

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist
Date 07/05/2025

Ref: 25/00872/FP
Att: Andrew Hunter

1 The Drive, Blackmore End, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL4 8LE

Erection of self-build detached dwelling and associated external works to include pedestrian/vehicular access to the highway.

Consultee comments;

The provision of the March 2025 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) is welcomed. Pre-app comments provided advised the need for a BNG calculation, whilst mandatory 10% BNG is not required for a self-build North Herts Local Plan policy NE4 still applies so a baseline value of the site is required. It is noted that the PEA site visit was undertaken in January which is not an optimum time for botanical survey. Indeed species such as primrose and bluebell are visible in case officer site photos but missing from the species list in the PEA.

The PEA does include a habitat map which shows the extent of tree cover on site but come the time the Arboricultural survey is undertaken this has been reduced to just 16 trees. The PEA advises the need for bat survey should the giant sequoia or oak be impacted and yet the sequoia is missing from the arb report, the size of the loss illustrated by the single remaining piece of trunk shown on page 2 below.

A footnote in the PEA states a suitably qualified and experienced specialist contractor undertook the site clearance so whilst criminal activity can be discounted the removal of such a significant tree which would appear to have had potential for a biodiversity interest is still a great loss.

From the information provided I do not feel that the applicant has sufficiently demonstrated that a net gain for biodiversity can be secured and hence the proposal would be contrary to policy. However, should the case officer be minded to approve the application, recommendations made in the PEA for other opportunities to provide enhancements for wildlife including integrated bird, bat and bee bricks and hedgehog boxes in part 4 should be conditioned. The following condition is advised;

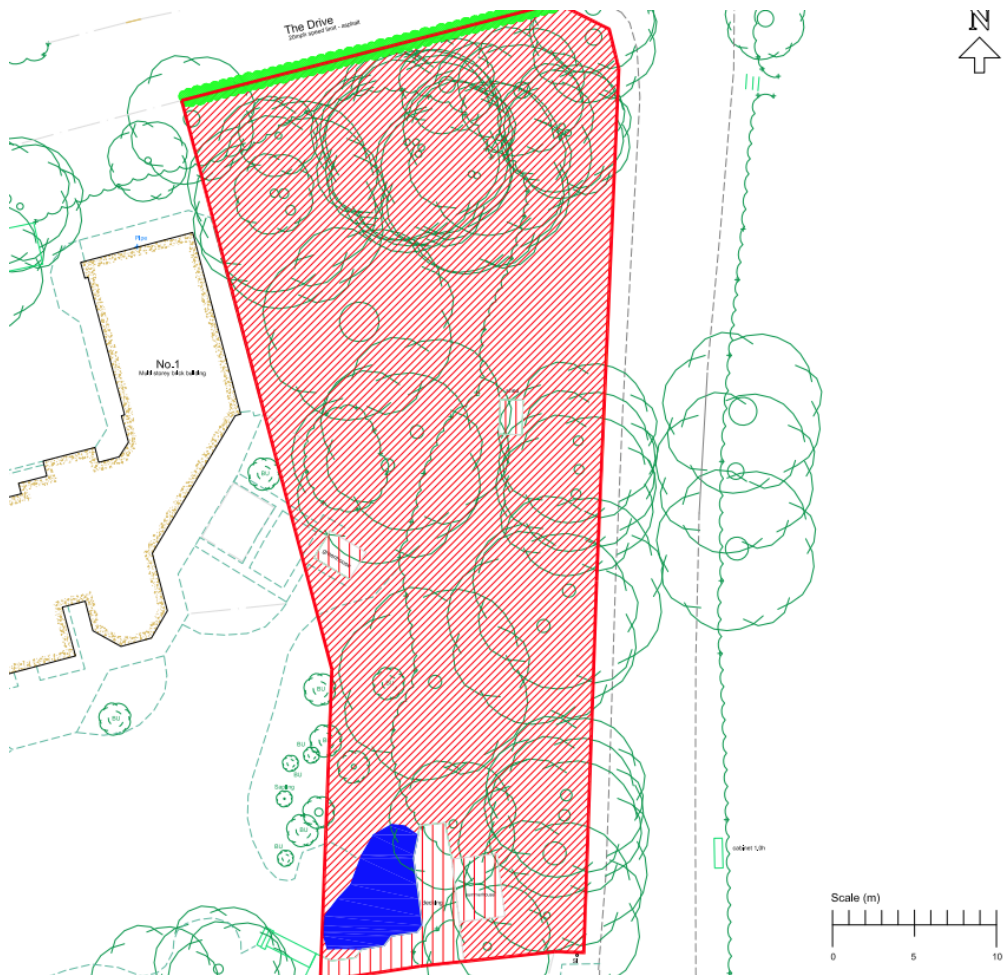
All ecological measures and/or works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in the March 2025 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the local planning authority prior to determination.

Reason: To ensure development is ecologically sensitive and secures biodiversity enhancements in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.



Photograph 4: Showing part of the lawn and mature giant sequoia, facing south.





UK HABS KEY

- Site Boundary *
- Vegetated Garden *
- Developed Land/Sealed Surface
- Ponds (Non-Priority) *
- Hedgerow *
- Individual Tree *

* Indicative Location

Rev.	Details	Drawn
		Chick
Project		
253041		
1 The Drive		
Blackmore End		
Title		
Existing Habitats Plan		
 AAE Environmental Unit 4-2 Chilham Court Shippon Adington Oxon OX13 9HX T: 01235 536042 F: 01235 536049 info@aae-uk.co.uk www.aae-uk.co.uk		