

Mark Peacock  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council  
The Campus,  
Welwyn Garden City  
Hertfordshire,  
AL8 6AE

Hertfordshire LEADS  
Hertfordshire County Council

County Hall  
Pegs Lane  
Hertford, Herts SG13 8DF  
[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)

**Contact:** Fenella Stacey  
**Tel:** [REDACTED]  
**Email:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** 22 January 2024

Dear Mark,

**Application:** Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 14 dwellings.  
**Address:** Wells Farm, Northaw Road East, Cuffley, Potters Bar, Herts. EN6 4RD  
**Application No:** [6/2020/3451/MAJ](#)

### **ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Thank you for consulting this office on the above application.

#### **Overall Recommendation:**

- Application can be determined with no ecological objections based on the current BNG plans proposed (with any conditions/Informatives listed below).

#### **Summary of Advice:**

- A Condition for an updated Biodiversity Gain Plan and Metric which will account for GCN habitat creation.

#### **Supporting documents:**

I have made use of the following documents in providing this advice:

- Biodiversity Net Gain Plan – 29/11/2023
- Biodiversity Metric Calculations – 29/11/2023
- Biodiversity Net Gain Plan – January 2024
- Biodiversity Metric Calculations – 05/01/2024
- Ecological Verification Report – January 2024

### Comments:

Previous comments made by Hertfordshire Ecology advised Biodiversity Net Gain for this development (06/05/2021 & 30/09/2021). Since our last comments (dated 15/12/23) an updated statutory metric and Biodiversity Net Gain Plan have been provided. These documents demonstrate a habitat biodiversity unit change of 26.35% in habitat units, and 281.17% in hedgerow units, opposed to the previous 11.61% and 281.17%. A Technical Note has also been provided and demonstrates that there have been no changes to the Site's baseline conditions from when they were first recorded. As such, using the same habitat baselines as previously done so is acceptable in this case.

I note that the baseline units for the site have changed due to several existing trees now being classed as 'small' under new guidance for the Statutory Metric, having previously been classed as 'moderate' in Metric 4.0. This has reduced the baseline habitat units on-site and has subsequently created an uplift in % of biodiversity units to be delivered. Overall, I find no reason to dispute the BNG proposals for the site and can see that the proposals are synonymous with the good practice.

Previous comments were made in respect to BNG being proposed in areas of the site that will be private gardens. However, this did not mention that the BNG metric does account for a potential loss of habitat in designated garden areas that will be subject to private ownership and personal use and does this by scoring the habitat a lower value. Given this, and the increased number of habitat units proposed overall, I feel delivering Net gain in private gardens would not prevent this proposal from achieving the mandatory 10% required to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain.

The updated statutory metric does not include the proposed habitat creation in the form of additional ponds and adjacent habitat creation (under GCN mitigation licence) on western adjacent land within the site owner's boundary. However, at this stage the metric and gain plans are acceptable. This is because these documents demonstrate that an excess of 10% in Biodiversity Net Gain can be delivered on-site without the off-site protected species habitat compensation. Such is in line with Government guidance, and I therefore find no issue with the BNG proposals on this basis.

Once the design for the off-site GCN habitat provisioning (both terrestrial habitat and aquatic) has been confirmed, this should be incorporated accordingly into a revised metric as stated within 6.3.2 of the current Gain Plan. I do not consider that this would reduce the Net Gain currently proposed for the site in any way. The amended metric should also inform an appropriately updated Biodiversity Gain plan. As the existing Gain Plan does not describe seed mixes for the Other Neutral Grassland or other forms of management.

Overall, I find no fundamental constraints associated with the BNG plans proposed for the development. On this basis I advise that any permission granted for this application is done so with the following Condition for a Biodiversity Gain Plan and updated Metric (to account for GCN aquatic and terrestrial habitat creation). This should demonstrate how the habitat creation and enhancement will be delivered and secured on-site for long-term biodiversity benefit. This would supersede the previous LEMP condition advised.

[Suggested Wording]

*“Development shall not commence until an updated biodiversity gain plan (BGP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The content of the BGP shall be informed by an updated metric to ensure the delivery of a minimum of 10% net gain in biodiversity and should also include habitat management plans for the GCN pond and terrestrial habitat creation. The Biodiversity Gain Plan shall take account of the principles within the latest submitted Biodiversity Net Gain Plan (dated January 2024), and include the following:*

- a). Description and evaluation of features to be managed;*
  - b). Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management;*
  - c). Aims and objectives of management;*
  - d). Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives;*
  - e). Prescriptions for management objectives;*
  - f). Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period);*
  - g). Details of the body or organisation responsible for implementation of the plan;*
  - h). Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures;*
- The approved plan shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.”*

All advice on other ecological matters previously addressed, not mentioned above, is still advised.

I trust these comments are of assistance,

Regards,

Fenella Stacey  
Assistant Ecological Advisor, Hertfordshire LEADS

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