

Job Name: Land North of East Street Rusper West Sussex
Date: 23rd October 2025
Prepared By: Matt Pendry BSc (Hons) MCIEEM (Principal Ecologist)
Subject: Technical Response – Planning ref: DC/25/0523

Following submission of ecology and BNG documents in relation to the above site the Ecology Officer at Horsham District Council issued a response which included a holding objection in relation to the removal of more trees than accounted for in the original BNG assessment, and the need for further compensation due to potential impacts on a roosting feature for bats.

Ecology

“One of the trees (T22) along the southern boundary has a single PRF-M (Potential Roosting Feature – Maternity), a rot hole on a major limb on the south-western aspect of the tree approximately 4m above ground level. This appeared to lead into a small cavity within the limb (Para 3.14 of the PEA, Ecology Partnership, Jan 2025). Para 4.10 states that as this tree is to be retained, no further survey will be necessary. However, Para 4.11 goes on to say that the tree should be protected during construction.

It is disappointing that current works to date (January 2025) have involved limb removal of the tree, exposing the PRF and as a result potentially changing the microclimate of the roost feature. If these works were communicated with the ecologists, it is likely that further survey would have been strongly advised. In the absence of any evidence to suggest bats are not using this roost for whatever purpose, it cannot be ruled out that an offence under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 may have been committed.”

Since this comment the Ecology Partnership have attended site and using a ladder and endoscope, have assessed the feature in greater detail. There are two rot holes which both enter into a shared space in the trunk, measuring 20cm in width between the two holes and 8cm in height. A section above the north-western hole extends and tapers c. 15cm up the tree and stops. This feature likely could support no more than five bats. No bats or evidence of bats, such as dropping was observed within the tree.

To mitigate any minor impacts associated with changing the microclimate around the feature it is recommended that a large bat box is established on the adjacent mature ash tree on the north-western elevation, providing some shelter whilst keeping flight paths clear. This should be done as soon as possible. This is in addition to the bat boxes which will be located throughout the site and detailed in

the Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy. No further habitat should be cleared on site unless in accordance with the recommendations for reasonable avoidance measures for reptiles, and birds in the PEA and GCN in the eDNA report.

Trees

"The metric accounts for 6 trees to be removed from the tree line, including 4x small, 1x medium and 1x large. However, during my site visit after the works were carried out, I accounted for 15x cut trees with a DBH of 7.5cm or greater, for the purposes of the vehicular access point. The Arboricultural Report also states T46 (hornbeam), G2 (various group of trees, with max DBH of 30cm), T12 and T14 (ash) within the red line boundary are also recommended to be removed. These removals (excluding G2) do not appear to be accounted for within the metric. Confirmation is also requested as to whether T47 and T48 (sycamores) in the southern boundary are to be retained.

Please can the metric be modified to reflect the correct number of trees to be lost to the development (including those that already have been removed), and a complete list of trees for removal accompany this amendment. Note the loss of small trees within a habitat whereby the classification is dependent on the presence of trees, does not need to be separately accounted for within the metric as per the user guide (see Page 55 of the metric user guide).

Photographs of the tree stumps with a pen for size reference (14.5cm) have been sent separately to the Case Officer. These comprise approximately 2x large (DBH >60cm and ≤90cm), 8x medium (DBH >30cm and ≤60cm) and 5x small trees (DBH >7.5cm and ≤30cm).

As per the metric user guide, the 'delay in starting habitat creation or enhancement' function should be amended to reflect the number of years the habitat is absent i.e., from clearance (January 2025) to the start of habitat compensation for the loss.

A review of the area of tree loss in relation to the tree schedule indicates that trees T25 – T33 have been removed, which is indeed higher than previously accounted for within the metric. Trees T31, T32, T33 had previously been accounted for. T26 and T27 have now been added into the baseline as both are medium sized tree species, and their condition assessed based on the information in the tree schedule. T25 and T28 were both hawthorns, which is considered a scrub species regardless of size in accordance with the UK hab definition, as such their loss is accounted for in the loss of scrub habitat. T29 and T30 were both small trees and as such are not counted for individually as they form part of a hedgerow habitat, as opposed to an area habitat (See pg 51 for the BNG user guidance). Their loss is accounted for in the reduced length of the treeline post development. The other stumps recorded are assumed to have belonged to components of the mixed scrub within this area as they were not recorded separately by the arboriculturalist.

All other category U trees on site are to be retained, and will be monitored going forward for safety. If any works are required in the future, crown reduction and monolithic should be pursued over complete removal. This can be incorporated into the HMMP.

The metric has been updated to account for these extra trees and additional offsetting will be required to achieve a +10% net-gain post-development.

Ditch

Further information is requested with regards to assessment of the roadside ditch, whereby the riparian zone (5m) lies within the red line boundary of the site.

For a habitat to be classified as a ditch for the purposes of the watercourse requirements of the metric, it needs to hold water for more than 4 months of the year, as stated on pg 38 of the BNG User Guide. The ditch on site shows no indication that it holds water for extended periods. No semi-aquatic vegetation was recorded such as common reed, watermint, or reedmace, and instead comprised creeping buttercup, nettles and other non-aquatic species amongst thick leaf litter and detritus. As such, this ditch is not considered to qualify as a watercourse.

Condition Assessments

Please can the condition assessments for the baseline native-hedgerow and ecologically valuable line of trees be provided.

These have now been added to the latest version of the metric.

Landscape Masterplan and Post-development Habitat Map

Please can confirmation be requested on whether the mapped species-rich hedgerows adjacent to the dwellings are within the private ownership of those dwellings. If this is the case, these must be counted as 'vegetated garden' only. This includes the introduced shrub.

Note that on the Landscape Plan Sheets, some mixed native hedgerows within the residential development area are proposing less than 5 woody species, whereas to meet the classification of a species-rich native hedgerow (the only hedgerow type proposed within the metric and mapped within the post-development habitat map in the BNG Report), a minimum of 5 woody species is required. Please can this be amended, or alternatively, change the classification where species lists are less than 5 to native hedgerow or ornamental non-native hedgerow as appropriate.

It is recommended a maintenance buffer is implemented between hedgerows and introduced shrub for effective management. This is also the case for the mixed scrub in the north-west corner of the site, where the habitat parcel is wedged directly next to a dwelling and the existing hedgerow.

It is also recommended that the trees surrounding the attenuation basin should be moved further away from any slopes to ensure room for root growth

The landscape plans and HMMP will be updated at the detailed design stage to close off the relevant condition and will take the above into consideration. Once detailed landscaping is finalised the BNG will be amended accordingly. The hedgerows indicated are to be located outside of private garden space, however, it should be noted that even if these hedgerows were not accounted for in the metric the net-gain would still be +20.76%.

Hopefully these comments help to address the concerns of the ecology officer and can be formally addressed through a Condition for a Biodiversity Enhancement Scheme, as well as the finalised detailed landscape design, Biodiversity Gain Plan and HMMP.

Kind regards

Matt Pendry BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

Recommended bat boxes



Large Multi Chamber WoodStone® Bat Box (Left), 1FS Schwegler Large Colony Bat Box (Right)