
From: Kate Dewey
Sent: 24 September 2021 17:11
To: Johnston, Christopher; Planning Comments (SMDC)
Cc: Andy Warren; Alex Fitzroy
Subject: Cash Heath Farm SMD/2021/0555

Categories:

Ref number SMD/2021/0555

Application Location Barn, Cash Heath Farm, Cash Heath, Forsbrook, Staffordshire, ST11 9DE

Application description Proposed conversion of redundant barns into 3 residential units

Site size hectares 0.186

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 – No objection subject to conditions

Secure via condition should approval be granted:

1. Bat method statement detailing mitigation as set out in the bat report.
2. Bat enhancements (minimum of 2 bat boxes and bat-friendly planting included within soft landscaping).
3. Lighting plan – designed sensitively mitigating for bat commuting habitat.
4. Timing of works to avoid the bird nesting season and replacement swallow nesting features.
5. Precautionary great crested newt method statement.
6. Sustainable drainage features
7. Soft landscaping scheme, including habitat enhancements.

Documents reviewed:

- Application Form
- Bat report (Cotswold Wildlife Surveys, August 2021)
- Drawings No. 2009 09 02 – 10

DESIGNATED WILDLIFE SITES, WIDER ECOLOGICAL NETWORK

No designated wildlife sites are located near to the development. A semi-natural habitat corridor is present to the east.

HABITATS

Biodiversity Net Gain

Policy NE1 in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Adopted September 2020, expects that 'all development where possible seeks to deliver a net gain in biodiversity proportionate to the size and scale of the development. In circumstances where adverse impacts are demonstrated to be unavoidable, developers will be required to ensure that impacts are appropriately mitigated, with suitable compensation measures towards loss of habitat used only as a last resort where there is no alternative'.

As there is no baseline information provided on the site's habitats, it is hard to determine whether a net loss or gain would occur. The proposals would appear to reduce the extent of existing green areas via creation of parking spaces. Biodiversity value should be maximised through suitable landscaping- wildlife-friendly ornamental planting, climbers on walls, using a short flower-rich lawn mix, and native or fruit tree and hedgerow planting around the new boundaries. Where grassland is disturbed to install the septic tank and soakaway, this should be reinstated using a suitable meadow mix. Detailed landscaping should be secured via condition.

Drainage

Sustainable drainage for surface water should be used, such as soakaways and ideally water butts installed on each unit.

Secure SuDS features via condition.

SPECIES

Bats

A preliminary roost assessment and subsequent bat surveys were conducted by Cotswold Wildlife Surveys in May, June and July 2021. A single occasional brown long eared bat roost was recorded in Unit A (as per the block plan). Numerous commuting bats were also recorded on site, predominantly along the western boundary.

As per the ecology report, a licence from Natural England will be required to proceed legally with the development. The LPA needs to consider the 3 tests under the Habitat Regulations. Given the small scale of the bat roost and the proposed mitigation, it is considered these tests will be met.

There would appear to be room in at least one building for a bat loft and this should be considered in preference to bat boxes. The works must be undertaken in line with the recommendations of the ecology report. A bat sensitive lighting scheme is also required. Any additional lighting needs to avoid any bat boxes and identified commuting habitat - mainly the lane along the western boundary of the site where numerous bats were recorded commuting from a supposed maternity roost to the south.

To enhance the site for bats, we recommend installing two bat boxes in suitable locations. This could be within suitable trees or on the buildings themselves. We suggest consulting with the site ecologist who knows the site for suitable locations. In addition to this, bat-friendly planting using night-scented plants is recommended as part of the soft landscaping plan.

Secure via condition the bat method statement, detailed bat mitigation, sensitive lighting scheme and bat enhancements.

Great Crested Newts

According to OS maps, there are numerous ponds within 250 m of the development, with more present within 500 m. There are also drainage ditches that run near to the proposed site, and additional ditches that may not be mapped. Due to this, there is potential for great crested newts and other amphibians to be present. Although the risk is low due to the nature of the development, some excavations are expected due to the proposed septic tank and associated pipework. A precautionary working approach detailed within an amphibian method statement is required, to include:

- From now until construction commences, any grass areas within the red line boundary and where the septic tank and associated pipework are proposed are to be kept short, so that they do not attract amphibians seeking shelter.
- Good housekeeping during the construction phase e.g. materials stored on pallets, no debris or material left in piles for prolonged periods, to ensure no temporary shelter is created that may attract animals seeking shelter.
- Stop work and consult an ecologist if a great crested newt is found.

Secure great crested newt precautionary method statement via condition.

Birds

At least 10 swallow nests were found within the buildings. Timing constraints will be required for building work to avoid the bird nesting season (March – August inclusive).

To replace the nesting opportunities post-development we recommend including a minimum of 10 swallow nesting features within other accessible buildings on the landholding, or in dark covered areas such as garages, lean-to structures or porches.

Condition needed to secure timing of works and swallow nesting compensation.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Increased sustainability could be achieved by including solar panels.

Regards,

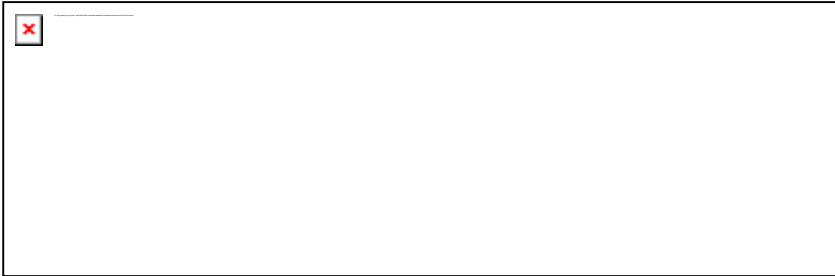
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Planning consultations- please send to planning@staffs-wildlife.org.uk

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