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Date: 18/06/2025

Dear Sarah

Application: Variation of condition 1 (revised plans) of planning permission 17/02627/1 granted 30.05.2018 for Application for approval of reserved matters comprising of access, landscaping, layout, scale and appearance of Phase 1 the development (pursuant to Outline application 14/02485/1 granted 07/12/2016) as amended by plans received on 22 December 2017; 30 January 2018; 27 March 2018; 18 April 2018; and 02 May 2018.

Address: Land East Of Garden Walk And North Of Newmarket Road Garden Walk
Royston Hertfordshire

Application No: 24/02656/S73

ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Thank you for consulting this office on the above application and the amended Management Plan. information you have provided on the issue.

Overall Recommendation:

- ☒ No in-principle objection, but the application requires further amendments as outlined to enable approval.

Comments:

Further to my previous comments, the Open Space and Infrastructure Soft Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan has been amended further. In respect of specific issues raised regarding management for the chalk grassland previously, I can confirm that:

1. Areas of open space (boundary vegetation, woodland, wildflower grassland and chalk grassland) are to be monitored and maintained under the supervision of a

CIEEM chartered Ecologist. This is acceptable, although a monitoring schedule will need to be developed in due course.

2. References to previous chalk grassland have been removed.

3. There are recommendations regarding a proposed seed mix EM6, meadow mixture for chalk. This is acceptable.

4.1 The autumn cut previously proposed in 11.11 and The Maintenance Schedule 12 has been removed. This could be reinstated – or cut on rotation – if there is a need to do this, depending on regrowth after the mid-late summer cut. I strongly suspect this regrowth will be limited and a cut not needed, which would benefit biodiversity.

4.2 However, 11.11 now states it should be undertaken in early spring after the flowers have shed their seeds. Technically this is now completely wrong as the intention is to cut and remove after summer flowering. There should be a spring cut (if really needed) and then a summer cut – following flowering. However, the Maintenance Schedule 12 is acceptable, so whether 11.11 to be amended again for completeness is a matter for the LPA. There will not, of course, be any ground nesting birds on such a small site used as public open space...

5. 11.12 Areas of unmown chalk grassland - namely 25% left uncut on rotation - should be mapped (where to be left and when, Ys1, 2, 3, 4 etc), otherwise in practice this will never happen or be monitorable. Over four years this should cover all of the chalk grassland area. This remains a good proposal ecologically and should be pursued.

6. This is a small site; depositing cuttings in compost heaps is *still* not acceptable (11.13). There is likely to be far too much material to enable this to be achieved year-on-year without degrading increasingly large areas of open space grassland in localised areas. Local composting of some material within the site is potentially achievable but only on a very limited scale occasionally following cutting.

7. Monitoring proposals have been incorporated as previously suggested up to Y5. Beyond this, the LPA will need to consider the expectations for 30 years of management – and monitoring - consistent with expectations of local plan policy, given this application is not subject to mandatory BNG. Whilst I would advise an agreement for 30 years of future management to secure long-term biodiversity gains, this is not a legal requirement for this application. However, should it wish to secure this, Monitoring reports should be made available in Years 10, 20 and 30, consistent with monitoring schedules proposed for BNG elsewhere. This is considered sufficient to demonstrate creation, establishment, success and maintenance of habitats created.

8. Soft Landscaping Plans have now been included within the Management and Maintenance Plan.

9. Based on the above, I consider the amended document is broadly acceptable and sufficient to ensure a further management plan is not required, unless the LPA

considers this necessary. I believe all of the essential information is included to guide appropriate management, assuming the plan can be amended further as outlined.

Consequently, the amendments outlined above should be addressed before this can finally be considered acceptable.

These are:

- 11.11 Description of annual management needed to be consistent with Maintenance Schedule 12.
- An additional map (probably better than incorporated onto the soft landscaping drawings) to show 25% rotational uncut areas of chalk grassland in any one four-year period.
- 11.13 Removal of references to anything other than occasional use of compost piles for disposal of some cuttings. The current suggestion is unacceptable.
- Further monitoring proposals (Ys10, 20, 30) if the LPA expect this plan to be legally secured for up to 30 years.

If these issues can be amended further as necessary, I consider the Plan will be acceptable.

I trust these comments are of assistance,

Regards,

Martin Hicks MCIEEM
Senior Ecology Officer Hertfordshire LEADS

Hertfordshire LEADS provides Landscape, Ecology, Archaeology, Design and Sustainability support to planning departments in Hertfordshire.