

Hertfordshire LEADS (Ecology)
Farnham House
Six Hills Way,
Stevenage
SG1 2F



PO: Thomas Howe
District: St Albans City and District
Council Planning and Building
Control
planning@stalbans.gov.uk

ecology@hertfordshire.gov.uk

11/03/2026

Application

Reserved Matters for – Construction of Phase 1 Residential comprising 236 dwellings, associated road, drainage, servicing/utilities infrastructure, landscaping and open space provision of Hitchin Meadows, Dane Walk and Stotfold Linear Park in accordance with condition 3 of 18/01154/OP (and the partial discharge of associated conditions 7,9,10,11,12, 13, 19, 21). The outline application was EIA development and an ES was provided. An EIA update note is provided with this Reserved Matters application.
[25/02794/RM](#) Highover Farm Highover Way Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 0RQ

Documents:

- Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Phase 1, Completion Date 02 March 2026, Ecology Solutions.
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Whole Site, Completion Date 02 March 2026, Ecology Solutions.
- Phase 1 Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP), February 2026, Ecology Solutions.
- Open Space Management & Maintenance Plan (Non-BNG Elements), Phase 1, March 2026 (Issue 2), Golby + Luck Ltd.
- Tree Survey Plan – Highover Farm, Hitchin, 18 September 2024, ACD Environmental.

Summary of Advice:

Condition 21- as amended by 25/02556/NMA can only be partially discharged.
The planning officer should:
1. Request further information from the applicant and re-consult the Ecology Service (LEADS) when it is furnished

- OLEMP document missing
- Insufficient information on the location of species enhancements
- Recommendation to ensure BNG for Suds features align with the National framework

Comments

See below for comments on Condition 21. Conditions 7,9,10,11,12, 13, 19, do not relate to Biodiversity and have not been commented on.

Phase 1 relates to: The construction of 236 dwellings, and the landscaping and open space provision of Hitchin Meadows, Dane Walk and Stotfold Linear Park.

A LEMP for phase 1 has been submitted to discharge [Condition 21](#).

The Lemp is consistent with the phase 1 biodiversity metric and outlines suitable management prescriptions to deliver the target habitats and their condition as described in the phase1 metric.

Species enhancements: are listed with examples of suitable types illustrated. The location of bird boxes within the green spaces are shown. The location of a single sparrow terrace location is shown in order to comply with the LNRS, the document also states that each new building should have an integrated Swift brick installed into it. The location of these is not mapped but a general prescription for the positioning of all bird boxes is included. Hedgehog hole locations are shown on the landscaping plans

Swift Boxes: Given the number of new buildings being built and the preference of swifts and sparrows which may also use these boxes, I would advise that the 1 per building is interpreted as a ratio with boxes being placed in groups. That the buildings chosen are selected according to their suitability for use by swifts as informed by professional ecological advice and their location is shown on a map with sufficient detail to allow the LPA to assess whether they are located according to best practice in terms of aspect, height and position.

An area of crop planting to support farmland birds' forms part of the plan. This will not compensate directly for the loss of ground nesting opportunity for farmland birds. Nor, given the potential disturbance and other risks such as from domesticated pets associated the new development, will the proposed green spaces. However, the planted seed mix will contribute to the feeding resources of the nearby populations of these species and is suitably located for this purpose.

SUDS features: SUDS features should contribute to Biodiversity in line with Standard 6 of the National standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). **Sections 5.22-5.41** and associated tables within the LEMP, deal with management of the SUDS and bioswale features for BNG. Any such measures should form part of the Maintenance and management plan required by standard 7 of the National standards. The LLFA can provide further advise as to whether the biodiversity measures for these features are consistent with the requirements for the other national standards.

I advise that the requirements listed by **Condition 21 can only be partially discharged** and that until the matters

listed below are satisfactorily resolved the submitted LEMP is not suitable to be used as the reference document to discharge the onward actions of the Condition.

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

Matters to address:

Provision of a location map for the swift boxes.

Provision of the OLEMP document for review.

I trust these comments are of assistance and kind regards.

Simon Richards

Senior Ecologists, Hertfordshire LEADS

Condition 21- as amended by 25/02556/NMA.

No development apart from enabling works, and those associated with Phase 0 strategic infrastructure works (comprising the physical construction of the spine road and drainage infrastructure, but excluding the planning and landscape establishment of those features) shall take place on the site until an outline landscape and ecological management plan (OLEMP) has

been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.

The OLEMP shall be informed by the Environmental Impact Assessment and the latest version

of the biodiversity metric, having regard to the approved metric submitted with the outline application, and should include the following:

- a) measures to protect and enhance retained features (noting commitments secured at the outline application stage)
- b) identification of opportunities to create new biodiversity assets and links to existing off site ecological networks
- c) a demonstration of how the above measures contribute to the achievement of a 10% minimum biodiversity net gain target for the overall development site, based on the approved metric (or an up to date statutory net gain metric), and
- d) a framework management and maintenance strategy.

Prior to or concurrent with the first reserved matters submitted in each subsequent phase (identified in condition 5 phasing and delivery plan) a LEMP for that phase, prepared in accordance with the approved OLEMP, shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. The LEMP shall also include:

- a) Description, areas and evaluation of features to be managed, marked on plans for that phase
- b) Aims and objectives of management
- c) Demonstration of how the above measures contribute to the achievement of the minimum 10% net gain target for the overall development and what the percentage is in that phase
- d) Appropriate management options for achieving target condition for habitats as described in the approved metric
- e) Details of the make, model, and location of a minimum of integrated bat and swift boxes in appropriate buildings has been supplied to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. These should be clearly marked on plans. Boxes shall be fully installed prior to occupation and retained as such thereafter.
- f) Confirm that all planting comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out

in the first planting season following the commencement of each phase of the development (or within such extended period as may first be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority).

Any planting removed, dying or becoming seriously damaged or diseased within five years of planting shall be replaced within the first available planting season thereafter with planting of similar size and species unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent for any variation

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

g) Details of the body or organisation responsible for implementation of the plan

h) Details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery. The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The approved plan will be implemented in accordance with the approved details for a minimum of 30 years to deliver the required condition of habitats created

i) The monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the retained, created and/or enhanced habitats. The monitoring reports shall be submitted to the local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved LEMP for that phase. The created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved LEMP for that phase shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved LEMP for that phase. The approved plan will be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To conserve and enhance biodiversity in accordance with the NPPF and North