

MEMORANDUM

From:	Duncan Fisher Ecology Officer		
Service	WBC Ecology	App No:	250835
Address:	Land adjacent to Hutts Farm Cottage, Blagrove Lane, Wokingham, RG41 4AX.		
Proposal:	Outline application for the proposed erection of 4 no. detached dwellings with associated parking and access. (All matters reserved except for means of access and layout.)		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (1-9)		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☒ **No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) stated below**
- ☐ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☐ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

This application is supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (Darwin Ecology, February 2025) and a completed statutory biodiversity metric (Iteration 1, March 2025).

Biodiversity Net Gain

Comments have been provided on a line-by-line basis in a separate copy of the submitted metric. The baseline habitats can be agreed.

The final detail of the post-development scenario is a matter for the general biodiversity gain condition (should permission be granted). However, it is relevant to look at the strategy proposed for achieving the mandatory 10% gain. The proposal does not seek to provide the habitat biodiversity net gain on-site and I agree that it is likely not possible to achieve on-site gain. The option of off-site biodiversity net gain remains open.

As the proposal does not seek to provide significant biodiversity net gain on-site, I recommend that the local planning authority does not need apply an conditions or agree an obligation to secure and monitor on-site delivery. The general biodiversity gain condition applied by legislation will be sufficient.

Reptiles

I think it is reasonable and proportionate for the application to not have a full reptile survey but rely on the current local knowledge of widespread reptile populations. Recent nearby planning applications have identified the presence of Slow-worm in hedgerows locally and there is hedgerow connectivity to the site. The presence of this species in the margins of the site should be considered likely.

I can recommend that the local planning authority can be confident that the proposal is unlikely to have a harmful impact on the local conservation status of reptile species of principal importance provided a Construction Environmental Management Plan condition is applied to secure mitigation measures for reptiles during construction.

Ecological Permeability and Species Specific Enhancement.

Local plan policy TB23 requires that new development include ecological permeability measures – e.g. Hedgehog holes to allow access to garden space.

The Ecological Impact Assessment has made recommendations for species specific enhancement, such as the inclusion of bat and bird boxes, in section 7 of the report. It is entirely appropriate for the local planning authority to seek inclusion of these measures under local plan policy TB23, the national design code, and the NPPF.

I recommend at a species specific enhancement condition is applied to any permission granted in order to secure detail and implementation of species specific permeability and enhancement measures in line with local policy.

Provided that the recommended conditions are applied, I can see no ecological reason why this proposal should be refused.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

As per BS42020:2013 standard condition D.4.1 unless a CEMP condition is also recommended for non-ecological reasons, in which case an additional bullet point should be added to ensure that the CEMP covers:

- Mitigation measures for protected species and species of principal importance.

Reason: to secure mitigation for protected species and species of principal importance in line with local plan policies CP7 and TB23 and ODPM circular 2006/05.

Species Specific Enhancements

Condition: *Prior to commencement a strategy for ecological permeability and species specific biodiversity enhancements to the site shall be provided to the local authority for its approval. This strategy shall be prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist and in line with the recommendations made in section 7 of the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment (Darwin Ecology, February 2025). Once approved the strategy shall be implemented in full unless otherwise agreed by the local authority in writing.*

Reason: *to ensure that the proposal is in accordance with Section 41 NERC Act re. UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species (Species of Principal Importance) and complies with local plan policies CP7 and TB23 and the*

National Planning Policy Framework, which requires consideration of the potential biodiversity gains that can be secured within developments.

Date: 23 May
2025

Signed: D. Fisher