

HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

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Your Ref: 5/2022/0267
Ask for: M J Hicks
Tel: 01992 556158
Date: 22/03/2023

Dear Lee

Application Outline application (access) - Erection of up to 95 dwellings, including 40% affordable dwellings and 5% self-build and custom build dwellings, public open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure
Address: Land Between Caravan Site And Watling Street Park Street St Albans Hertfordshire
Application No: 5/2022/0267

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology on additional badger, BNG and layout information submitted in respect of this proposal, for which I would like to make the following comments:

1. The reserve area has been re-visited (28/09/22) by the Consultant Ecologist in respect of badgers. No setts were discovered, although the use of this area for foraging was recognised. Whilst the existing arable field is unlikely to provide a substantial foraging resource given its previously intensive arable management, its edges are clearly part of the existing wider foraging grounds. The woodland sett holes are all more than 30m from the proposed development site, the zone of influence considered appropriate for sett protection depending on the nature of works. The survey appeared thorough and followed best practice, and I have no reason to object to its findings.
2. As no setts are likely to be directly affected, no offence will be caused and no licence will be necessary. The legislation maintains badger welfare by protecting animals and their setts from harm or damage, but does not specifically protect foraging areas. However, development would normally seek to ensure wider badger welfare is maintained by retaining foraging and access routes where appropriate.

Hertfordshire LEADS provides Landscape, Ecology, Archaeology, Design and Sustainability support to planning departments in Hertfordshire.

3. Consequently, a precautionary approach is proposed in respect of badgers, the report stating *The Illustrative Landscape Design and Illustrative Layout have been updated to provide a 10m buffer between the Site and the land to the south. This area will be a rough grassland area with occasional scrub planting and bordered by a species rich hedgerow.* Version 6 of this plan (dated 11/10/22) now shows an additional buffer area within the application site to include rough grassland and a proposed hedgerow. It is identified as additional badger foraging area on the Illustrative Layout Rev F. It would now also positively contribute to BNG within the site (see below). This will further enhance and protect the 'nature reserve' strip to the south of the site. A walkover survey is also proposed prior to any works, which follows best practice.

4. I support these proposals and consider that they are reasonable in respect of addressing concerns regarding badgers. Consequently, I consider the LPA has taken due consideration of badgers as a protected species.

5. I note that the Biodiversity Net Gain concerns raised previously have been recognised and new proposals to achieve more justifiable better grassland within the development have been presented. These are also supported. The net gain has been re-calculated as achieving 12.9% BNG, with some potential for more as part of detailed proposals to be submitted as Reserved Matters. The metric has been provided and I have no reasons to disagree with its completion. An illustrative Biodiversity Gain Plan has also now been provided and shows the buffering areas of Other Neutral Grassland and other habitats provided as part of the development. Consequently, I consider this approach in achieving BNG to be acceptable in respect of this Outline application.

6. On the basis of the above, I consider that the application can be determined accordingly.

I trust these comments are of assistance,

Regards,



Martin Hicks MCIEEM
Senior Ecology Officer, Hertfordshire Ecology