

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist
Date 17/4/26

Ref: 26/00587/S73
Att: Peter Bull

Ickleford Mill, Arlesey Road, Ickleford, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3UN

Section 73 Application : Variation of conditions 4, 10,11,14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 31 32, 35 and 37 of outline planning permission 17/01955/1 granted 11.03.2024 for up to 71 dwellings and associated access, car parking, garages, landscaping and open space including demolition and removal of all existing structures, buildings and hardstanding (all matters reserved except means of access).

Consultee comments;

Thank you for consulting me, having read through the submitted documents I offer the following comments for consideration with reference to conditions 35 and 37 only.

Condition 35: Compliance with Badger and Otter Report, this requires the development to be carried out in complete accordance with the recommendations contained within the Badger and Otter Report dated 2022. The Badger and Otter Report sets out a recommendation for a 10m buffer to be maintained to the River Oughton.

Condition 37: Buffer to the River Oughton is in relation to the inclusion of an undeveloped 10m buffer to the river. When defining undeveloped land it is presumed that this means land in its natural state, not having had any engineering works or built features on it.

An updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment has been undertaken dated February 2026 and is provided with the S73 application.

The applicant is requesting the 10m measurement is removed from condition 37 and states the *proposals have been subject to an updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, prepared by MKA Ecology to ensure the protection of Otters and Water Voles*. However, the ecological report still advises the 10m buffer should be maintained from the top of the banks of the River Oughton in order to reduce the risk of disturbance to both otter and water vole 'where feasible'. It does not recommend the removal of the 10m distance. Indeed, the updated report reaffirms the value of the site for otter and maintains there is presence of water vole cannot be ruled out.

I would not object to amending condition 35 to *The development shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations contained within section 4 of the submitted Badger and Otter Report dated 2022, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority*. As it is accepted that the location of the new apartment building and pumping station has been agreed.

Whilst I appreciate there have been many aspects of this proposal that the applicant has been required to consider in order to bring forward the best development in terms of design I do not feel able to support the changes to the wording of condition 37 as proposed.

Chalk streams are incredibly valuable as are their associated flora and fauna, in my opinion the 10m buffer is the minimum we should be requiring so I would suggest that any built incursion into this is restricted purely for the replacement Mill building footprint and the pumping station.