

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist

Date 14/07/25

Ref: 25/01544/FP

Att: Andrew Hunter

Little Arundel, Bedford Road, Holwell, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3RX

Erection of two detached dwellings including access drive, car parking, private gardens, hard and soft landscaping following the demolition of the existing detached garage and outbuilding.

Consultee comments;

Thank you for consulting me, having read through the submitted documents I would have no ecological objection to the proposal.

The April 2025 Statutory Biodiversity Metric records the site as vegetated garden giving a baseline value 0.76 Habitat Units and 0.06 Hedgerow Units. The post-development habitats of the site are valued at 0.63 Habitat Units and 0.12 Hedgerow Units, resulting in a net loss of 17.72% in habitat units. 3.5 of the planning states advises '*An area for biodiversity net gain (BNG) is identified within the rear part of the site. This is proposed indicatively at this stage, with such being finalised as part of dealing with the BNG condition*'. But the Biodiversity Gain assessment concludes '*To meet the required 10% gain, a further 0.21 Habitat Units are required, these can be of any distinctiveness level. It is understood that these units will be sourced via a habitat bank in the first instance*'. The biodiversity gain hierarchy needs to be considered when determining whether biodiversity units can be secured off site and, in this instance, as the proposal impacts garden land and will deliver garden land, it's acceptable for the applicant to source the unit shortfall by purchasing off site units.

The April 2025 Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) did not find any evidence of protected species using the site but does make recommendation for ecological enhancements. The North Herts Local Plan advises development should consider the inclusion of integrated features in the built fabric of dwellings such as bat, bird and bee bricks which are referred to in the EclA. Taking this into account the following condition is advised;

Ecological Enhancements

No development shall take place until an Ecological Enhancement Plan (EEP) for the creation of new wildlife features such as hibernacula, the inclusion of integrated bird/bat and bee boxes in buildings/structures, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure development is ecologically sensitive and secures biodiversity enhancements in accordance with the North Herts Local Plan policy NE4.

The case officer should note Biodiversity Gain condition wording should be added to the decision notice, the biodiversity gain condition is a pre-commencement condition having its own separate statutory basis and is deemed to apply to every planning permission granted for the development of land in England. To ensure the applicant is clear about this distinction the biodiversity gain condition should

not be included in the list of conditions imposed in the written notice when granting planning permission but should remain separate.

Biodiversity Net Gain

*The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition “(the biodiversity gain condition)” that **development may not begin** unless:*

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and*
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.*

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be North Herts Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.