
From: Johnston, Christopher
Sent: 05 August 2021 15:06
To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: FW: SMD/2021/0089 Capri, Gallows Green

Categories:

From: Kate Dewey
Sent: 03 August 2021 15:24
To: Johnston, Christopher
Cc: Steve Massey; Fauna Forest Ecology Ltd; Alex Fitzroy
Subject: SMD/2021/0089 Capri, Gallows Green

Ref number SMD/2021/0089

Application Location Capri, Gallows Green, Alton, Staffordshire, ST10 4BN

Application description Outline planning application with all matters reserved for a residential development

Site size hectares 0.685

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has been asked to review the above application as part of a service level agreement with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to provide ecology advice regarding planning and development management functions.

SUMMARY –Holding objection -further information or amendments required.

Required prior to determination:

1. A Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) to ensure biodiversity net gain is achievable.
2. Initial details of drainage proposals shown within updated plans.

Secure via condition should approval be granted:

3. Tree and hedgerow protection recommendations as per the arboricultural report (13 April 2021).
4. As per the ecology report by Fauna Forest Ecology (May 2021):
 - a. A method statement detailing reasonable avoidance measures (RAMs) as set out in section 5 must be secured and followed in full. To also include details set out in sections 4.22, 4.23, and 4.24. To protect amphibians, birds, hedgehogs and reptiles.
 - b. As per sections 4.11, 4.12, 4.17 and 5.3, a sensitive lighting scheme must be devised to protect commuting and foraging habitat for bats and other mammals.
 - c. The landscaping and planting scheme is also to include hedgerow planting as set out in sections 4.9 and 4.10.
 - d. As per section 4.17, any boundary/garden fencing must allow for hedgehog commuting. To mitigate for habitat fragmentation.
 - e. As per section 4.20, bird boxes to be included as enhancements. A minimum of 10 are recommended – may also be fixed to suitable trees.
5. A soft landscaping and sustainable drainage plan showing ecology enhancements, sustainable drainage features, and planting scheme.

Documents reviewed:

- Location Plan
- Block Plan
- Arboricultural Report
- Ecological Report
- Design & Access Statement

HABITATS

Biodiversity Net Gain

The current proposals will see a loss of grassland habitat and the potential for retained boundary habitats to deteriorate in condition. The new gardens may provide some habitat to compensate for this depending on design but there will be no control over the amount or quality across the development once inhabited, so this cannot be relied upon for net gain. Within the current proposals it is unclear if a net gain can be achieved due to the lack of green space available beyond garden space.

A Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) is required to ensure the development provides a Biodiversity Net Gain. This is required prior to determination to ensure a net gain is achievable within the current proposals.

Specific habitat protection/ loss/ creation

The tree and hedgerow protection recommendations as set out in the arboricultural report must be followed in full. To be secured via condition.

Within the current plans the gardens of the proposed dwellings within the southern half of the site appear to back onto existing hedgerows with trees, meaning they are likely to be under pressure from pruning and other disturbance leading to a loss in habitat quality. The ecology report recommends a 5 m buffer between gardens and existing boundary features to incorporate a wildlife corridor. This will provide commuting habitat for hedgehogs and other species.

Native hedgerows should be used as garden boundaries instead of fencing where possible. If this is not feasible, climbing plants should be used on the fencing to provide additional habitat. A wildflower rich lawn seed mix should be used within the gardens and front lawns. Green spaces along road and parking verges and site edges should incorporate native herb, shrub and wildflower planting. Suitable plants from the site could be transplanted where possible.

Orchard tree planting should be considered, as traditional orchards are a priority habitat and have been steadily lost from the Alton area.

Depending on land ownership, the southernmost boundary of the site could be enhanced by creation of a hedgerow to join up existing trees and to shield the neighbouring field from the development.

The above may be secured via condition.

Surface water and waste drainage

No drainage plans have been submitted. The current block plan shows very limited space available for sustainable drainage features. The ecological impact of any proposed drainage needs to be considered. This includes any excavation or other works to implement these features, but also surface runoff and any waste treatment that may impact upon existing watercourses downstream.

We would like to see a variety of sustainable drainage features utilised. This could include managing runoff with swales and a rain garden, and building designs could include rainwater harvesting (RWH) systems such as water butts. Any soakaways if proposed should incorporate features such as swales, ditches, and ponds which will enhance biodiversity and provide additional pollutant filtering. Permeable surfaces should be used where possible, such as the spare parking spaces where reinforced grass systems or pervious paving can be used.

Some initial drainage proposals are needed prior to determination to ensure they are deliverable alongside ecology considerations.

SPECIES

Great Crested Newts, Amphibians

The ecological report states that there are no ponds within 250 m of the site except for the one within the garden of the house, but there are at least 6 other ponds within 500 m of the proposed development site (MAGIC). Furthermore, there are no considerable barriers to movement between the site and these ponds, with numerous hedgerows and ditches that provide corridors. Due to this the development will need to consider the presence of great crested newts within terrestrial habitat on site, particularly for boundary features and any ground excavation and vegetation clearance that occur near to these. Reasonable avoidance measures (RAMs) for amphibians are required within the method statement to be secured via condition.

Birds

The proposals will see the hedgerow along the main road as well as ornamental shrubs and trees within the site removed. Clearance must avoid the bird nesting season or alternatively, have these features checked prior to clearance works and be supervised by an ecologist. Reasonable avoidance measures (RAMs) for nesting birds as part of the method statement are to be secured via condition.

The ecology report recommends enhancements in the form of bird boxes which may be fitted to new dwellings and retained trees. A minimum of 10 are recommended. To be secured via condition.

Bats

The ecology report states that bats are likely to commute and forage along the boundary hedgerows, trees, and surrounding fields, particularly those that separate the southern field from surrounding fields. A sensitive lighting scheme is required to avoid light spill onto these features and protect bat habitat. This will also benefit other species.

A dark buffer zone or dark corridor must be incorporated as part of this along the boundary hedgerows and trees that separate the southern field from surrounding fields (seek ecologist advice). Any security lighting is to be on a short timer. External lighting must face down and be hooded/baffled to reduce light spill. Any street lighting must be designed and positioned in such a way to reduce light spill onto surrounding habitats and illuminate target areas only.

This may be secured via condition.

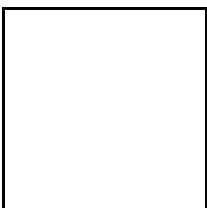
Hedgehogs and other small mammals

Hedgehogs are negatively impacted by barriers to movement such as garden fencing. Any proposed garden fencing along the site boundary will need to facilitate gaps for hedgehog commuting. It would be best to utilise native hedgerow planting instead of fencing to better provide for wildlife. This may be secured via condition.

Regards,

Kate Dewey BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

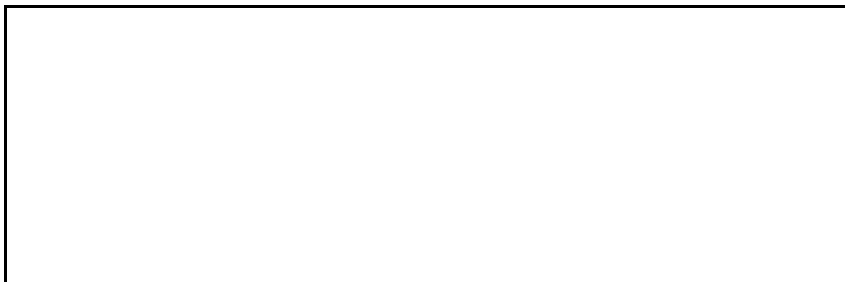
Senior Planning Officer



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