

Land To the North Of Hawes Farm High Street Ipstones

SWT Further Comments

Application Reference: SMD/2025/0022

Location: Land To The North Of Hawes Farm High Street, Ipstones

Proposed Development: Erection of two detached dwellings

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.

We have viewed the following documents:

Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Note. Land off High Street, Ipstones, Staffordshire, Haslam Ecology, Wolverhampton, 25th September 2024, revised 5th March 2025.

Report Reference: HE 2200524

- Small Sites Metric (the statutory biodiversity metric) completed by on 25th September, 2024.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust recommend a **holding objection** until the further information detailed below is supplied and correct and has been assessed:

- Justification of why hedgerows described in the report are not included in the SBMCT or inclusion of the hedgerows in the SBMCT
- Clarification as to why the area detailed as 'modified grassland within residential area' has been classified as this rather than 'vegetated garden'.
- A plan showing how the nutrient enrichment from road usage and neighbouring residential properties will be reduced to a level that it will not cause enrichment of the other neutral grassland
- LEMP detailing how appropriate conditions including soil specification and details of the seed mix for achieving other neutral grassland in good condition and moderate grassland will be achieved
- Draft HMMP for the on-site habitats that will be managed and monitored for 30 years – other neutral grassland and modified grassland
- Details of the S106 securing monitoring and management of the significant on-site habitat (Other Neutral Grassland)

Further Detail

Hedgerows

Please could you justify why the hedgerows are not included in the SBMCT given they are described in the ecology report and are not stated as being 'outside the site' (unlike the trees) or update the metric to include this linear feature and provide a means for the necessary uplift.

The report states:

'The boundaries are a mixture of the original dry stone walls with garden boundary hedgerows of hawthorn (western boundary), and cherry laurel, honeysuckle and holly in the southwestern corner. There is a wooden panel fence along the eastern boundary which joins a managed leylandii hedgerow.'

'There are adjacent mature trees (not within the development boundary) of London Plane and rowan.'

Other Neutral Grassland

The report states 'an enclosed field of modified grassland that is floristically poor due to management regime and nutrient enrichment (from road usage and neighbouring residential properties)' this will make other neutral grassland in good condition difficult to achieve. If the other neutral grassland only reaches moderate condition, there will be a net loss of -6.69%; therefore 10% BNG will not have been achieved. It is therefore very important that the grassland reaches good condition to make a net gain of over 10%. There needs to be some demonstration that the desired habitat in the desired condition is achievable. There should be a plan produced to show how the nutrient enrichment from road usage and neighbouring residential properties will be reduced to a level that it will not cause enrichment of the other neutral grassland. As the soil is currently enriched, it will be unsuitable to support other neutral grassland, it will need to be replaced with a low nutrient soil suitable to sustain other neutral grassland in good condition. A LEMP or other plan provided showing how that correct type of soil / ground conditions to achieve other neutral grassland in good condition is required. The site preparation plans, ground conditions and the HMMP will need to show that the habitats are capable of being achieved and managed for 30 years. A draft HMMP is requested at this stage; this will also be needed to secure 30 years of management and monitoring as detailed below.

Modified Grassland

Clarification is sought as to why the area detailed as 'modified grassland within residential area' has been classified as this rather than 'vegetated garden'. The SBM user guide has specific guidance on private gardens. If the modified grassland is not a private garden as described in the definition in the SBM user guide, along with the other neutral

grassland it will need to have a planning condition / S106 securing 30 years of management and monitoring as detailed below; this should also put in place provisions to ensure that this area does not become a private garden for at least 30 years after completion of the development. It should also be included in the LEMP and HMMP.

Protected Species

It is concerning that a data search still has not been carried out despite our previous comments mentioning we had needed to carry one out. The CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal state '*A PEA normally comprises both desk study and walkover survey*', there is no explanation as to why the desk study has been omitted for the current application.

The revised report mentions ground nesting birds and mammals, although in the mammal section, only are mentioned. There appears not to have been a consideration of the other protected species mentioned in our comments made in February 2025. For this reason, we recommend a precautionary approach with measures for these species secured by planning conditions.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Is the Net Gain Condition Capable of Being Discharged?

To determine whether the biodiversity gain condition is capable of being discharged, we need to consider any planning conditions or S106s securing significant onsite habitat enhancements, including any conditions requiring the maintenance of the enhancement for at least 30 years after the completion of the development.

We have insufficient information to consider this – we need details of these conditions or S106, and further information to set these conditions or S106. The conditions need to be set prior to determination of this application.

BNG Planning Conditions

Please note that there are significant on-site enhancements delivering BNG and the management and monitoring of these (and subsequent monitoring of this) will need to be secured with a S106 agreement with SMDC for 30 years. This would include the other neutral grassland and modified grassland. This is in addition to the net gain condition. [There is government guidance on legal agreements for BNG](#). This will need to be agreed and secured 30 years from completion of development of management and monitoring of net gain; therefore it is likely that the schedule for the monitoring of monitoring by SMDC should be agreed prior to consent being given. The agreement will need to detail what is considered completion of the development and the start of the 30 years of management and monitoring. Details of who will and how the other neutral grassland and modified grassland will be managed will need to be supplied to show that the desired condition will be met. It should be clear that the neutral grassland and modified grassland will not become part of the private gardens in the next 30 years. Details of this

will need to be supplied to enable us to determine whether the net gain condition is capable of being discharged.

The HMMP will also need to be approved and secured by a planning condition or legal agreement – this could be linked to the condition above, however we would recommend that a draft HMMP is agreed to set the condition or S106 securing the management and monitoring of the significant onsite BNG prior to the decision and then the final HMMP is secured in a condition alongside the approval of the gain plan (net gain condition) as a pre-commencement condition, as, if there are changes needed to discharge the net gain condition, the HMMP may need to be altered.

If planning consent is given, we would wish to see that suitable ground (soil) conditions have been created to achieve other neutral grassland in good condition, this would need to be proven through soil testing. [Buckinghamshire Council have created some guidance on soil sampling for grasslands and we would expect this to be followed](#), [Natural England also have a technical Information Note for Soil sampling for habitat recreation and restoration](#). If the soil is not suitable, then, as the plans stand, 10% net gain will not be achievable and a new plan will be needed to deliver the 10% BNG – therefore we recommend the following:

- Planning condition for soil testing to prove that the soil is suitable is needed prior to approval of the HMMP and the biodiversity gain condition can be discharge

Protected Species Planning Conditions

- Retention of the hedge and, if this cannot be secured into the future, planting a parallel hedge to act as the curtilage of the new properties (allowing the existing hedge to be an ecological feature that can be retained for commuting/foraging bats and nesting birds and provides some buffer around the development).
- Tree root protection zone for construction – this would be a pre-commencement condition.
- Ecologically sensitive lighting plan for external nocturnal lighting both during and post construction – this would be a pre-commencement condition. With another condition asking for evidence that the lighting plan has been adhered to.
- 2x integrated bat boxes per house – 4x in total – citing to be agreed as a pre-commencement condition. A separate condition for the placement of the boxes.
- 2 x bird nest boxes on each house (1 x house sparrow and 1 x generic) (4x in total) – citing to be agreed as a pre-commencement condition. A separate condition for the placement of the boxes.
- Hedgehog precautionary measures for site clearance and demonstration of retaining 'hedgehog highway' features in landscape design – depending on scheme details, this might be the retention of the existing hedgerows or suitable

holes are incorporated at the base of boundary structures to allow wildlife to commute through the site, such as specific “hedgehog holes” which are 13 x 13cm in size.

- During construction, it is recommended that deep, steep sided excavations are not left overnight without an escape route, either a ramp or sloping bank. Similarly, it is advised that any pipes stored on site are capped.
 - Open excavations should be checked in the morning on a daily basis for the presence of any animals that may have fallen in during the night.
 - If a hedgehog is found onsite, it should be picked up with gloved hands, placed in a ventilated box and released into suitable nearby vegetation that will be unaffected by the proposed works. If a hedgehog is injured, thought to be injured, it should be immediately taken to a local vets/wildlife hospital for treatment.
 - It is important that any new fencing or walls installed as part of the development do not create a barrier to dispersal for wildlife. It is recommended that.
- Reasonable avoidance measures to avoid entrapment of mammals during construction. These should be included in a CEMP and toolbox talks with a sign off mechanism to show that construction workers will abide by them. These should include:
 - During construction, it is recommended that deep, steep sided excavations are not left overnight without an escape route, either a ramp or sloping bank. Similarly, it is advised that any pipes stored on site are capped.
 - Open excavations should be checked in the morning on a daily basis for the presence of any animals that may have fallen in during the night.
 - If a hedgehog is found onsite, it should be picked up with gloved hands, placed in a ventilated box and released into suitable nearby vegetation that will be unaffected by the proposed works. If a hedgehog is injured, thought to be injured, it should be immediately taken to a local vets/wildlife hospital for treatment.
 - Reasonable avoidance measures to protect reptiles or amphibians during construction. These should be included in a CEMP and toolbox talks with a sign off mechanism to show that construction workers will abide by them. These should include:

- Onsite grassland should be maintained to a short sward (less than 100mm) prior to the commencement of works. This is to discourage reptiles from using the site.
- Before any works commence, all site contractors/stakeholders will be briefed during a 'Tool-box' talk of the potential for protected species to occur on site, what to look out for and what to do in the event that animals are found.
- During construction works, materials that require piling will be stored within areas of bare ground above ground level, using pallets to prevent reptiles from seeking shelter below.
- Excavations/trenches should not be left open overnight to prevent amphibians/reptiles falling into them and becoming trapped. If trenches cannot be filled in after the working day for whatever reason, an escape mechanism such as wooden planks of 50mm wide as a minimum should be placed in them at a 45-degree diagonal angle.
- Open excavations should be checked in the morning on a daily basis for the presence of any animals that may have fallen in during the night.
- If an amphibian/reptile is found work must stop immediately, and contact should be made with the assigned licensed, qualified ecologist. At no point should any person handle a herptile without express consent from the qualified ecologist. Any newts, frogs or toads found should be carefully caught (where capture is possible and humane) in a ventilated box using dampened gloved hands and released into suitable nearby vegetation that will remain unaffected by the proposed works. Any reptiles found should be left to leave the site of their own accord. Where this is not possible, they should be placed into a ventilated box using gloved hands and released into suitable nearby vegetation, away from the working area.
- If in the event a GCN, or suspected GCN is found, work must cease; the ecologist will be made aware of the finding and will appraise the situation providing further advice.
- Site staff must be made aware that if GCN are found there is a correct procedure in place to follow, and failure to halt works may result in committing an offence. At no point should any person handle a GCN or suspected GCN. Unlicensed handling is illegal and untrained handling may cause the newt unnecessary stress and injury.
- Measures put in place to avoid the bird breeding season, any vegetation clearance should be done outside the main bird breeding season, between early October and the end of February. If this cannot be done, then a suitably qualified Ecologist should survey all areas for active nests prior to vegetation removal,

preferably immediately prior to, and no more than 48 hours before removal. Any identified active nests must be protected until the chicks have fledged and the nest is no longer in use, using a suitable buffer, marked with barriers where necessary. If a suspected active nest is discovered by contractors, an ecologist should be contacted for further advice before clearance can continue in the vicinity of the nest.