

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist
Date 23/1/25

Ref: 24/02908/PNQ
Att: Melissa Tyler

Fear End, Fears Green, Sandon, Buntingford, Hertfordshire, SG9 0QY

Prior Approval Class Q: Conversion of agricultural buildings into 7 residential dwellings

Consultee comments;

Comments were made previously in relation to this site for 24/02360/PNQ. As the reduction of units from 9 to 7 has no impact on the ecological outcomes those comments remain the same as follows;

The submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and associated bat emergence surveys report has identified building (B1) as a maternity roost for pipistrelle bats. The bat report recommends retaining this existing roost in the building fabric as the bats are found under the weatherboarding on the exterior and the proposed design allows for this. However, as works may still impact bats mitigation will be required, parts of which will require licencing and supervision by an ecologist.

The introduction of residential use onto this site will increase the light levels and consequently could have a negative impact on nocturnal species using the site and adjacent woodland.

Biodiversity net gain does not apply to Class Q applications but the NPPF and North Herts Local Plan policy NE4 do place an expectation on development to deliver net gains for biodiversity and this could be supported in this scheme through the inclusion of bat and bird boxes and new nectar / berry rich planting.

A number of planning conditions would be required to ensure the development proceeds in a manner avoiding ecological impacts and maximising gains, these are suggested below;

Construction Environmental Management Plan

No development shall take place (including ground works or vegetation clearance) until a construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) should be informed by the June 2024 Ecological Impact Assessment and include the following.

- a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.*
- b) Identification of "biodiversity protection zones".*
- c) Practical measures to avoid or reduce impacts during construction.*
- d) The location and timing of sensitive works to harm to biodiversity features.*
- e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.*
- f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.*
- g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECow) or similarly competent person.*
- h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.*

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

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 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 National Planning Policy Framework.

Lighting

Prior to occupation, a lighting design strategy for biodiversity for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall;

a) identify those areas/features on site to which bats and other nocturnal species are particularly sensitive where lighting is likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places, or along important routes used to reach key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging, and

b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that works do not result in adverse impacts to protected species. (Section 15 of the NPPF)

European Protected Species Licence

No works are in any circumstances to commence unless the local planning authority has been provided with either:

- a licence issued by Natural England authorizing the specified activity/development to go ahead; or*
- a statement in writing from the relevant licensing body to the effect that it does not consider that the specified activity/development will require a licence.*

Reason: To ensure that works do not result in adverse impacts to protected species.