



Hampshire Swifts

Orchard House
Wilverley Road
Brockenhurst
Hants SO42 7SP
12th March 2020

Planning Officer
Planning Department
East Hampshire Council

Dear Mr Holmes

Re: 58616. Nine dwellings following demolition of existing buildings, new vehicular access from Eddeys Lane following closure of existing access together with associate parking and landscape. Beech Hill Stores, Eddeys Lane, Headley Down, Bordon, GU35 8HU.

I am writing on behalf of Hampshire Swifts, a charity devoted to the conservation of Swifts in Hampshire and part of a national network of Swift groups throughout the UK.

We note that in their ecological appraisal, Wyg Ecology recommend the inclusion of 4 nest boxes for Swifts (*Apus Apus*). We support this but request that planning consent for this development includes multiple integral nest sites for Swifts, one in each of the 9 houses proposed. This is compatible with current RIBA advice for a minimum of 1 Swift brick per dwelling. Our reasons for this request are as follows:

1. PLANNING CONTEXT

Paragraph 175d of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 states 'When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:**opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged**'.

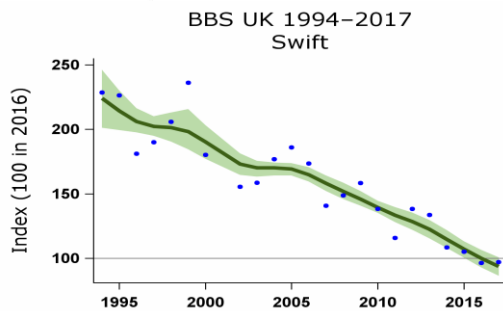
Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, states: "Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity."

2. CONSERVATION CONTEXT

Swifts are entirely dependent on man-made structures for nesting in urban environments. House Sparrows are also dependent on dwellings for nesting. Both species are undergoing national declines of > 50% in 20 years for Swifts and > 60% in 20 years for House Sparrows caused mainly by **the loss of nesting sites** on existing houses due to re-roofing and replacement of soffits and fascias with UPVC. House Sparrows are a red-listed species of conservation concern and Swifts are expected to be notified as red-listed at the next review. Current building regulation requirements for new homes are not conducive to allow either species to nest. Both species readily use Swift bricks when these are incorporated into new developments.



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Swifts are undergoing a catastrophic decline in numbers with sightings having reduced by over 50% in the past 20 years

3. HUMAN CONTEXT

It is well established that access to nature is of huge benefit to people, especially in the context of mental health and wellbeing. A number of studies have demonstrated significant benefits of simple interventions such as nest boxes and ensuring windows face onto green spaces. The sight and sound of Swifts in summer brings joy to many people. Recent research has shown that home owners are almost entirely supportive of having Swift bricks in their homes, so developers need have no fear that it will affect sales.

4. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Swifts are very hygienic and their nest sites do not suffer from accumulation of bird lime. In addition, Swift bricks are designed to exclude larger species such as Starlings and Jackdaws from entering the nests. However, species such as House Sparrows, Blue and Great tits can readily access and use the bricks. House Sparrows actually prefer Swift bricks to the often used "sparrow terraces". Both Swifts and House Sparrows prefer to nest in colonies, so providing multiple nest sites in a development is best.

Swift bricks require no maintenance or cleaning out and because they are an integral part of the building Swift bricks will last as long as the building itself.

5. IN SUMMARY

Integration of Swift bricks is very easy to include into routine building practices and results in a permanent, discrete, maintenance-free biodiversity enhancer which will provide much-needed breeding spaces for declining species of birds.

Further information on Swift bricks, where to site them and recommendations on how many to use in a development can be obtained from Hampshire Swifts. We would be happy to provide advice on the siting of Swift bricks in this proposed development.

If the Planning Committee intends to grant permission for the above application, we urge you to make installation of Swift nest bricks a condition of planning approval.

Yours sincerely

Catharine Gale,