

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist
Date 20/07/2026

Ref: 25/02064/OP
Att: Ben Glover

Land Adjacent To 10, Hambridge Way, Pirton, Hertfordshire

Erection of up to 50 dwellings including affordable housing, together with amenity space, landscaping and all associated infrastructure and works (all matters reserved except means of access).

Updated Consultee Comments;

Great Crested Newts were confirmed as present in the surveyed ponds and the applicant has chosen to use the Natural England District Level Licence route to allow works to proceed lawfully. An Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate has been provided.

The submission of the May 2026 Bat Activity Survey (BAS) is welcomed, it notes the *'hedgerows and lines of trees situated at the boundaries of the Site as well as the hedgerow bisecting the Site at its centre have been identified as important areas for the Site's bat assemblage.'* Going on to recommend, the *'network of lines of trees and native hedgerows highlighted in Figure 6 are important features for commuting and foraging bats. supporting a regionally significant assemblage of bat species, and must be retained where possible'*

Figure 6: Commuting and foraging areas for bats at Land East of Walnut Tree Road, Pirton



The applicant cites NPPF paragraphs in attempting to justify the removal of the central hedgerow and yet no mention is made of the NPPF's advice that '*existing trees are retained wherever possible*' or where it acknowledges the value of wildlife corridors. The proposed Framework Plan shows an indicative green link through the development which has different development block sizes above and below. This link could have followed a central retained hedgerow with blocks 1 and 4 (shown below) reversed.



The site as proposed results in 19% net loss of biodiversity units. Unallocated sites such as this should be better placed to secure on site enhancements and this remains disappointing. Where compromise has to be found it should first seek to retain existing features before seeking off-site solutions.

Housing unit densities can still be maintained, if necessary, with a housing mix which favours smaller units. Should this application be viewed positively by the case officer I would suggest a condition be added to require an amended land use plan which shows the central hedgerow as retained.

Additional conditions would include; Construction Ecological Management Plan, Ecological Enhancement Plan, Habitat Management & Monitoring Plan, Lighting Strategy in accordance with figure 7 from the BAS and the deemed Biodiversity Gain Condition.