



ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

TO: *Alison Webster*

FROM: *Hannah Simmons*

DATE: *31 March 2026*

SUBJECT: *20251116 / Land W Of Norwood Lane, Meopham*

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.

SUMMARY: SUFFICIENT INFORMATION

We have reviewed the information submitted by the applicant and advise that sufficient **ecological and biodiversity net gain** information has been provided for determination. Recommended **condition/informative** wording is provided below.

A summary of our review of the submitted biodiversity net gain information is provided below. Detailed comments on the submitted ecological and biodiversity net gain information follow the subheadings below.

Table 1: *To show a summary of our review of submitted biodiversity net gain information*

Percentage Net Gain Required	Percentage Net Gain Reported for Habitats Area	Percentage Net Gain Reported for Linear Habitats	Net Gain Proposed:	On-site 'significant' Net Gains Proposed
10%	10.10%	59.45%	All on-site	Yes

Using the national and local guidance regarding significance, we consider that the on-site biodiversity net gain (excluding private gardens) should be treated as significant and so requires securing for 30-years.

Protected Species

Roosting Bats

Multiple trees on site have been identified as having Potential Roosting Features (PRF). It is unclear from the ecological report which trees are proposed to be removed as in section 5.3.8, it is proposed that TG2 is to be removed to facilitate site access, but then in section 6.1.3, TG1 is proposed to be removed, which does not exist in either the tree assessment results table or Habitats and Ecological Features map.

Assuming that it is TG2 that is to be removed, as it only categorised as PRF-I (only suitable for individual or small numbers of bats), we are satisfied that no further surveys are required as there is a low potential for roosting bats in a tree, which does not require surveys providing precautionary felling methods are used. We advise that the method proposed for felling the tree is suitable and this method set out in section 6 is incorporated into a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

If another tree that is categorised as PRF-M (suitable for multiple bats) is proposed to be felled, then we advise that surveys of this tree to ensure that it is not a current active roost will be required.

Reptiles

No reptiles were found to be present during the survey work undertaken on site between May-June 2025. We are satisfied that no mitigation measures are required for reptiles on site. The ecological report has recommended hibernacula and log piles are incorporated into the design to increase the suitability of the development for reptiles, we advise that these are included in an enhancement plan, see below for more information.

Nesting Birds

It is possible that breeding birds may be using the vegetation on site, with the removal of hedgerows to facilitate access to the site impacting breeding birds specifically. We advise that the measures set out in section 6 be incorporated into a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Small Mammals

The site has the potential to support several mammal species such as hedgehog and brown hares. The ecological report has suggested many precautionary measures to mitigate against any potential harm during the construction phase. We recommend that these precautionary measures set out in section 6 are incorporated into a CEMP to reduce the risk to brown hares and hedgehogs.

Badgers

We have reviewed the badger section of the ecological report. During the survey work undertaken in February and May 2025, two Badger setts were recorded within the woodland to the west of the site. One was considered an Active Outlier Sett, whilst the other was considered an Inactive Outlier Sett. Due to the low levels of activity, it was determined that none of the setts are likely used for breeding and more likely as shelter when foraging on site. However, it was not possible during the surveys to locate the main sett to which these outlier setts should be connected to. It is therefore assumed that the main sett used by the badgers is outside the development area, but due to dense

vegetation exists on site that may be obscuring the main sett it cannot be ruled out completely that the main sett may still be on site, although considered unlikely.

Although badger setts were found on site, they are located within the woodland that is proposed to be retained and enhanced and therefore, they are not expected to be directly impacted by the proposal. As the active badger sett is not within 30m of any proposed works, we are satisfied that a licence is not required at this stage.

As suitable habitat exists on site for badgers, it is possible that badgers could be using the site. As a highly mobile species, they can colonise areas quickly and new setts can appear between surveys and works beginning.

We advise that no more than one month prior to site clearance/construction, a precautionary walkover of the site and a 30m radius around the site should be undertaken, by a suitably qualified ecologist, to search for badger setts. If a badger sett is discovered on site, or within 30m of site, a suitably experienced ecologist will need to provide advice on any necessary mitigations for badgers. This should include whether a badger mitigation licence from Natural England is required prior to the commencement of any works on site. We advise that this is secured via a condition if planning permission is granted.

Badger Walkover - Suggested Condition Wording:

No earlier than one month prior to commencement (including site or vegetation clearance), a pre-works update badger walkover survey shall be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist to identify any badger sett entrances within 30m of the site boundary. Should badger sett entrances be identified, details of any necessary additional survey undertaken, along with any mitigation and licensing requirements shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for written approval prior to commencement.

Priority habitat

Within the site there is a stand of deciduous woodland, identified as Churchway Wood that is proposed to be retained. A 15m buffer is proposed, as are works to enhance the woodland. Measures to reduce dust pollution and minimise disturbance to sensitive habitats and wildlife have been set out in Section 6 of the Ecological Appraisal which we advise are incorporated into a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Hedgerows on site are also a priority habitat. Whilst some loss is proposed to occur to facilitate access to the site, the remainder is to be retained and enhanced and new hedgerow is proposed to compensate for the partial loss of hedgerow. Protection measures have been set out in Section 6 of the Ecological Appraisal which we advise are incorporated into a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

CEMP - Suggested condition wording

No development shall be undertaken (including any ground works, site and/or vegetation clearance) until a construction ecological management plan (CEMP) which contains full details of the measures outlined in section 6 of Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, 10 February 2026) associated with Land at Norwood Lane, Meopham has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP shall be based on up-to-date ecological survey information, as advised by a suitably qualified ecologist and include the following:

- Retained tree and hedgerow protection measures in accordance with BS 5837:2012;
- Measures to avoid impacts to the woodland and hedgerows onsite, including identification of a construction exclusion zone (and the use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs);
- Extent and location of proposed construction and mitigation works, shown on appropriate scale maps and plans;
- Specific measures (which may be presented as a series of method statements) to avoid impacts to roosting bats, nesting birds and small mammals and a timetable for implementation of the measures;
- Persons responsible for implementing the measures, including times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on-site;
- The role and responsibilities of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) or similarly competent person(s);
- Contingency plans should a protected species be encountered;
- Copies of any protected species mitigation licences issued by Natural England as required; and
- Details of the safe disposal of any wastes for implementing measures.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period in accordance with the approved details.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Under the Environment Act 2021 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), all planning applications¹ for development (unless exempt^{2,3}.) must deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), shown via use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric prior to commencement of any development.

Significant on-site gains, and all off-site gains will need to be secured for at least 30 years.

Having reviewed submitted information⁴, we consider a 10% biodiversity net gain is a statutory requirement of this proposed development. We consider there is no local policy biodiversity net gain requirement above 10% for this development.

We have produced the following table to aid the local planning authority in ascertaining whether sufficient BNG information has been submitted:

Table 2: To show whether the applicant has met the minimum validation requirements

Information Needed	Provided	Comments
Confirmation that the applicant believes that planning permission, if granted, the development would be subject to the biodiversity gain	Yes	

¹ All planning applications for major development (unless exempt) submitted on or after 12th February 2024 in England, and all minor applications (unless exempt), submitted on or after the 2nd April 2024.

² Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

³ The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 (legislation.gov.uk)

⁴ References to the biodiversity value of any habitat or habitat enhancement within this section of the advice note refer to the value as calculated in accordance with the biodiversity metric.

Information Needed	Provided	Comments
condition.		
The pre-development biodiversity value(s), either on the date of application or earlier proposed date (as appropriate) .	Yes	A site visit was carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist February 2025 with an update in May 2025. This is considered acceptable to inform the habitat baseline for this application given the site size, location and habitats reported.
Where the applicant proposes to use an earlier date, this proposed earlier date and the reasons for proposing that date.	Yes	
The completed metric calculation tool showing the calculations of the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on the date of application (or proposed earlier date) including the publication date of the biodiversity metric used to calculate that value.	Yes	The site is 7.41 hectares (74100 square metres) in size, according to the information in the application form. The habitat area reported in the biodiversity metric calculation tool matches the reported red line boundary site area as per the application form. We are content with the baseline habitat classifications. We are satisfied that the strategic significance scores for the baseline are all set to low. The LNRS mapping portal will need to be used to determine the strategic significance score for post-development habitats. The Local Habitat Map is available here: Local Nature Recovery Strategy mapping portal Making Space For Nature Kent, with guidance on its use available here: How to use the online mapping tool Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy We consider that the proposed habitat creation/enhancement and proposed uplift of 10.10% for area habitats and 59.45% for hedgerow habitats is achievable and realistic.
A statement whether activities have been carried out prior to the date of application (or earlier proposed date), that result in loss of onsite biodiversity value (' degradation ').	-	None reported or visible on aerial imagery dated 23 April 2020 to 6 August 2025 (Google Earth Pro, accessed 30 March 2026 date)
A description of any irreplaceable habitat (as set out in column 1 of	-	None reported.

Information Needed	Provided	Comments
the Schedule to the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) on the land to which the application relates, that exists on the date of application, (or an earlier date).		
Plan(s), drawn to an identified scale and showing the direction of North, showing onsite habitat existing on the date of application (or earlier proposed date), including any irreplaceable habitat (if applicable).	Yes	

The habitat baseline must be correct prior to determination, but full details of how the proposals will deliver biodiversity gains are not strictly required until submission of the pre-commencement Biodiversity Gain Plan. However, it is advisable to seek an indication prior to determination as, it gives an indication of how the biodiversity gain hierarchy will be applied, and if granted consent, the project cannot commence until this information has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. This information will also provide sufficient indication as to how conditions need to be applied should planning permission be granted for this application.

The government's standing advice on BNG states (under paragraph 002 Reference ID: 74-002-20240214): *"[BNG] is not just a post-permission matter. To ensure the biodiversity gain objective is met and the condition can be discharged successfully, it is important biodiversity net gain is considered throughout the planning process."*

Information has been submitted with this application to give confidence that the biodiversity gain hierarchy can be effectively applied to this application, and how conditions should be applied should planning consent be granted.

Significant on-site gains

Significant on-site gains are areas of habitat creation or enhancement which contribute significantly to the proposed development's biodiversity net gain relative to the biodiversity value before development. Retention of existing habitat cannot count as an on-site significant gain.

Non-significant enhancements are those whose loss will not significantly decrease the development's biodiversity value e.g., private gardens or container planting. These types of enhancements do not normally require maintenance provisions and so no Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, legal agreement or commitment to maintain them is required.

We consider the creation of Other Neutral Grassland, Urban Trees, Native Hedgerows with trees and Species-rich native hedgerows, plus the enhancement of the woodlands

and hedgerows to constitute significant⁵ on-site gains. Government guidance states: “The maintenance of these significant enhancements must be secured with a [legal agreement](#) (planning obligation or conservation covenant) or planning condition for 30 years in the same way as off-site gains. LPAs will consider the most appropriate mechanism and this will need to be agreed at the planning permission stage.”⁶

It is our view that these significant on-site gains should be subject to a S106 agreement or conservation covenant to secure a monitoring fee and ensure enforceability over a 30-year period. It is our view that monitoring fees should be secured for these significant on-site gains as these gains will need to be subject to monitoring reports across 30 years, which will need to be reviewed (and acted upon as necessary) by the LPA at their own cost. We provide details of suggested monitoring fees in our March 2025 advice note ‘KCC Ecological Advice Service suggested BNG Monitoring Fees’ which has been distributed to all LPAs in Kent.

Additionally, we recommend conditions for a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) to secure the significant on-site gains. We also recommend that the conditions secure the retention of the hedgerows on site. Although, the retention of existing habitat cannot count as on-site significant habitat, the relevant retained habitats are recommended to be secured as well as the relevant created and enhanced habitats as without the retained habitats the 10% biodiversity net gain would not be achieved. Furthermore, there are national and local policies in place to conserve biodiversity.

HMMP - Suggested Condition Wording:

The development shall not commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP), prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan (submitted as part of the deemed condition discharge application), and based on the most up-to-date and/or relevant ecology surveys as determined by a suitably qualified ecologist, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The Plan shall include:

- a) a non-technical summary;*
- b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;*
- c) the planned habitat retention, creation and enhancement works (including detailed landscaping plan(s) and planting schedule(s)) to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;*
- d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and*
- e) the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the retained, created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority.*

The retained, created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved HMMP shall be implemented, managed, maintained and monitored in accordance with the approved

⁵ We have recently drafted an advice note titled ‘[Defining significant onsite habitat for Biodiversity Net Gain in Kent and Medway](#)’ (March 2025) which outlines our definition of ‘significant’. However, this document is awaiting a revision whereby reference to retained habitats counting as on-site significant habitats will be removed.

⁶ [Make on-site biodiversity gains as a developer - GOV.UK](#)

HMMP. Monitoring reports shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP.

Ecological Enhancements

The proposed development provides opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife, such as native species planting and the installation of integrated bat/bird nest boxes. We advise that measures to enhance biodiversity are secured as a condition of planning permission, if granted. This is in accordance with Paragraph 193 of the NPPF that “*opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity*”.

Ecological Enhancement - Suggested Condition Wording:

Prior to any works above slab level, a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Plan shall include full details of the biodiversity enhancements to be implemented on-site. The Plan shall be based on the details contained in sections 6 of the Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, 10 February 2026) associated with Land at Norwood Lane, Meopham and shall include:

- *Provision of suitably placed bat and/or bird boxes, with the exact locations, make and model and height from ground level shown on scaled plans suitable for construction. In the case of building mounted boxes, scaled elevation plans shall be provided. Boxes for breeding birds shall be targeted at S41 priority species and/or red/amber listed species as listed within the latest British Trust for Ornithology Birds of Conservation Concern report. Boxes shall be building integrated and/or constructed of woodcrete to ensure durability;*
- *The creation of labelled hedgehog highways (by creating small 13×13cm gaps in close board fencing) to facilitate the movement of hedgehogs across the site;*
- *The provision of bee bricks and/or the provision of log piles/artificial refugia for reptiles and amphibians. The exact locations, make and model, height from ground level, size and construction materials shall be shown on scaled plans suitable for construction.*

The Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and all features shall be retained in that manner thereafter.

Artificial Lighting

Bats were found to be commuting and foraging on site during the night-time bat walkover surveys. Lighting in the vicinity of a bat roost or along commuting / foraging routes could constitute an offence both to a population and to individuals. Artificial lighting has been shown to be particularly harmful to bats along river corridors, near woodland edges and near hedgerows⁷. Local authorities have a duty to ensure impacts upon legally protected species are avoided and impacts upon bats are a material consideration in any planning permission under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and through the NPPF 2024.

⁷ Bats and Artificial Lighting guidance. Available [here](#).

Therefore, to mitigate against potential adverse effects on biodiversity, the Bat Conservation Trust/Institute of Lighting Professional's '*Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night*' (or subsequent updates) should be consulted in the lighting design of the development.

We advise that the incorporation of sensitive lighting design for biodiversity is submitted to the local planning authority and secured via an attached condition with any planning permission.

Lighting - Suggested Condition Wording:

Prior to occupation, a lighting design plan for biodiversity shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The plan shall show the type and locations of external lighting, as well as the expected light spill in lux levels, to demonstrate that areas to be lit shall not adversely impact biodiversity. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the approved plan and shall be maintained thereafter.

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

Hannah Simmons
Biodiversity Officer

This response was submitted following consideration of the following documents:

- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. Aspect Ecology. 20 October 2025
- Bat Survey Report. Aspect Ecology. 3 February 2026
- Ecological Appraisal (including confidential badger appendix). Aspect Ecology. 10 February 2026
- Landscape Strategy. Turley Design. August 2025