

Hertfordshire LEADS (Ecology)
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Planning Unit

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Date: 19/05/2026

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Application

Proposal: Erection of two 2-bedroom bungalows including garage/cycle store and bin storage to serve plots 1 and 2, parking and creation of pedestrian access within curtilage of 23 Conquest Close.

Address: Land To The Rear Of 23, Conquest Close, Hitchin, Hertfordshire.

Application No: 26/00774/FP

Documents referenced:

- Planning, design and access statement
- Preliminary ecological appraisal
- Biodiversity net gain report
- Statutory BNG metric
- Habitat condition assessment
- Location plan
- Site plan as existing
- Plot 1 and 2 house site plan as existing
- Plot 1 and 2 house site plan as proposed
- Waste and fire site plan as proposed
- Bin store plans and elevations
- Bike store plans and elevations
- Energy statement
- Environmental health consultee response
- Neighbour representations
- Site notice
- Specification for bike storage

Consultancy:

This ecology consultation response has been prepared by Ricardo on behalf of Hertfordshire LEADS (Ecology)

The planning application can be determined subject to the conditions set out below.

Comments

BNG Checklist

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

The submitted ecological information meets the Local List and statutory pre-determination requirements, with surveys undertaken within the acceptable validity period and sufficient to give confidence in the UKHab baseline and condition assessments. No evidence of unauthorised habitat degradation has been identified between 30 January 2020 and the relevant date, nor any post-August 2023 activities that would artificially reduce biodiversity value. Minimum BNG information has been provided: the baseline map is consistent with the habitat assessment, and the statutory metric includes a completed start page with the author's details and completion date. Strategic significance values have been set appropriately for the pre-LNRS period using Hertfordshire ecological network mapping. No irreplaceable habitats are present on site, and the metric has been correctly completed in this regard. The scheme results in a habitat unit deficit requiring off-site units, which is acceptable at validation stage; the applicant must be advised that the Biodiversity Gain Plan will need to demonstrate $\geq 10\%$ net gain within the trading rules. The landscaping plans should be reviewed alongside the ecological reports and metric to ensure the habitat creation and planting proposals are consistent across all submitted documents. Where inconsistencies are identified, updated drawings and/or reports should be provided before the relevant conditions are discharged.

BNG

The statutory metric has been reviewed and correctly identifies the loss of medium-distinctiveness habitats, resulting in a requirement for 1.19 off-site units to achieve $\geq 10\%$ net gain. On-site enhancements are standard and fall well below the LEADS 0.2 ha threshold, meaning they do not constitute "significant on-site enhancement" under government guidance and therefore do not trigger a Section 106 agreement or a full HMMP. A proportionate LEMP secured by condition is appropriate for on-site measures. The submitted metric identifies a requirement for 1.19 off-site biodiversity units to achieve the statutory biodiversity net gain requirement. Details confirming how the required net gain will be achieved will need to be provided at Biodiversity Gain Plan stage. No irreplaceable habitats are affected.

Ecology Reporting

The submitted ecological reports are acceptable and provide sufficient information to assess the likely ecological impacts of the proposal. No significant protected species constraints have been identified beyond nesting birds, with proportionate precautionary measures proposed within the submitted documentation.

The Biodiversity Gain Plan will need to demonstrate how the required biodiversity net gain will be achieved and should be consistent with the approved landscaping and ecological documents.

Conditions and Informatives

LEMP/HMMP (pre-construction)

The submitted Landscape and Ecology Management Plan/ Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan information is generally acceptable. However, the landscaping

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proposals shown on the submitted drawings should be reviewed to ensure they are consistent with the habitat creation and enhancement measures described within the ecological documents and biodiversity metric.

Where inconsistencies are identified, updated plans and/or amended ecological documents should be submitted before the condition is discharged.

Reason: To ensure habitats are protected, enhanced and managed appropriately, and to secure long-term biodiversity outcomes.

Protected Species (pre-construction)

The submitted precautionary working methods and nesting bird protection measures are acceptable and should be implemented in accordance with the approved ecological reports.

Reason: To safeguard protected and priority species in accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and NPPF.

External Lighting (pre-construction)

Any external lighting should be designed to minimise light spill onto retained vegetation and boundary habitats in accordance with the recommendations within the ecological report.

Reason: To avoid adverse impacts on bats and nocturnal wildlife.

Tree Protection (pre-construction)

The submitted ecological information should remain consistent with any approved arboricultural protection measures and retained vegetation shown on the approved plans.

Reason: To safeguard retained trees that contribute to local character and biodiversity.

Biodiversity Net Gain – Off-Site Units (pre-construction)

The submitted metric identifies a requirement for off-site biodiversity units. Evidence confirming how the required biodiversity net gain will be achieved will need to be submitted as part of the Biodiversity Gain Plan process.

Reason: To ensure the development achieves a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Biodiversity Enhancements (pre-development)

The proposed biodiversity enhancement measures, including native planting and integrated wildlife features, are supported in principle.

Reason: To deliver measurable biodiversity enhancements in accordance with the NPPF.

Soft Landscaping Implementation (post-construction)

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

The landscaping proposals should remain consistent with the habitat enhancement measures described within the ecological reports and biodiversity metric.

Reason: To ensure successful establishment of landscaping and habitat creation.

Ecology Informatives

Protected Species

If protected species are discovered during works, all activity must cease, and advice sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law. Works should avoid the nesting season where possible.

Where fencing is installed, 13cm × 13cm gaps at ground level are recommended to maintain hedgehog connectivity.

Lighting Guidance

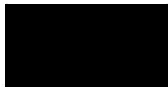
The applicant is encouraged to follow ILP Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK when finalising lighting specifications.

Biodiversity Gain Plan

A Biodiversity Gain Plan will be required and should demonstrate how the development will achieve the required biodiversity net gain.

I trust these comments are of assistance and kind regards.

Signature

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Ricardo on behalf of Hertfordshire LEADS