

**CH/2017/1824/FA**

Case Officer:	Emma Showan	Decide by Date:	19.02.2018
Date Received:	27.09.2017	Ward:	Chesham Bois And Weedon Hill
Parish:	Chesham Bois		
App Type:	Full Application		
Proposal:	<b>Demolition of existing house and erection of three 5 bedroom houses, served by existing access</b>		
Location:	<b>Rowanlinden 70 Long Park Chesham Bois Buckinghamshire HP6 5LF</b>		
Applicant:	<b>Beacon Build</b>		

**SITE CONSTRAINTS**

Article 4 Direction  
 Adjacent Conservation Areas  
 Adjacent Archaeological Notification Site  
 Bovington Technical Radar Zone  
 Conservation Area  
 Within 500m of SINC NC1  
 Tree Preservation Order  
 Tree Preservation Order (A/G/W)  
 Established Residential Area of Special Character

**CALL IN**

Councillor Harris has requested this application be referred to the Planning Committee if the Officers' recommendation is for approval.

**SITE LOCATION**

This application relates to No. 70 Long Park, a residential property in the built-up area of Chesham Bois. The area is characterised by a range of property types, although the majority are large and are set back from the highway. No. 70 too is set back from the main highway and is accessed via a private driveway serving a small handful of properties. It occupies a sheltered site and a plot which is considerably larger than that of neighbouring properties. The site is located within an Established Residential Area of Special Character.

**THE APPLICATION**

This application proposes the demolition of the existing house and the erection of three 5-bedroom houses.

The house on Plot 1 would have a maximum width of 10.2 metres, depth of 11 metres and crown roof height of 9.2 metres, with an eaves height of 5.5 metres.

The house on Plot 2 would have a maximum width of 10.4 metres, depth of 9.8 metres and roof height of 9 metres, with an eaves height of 5.5 metres.

The house on Plot 3 would have a maximum width of 16.4 metres, depth of 9.8 metres and roof height of 9 metres, with an eaves height of 5.5 metres. This dwelling would have an integral double garage.

Plots 1 and 2 would both be served by separate double garages.

Plot 1 would be served by a new access onto Long Park, while Plots 2 and 3 would use the existing access onto Long Park.

Amended plans have been submitted during the course of the application and these show an amended site layout (the dwellings are set further forward with the site) and minor alterations to the height and design of the proposed dwellings.

#### **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

None relevant.

#### **PARISH COUNCIL**

In regards to the original plans: We have no objection in principle to proposed development of the site but have sympathy for owners of 66 Long Park and their concerns about loss of privacy due to the proposed location of Plot 1. We also have concerns about the increase in traffic along the existing narrow access route which will serve the new properties.

In regards to the amended plans: The amended plans show the re-siting of Plot One and two garages. We have heard from a number of local residents regarding this planning application and support their concerns which remain about the increase in traffic along the existing narrow access route and the resultant danger to road safety. The siting of the three plots for the three storey properties are too close together and result in a cramped form of development which is not in keeping with the surrounding area. The proposals would result in overdevelopment and would erode the local character.

#### **REPRESENTATIONS**

14 letters of objection received which can be summarised as follows:

- Plot 1 is located immediately adjacent to and half way down the garden at No. 66 so views from No. 66 will be dominated by the side elevation of the new house
- The site elevation of Plot 1 has a number of windows which will overlook the garden and dwelling at No. 66
- Concern about traffic and the new access as the private lane has no passing places leading to the site
- Two of the trees that the Arboricultural report says should be removed are not reference on the plan
- No information about the ground floor level, ridge and eaves levels of the existing and proposed buildings
- The houses are three storey high and are not in-keeping with the other houses in the area
- Concern about access for emergency vehicles
- Residents have a shared financial responsibility for the upkeep of the road
- No. 51 reserves the right, where legally possible to withhold the right of access over their property
- Serious implications for safety given the intensification of the road
- The application should insist that the road is upgraded and that a paved footpath be introduced
- The properties will overlook the bungalows in The Grove
- The process will be noisy and disruptive
- The public footpath should not be closed at any time
- Concerns that the site joins a popular public footpath
- The siting of the three new houses appears to deliberately leave room for more houses to be added later
- Rowanlinden currently has no mains drainage
- There is already great strain on the existing infrastructure and the utilities in particular were not put in to serve so many dwellings
- Not enough parking for the properties
- Three houses on the plot is excessive
- Overdevelopment

- Noncompliance with Policy H12 regarding proposed garden depths
- The Amersham and District Residents Association strongly objects to the proposal

A petition of 26 signatures has been submitted, objecting to the development.

3 neutral letters received which can be summarised as follows:

- Support from No. 12 The Grove in respect of the removal of the trees (as per the plan)
- Support from No. 8 The Grove provided the line of cypress trees, adjacent to the boundary with this property remains intact
- The applicant has offered to make good any damage to the road or verges caused by construction vehicles and to not allow the parking of vehicles on this part of the road
- The applicant has stated that the site was originally sold as 68 & 70 Long Park, as two plots and No. 74 was sold as 72 & 74 Long Park so the intention was always for an additional two houses served by this road

7 letters of objection in response to the amended plans which can be summarised as follows:

- The original concerns remain
- The movement of the dwelling on Plot 1 will mean that this dwelling is now more intrusive and overbearing to No. 66 Long Park
- Overdevelopment
- Concern over footpath
- Any development should be conditioned so that the access/road is kept clear at all times and work should be undertaken within the site
- Loss of privacy to No. 12 The Grove as a result of the proposed third floor rear window
- The amended plan does not show the location of the house at No. 66
- Concern over bats

## CONSULTEES

### **Buckinghamshire County Highways Authority:**

The application seeks planning permission to erect three, five-bedroom houses. The houses will be served off Long Park which is privately maintained up to the junction with Green Lane.

In terms of trip generation, I would expect each dwelling to generate 8-10 daily vehicular movements, two-way. As the site already consisted of one dwelling, the overall development has the potential to generate in the region of 16-20 additional vehicular movements (two-way), per day. As the site would be subject to an intensification in use, the access arrangements serving the site will need to be assessed in order to determine their suitability to accommodate the additional movements.

The Highway Authority would have concerns regarding the suitability of the private section of Long Park, as the access is of an inadequate width to serve additional vehicle movements. An access road serving more than three dwellings is usually required to be a minimum of 4.8m wide. Furthermore, the visibility from the fork of the private road onto the main part of the private road is substandard. However, as this road is private, whilst we can raise these concerns to the Local Planning Authority, we cannot justify them as a reason for refusal as the road does not form part of the publicly maintained highway.

Therefore, I will comment on the impact of the development where the public highway meets the private road. In accordance with guidance contained within Manual for Streets, visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m are required in both directions from the junction commensurate with a speed limit of 30mph.

Mindful of the above, I have no objection to the proposals.

**Building Control Officer:**

The proposed work is to comply with Approved Document B5-Access and facilities for the fire service.

**District Tree and Landscape Officer:**

In the early twentieth century various belts of woodland were planted around the grounds of Bois House (now Tenterden). Neither the house nor the woodland is shown in an 1898 Ordnance Survey map but they are present on a 1925 map. Much of the grounds appear to have been sold after the Second World War and housing development on much of the land took place during the 1950s and 1960s. Tree Preservation Order No 11 of 1950 was made around this time to protect these belts of woodland and the whole of the application site is within this protected woodland.

The application includes an Arboricultural and Planning Integration Report.

The application proposes three detached houses within the southern part of the site leaving the northern part, about 40% of the site, as woodland. This woodland includes some very large old trees with some showing signs of deterioration with old age.

Plot 1 would use a new access through some poor hedging while Plots 2 & 3 would use the existing access. Two major trees, T1 oak and T2 hornbeam are shown retained between the drives, largely surrounded by no-dig construction. A clump of trees and shrubs up to about 8m in height that includes T4 holly and T10 birch is shown to be removed. A group of apple and cherry trees, G8, close to the boundary with 66 Long Park is also shown to be removed.

A line of tall cypresses along the rear boundary of Plots 1 & 2 is shown to be retained. There is a group of quite closely-spaced tall trees behind the existing dwelling and the proposed Plot 3. This consists of two very tall ash about 30m in height and various slightly smaller sycamore, ash and beech about 20-25m in height (T14, G15, T16 & G17). Most of these are shown to be removed. There appears to have been some recent damage to the roof of the existing house by some of these trees. One tall ash has a weak twin-stemmed structure and many of the other trees have little lower branching. The other tall ash has a better shape but it would be sheltered by the adjacent trees. I have concerns about the loss of this entire group of trees but I recognise that it would be difficult to retain a limited number of these trees safely.

The Arboricultural and Planning Integration Report lists the trees proposed for removal on section 6.1. This also refers to T15 and G19 for removal but these are not valid references and appear to be an error.

Overall although I have some concerns about the loss of the group of trees behind Plot 3, I would not object to the application provided there is adequate protection for the retained trees.

**POLICIES**

National Planning Policy Framework.

Core Strategy for Chiltern District - Adopted November 2011: Policies CS4, CS5, CS8, CS10, CS11, CS20, CS25, CS26, CS31 and CS32.

The Chiltern Local Plan Adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) Consolidated September 2007 & November 2011. Saved Policies: GC1, GC3, H3, H4, H11, H12, TR2, TR3, TR11 and TR16.

Affordable Housing SPD - Adopted 21 February 2012.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Principle of development**

1. The application site is located within the built-up area of Chesham Bois where proposals for new dwellings will be acceptable in principle subject to there being no conflict with any other policy in the Local Plan. Proposals should be compatible with the character of the area by respecting the general density, scale, siting, height and character of buildings in the locality and the presence of trees, shrubs, lawns and verges.
2. The site is also located within an Established Residential Area of Special Character which sets out the following criteria to assess new dwellings:
  - The plot size of any proposed dwelling in terms of shape and magnitude should not be significantly at variance with other existing plots in the vicinity
  - Each proposed dwelling plot should have an existing frontage to an existing road
  - The width across each plot frontage should be closely similar to other plot widths in the vicinity
  - The position of each proposed dwelling within its plot and the spacing between dwellings should be in accordance with the prevailing character in the vicinity
  - The frontage building line to the existing road should be generally maintained and the general height of buildings in the vicinity should not be exceeded
  - The form of existing residential development should be maintained in terms of dwellings being detached, semi-detached, terraced
  - The size, design and external appearance of each new dwelling should be compatible with the character of existing dwellings in the vicinity
  - Important features which are characteristic of the street scene in the vicinity should be retained. Such features include trees, shrubs, hedges, footways etc.

### **Design/Character and appearance**

3. The application site currently comprises a two storey dwelling which is set back from the highway within extensive gardens and a plot that is considerably larger than that of neighbouring properties. The site contains mature vegetation and trees that give the location a green and secluded position at the end of the cul-de-sac. It is proposed to demolish this existing dwelling and to erect three detached properties and their respective garages in its place. While Plot 1 would have a new access onto Long Park, Plots 2 and 3 would rely on the existing access serving No. 70.

4. As the application site falls within an Established Residential Area of Special Character, the criteria for new development are more stringent, in line with Development Plan Policy H4. Taking each of these in turn, the plot size of the proposed dwellings should not be significantly at variance with the other plots in the vicinity. In this case, the plots would be similar to their neighbours in terms of shape and magnitude and they would have a frontage with an existing road. Taking into account the plot widths, the plot sizes of the proposed dwellings would have an average width of 16 metres which compares to the average along this part of Long Park which falls between 20-25 metres. However, Long Park itself is characterised by a range of property types and includes sections along both sides of the highway which contain semi-detached and smaller detached properties with narrower plot widths, akin to those of the proposed dwellings. Accordingly, although smaller than the plot widths of the immediate neighbours, the proposed plots would not be notably out of character with Long Park as a whole and the difference between the proposed plots and their neighbours is not significant enough to be of major concern. In addition, the plot depths and shapes are comparable to their neighbours which further helps the plots to integrate with the others in the vicinity. Taking the next criteria into consideration, each dwelling would respect the existing build line, with the dwelling on Plot 1 being positioned slightly towards the rear of No. 66 Long Park and the dwellings on Plots 2

and 3 being stepped back from Dwelling 1. All the properties would be set forwards within their plots so that they retain adequate garden depths commensurate to others in the locality and adequate spacing would be retained between the properties in accordance with Development Plan Policy H11. Despite having living accommodation set over three levels, this would be achieved through the erection of rear dormers in the properties that allow for habitable accommodation in the roofspace. They are quite clearly two storey properties with further accommodation in the roofspace and the presence of a third floor would not be easily discernible from the front elevation and the dormers would be small and are not considered to dominate their respective roof slopes. Furthermore, the proposed dwellings would be of a similar height to others along Long Park and in accordance with the prevailing development type in the area, with the dwellings being detached and their design and proportions being considered compatible with the character of the existing dwellings in the vicinity. Finally, many of the trees on site will be retained and this part of Long Park will retain its green and relatively secluded position. A condition to ensure no trees are felled and further conditions to ensure a landscaping scheme is approved and implemented would ensure adequate vegetation and greenery remains on site, should planning permission be granted.

5. Although neighbours and the Parish Council have raised concern that the proposed dwellings would constitute overdevelopment and would be out of character with neighbouring properties, it is considered that the site is large enough to adequately take the erection of three new dwellings and adequate spacing would be retained, in accordance with the terms of Development Plan Policy H11, between the dwellings so that they do not appear overly cramped in relation to one another. In fact, it should be noted that the space between the houses is actually greater than the spaces between some of the existing houses along Long Park, so it cannot be said that the development is out of character in terms of spacing. It should also be noted that overdevelopment is just a vague descriptive term, with no precise meaning, and does not constitute harm in itself. A minimum of 3.5 metres would separate the flank walls between Dwellings 1 and 2, while 6.5 metres would separate the flank walls between Dwellings 2 and 3 which is considered to be wholly sufficient. In terms of the proposed design, the three dwellings would be detached properties with pitched roofs and a fairly traditional appearance. Although the properties would contain rear dormers in the roofslope to facilitate habitable accommodation in the roofspace, these dormers would be modestly proportioned and located to the rear where they would not be visible in the streetscene. As such, the properties would appear as two storey from the front elevation and will therefore be in keeping with the neighbouring properties. Accordingly, they are considered to integrate with the character of the other properties along this part of Long Park and a condition requiring the approval of details in relation to the facing materials proposed will ensure that the development integrates within the locality and is not intrusive or overly prominent in the street scene.

### **Neighbouring amenity**

6. The proposed dwellings would be located at the cul-de-sac end of Long Park, adjacent to No. 66. The dwelling on Plot 1 would be set to the rear of No. 66 so that it extends in depth beyond the rear elevation at No. 66. The garage serving this property would also be located at the boundary with No. 66 and in line with the front elevation of this neighbour, but would be single storey and of a modest height. The proposed dwelling on Plot 1 would have a roof which is pitched away from No. 66 which will help to offset its bulk and it is considered that adequate separation between Dwelling 1 and No. 66 will be maintained (approximately 10 metres), and with Dwelling 1 being situated a minimum of 3 metres away from the flank boundary with No. 66, it is considered that the proposal would not appear overly overbearing to this neighbour. In addition, no first floor flank windows are proposed in the west flank elevation of Dwelling 1 facing No. 66 aside from two windows serving bathrooms and these can be subject to a condition requiring them to be obscurely glazed and non-opening. This will eliminate overlooking in this direction and a condition restricting the future insertion of windows in this west flank will also mitigate against future overlooking.

7. To the rear, the three properties would face towards the rear elevations and gardens of properties along The Grove. A number of the occupiers of the bungalows along The Grove have raised concern in

relation to a potential loss of privacy as a result of the rear dormers serving the three properties. Although this concern is noted, it is considered that adequate separation will be retained between the rear elevations of the proposed dwellings and the properties to the rear at The Grove (there would be a minimum of 16 metres between the rear elevations of the proposed properties and their respective rear boundaries), and the retention of adequate boundary screening to the rear will further offset some of the intrusion. Given this separation distance, a refusal based on loss of amenity could certainly not be substantiated at an appeal.

8. With regards to amenities of future occupiers of the dwellings, each dwelling would have adequate light and outlook and access to a private rear garden with a garden depth in excess of 15 metres, and therefore in compliance with Development Plan Policy H12. Adequate bin storage can also be provided within the site and so no objections are raised in this respect.

#### **Parking/highway implications**

9. It is proposed to provide a minimum of three parking spaces per dwelling to be laid out on an area of hardstanding to the front of the dwellings and each property would also have access to a double garage. This is in line with the parking standards set out in Development Plan Policy TR16. Furthermore, in regards to the creation of the new accesses, as the proposed access is onto a privately owned highway, no objections can be raised by Buckinghamshire County Highways Authority. Despite being less than 4.8 metres wide, the access already serves more than three dwellings and it is not considered that the erection of an additional two properties would lead to an intensification of the site to such an extent that there would be an adverse impact on the highway. The Highways Authority have also confirmed that there is adequate visibility and no detrimental impact from the proposal at the point where the public highway meets the private road. Finally, in regards to the maintenance of the access along Long Park, this is a civil matter to be discussed between the applicant and the owners/users of the driveway.

#### **Trees**

10. The District Tree and Landscape Officer has raised no objections to the proposal.

#### **Affordable housing**

11. For proposals under 5 dwellings, Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy requires a financial contribution towards off-site affordable housing to be made. However, there are now specific circumstances set out in the NPPG (National Planning Practice Guidance) where contributions for affordable housing and tariff style planning obligations (section 106 planning obligations) should not be sought from small scale development, including developments of 10 units or less, which have a gross floor space of less than 1,000 square metres. This carries more weight than Policy CS8, as it is more recent, so an affordable housing contribution cannot be sought in this instance.

#### **Sustainability and access**

12. Core Strategy Policy CS4 sets out sustainable development principles for new development and in this respect it is noted that the site is within a relatively sustainable location in the built-up area of Chesham Bois which benefits from bus routes, local amenities and existing waste collection routes. As such, no objections are raised in respect of Policy CS4.

#### **Working with the applicant**

13. In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Council, in dealing with this application, has worked in a positive and proactive way with the Applicant / Agent and has focused on seeking solutions to the issues arising from the development proposal.

Chiltern District Council works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by:

- offering a pre-application advice service,

- updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application as appropriate and, where possible and appropriate, suggesting solutions.

In this case, Chiltern District Council has considered the details as submitted which were considered acceptable.

### Human Rights

14. The following recommendation is made having regard to the above and also to the content of the Human Rights Act 1998.

### **RECOMMENDATION: Conditional permission**

#### **Subject to the following conditions:-**

1 C108A General Time Limit

2 Before any construction work commences on the site, details of the materials to be used for the external construction of the development hereby permitted, including the facing materials, roofing materials and surface materials for the paths and parking areas, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be carried out in the approved materials.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the development is not detrimental to the character of the locality, in accordance with policies GC1 and H3 of the Chiltern District Local Plan Adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) consolidated September 2007 and November 2011, and policy CS20 of the Core Strategy for Chiltern District (Adopted November 2011).

3 Prior to the commencement of any construction works on site, detailed plans, including cross sections as appropriate, showing the existing ground levels and the proposed slab and finished floor levels of the residential units hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such levels shall be shown in relation to a fixed datum point normally located outside the application site. Thereafter the development shall not be constructed other than as approved in relation to the fixed datum point.

Reason: To protect, as far as is possible, the character of the locality and the residential amenities of neighbouring properties, in accordance with policies GC1, GC3 and H3 of the Chiltern District Local Plan Adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) consolidated September 2007 and November 2011, and policy CS20 of the Core Strategy for Chiltern District (Adopted November 2011).

4 Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted, the access onto Long Park shall be laid out in accordance with the approved plans and visibility splays shall be provided on both sides of the access between a point 2.4 metres along the centre line of the access measured from the edge of the carriageway and a point 43 metres along the edge of the carriageway measured from the intersection of the centre line of the access. The area contained within the splays shall be kept free of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height above the nearside channel level of the carriageway.

Reason: in order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway and of the development, and to provide adequate intervisibility between the access and the existing public highway for the safety and convenience of users of the highway and of the access, in accordance with policies TR2 and TR3 of the Chiltern District Local Plan Adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) consolidated September 2007 and November 2011, and policies CS25 and CS26 of the Core Strategy for Chiltern District (Adopted November 2011).



5 The scheme for parking indicated on the submitted plans shall be laid out prior to the initial occupation of the development hereby permitted and those areas shall not thereafter be used for any other purpose.

Reason: To enable vehicles to park clear of the highway to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the adjoining highway, in accordance with policies TR2, TR3, TR11 and TR16 of the Chiltern District Local Plan Adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) consolidated September 2007 and November 2011, and policies CS25 and CS26 of the Core Strategy for Chiltern District (Adopted November 2011).

6 Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted, full details of the proposed boundary treatments for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved boundary treatments shall then be erected/constructed prior to the occupation of the residential units hereby permitted.

Reason: To protect, as far as possible, the character of the locality and the amenities of neighbouring properties, in accordance with policies GC1, GC3 and H3 of the Chiltern District Local Plan Adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) consolidated September 2007 and November 2011, and policy CS20 of the Core Strategy for Chiltern District (Adopted November 2011).

7 Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted, full details of the proposed refuse and recycling bins shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved bin storage shall be provided in accordance with the approved plans.

Reason: To ensure that adequate bin stores are provided, in accordance with Policy GC3 of The Chiltern District Local Plan Adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) Consolidated September 2007 and November 2011.

8 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order, with or without modification), no roof lights, windows/dormer windows other than those expressly authorised by this permission, shall be inserted or constructed at any time in the flank elevations of the properties hereby approved.

Reason: To protect the amenities and privacy of the adjoining properties, in accordance with policy GC3 of the Chiltern District Local Plan Adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) consolidated September 2007 and November 2011.

9 This permission is granted on condition that none of the trees or hedges on the site (other than those specified to be removed on the plans hereby approved), shall be felled, topped, lopped or uprooted without the prior approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority for a period of five years from the date of implementation of this permission. Furthermore, the existing soil levels around the boles of the trees so retained shall not be altered.

Reason: In order to maintain, as far as possible, the character of the locality.

10 No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping at a scale of not less than 1:500 which shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, with details of those to be retained, and those to be felled being clearly specified.

Reason: In order to maintain, as far as possible, the character of the locality.

11 All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced

in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: In order to maintain, as far as possible, the character of the locality.

12 The flank windows on the proposed dwellings will remain obscurely glazed in accordance with the approved plans.

Reason: To protect the amenities and privacy of the adjoining properties, in accordance with policy GC3 of the Chiltern District Local Plan Adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) consolidated September 2007 and November 2011.

13 AP01 Approved Plans

## **INFORMATIVES**

1 All species of bat and their roosts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. The applicant and contractors should be aware that all bats and any structures used by them are protected by law, and that works likely to disturb bats or their resting places (even if undertaken at a time of year when the bats are absent) require a licence from Natural England. Should a bat be encountered during development, work should cease immediately and advice should be sought from Natural England (tel. Batline 0345 1300228). Bats should preferably not be handled (and not without gloves) but should be left in place, gently covered, until advice is obtained. Particular care and vigilance should be taken when roof tiles or slates are removed (remove by hand and check underside for bats before stacking, particularly the ones over the gable ends and ridge tiles.) Fascias, barge boards and external cladding may also provide roost opportunities for bats and should be disturbed with care. As a further precaution, undertaking roof work during the months of March to May, or September to November will avoid the main hibernation and breeding seasons when bats are most sensitive to disturbance.