

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist

Date 9/09/2026

Ref: 26/02035/FP

Att: Thomas Howe

Land Adjacent To 67, Park Lane, Knebworth, Hertfordshire, SG3 6PW

Erection of building for church hall use including car parking, column lighting, hard and soft landscaping, bin store and air source heat pump enclosure on south-west elevation. Alterations to existing vehicular access.

Consultee comments;

Thank you for consulting me, having looked at the submitted documents and note it is the same as the previous application 25/02615/FP. As new BNG exemptions have been introduced the scheme is no longer subject to a requirement to deliver mandatory 10% BNG but North Herts Local Plan policy NE4 still applies. Given that this requires '*All development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity..*' and the Statutory Metric submitted with the previous application found the proposal to result in a net loss of 12.84% in Habitat Units it would seem that the scheme is not in accordance with policy.

The provision of the August 2025 Ecological Appraisal (EA) is welcomed and no impact on protected sites or species has been identified. Recommendations are made for ecological enhancements and the provision of the June 2026 Ecological Enhancement Plan is noted. The original condition placed on the previous approved application specifically requires the *inclusion of integrated bird/bat and bee bricks in buildings/structures*. The June 2026 EEP only shows features to be installed on trees or located on the boundary of the site. Whilst the proposed insect hotel is acceptable I would want to see integrated bat and bird bricks. As such a planning condition should still be applied to secure these features as follows;

No development shall take place until an Ecological Enhancement Plan (EEP) for the creation of new wildlife features including integrated bird/bat and bee bricks 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.

Whilst no evidence of bats was found within the site 4.3.10 of the EA comments, '*the surrounding hedgerows and trees are likely to offer higher quality habitat to feeding and foraging bats*' It is noted that 1m lighting bollards are proposed to illuminate the parking area which lies adjacent to habitat with potential bat interest. The submitted bat sensitive lighting strategy is welcomed and adherence to this should be conditioned.