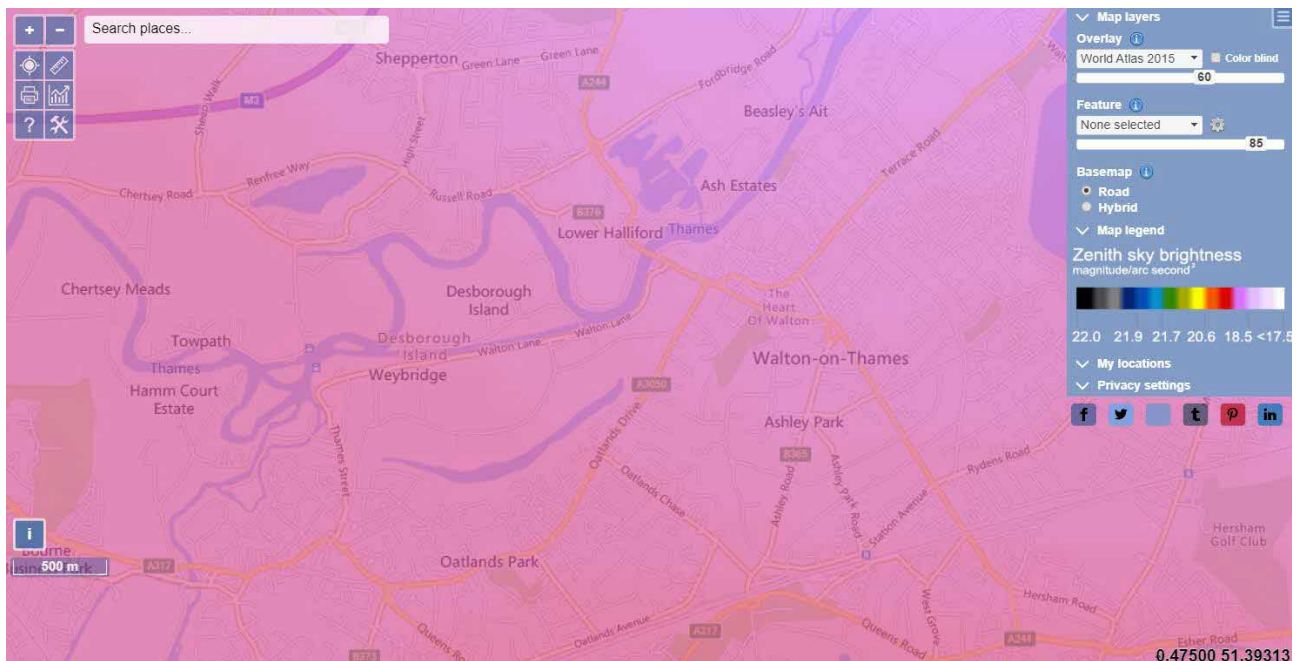
Sensitive Lighting

The site currently experiences light spillage from on-site and neighbouring sources, including residential properties and roads, and is located within Class 6 of the Bortle Dark Sky Scale - a bright suburban zone⁴ (as shown on Figure 1). Although the site is currently well-lit, in accordance with good practice, and as stated by SWT, a Sensitive Lighting Management Plan should be produced in order to minimise light spillage and pollution and not directed onto any sensitive receptors, which can be secured via an appropriately worded condition.

³ A licence will only usually be issued after full planning permission has been granted and any relevant conditions discharged.

⁴ Light Pollution Map: www.lightpollutionmap.info

Figure 1: Light Pollution Map



Great Crested Newts

Great crested newt surveys have been suggested by SWT, however we are unsure of the justification for this. The 'pond' is in fact an inlet from the engine river which contains fish and wildfowl, and therefore does not provide suitable breeding habitat for great crested newts. Despite a careful search of the site, no amphibians (or other species of herpetofauna) were seen or found sheltering under any refugia lifted during any of the site visits and no records for GCN were returned by Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre (SBIC) within the 2 km search. It is important to note that the site comprises two residential plots that are both well maintained and therefore do not provide suitable terrestrial habitat for any species of herpetofauna. In addition, the response by SWT for the adjacent 8-14 Oatlands Drive application (2020/0691) suggested a precautionary approach should be taken, with no further surveys suggested despite being located within closer proximity to the pond/engine river and therefore a similar approach should be applied to this application. Control measures during works can be set out in a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which can be secured via an appropriate worded condition attached to planning.

It is important to note Paragraph 99 of Circular ODPM 06/2005, states *"It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision."* However, paragraph 99 continues to state that *"However, bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development."*

Protected Habitat – Statutory Designated Sites

We have reviewed the magic website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk) and believe the proposed development does not lie within the Impact Risk Zone for the South West London Waterbodies Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site and therefore Natural England are unlikely to comment. It is worth noting that on the adjacent

applications Natural England either made no comment (2022/2118) or commented and raised no objections (2020/3223).

Biodiversity Net Gain

A copy of the DEFRA Metric (excel spreadsheet) will need to be forwarded to the Council so that they can run an audit on the re-assessment completed. The habitats recorded on site include vegetated garden, developed land; sealed surface and urban trees. Condition assessments for vegetated garden and developed land are not necessary as the metric automatically assigns their condition to be 'N/A'. The majority of the trees were young/immature, therefore, we consider an assessment of 'moderate' condition of the trees to be generous and sufficient.

In summary, we conclude that the ecological surveys completed to date are acceptable to assess the impact of the proposed redevelopment on local wildlife/protected species and that no additional surveys are required. A range of control measures will be implemented to ensure that the population status of bats using the site will be maintained at favourable conservation status and generic measures will be adopted during the works to minimise impact on local wildlife using the site and avoid contravention of current legislation. In addition, a range of ecological enhancement measures and a sensitive lighting design can be implemented on the site. All of which can be secured via appropriately worded conditions attached to the planning consent, as detailed within SWTs response.

I trust the above addresses the comments received so that there are no outstanding ecological objections to the proposals and that planning can be granted subject to appropriately worded conditions. However, if any further information is required then please contact me.

Yours sincerely



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Director of Ecology
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Encl. Electronic copy of DEFRA's Metric