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Contact: Chloe Weingarten
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Date: 02/07/2025

Dear Steve,

Application: Outline planning application for development of employment land (flexible use B2, B8, E(c) and E(g)), informal open space, associated works and infrastructure including a new access from A507, with all matters reserved except for access.
Address: Land South Of A507, West Of A10 Buntingford
Application No: **3/24/1255/OUT**

ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Thank you for consulting this office on the above application.

Overall Recommendation:

☒ Application can be determined with no ecological objections (with any informatives/conditions listed below).

Summary of Advice:

All previous advice in relation to the CEMP, badgers, reptiles, barn owls, lighting, and biodiversity enhancements should be followed in full.
The below will supersede any advice on great crested newts, bats, water vole, and otters.
Great crested newt informative.
Minor amendments have been made in relation to the biodiversity net gain proposals, however the 10% minimum has still been reached.

Supporting documents

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment: Design Stage – CSA Environmental (June 2024).
Biodiversity Metric (CSA Environmental).
Ecological Impact Assessment (CSA Environmental; June 2024).
Biodiversity Survey – Appendix document.
Ecological Impact Assessment (CSA Environmental, June 2025).

Comments

Further to our comments dated 20/11/2024, an Ecological Impact Assessment has now been submitted which contains the results of the surveys which were missing from the previous submission.

All previous advice in our previous letter dated 20/11/2024 in relation to the CEMP, badgers, reptiles, barn owls, lighting, and biodiversity enhancements should be followed in full. However, the following will supersede any advice on bats, great crested newts, water vole, and otters.

Bats: Results of a GLTA have now been submitted, and no trees to be affected were identified to possess any Potential Roosting Features for bats. Therefore, no further surveys for trees are required.

Activity surveys were undertaken between April – August 2024, which confirmed that at least 6 species of bat are utilising the site. Most activity was from common pipistrelles. The report states that the patterns of activity did not indicate that any bats are roosting on or adjacent to the site. Barbastelle activity was recorded during the surveys, however this was deemed to be from occasional passes, and again, there was no indication that suggests a nearby roost.

Water vole and otter: No signs of otter or water vole were found during the two survey visits in March and August 2024. Therefore, both of these species were considered to be absent from the site, and no further surveys are required.

Reptiles and GCN: A low population of reptiles is known to be present along the south-west margin of F3 which is offsite. However, no reptiles were found on or adjacent to the site. The previously advised mitigation to be incorporated into the CEMP will sufficiently cover reptiles in the event that they are found on site.

There are multiple ponds within 250m of the site, therefore a HSI was undertaken on these ponds. All ponds scored either a “poor” or “below average” score. EDNA samples were taken from P1, P2, and P5, all of which came back with a negative result. This indicates the likely absence of great crested newts from the site, and no further surveys are required.

In the unlikely event that GCN are found during the works, **I advise the following informative should be added to any permission granted:**

“If great crested newts, or evidence of them, are discovered during the course of works, work must stop immediately, and advice sought on how to proceed lawfully from an appropriately qualified and experienced Ecologist or Natural England to avoid an offence being committed.”

Biodiversity net gain: Amendments have been made to the biodiversity net gain proposals which have been included in an updated biodiversity net gain assessment report, and metric.

A 12.49% net gain for habitats, and 10.11% net gain for hedgerows is now proposed. Only very minor changes have been made in terms of habitat and hedgerow creation, and development still achieves the minimum 10% required by law.

The biodiversity gain condition will apply to this application, whereby a biodiversity gain plan will be submitted as part of this condition. We advise that the government template for the biodiversity gain plan should be used, and a metric which corresponds with the gain plan should be submitted alongside this.

The claims for BNG for this site would be considered as ‘significant’ net gain. This is because of the creation of medium distinctiveness habitats. In this instance the LPA are advised to secure this significant net gain for the respective habitat units via legal agreement whether through an S106 agreement or conservation covenant.

Given that BNG for this site is significant, if the LPA were minded granting permission, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) should be secured via the legal agreement. This shall demonstrate how the habitat enhancement and creation, and subsequent target habitat conditions on-site will be created, enhanced, and monitored over 30 years following the completion of the capital works required to create them. It is recommended that the HMMP should be in line with the HMMP template produced by DEFRA. Considerations should also be given within any legal agreement to secure resources to allow adequate monitoring over the 30-year period.

I trust these comments are of assistance,

Regards,

Chloe Weingarten
Assistant Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire LEADS

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