

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist

Date 30/1/25

Ref: 24/02889/FP

Att: Naomi Reynard

Land At Roundwood, Back Lane, Graveley, Hertfordshire,

Residential development of 281 dwellings and associated roads, parking, realignment of Back Lane, drainage, landscaping, open space, servicing facilities and associated works

Consultee comments;

Having looked at the submitted documents I have no ecological objection to the proposal subject to conditions as listed.

Biodiversity Net Gain and Ecology

The December 2024 Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) contains a number of recommendations to mitigate impacts and I welcome the suggestion of integrated ecological enhancements though have not been able to locate these on a plan. 1 bird nest box per plot equivalent is a good ratio with the addition of at least 25 bat boxes on south and western edges beneficial. Both bat and bird features should be integrated into the built fabric of buildings and an ecological enhancement plan as informed by the EcIA should be conditioned.

I welcome the provision of a Statutory Metric and note that the site has the ability to deliver 17.8% increase in habitat units and 14.3% increase in hedgerow units thereby meeting the statutory requirement of a 10% BNG.

Tree works detailed in the December 2024 Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment should be included in the Construction Environment Management Plan.

Planting strategy

I welcome the proposal to use local provenance Hertfordshire varieties in the orchard planting. Also, the choice of nectar / berry rich planting palette. The planting plans are well laid out with ecological benefits considered and a good species mix to support climate resilience. The placement of an oak by the existing one in the NW corner is nice to see, with its statement setting allowing space for such a large tree.

Boundary treatment

Roundwood itself is an ancient woodland containing ground flora and fauna sensitive to disturbance. As a result it was expected that a 1.8m (minimum) steel mesh fence – similar to that shown below – would be installed around the periphery of the woodland to prevent access from people or pets.



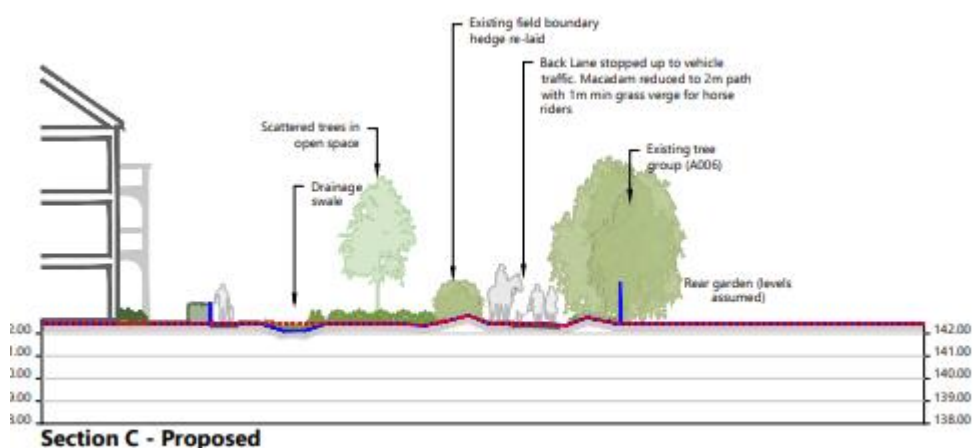
Currently only a 1.2m post and rail fence is all that is shown, this will not prevent pets entering the woodland which must be avoided.

Clarification over hedgerow treatment along Back Ln is needed. The cross section showing back lane indicates the existing field boundary hedge to be re-laid which is welcomed. Detail needed for this should be in the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.

Lighting

A Lighting Strategy will be required, bat activity on western boundary will require sensitive lighting and I welcome the use of low level bollard lighting on sensitive edges as shown on Services and Lighting plan.

Concern was previously raised about the potential for light spill into back lane from the new 3 storey blocks. Section C shows the proximity of the buildings to the lane and it would be helpful for the lighting strategy to address how, if any, light spill will be mitigated beyond the 7m sensitive lighting zone.



Suggested conditions; **CEMP, EEP, Lighting Strategy, BGP, HMMP**. Wording 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 December 2024 Ecological Impact Assessment and Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment to include the following.

- a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities in particular in relation to trees.*
- 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 hibernacula, the inclusion of integrated bird/bat and bee bricks in buildings/structures and hedgehog holes in fences, as informed by the December 2024 Ecological Impact Assessment, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

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 be informed by part 5, impacts and mitigation, of the December 2024 Ecological Impact Assessment;

- 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.

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.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan

A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) to ensure delivery of the gains as detailed in the Biodiversity Gain Plan shall be provided. The HMMP will include;

- how significant on-site enhancements will be managed*
- timing and methods for habitat monitoring*
- monitoring results reporting timescales*
- timing and methods for review of management proposals*

The approved HMMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the biodiversity gain plan period in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

