



Client:
Hill Residential Limited
The Courtyard, Abbey Barns,
Ickleton, CB101SX

Project:
Land off Gray's Lane & Crow Furlong
Hitchin
Hertfordshire

Drawing:
Proposed Site Plan

Scale: 1:1250@A3	Date: June 2025		
Drawn By: CK	Checked By: PD	Drawing No: 181-PS-2-101	Rev. No:
CAD Ref:			

Appendix 5083/2:

Pre-application comments and correspondence from Hertfordshire Ecology

From: Bernard Fleming [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 July 2020 10:18
To: Jon Byrd [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Land to the east of Foxholes and Gainsford House, Pirton Road, Hitchin - 16/03240/1PRE

Hi Jon,

Thanks for this and apologies for the delay in getting back to you.

Firstly, that 'other' letter is attached – the old maps of the area (which prompted some of my comments (you'll be able to spot them) are very interesting.

Moving onto your next steps, I agree with your summary of our conversation.

In a little more detail, I do believe it would be worth updating the Phase 1. As for dormice, it is my opinion that the species is essentially extinct in Hertfordshire but still hope to be surprised one day. So, although I would not 'demand' further survey work is carried out, if you believe the circumstances introduce the risk that they may be present, then I endorse your approach.

I agree with the approach regarding reptiles; effective avoidance/safeguarding measures should prove adequate on the basis of what we know now.

As for BNG, that's right. Again, we can't and don't 'demand' use of the metric (unless set out in local policies) but we would want to see meaningful enhancements that are relevant to the site and its surroundings that are sustainable in the long term. Should your client wish to pursue a metric we will happily review it. An eye will obviously have to be kept on progress with the Environment Bill, but we do not anticipate any significant movement on that in the near future.

One last thing, shortly after writing the attached letter, our attention was drawn by a member of the public to the presence of roman snails in the woodland. It would be wise to explore this as well and suggest any necessary measures.

It was good of you to make contact in the first place and I hope our conversation helps your work on this project.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Best wishes,

Bernie Fleming

Ecology Advisor

Hertfordshire Ecology

Environmental Resource Planning

Postal Point CHN109

Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford SG13 8DN

t: 01992 555220

To contact the Hertfordshire Ecology team, please direct enquiries to: ecology@hertfordshire.gov.uk or phone 01992 555220

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

From: Jon Byrd [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 July 2020 14:16
To: Bernard Fleming [REDACTED]
Cc: Anita Parry [REDACTED] Ecology <Ecology@hertfordshire.gov.uk>
Subject: Land to the east of Foxholes and Gainsford House, Pirton Road, Hitchin - 16/03240/1PRE

Hi Bernie,

Thank you for speaking with me just now, regarding the above site, it is very much appreciated...especially given how busy it sounds like you / the team are. It of course helps that you are familiar with the site / nearby applications etc. and that you've looked at this since Daniel Weaver left. You mentioned a consultation response that you had prepared in 2018, would you be able to forward this over to so we can make sure all / any comments are addressed?

In the interests of enabling a robust planning application to be submitted, and to establish whether any additional ecological constraints are likely to be present, we discussed updating the Phase 1 habitat survey information during the optimal season.

It was also discussed that Dormouse may well be extinct in the County and are unlikely to represent a constraint to the proposals. That said, in order head off any likely queries from the WT, or other interested parties, there may be merit in undertaking an update / more recent assessment for Dormouse. This could include a further 'nut search' / habitat suitability assessment, but undertaking a nest tube survey would likely be disproportionate to the risk / likelihood of their presence.

With regards reptiles, you are in agreement that common reptile species are widespread in the County and that proceeding on the assumption that they could be present in suitable habitats would likely result in a similar mitigation / safeguarding approach, as confirming their presence through formal survey effort. As such, we intend to include a precautionary mitigation / safeguarding strategy within our Ecological Appraisal, and are not proposing to carry out any additional detailed survey work (assuming the on-site habitats are all as previously recorded).

We also talked about the likely requirements for a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment to be included within the planning submission and you were in agreement that this could likely be avoided, subject to provision / detailing of proportionate ecological enhancements, tied into surrounding green infrastructure (where possible), managed in the long-term. We also discussed that a BNG assessment is likely to be requested by the Wildlife Trust but that there is no Policy requirement and it could be a disproportionate use of our Client's funds, albeit if the Client wanted to prepare one you would be in a position to review this.

Given the nature of the proposals and current land use, we aren't proposing to undertake any further ecology surveys above those bits mentioned above.

I trust that the above is a fair reflection of our conversation and will of course be happy to discuss all of this further.

Many thanks,
Jon

Jon Byrd
Principal Ecologist
t: 01295 279721 | [REDACTED]

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Visit our website for the latest news from Aspect Ecology: **July 2020 New draft British Standard for Biodiversity Net Gain – Aspect Ecology submits our response to the consultation.** For further details please click [here](#).

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HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

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Tel: 01992 555220

Tom Rea

Planning Officer

Development Management

North Hertfordshire District Council,

PO BOX 10613,

Nottingham, NG6 6DH

Dear Tom,

Ask for: Bernie Fleming

Tel: 01992 555220

Date: 17 August 2018

18-01669-PRE

60 dwellings with associated access, car parking, open space and landscaping together with the provision of community woodland

Land to the East of Foxholes and Gainsford House and on the West Side of Crow Furlong, Hitchin

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology.

The Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, June 2018) has found little of ecological significance. The appraisal appears to be thorough and comprehensive and I have no reason to doubt its findings, although the description wholly failed to recognise the woodland's previous land use as an orchard, which is present on the 1930s maps. There is no indication that any fruit trees survive, although they may not have been looked for if this origin was not known. The abundance of hazel may be linked to a previous orchard use although I am not aware of any cob-nut 'plats' within Hertfordshire. This would, however, need further consideration in respect of the management plan for the site (see below), although there are no current proposals to remove the woodland area as part of the development.

Consequently, I have no objections to the principle of development at this site provided it follows the principles described in Section 6 of the appraisal and layout of the Master Plan (AT Architecture, March 2018.) and in particular that the existing woodland boundary features are retained and restored. The approach will do much to ensure that the net loss of biodiversity is minimised yet I would like to see measures to prevent the loss of hedgehogs from gardens included along with suggestions on how bird and bat boxes will be maintained, especially those embedded in new houses.

Section 6 also sets out a number of enhancement measures. Alone, these are less compelling, perhaps as a consequence of the appraisal apparently blurring the role of mitigation and enhancement. When combined, however, both sets of proposals present a reasonable and proportionate set of measures even if understandably lacking in some detail at this stage. I note, in particular, the intention to secure the long-term management of the secondary woodland, which seems to have generated from or replaced the previous orchard. Currently the wooded area lacks structural diversity which is typical of an area naturally regenerated at the same time and consequently, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss the detail of these proposals prior to any application, to ensure they fully meet the expectations of national and local planning and biodiversity policy and the potential origins of the woodland site.

Funded by the following LPAs:

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, DACORUM BOROUGH, EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT, HERTSMERE BOROUGH, NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT, ST ALBANS DISTRICT, THREE RIVERS DISTRICT, WATFORD BOROUGH, WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH

It is imperative that the acceptability or otherwise of development at this site in biodiversity terms will depend on the satisfactory delivery of these or similar measures as a minimum – especially the management of the existing woodland. The appraisal suggests they could be secured by condition or agreement but I recommend they are embedded in any future application. Given their relative importance, this underpins our wish that they form **part of the proposal** and not the subject of debate post-decision.

Yours sincerely,

Bernie Fleming

Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire Ecology

Appendix 5083/3:

Assessment Methodology

Evaluation Methodology

1. The evaluation of ecological features and resources is based on professional judgement whilst also drawing on the latest available industry guidance and research. The approach taken in this report is based on that described by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland' (2018)¹.

Importance of Ecological Features

2. Ecological features within the site/study area have been evaluated in terms of whether they qualify as 'important ecological features'. In this regard, CIEEM guidance states that *"it is not necessary to carry out detailed assessment of features that are sufficiently widespread, unthreatened and resilient to project impacts and will remain viable and sustainable"*.
3. Various characteristics contribute to the importance of ecological features, including:
 - Naturalness;
 - Animal or plant species, sub-species or varieties that are rare or uncommon, either internationally, nationally or more locally, including those that may be seasonally transient;
 - Ecosystems and their component parts, which provide the habitats required by important species, populations and/or assemblages;
 - Endemic species or locally distinct sub-populations of a species;
 - Habitat diversity;
 - Habitat connectivity and/or synergistic associations;
 - Habitats and species in decline;
 - Rich assemblages of plants and animals;
 - Large populations of species or concentrations of species considered uncommon or threatened in a wider context;
 - Plant communities (and their associated animals) that are considered to be typical of valued natural/semi-natural vegetation types, including examples of naturally species-poor communities; and
 - Species on the edge of their range, particularly where their distribution is changing as a result of global trends and climate change.
4. As an objective starting point for identifying important ecological features, European, national and local governments have identified sites, habitats and species which form a key focus for biodiversity conservation in the UK, supported by policy and legislation. These are summarised by CIEEM guidance as follows:

Designated Sites

- Statutory sites designated or classified under international conventions or European legislation, for example World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA);

¹ CIEEM (2018) 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine', Version 1.3, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester (updated September 2024)

- Statutory sites designated under national legislation, for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR);
- Locally designated wildlife sites, e.g. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

Biodiversity Lists

- Habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales (largely drawn from UK BAP priority habitats and priority species), often referred to simply as Priority Habitats / Species;
- Local BAP priority species and habitats.

Red Listed, Rare, Legally Protected Species

- Species of conservation concern, Red Data Book (RDB) species;
- Birds of Conservation Concern;
- Nationally rare and nationally scarce species;
- Legally protected species.

5. In addition to this list, other features may be considered to be of importance on the basis of local rarity, where they enable effective conservation of other important features, or play a key functional role in the landscape.

Assigning Level of Importance

6. The importance of an ecological feature should then be considered within a defined geographical context. Based on CIEEM guidance, the following frame of reference is used:
 - International (European);
 - National;
 - Regional;
 - County;
 - District;
 - Local (e.g. Parish or Neighbourhood);
 - Site (not of importance beyond the immediate context of the site).
7. Features of 'local' importance are those considered to be below a district level of importance, but are considered to appreciably enrich the nature conservation resource or are of elevated importance beyond the context of the site.
8. Where features are identified as 'important' based on the list of key sites, habitats and species set out above, but are very limited in extent or quality (in terms of habitat resource or species population) and do not appreciably contribute to the biodiversity interest beyond the context of the site, they are considered to be of 'site' importance.
9. In terms of assigning the level of importance, the following considerations are relevant:

Designated Sites

10. For designated sites, importance should reflect the geographical context of the designation (e.g. SAC/SPA/Ramsar sites are designated at the international level whereas SSSIs are designated at the national level). Consideration should be given to multiple designations as appropriate (where an area is subject to differing levels of nature conservation designations).

Habitats

11. In certain cases, the value of a habitat can be measured against known selection criteria, e.g. SAC selection criteria, 'Guidelines for the selection of biological SSSIs' and the Hedgerows Regulations 1997. However, for the majority of commonly encountered sites, the most relevant habitat evaluation will be at a more localised level and based on relevant factors such as antiquity, size, species-diversity, potential, naturalness, rarity, fragility and typicalness (Ratcliffe, 1977). The ability to restore or re-create the habitat is also an important consideration, for example in the case of ancient woodland.
12. Whether habitats are listed as priorities for conservation at a national level in accordance with Sections 41 and 42 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, so called 'Habitats of Principal Importance' or 'Priority Habitats', or within regional or local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) is also relevant, albeit the listing of a particular habitat under a BAP does not in itself imply any specific level of importance.
13. Habitat inventories (such as habitat mapping on the MAGIC database) or information relating to the status of particular habitats within a district, county or region can also assist in determining the appropriate scale at which a habitat is of importance.

Species

14. Deciding the importance of species populations should make use of existing criteria where available. For example, there are established criteria for defining nationally and internationally important populations of waterfowl. The scale within which importance is determined could also relate to a particular population, e.g. the breeding population of common toads within a suite of ponds or an otter population within a catchment.
15. When determining the importance of a species population, contextual information about distribution and abundance is fundamental, including trends based on historical records. For example, a species could be considered particularly important if it is rare and its population is in decline. With respect to rarity, this can apply across the geographic frame of reference and particular regard is given to populations where the UK holds a large or significant proportion of the international population of a species.
16. Whether species are listed as priorities for conservation at a national level in accordance with Sections 41 and 42 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, so called 'Species of Principal Importance' or 'Priority Species', or within regional or local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) is also relevant, albeit the listing of a particular species under a BAP does not in itself imply any specific level of importance.
17. Species populations should also be considered in terms of the potential zone of influence of the proposals, i.e. if the entire species population within the site and surrounding area were to be affected by the proposed development, would this be of significance at a local, district, county or wider scale? This should also consider the foraging and territory ranges of individual species (e.g. bats roosting some distance from site may forage within site whereas other species such as invertebrates may be more sedentary).

Appendix 5083/4:

Grassland Species Summary

Species recorded within the internal (grassland) sward areas of the site during specific grassland survey work undertaken on 24 May 2018.

<i>Species</i>		Number of quadrats presence recorded (out of 10)
Scientific name	Common name	
<i>Grasses</i>		
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot	9
<i>Poa</i> sp.	Meadow-grass species	8
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog	4
<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Meadow Foxtail	3
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass	1
<i>Bromus hordaceus</i>	Soft Brome	1
<i>Forbs</i>		
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander Speedwell	8
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup	6
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common Mouse-ear	6
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field Bindweed	6
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Ragwort	5
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	Cut-leaved Crane's-bill	3
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley	3
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover	2
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	2
<i>Trifolium dubium</i>	Lesser Trefoil	2
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel	1
<i>Taraxacum</i> agg.	Dandelion	1
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved dock	1
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled Dock	1
<i>Lamium album</i>	White Dead-nettle	1
<i>Silene latifolia</i>	White Campion	1

Total: 6 grass species and 16 forbs recorded across all quadrats, with individual quadrats each containing a recorded total of 4-10 species.

Other species recorded incidentally within the grassland sward, but not present within any of the individual quadrats:

Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus*, Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, Common Vetch *Vicia sativa*, Horseradish *Amoracia rusticana*, Garden Daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*

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