

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist

Date 26/02/2026

Ref: 26/00116/FP

Att: Thomas Howe

19 Walnut Tree Road, Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3PX

Erection of four detached dwellings and detached garage to serve plot 4 including hard and soft landscaping, parking and creation of vehicular access.

Consultee comments;

Thank you for consulting me, having looked at the submitted documents I would have no ecological objection to the proposal.

The Statutory Metric provided identifies the site as being able to deliver a 30% gain in biodiversity units therefore meeting the mandatory requirement for 10% BNG. However, I feel this is an ambitious calculation given the trees proposed are above Other Neutral Grassland (ONG) at moderate condition. The baseline habitat on site is vegetated garden and developed land so gaining an uplift in value is possible given the creation of grassland, wetland and tree habitats though I challenge whether this would equate to 30%.

To achieve ONG in moderate condition requires sensitive management to maintain sward quality, ideally on a cut and collect basis to allow wildflowers to grow and seed. The tree spacing shown is relatively dense and it is likely that in a few years the canopy would close above the grassland and habitat quality will dwindle. BNG expects habitats to be retained and managed appropriately for 30 years and a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan will be required as the habitats proposed are of medium distinctiveness. As such the following condition is advised.

The development shall not commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP), prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority and including;

- (a) a non-technical summary;*
- (b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the [HMMP];*
- (c) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;*
- (d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development;*
- (e) the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority.*

The agreed measures are to be implemented on site prior to the first occupation of the first dwellinghouse hereby approved and shall remain on site thereafter.

In addition to mandatory BNG the North Herts Local Plan policy NE4 also advises development should consider the inclusion of integrated features in the built fabric of dwellings such as bird and bee bricks. Taking this into account the following condition is advised;

No development shall take place until an Ecological Enhancement Plan (EEP) for the creation of new wildlife features such as the inclusion of integrated bird/bat and bee boxes in buildings/structures, and hedgehog holes in fences has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure development is ecologically sensitive and secures biodiversity enhancements in accordance with the North Herts Local Plan policy NE4.

The case officer should note Biodiversity Gain condition wording should be added to the decision notice, the biodiversity gain condition is a pre-commencement condition having its own separate statutory basis and is deemed to apply to every planning permission granted for the development of land in England. To ensure the applicant is clear about this distinction the biodiversity gain condition should not be included in the list of conditions imposed in the written notice when granting planning permission but should remain separate.

Biodiversity Net Gain

*The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition “(the biodiversity gain condition)” that **development may not begin** unless:*

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and*
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.*

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be North Herts Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.