

From: [Planning For Nature](#)
To: [Curley, Jane](#); [Planning Comments \(SMDC\)](#)
Cc: [Steve Massey](#); castell_ecology@btinternet.com
Subject: SMD/2020/0198 Orchard Farm
Date: 04 August 2023 08:00:17

SMD/2020/0198

Orchard Farm, Churchill Road, Cheadle, Staffordshire, ST10 1DJ

Outline permission for residential development

0.46 hectares

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

Required prior to determination:

1. Updated PEA survey, with biodiversity metric
2. Outline drainage plan

NATURE RECOVERY NETWORK

The site is in the Urban and Wetlands Habitat Connectivity Opportunity Areas

Local priority habitats and wildlife corridors include hedgerows, Cecilly Brook and floodplain meadows.

The site is partly within a strategic ecological corridor 9 (Cecilly Brook corridor) within the Staffordshire Moorlands Green Infrastructure Strategy 2018.

DESIGNATED WILDLIFE SITES

Statutory Designated Sites

Cecilly Brook LNR lies to the north of the site, and while not directly impacted, drainage from the site could impact the brook, and habitat loss/ severance of habitat corridors linking to the LNR needs to be avoided.

HABITATS

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

The PEA submitted was undertaken in 2018 and its therefore out of date. An updated walkover to note current habitats and any changes is required. This should form the baseline for a biodiversity metric.

Habitats identified at the time include native boundary hedgerows which are a priority habitat.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Policy NE1 paragraph 5 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 will result in a net loss of biodiversity due to the amount of development proposed with little green space available for compensation. Therefore a Biodiversity Impact Assessment using the latest Defra metric is required, and any off-site mitigation will need to be calculated. Given the scale of the site and its location on the edge of a green infrastructure corridor, we recommend that at least 5% net gain is provided.

In order to maximise wildlife value of landscaping, the following should be considered: Short flowery lawn mix for amenity grassland, climbers to create green walls, fruit trees, new and enhanced native hedges with trees/ additional species, re-seeding disturbed areas with wildflower meadow mix, and creating wetland features for surface and treated water discharges.

Outline Drainage Scheme

No plans for surface or foul water systems have been provided. This infrastructure could impact on other habitats, including outside of the development boundary. It may also affect watercourses, particularly as the Cecilly Brook is nearby. Drainage systems are also an opportunity for sustainable solutions and habitat gains, if integrated early in the site design. Therefore, an outline of the type and location of drainage features is required before determination, to be able to judge ecology impacts.

We advocate an integrated approach that maintains existing site hydrology, makes the best use of water in the landscape and maximises biodiversity value. Source control should be used such as permeable surfaces, reinforced grass parking spaces, water butts and rainwater harvesting.

Use of landscaping to infiltrate water such as roadside swales, rain gardens and wetland features should be considered as well as amphibian-friendly roads and drainage design.

SPECIES

Bats

No bat roosting features were found on the site. The existing farmhouse at Orchard Farm outside the site boundary was not surveyed but looks to have potential for bats. Bats are likely to use the site for foraging and commuting, particularly using the hedges to commute from the brook into gardens and roosts in the town. Retaining hedges and a dark corridor for bats alongside the footpath should be a priority with the design, as well as new roosting features within new buildings.

Birds

Three priority birds were recorded on the site- Song Thrush, Dunnock and House Sparrow. Habitat, particularly hedgerows and native shrub planting should be retained and created, as well as nest boxes for house sparrow built in to any new buildings. Climbing plants, particularly ivy, on building elevations and other walls could be used for vertical habitat.

Net gain for species

All new buildings should include new bat and bird features as appropriate to the structure:

Built-in bat bricks and access tiles, and if possible a bat loft in a larger home.

House sparrow nest terrace, house martin cups, starling nest features.

2 storey buildings and taller- swift boxes in apex areas

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

The orientation of dwelling roofs should be a consideration for the final design, as very few dwellings are positioned for maximising potential solar gain and use of solar panels.

Shade for south-facing walls and car parking areas should also be considered in the design.

Regards,

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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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