



ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

TO: *Kathryn Mathews*

FROM: *Nancy Inman*

DATE: *16 September 2025*

SUBJECT: *17 Hardinge Road, Ashford PA/2025/0889*

The following is provided by Kent County Council's Ecological Advice Service (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 whether sufficient and appropriate ecological information has been provided to assist in its determination.

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: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED

We have reviewed the submitted information and are satisfied that habitats onsite are of low value for biodiversity, consisting of hardstanding only. This qualifies the site as exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). We request that a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) is undertaken in regards to roosting bats.

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (BATS) NEEDED

No ecological information has been submitted with this application. As a result of reviewing the data we have available to us, we advise that the proposed development has the potential to adversely affect roosting bats.

Bats/their roosts are fully protected from disturbance and harm through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Some species of bat (including Bechstein's, noctule, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared) are also listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 as Species of Principal Importance

for conservation. Local planning authorities must have regard for the conservation of Section 41 species and all bat species as part of their planning decisions¹.

The development meets the requirements on the planning trigger list as identified by the Wildlife Assessment Check² (WAC) for a preliminary roost assessment (PRA) for bats. As such, we recommend a PRA is carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN – EXEMPT

A Biodiversity Net Gain report and metric have been provided (MM Environmental, June 25). This demonstrates that baseline habitats have a value of zero units, and that post-development habitats will result in a unit increase of 0.0392 units. As the baseline value is zero, we are satisfied that this development meets the 'de minimis' exemption criteria, and therefore that mandatory net gain does not apply:

- The development will not impact any onsite priority habitat; AND
- The development will not impact more than 25 square metres of onsite habitat with a biodiversity value greater than zero; AND
- The development will not impact more than 5 metres of onsite linear habitat.

NUTRIENT NEUTRALITY (STODMARSH)

The proposed development falls within the Stodmarsh Nutrient Impact Area. All new developments with overnight accommodation within the Stour catchment area must take into account Natural England's Advice on Nutrient Neutrality for New Development in the Stour Catchment. The Local Planning Authority, as the 'Competent Authority', will need to address the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Regulation 63, as amended) by conducting an HRA (Habitats Regulations Assessment) for which the applicant will need to provide information regarding nutrient budget calculations³ (unless the Competent Authority has an alternative agreed approach).

The Competent Authority will need to ensure that the proposals can mitigate for any additional impacts on the Stodmarsh Special Protection Area (SAC) and Ramsar site, and ensure that adequate means are in place to secure the mitigation. Any mitigation measures proposed at the appropriate assessment stage of the HRA must be robust and secured in advance of planning permission being granted, or be suitable to be secured through a planning condition. We are unable to advise on the suitability of nutrient mitigation as we do not have the relevant expertise.

Local planning authorities are the ultimate decision-makers, but they are required by law to consult Natural England and must give its advice considerable weight, providing sufficient justification if they depart from it⁴.

¹ [Bats: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK](#)

² Wildlife Assessment Check – Partnership for Biodiversity in Planning

³ [Natural England Advice Note 28 June 2021](#)

⁴ [Habitats Regulations advice for LPAs | Local Government Association](#)

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

Nancy Inman
Biodiversity Officer

This response was submitted following consideration of the following documents:

- Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Metric (MM Environmental, June 25)
- Design and Access Statement (Cunningam Developments)