

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist
Date 25/09/25

Ref: 25/01094/FP
Att: Thomas Howe

Land To The Rear 34, Arlesey Road, Ickleford, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3UU
Erection of nine dwellings including access, parking and landscaping.

Updated comments;

The provision of an updated Statutory Biodiversity Metric is welcomed, thank you. This acknowledges the loss of the poplar and that the development will result in a net biodiversity loss of 31.13% of habitat units. This equates to a unit shortfall of 1.57 which will be secured through purchasing off-site credits as the application is unable to demonstrate sufficient gains on site.

The loss of the poplar tree is regrettable, but it shows good signs of regeneration and could potentially come back as a coppiced feature. The existing fruit trees on site are all shown to be removed, so losing any nod to the heritage of the area. Old maps indicate the site was previously part of an orchard so it would be positive to see this reflected in the new planting on site where possible.

In addition to mandatory BNG the North Herts Local Plan also 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 6.5 of the April 2025 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. 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 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.