

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist
Date 15/8/24

Ref: 24/01691/FP
Att: Andrew Hunter

Land North East Of Dower House, Hitchin Road, Preston, Hertfordshire

Erection of one self-build detached 6-bed dwelling including parking and landscaping and rebuilding of brick boundary wall.

Consultee comments;

As this proposal is for a self-build property it is exempt from any mandatory requirement to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain. However, North Herts Local Plan policies still apply, having read through the submitted documents I do not feel that the proposal would be strictly in accordance with policy NE4; that all development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity.

It would appear from aerial images that the site was previously plantation woodland and that the habitats currently on site have evolved over the last 8 years or so. The biodiversity gain assessment provided with the application shows a 90% loss of habitat units as a result of the proposal. A number of enhancement opportunities do seem to have been explored within the scheme, as the DAS states, reflecting recommendations made in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). I agree that the BNG metric calculations do appear harsh and that the inclusion of a green roof, vegetated garden beds and tree and hedgerow planting will deliver ecological benefits and as such I feel the 90% loss could be misleading over what actually appears an ecologically sensitive development.

The EcIA makes recommendations for precautionary measures and ecological enhancements and provided the following conditions are attached to any permission granted I would have no objection.

No development shall take place until an Ecological Enhancement Strategy (EES) for the creation of new wildlife features such as the inclusion of integrated bird/bat and bee bricks and native tree and hedgerow planting as recommended in the July 2024 PEA has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure development secures biodiversity enhancements in accordance North Herts Policy NE4.

No development shall take place (including any, ground works, site clearance) until an ecological Precautionary Method of Working (PMW) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The PMW shall include the following.

- a) *Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.*
- b) *Identification of “biodiversity protection zones”.*
- c) *Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).*
- d) *The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.*

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- e) *The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.*
- f) *Responsible persons and lines of communication.*
- g) *Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.*

The approved PMW shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

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