

Thank you for consulting the GMEU

Summary

The only ecological issue is mitigation for a small loss of low ecological value habitats.

Wildlife Issues

I am satisfied that it is very unlikely that there were any wildlife issues associated with this part retrospective application given the small area of low value habitat lost and lack of high value habitats nearby. No further information or measures are required.

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

Section 180 of the NPPF 2023 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 slurry pond has been constructed on improved grassland with overlap on to disturbed ground, with these habitats permanently lost to the slurry pond if permission is granted.

The area of the slurry pond within the grassland exceeds 25sqm therefore the development is subject to mandatory biodiversity net gain. A metric has been provided that indicates 10% is achievable on-site through planting of a couple of trees. Whilst I accept that 10% is achievable on the site, there is currently a mismatch between the red edge boundary and size of the slurry pond and that covered by the net gain assessment. The BNG assessment records a total loss of 0.055ha of habitat, whilst the cross sections indicate the oval slurry pond is 20m x 15m an area of approximately 0.096ha with an additional area, which will return to grassland between the slurry pond and the deer fence to factor in. They cannot be both correct.

However if the slurry pit dimensions are correct net gain is still achievable but more trees would need to be planted, approximately 12, which would be feasible given the length of the perimeter, without preventing access.

I therefore recommend clarification on which is correct, though as long as 10% is achievable on-site the finalised metric and layout could be left to discharge of the statutory biodiversity gain condition.

As rural trees are a moderate value habitat control via condition or legal agreement should occur. Given the units involved a condition in my opinion is the more reasonable approach