

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist
Date 20/01/2026

Ref: 25/03050/FP
Att: Melissa Tyler

The Ruddy, Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, SG7 5QF
Erection of 4 dwellings including parking and landscaping.

Consultee comments;

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

The November 2025 Statutory Biodiversity Metric records a baseline value 3.17 Habitat Units and 1.16 Hedgerow Units. The post-development habitats of the site are valued at 2.39 Habitat Units and 1.81 Hedgerow Units, resulting in a net loss of 25% in habitat units. The biodiversity gain hierarchy needs to be considered when determining whether biodiversity units can be secured off site and, given the scale of resultant garden land, it's acceptable for the applicant to source the unit shortfall by purchasing off site units.

It is disappointing to see the loss of trees from the site and I am slightly concerned over the proximity of plot 2 to existing trees / hedgerow. The planning statement considers this in 7.7.3 referring to the removal of C category trees but in fact there 3 C category and 4 B category trees to be lost with a further 17 B cat impacted as a result of the proposal. North Herts Local Plan policy NE4 requires 12 metres of complimentary habitat be provided around trees and hedgerows and this site fails to achieve that. Whilst there is a degree of flexibility on assessing the application of the policy the position of the dwellings in relation to trees does seem tight.

The December 2025 Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) did not find any evidence of protected species using the site but does make recommendation for ecological enhancements. The North Herts Local Plan advises development should consider the inclusion of integrated features in the built fabric of dwellings such as bat, bird and bee bricks which are referred to in the EcIA. Taking this into account the following condition is advised;

Ecological Enhancements

No development shall take place until an Ecological Enhancement Plan (EEP) for the creation of new wildlife features such as hibernacula, the inclusion of integrated bird/bat and bee boxes in buildings/structures, 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.