

GMEU response

Summary

The only likely ecological issue is biodiversity net gain.

Protected Species

It is very unlikely that there will be any protected species issues associated with this development. The proposed lagoon is located in an open field with no high value habitats nearby or records of protected species held by the GMEU. No further information or measures are required.

Other Wildlife

There is a theoretical risk of disturbance to ground nesting birds such as lapwing or skylark. This risk is however very low. It is very unlikely that any other wildlife will be harmed by the development. I therefore recommend an informative along the following lines is applied to any permission.

The applicant is reminded that, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended it is an offence to remove, damage, or destroy the nest of a wild bird, while the nest is in use or being built. Planning consent does not provide a defence against prosecution under this act. If a birds nest is suspected work should cease immediately and a suitably experienced ecologist employed to assess how best to safeguard the nest(s).

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 development will result in the loss of a relatively small area of low ecological value grassland to development. Tree planting is proposed around the perimeter of the slurry lagoon.

With regards biodiversity net gain, a metric has been provided that demonstrates that if 16 trees are planted around the perimeter of the lagoon, 10% net gain will be achieved. I am satisfied that there is adequate spacing for this to be applicable ie not a line of trees. All sixteen trees would however have to survive for 30 years to achieve 10% net gain. It may be worth planting 17 in order to provide a margin of error. This is however a minor point and can be resolved at discharge of condition stage. Overall, I am satisfied that 10% net gain can be achieved on site.

The tree planting would be regarded as significant as defined by defra as a medium distinctive habitat and critical to the achievement of 10% BNG. An HMMP will be required, though given it will only apply to planting and maintaining 16 trees, I am satisfied that the full defra template is not required. The HMMP can in my opinion be controlled via condition.

With regards the proposed trees, I recommend the use of native species given that moderate condition is the target.

Planning and Transportation

Place