



ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

TO: Alison Webster
FROM: Helen Forster
DATE: 22 August 2023
SUBJECT: The Robins, Meopham 20230673 - SCON3

The following is provided by Kent County Council's Ecological Advice Service (KCC EAS) for Local Planning Authorities. It is independent, professional advice and is not a comment/position on the application from the county council. It is intended to advise the relevant planning officer(s) on the potential ecological impacts of the planning application and if sufficient/appropriate ecological information has been provided.

Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant or other interested parties may have must be directed in every instance to the planning officer, who will seek input from the EAS where appropriate and necessary.

No ecological information has been submitted with this application. As a result of reviewing the data we have available to us, and the information submitted with the planning application, we advise that further information is sought from the applicant with regards to the potential for ecological impacts to arise.

We have taken this view as the site is directly adjacent to the Happy Valley, Meopham Local Wildlife Site which has been designated as a LWS as it has fragments of scrubby, open ancient semi-natural broad-leaved chalk woodland and calcareous grassland. The aerial photos indicate that the site is a mixture of scrub and grassland suggesting that similar habitat is present within the site. As such, an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist¹, in accordance with good practice guidelines.

The EcIA will include the following:

- Details of the impacts of development proposals on the ecological baseline established via a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and any additional surveys undertaken;
- Assessment of impacts of the proposal on the LWS.

¹ Suitably qualified ecologists can be found using either the: [CIEEM Registered Practice Directory](#) or the [Environmental Data Services Directory](#).

- Details of any necessary and achievable ecological mitigation and/or compensation measures;
- Details of ecological enhancement measures, and;
- Provision of sufficient information to determine whether the project accords with relevant nature conservation policies and legislation.

To ensure that the planning determination is adequately informed in respect of all potential ecological impacts, we advise that the EcIA is sought prior to determination of the planning application. This is in alignment with paragraph 99 of ODPM 06/2005 which states “*it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision*”.

We highlight that under Policy CS12 of the Gravesham 2014 Local Plan the LPA must consider the following:

5.7.23 Sites designated for their biodiversity value will be protected, with the highest level of protection given to internationally designated Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites, followed by nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, followed by Local Wildlife Sites and then by other areas of more local importance for biodiversity.

The EcIA will also ensure alignment with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) Act 2006. Under section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 and paragraph 174 of the NPPF 2021, biodiversity should be maintained and enhanced through the planning system. Additionally, in alignment with paragraph 180 of the NPPF 2021, the implementation of measurable net gains for biodiversity (integrated as part of design) should be encouraged. We highlight that due to the current design of the proposal under the NPPF the proposal is unlikely to result in a measurable Net Gain for Biodiversity.

If you have any queries regarding our comments, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Helen Forster MCIEEM
Biodiversity Officer

This response was submitted following consideration of the following documents:
No ecology documents