

Site Name	Land At Crabtree Farm, Hinckley Road, Barwell Leicestershire	Advice Request	Ecology
Planning Ref	23/01177/FUL	Response Deadline	8 th January 2024
Planning Officer	Tim Hartley	Completed By	Kirsten Hunter BSc ACIEEM
Date of Request	18 th December 2023	Date of Issue	15 th January 2024

Stance: Approve subject to off-Site biodiversity requirements and planning conditions

Dear Tim,

I am writing in respect of ecological matters for the above application regarding the proposed residential development of 45 dwellinghouses with garage and associated driveway, open space, landscaping, drainage and LEAP (Revised scheme 22/01053/FUL). I have accessed the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC) database and Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council's online planning portal and reviewed the following documents:

- Landscape Plan – Drg No. EML FE 1245 03 and 04, dated Nov 2023;
- Ecological Position Statement by FPCR, dated Dec 2023. Read in conjunction with:
 - Land at Crabtree Farm West, Hinckley Road, Barwell. Ecological Impact Assessment. BWB (November, 2022) (Annex A); and
 - Land at Crabtree Farm East, Hinckley Road, Barwell. Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Wildlife Site Assessment. BWB (November, 2021) (Annex B); and
- Site Location Plans, dated Nov 2023.

FPCR has produced an Ecological Position Statement in support of the above planning application which includes an update walkover of the Site undertaken in Nov 2023. The original Site visit by BWB in July 2021 assessed the quality of grassland against Local Wildlife Selection (LWS) criteria and found the site did not meet requirements of LWS selection. This grassland classified as 'modified grassland' in 'poor' condition, which was confirmed by the Nov 2023 update.

Recommended presence/absence bat surveys regarding the high potential mature tree TN2 (Section 3.8) should be carried out if this tree requires removal/management due to the development. Survey effort should follow guidance as per the Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition, 2023). Surveys should be carried out between May and September (optimum period May to August). Presence/absence surveys will allow the surveyor to consider the need for mitigation, enhancement and compensation to assess the likelihood of an offence being committed and to make a decision as to the need for a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence from Natural England.

The 2021 PEA by BWB suggests the presence of 'low' suitability foraging habitat for bats on Site, however bat activity surveys have not been recommended. A professional ecologist's judgement should be made on whether the need for bat activity surveys is appropriate. Otherwise, bat activity surveys of appropriate timing and survey effort should be carried out, as per Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition, 2023). For 'low' suitability habitat, this should comprise one survey visit per season and static surveys for a minimum of 5 consecutive nights per season in optimal weather conditions.

An update BNG was carried out by FPCR based on the Nov 2023 walkover. Section 3.5 reports a loss in BNG regarding habitat units of -42.97% and minor gain for linear units of +1.50%. The full metric calculation is missing and should be provided for review. The assessment concludes that the proposed development does not have capacity to achieve net gain on Site. Therefore, off-site compensation for habitat loss is recommended. The applicant should agree with the LPA on a suitable mechanism to achieve this. This could form a pre-commencement planning condition, and a BNG metric should be provided to demonstrate net gain has been achieved in this way.

In addition, the following are recommended as pre-commencement conditions. These should be approved by the LPA, implemented prior to commencement of works and strictly adhered to throughout the development process:

- 30-year Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) to detail habitat establishment/upkeep and demonstrate how habitat conditions sought in the BNG both on and off Site will be achieved/maintained;
- Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP) to include details on specification and installation of ecological enhancements as listed in the BWB PEA Section 7, including bat and bird boxes, hedgehog highways, planting plans, wildflower meadow creation as well as suitable refuge and hibernation site creation (log and brash piles) for amphibians and reptiles, both on and off-Site. This should also include details on locations of dropped kerbs to benefit common amphibians;
- A biodiversity specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) including details on identification of potentially damaging construction activities, timing of works to avoid harm to breeding birds and bats, measures to reduce impacts on protected/priority species during construction and identification of biodiversity protection zones e.g. root protection areas (RPA) for retained hedgerows and buffers around the existing pond;

- Precautionary method of working such as a Reasonable Avoidance Measures Method Statement (RAMMS) document to include protected and priority species raised as concerns in the PEA e.g. common amphibians, badgers, breeding birds, reptiles, brown hare and hedgehogs; and
- Artificial lighting strategy sensitive to bats particularly with regards to limiting light spill into retained habitat on Site and adjacent foraging and commuting habitat. This should be reviewed and approved by a suitably experienced bat ecologist.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Kirsten Hunter BSc, ACIEEM

Senior Ecologist

On behalf of Leicestershire County Council (Ecology Team)