

Summary

The main ecological issue is biodiversity net gain.

Protected Species, Nesting Birds and other Wildlife

There are unlikely to be any protected or other species associated with this site, given that the vegetation has already been cleared, the site small and there are no records of species such as great crested newts nearby that could theoretically stray on to the site. I am satisfied that no further information or measures are required.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment & Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Section 187 of the NPPF 2024 states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. 10% BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).

The site is currently grassland based on the photograph in the D & A Statement, though as noted at preapp hedge and trees were present and these based on BNG guidance should potentially be included in the baseline for the site as cleared after 2020 unless the LPA is satisfied that they were not deliberately removed to avoid the need to mitigate. Either way the site will be replaced by development and garden.

No biodiversity net gain assessment or metric have been provided, with the D & A statement implying one is to be provided, whilst the application form claims exemption under the de minimis rule. The latter is clearly inaccurate and I therefore assume one is currently in production.

I therefore recommend that prior to determination a BNG assessment, that includes a discussion on what should be regarded as the correct baseline and a BNG metric. As noted in the D & A statement it is unlikely that 10% net gain can be achieved on the site ie off-site compensation is likely to be required.

As bird nesting habitat was cleared, I recommend provision of one house sparrow terrace on the new build. The details can be conditioned.