

From: [Planning For Nature](#)
To: [Pet Twigg](#); [Planning Comments \(SMDC](#)
Cc: [; Kellie Collinson](#)
Subject: Re: SMD/2023/0050 Yew Tree Farm
Date: 08 June 2023 17:18:59

SMD/2023/0050

Yew Tree Farm, Eaves Lane, Armshead, Staffordshire, ST2 8LY

Replacement Farm Dwelling

0.1 hectares

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

SUMMARY – No objection, subject to updated site plans and appropriate conditions.

Required before determination:

1. Updated site plan showing location of replacement hedges, hedge enhancement and reinstated grassland areas
2. Confirmation of bird and bat features to be provided and locations

Secure via condition should permission be granted:

3. Detailed landscaping scheme
4. Details of lighting, if external lighting will be installed.

Bats and Birds

The Bat Bird Presence Absence Survey May 2023 by Evolution Ecology found no roosts to be present within the farmhouse. Sensitive lighting is recommended to minimise impacts to bats using the area in future.

A number of outbuildings have been demolished and the stone barn within the site has been partly dismantled for repair. These buildings were not surveyed in the PRA or activity surveys. It is unknown whether bats or birds used these buildings but there has likely been a reduction in shelter and opportunities for these species. Hedge removal has also reduced nesting sites for birds.

As part of providing a net gain for biodiversity, we would wish to see in-built bat roosting and bird nesting features included in the new house. We recommend one bat brick and two roof access tiles (designs/ specifications can be provided by the ecologist), as well as two inbuilt bird boxes (recommend house sparrow terrace and starling box). A barn owl nest box would also be ideal on a tree within the landholding, as this species is present locally. These should be shown on a plan, which may be provided now or secured via a pre-commencement condition.

Outline Drainage Scheme

The revised site plan submitted 21 March 2023 and accompanying email show that the existing septic tank is to be used, along with a new rainwater soakaway in the field to the north-west. These would not impact any nearby drains or watercourses so would be satisfactory. Care would be needed when constructing the new soakaway/ drainage pipes to avoid tree roots of existing hedges.

We suggest that creating a new small pond/ wetland area would provide more

biodiversity gain than a soakaway, if possible. This is a desirable but optional alternative.

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 southern hedgerow along the access track has been removed along with the verge, as part of widening and resurfacing the track. A garden hedge has also been removed. This has resulted in a loss of approx. 45m of native hedge and some areas of grass, which will need to be replaced as part of any landscaping scheme. The current dwelling will be demolished and a new dwelling built further from the boundary, with gardens proposed on the footprint and surroundings within the curtilage. Part of the adjoining field has been altered to install a mobile home, which would need to be reinstated with a suitable meadow mix.

A replacement native hedgerow should be planted along the track as far as there is space, and any disturbed areas reinstated with a suitable wildflower or hedgerow meadow mix to the hedge margins/ verge. The hedge species mix should include locally characteristic shrubs - hawthorn, holly, hazel, dogwood, honeysuckle, dog rose and standard trees at 20m spacing, such as oak, alder, birch and field maple.

As this will take some time to establish, it will not replace the value of the mature original hedge immediately. Additional native hedging should be added around the proposed boundary. Fruit trees would be an appropriate addition. Enhancement of the other trackside hedge should be undertaken to add extra species from the above list where there are gaps, along with further standard trees within/adjacent the hedge.

Location of replacement and enhanced habitats should be shown on an updated site plan. A detailed landscaping plan with relevant specifications could be secured via condition, to be submitted and approved post-construction.

Regards,

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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On Thu, 16 Mar 2023 at 15:45, Planning For Nature <planningfornature@staffs-wildlife.org.uk> wrote:

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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 before determination:

1. Bat activity surveys
2. Drainage location plan

Secure via condition should permission be granted:

3. Any bat mitigation required
4. Landscaping scheme

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA)

The Preliminary Roost Appraisal (PRA) Bat Survey – January 2023 by Evolution Ecology Due to the number of potential access points and suitable roosting features, the building is deemed as having 'Moderate' potential for roosting bats. Therefore, two bat activity surveys (dusk/dawn) are required during the bat activity season (May to August)

Impacts have not been assessed. If roosts are present there would be loss of roosts when the building is demolished, and a bat licence would be needed.

The further surveys are required to establish bat presence/ absence and suitable mitigation.

Considering the location of the new dwelling could help reduce impacts if bats are present, i.e. building the new house nearby before demolishing the current dwelling, as this would make timing

more flexible.

Outline Drainage Scheme

No plans for surface or foul water systems have been provided, although the information states that a septic tank and soakaways will be used. This infrastructure could impact on other habitats, including potentially outside of the development boundary. It may also affect watercourses if there are any nearby. Therefore, the location of drainage features is required before determination, to be able to judge ecology impacts.

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 proposal should show, through landscaping, that any loss of green areas will be balanced by new planting. In order to maximise wildlife value of landscaping, the following should be considered: short flowery lawn mix for amenity grassland; climbers on walls and fences; fruit trees; new native hedges on boundaries; enhancement of existing hedges with trees/ additional species; re-seeding disturbed areas with wildflower meadow mix; and creating wetland features for surface and treated water discharges.

Regards,

Kate Dewey BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

Senior Planning Officer

 07494852383

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