

Summary

Clarification regarding exemption from biodiversity net gain is required. There are no other ecological issues associated with this development.

Bats

A valid bat assessment has been provided. No evidence of bats was found and the building assessed as having negligible bat roosting potential. I have no reason to doubt the findings of the report, the photographs supporting the assessment.

No further information or measures are required.

Nesting Birds

No evidence of nesting birds was recorded. The photos indicated theoretical nesting opportunities. As a precaution I recommend an informative along the following lines.

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 bird's 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 is for a replacement barn on almost the same footprint as the existing barn with a footprint increase of 24sqm. There are no wildlife issues.

The development appears at face value to be exempt from biodiversity net gain under the de minimis rule as the building increase alone will not result in the loss of more than 25sqm of vegetated habitat. I note however the land in front of the barn is vegetated and I am unclear whether or not this is to be retained. If this is to become hardstanding then more than 25sqm of vegetated habitat would be lost. *I therefore recommend that prior to determination, clarification on whether or not the grass in front of the barn is to be retained.*

Second the land to the rear of the barn is hardstanding but only recently created. Google imagery indicating some time in 2023. Previously it was grassland. Theoretically the habitats present prior to clearance could be taken into account. However, given even if grassland the habitat loss would be less than 25sqm, the de minimis rule would still apply unless the application was to regularise the current usage, which does not appear to be the case. No further information is therefore required at this time.

I recommend one bird box as enhancement. The details can be provided via condition.

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Planning and Transportation

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Place