

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist

Date 24/11/25

Ref: 25/02627/FP

Att: Alex Howard

Land Adjacent To, 1 Caldecote Road, Newnham, Hertfordshire, SG7 5JZ

Erection of one dwelling and associated external works.

Consultee comments;

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

The provision of the November 2025 Ecological Assessment (EA) is welcomed. The site is identified as modified grassland with a native hedgerow and an existing fruit tree on site to be retained. The submitted Statutory Metric identifies the biodiversity baseline as 0.64 Habitat Units and 0.26 hedgerow units with the post-development habitats of the site valued at 0.46 Habitat Units and 0.26 hedgerow units. Representing a loss of 28.47% of habitat units and no gain in hedgerow units, this is reflected in the October 2025 Biodiversity Net Gain review. However, the November 2025 Biodiversity Net Gain report seems to indicate a gain of 11.09% in habitat units and a gain of 13.08% of hedgerow units.

No off-site details are provided in the metric nor in the reports submitted so for the sake of this application it should be assumed that it would result in a net loss to biodiversity. That said, it would be possible for the applicant to purchase off-site units. Whilst there is no ecological objection to the principle of development at this site, information would need to be clarified to satisfy a Biodiversity Gain Plan.

The applicant is reminded that if off-site units are being provided within land under their control, as described on the North Herts Council website, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be required to ensure the BNG is secured for 30 years and managed in an appropriate manner. In addition to this, as the habitat gains are classified as off-site they will need to be registered on the Natural England Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Site Register.

Lastly, the EA makes recommendations for biodiversity enhancements in part 8 which are shown on plan AF05. It is important that bat and bird boxes are placed on the appropriate elevations where bird nests would seek to avoid southerly elevations and bat boxes northerly ones. A clarified plan is needed to guide the location of these features, as such, in conjunction with North Herts Local Plan policy NE4, 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.