



ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

TO: Robert Allan
FROM: Nancy Inman
DATE: 05 September 2025
SUBJECT: Old Mount Farm, Rhodes Minnis 25/1495/FH

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.

SUMMARY: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED

We advise that our advice from the previous application 25/0931/FH remains as detailed below.

The previous farmhouse building has been demolished under application ref: Y07/0137/SH. This application required a licence from Natural England and a mitigation strategy which involved the creation of a bat loft within the garage. This is due to the loss of a brown long-eared bat maternity roost and a common pipistrelle roost. The bat loft has been constructed under application ref: Y12/0285/SH. The existing garage is to be retained, however we request the results of an update bat inspection survey to determine whether the existing loft space is currently supporting roosting bats, whether it is suitable for roosting bats and whether adverse impacts as a result of development proposals are likely.

It is likely that impacts to protected species e.g. reptiles, great crested newt and dormice are unlikely due to the small scale of the site and the limited suitability of habitats to support protected species.

The applicant has stated that they are exempt from BNG under the self/custom-build exemption criteria, however it is not within our remit to confirm this.

BATS – FURTHER SURVEY REQUIRED

A bat loft was constructed (see fig 1. below), in order to provide opportunities for bats following the destruction of a brown long-eared bat maternity roost, and a common pipistrelle roost. Impacts to the bat roost will occur following the construction of the adjoining new build, and the incorporation of a green roof (see fig 2. below).

In order to ensure that no adverse impacts will occur (e.g. to flight paths and potential entrance points), and that the existing structure is suitable for roosting bats, we request that a bat survey is conducted by a suitably qualified ecologist. This should include the following:

- An assessment of the existing garages current suitability for supporting brown long-eared maternity roosts and common pipistrelle roosts
- The completion of any required monitoring of internal conditions (e.g. humidity and temperature) to ensure that conditions are suitable for roosting bats
- A detailed internal and external inspection for bat field signs followed by emergence surveys if required
- An assessment of the potential impacts of the construction of the new building and the green roof on the suitability of the bat loft to support roosting bats
- Recommendations for enhancements to existing bat loft to increase suitability (if currently unsuitable or unoccupied by bats)
- Mitigation measures to prevent adverse impacts to bats if it is concluded that there may be adverse impacts as a result of development proposals



Fig 1. Current bat loft

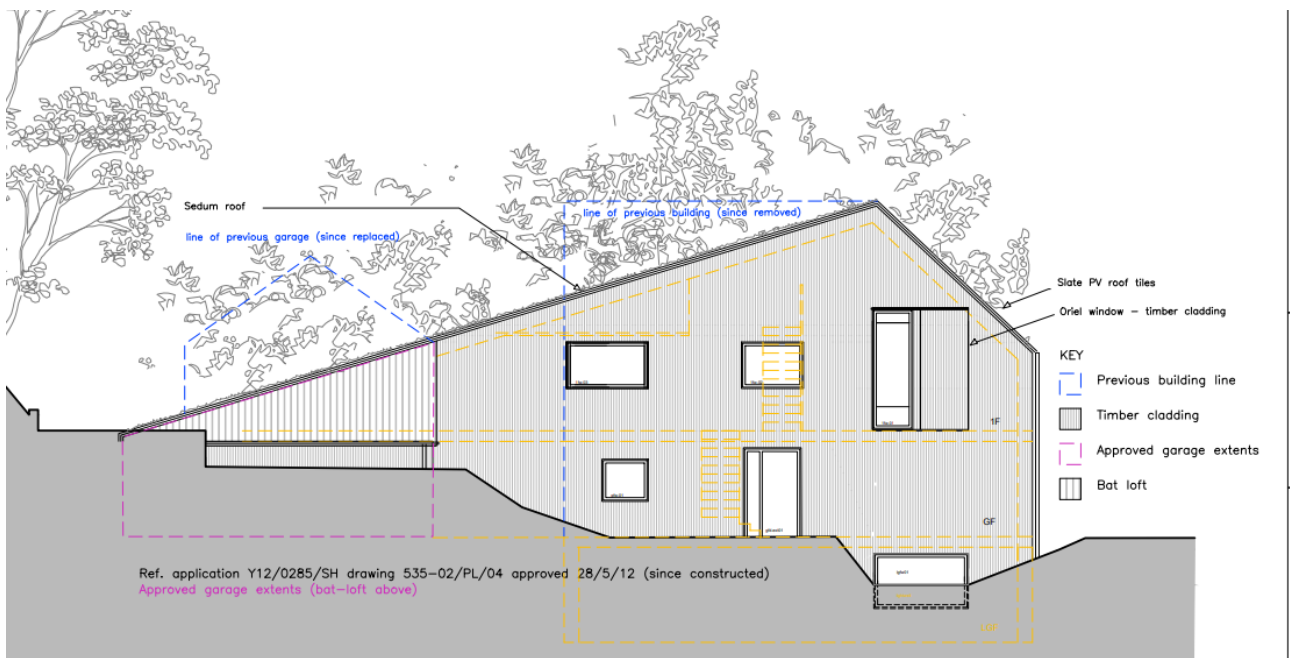


Fig 2. New building elevations

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN: SELF-BUILD EXEMPTION

The applicant considers the proposals to be exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain under the self-build exemption. For this exemption to apply, the proposals must:

- consist of no more than 9 dwellings;
- on a site that has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares; and
- consist exclusively of dwellings that are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015

It is not within our remit to verify that the proposed dwellings meet the definition of self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in the 2015 Act. The LPA should therefore ensure that the proposals meet the definition and that a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain does not apply.

Government guidance on self-build and custom housebuilding indicates that “[in] considering whether a home is self-build or custom build home, relevant authorities must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have primary input into its final design and layout ... Off-plan housing, homes purchased at the plan stage prior to construction and without input into the design and layout from the buyer, are not considered to meet the definition of self-build and custom housing”.

A recent appeal decision indicates that a “*suitably robust mechanism such as a planning obligation/legal agreement or other means*” is necessary to properly secure a development as self-build and to prevent it reverting to an open market dwelling where a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain would otherwise apply.

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:

- Site Location Plan (April 2025)
- Existing Location Plan and Elevations
- Design and Access Statement (James Clague, April 2025)
- Bat Mitigation Method Statement (Lloydbore, Oct 2010)