
From: Planning For Nature <planningfornature@staffs-wildlife.org.uk>
Sent: 16 March 2023 13:13
To: Johnston, Christopher; Planning Comments (SMDC)
Cc: Richard Millington
Subject: SMD/2023/0073 Woodhead Farm

Categories:

SMD/2023/0073

Woodhead Farm, Woodhead Road, Light Oaks, Staffordshire, ST2 7NH

Conversion of existing barns into 3No. residential dwellings

0.38 hectares

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust provides ecology advice to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council as part of a service level agreement.

SUMMARY – HOLDING OBJECTION - There is currently insufficient information to determine the full ecological impact of the application, and to demonstrate there will be a biodiversity net gain.

Required prior to determination:

- Further bat surveys to complete the buildings roost assessment, and check trees
- Detailed bat mitigation plan.
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of wider site and BNG small sites metric.
- Drainage location information

Secured by conditions:

- Swallow mitigation plan
- Landscaping Plan including location of species features.

Documents Reviewed:

- Existing and Proposed Plans
- Application Form
- Bat Activity Survey, September 2022 by Elite Ecology

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.'

The application currently lacks information with regards to habitats on the site, and the potential for other protected species, which could be impacted by works to the non-built areas of the site. A brief preliminary ecological appraisal of the wider site is required.

The proposals are likely to result in a net loss unless well designed, due to the need to clear existing vegetation and establish gardens. A Small Sites biodiversity metric is required to show that the plans will provide a small gain.

To maximise wildlife value of landscaping, the following should be considered: planting of native trees; new native hedges on boundaries; enhancement of existing hedges with trees/additional species; re-seeding disturbed areas with wildflower meadow mix; planting of traditional orchards; and creating wetland features for surface water discharges.

Drainage Scheme

Surface water is proposed to be dealt with via soakaways and foul via a septic tank. No plans have been provided- this infrastructure could impact on other habitats, including potentially outside of the development boundary. Drainage systems are also an opportunity for sustainable solutions and habitat gains, if integrated early in the site design. Therefore, more information on the location of drainage features is required before determination.

SPECIES

Bats

The Bat Activity Survey conducted 25th August 2022 confirmed the presence of common pipistrelle bat roosts in buildings B1 and B2 and due to the date and numbers of bats it is suspected that building B1 supports a maternity roost.

Five additional bat species were recorded foraging and commuting in the landscape surrounding the site including Whiskered and Daubenton's bats which are found less frequently.

Further surveys are required. As the buildings have high value for bats and only one activity survey has so far been carried out, the reports states:

'Two further bat activity surveys are to be carried out in the 2023 activity season between May and September, with at least one of these in the optimal survey season of mid-May to August.'

It is not clear whether any trees would be felled but this would seem likely given the need to restore the buildings and create gardens. Any trees to be lost should also be checked for bat roosting potential.

This is required before determination in order to judge the impacts and mitigation necessary, and to be able to consider the 3 tests under the Habitat Regulations.

Birds

The survey report confirms the presence of nesting barn swallows and other common species such as wren. Swallows are extremely site faithful returning each year to the same nest sites. Many former nest sites within the Staffordshire Moorlands have been lost due to barn conversions and therefore to prevent a loss of biodiversity as required by Local Plan Policy NE1, it will be necessary to provide suitable mitigation. The survey report makes recommendation in this regard – details of suitable replacement nesting sites should be secured via condition.

Kate Dewey BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

Senior Planning Officer



Please note, ecology advice is provided to SMDC 2 days per week- working days are normally Tuesdays and Thursdays.

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



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