



ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

TO: Rebecca Harrison

FROM: Lucy McGinley

DATE: 02 October 2026

SUBJECT: 20260340 – Rockley House, Gravesend

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/Loss Reported for Area Habitats	Percentage Net Gain/Loss Reported for Linear Habitats	Net Gain Proposed: 1 – all on-site; 2 – no significant on-site and off-site; 3 – significant on-site and off-site	On-site 'significant' Net Gains Proposed (Yes/No)
10%	+19.76%	+285.45%	1 – all on site	No

Using the national and local guidance regarding significance, we consider that the on-site biodiversity net gain (excluding private gardens) should not be treated as significant and so does not require securing for 30-years. Even though there is no on-site significant

habitat identified on-site for legislative biodiversity net gain, we recommend that a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan secure habitat retention, creation and enhancement works at the site under planning policy.

PROTECTED/NOTABLE SPECIES

The submitted reports include a Preliminary Ecological Assessment and Arboriculture Survey. Based on the application site, and what has been highlighted within the surveys provided, we determine that the following protected species are likely to be present on or around the application site:

- Commuting and Foraging Bats
- Breeding Birds
- Hedgehogs

As the site has mostly been used for horse grazing and frequent management, the terrestrial area within the red line boundary is not suitable for reptiles or amphibians due to low sward height and high maintenance. Additionally, the native hedgerow present on site provides sub-optimal habitat and therefore limited opportunity for hazel dormice.

BATS

Bats are fully protected through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Some species of bat (e.g., Bechstein's, noctule, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared) are also listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 as Species of Principal Importance (aka. Priority Species) for conservation. Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 places a general duty on all public authorities, including the local planning authorities, to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Government standing advice indicates that local planning authorities must have regard for the conservation of Section 41 species and all bat species as part of their planning decisions¹⁸.

The application site has 6 buildings planned for demolition – B1 is a stable/storage building made from corrugated metal roof and breezeblocks, B2 is a stable building made from breezeblocks and a flat roof, B3 is a timber and steel framed barn with a pitched corrugated roof, B4 is a stable building made from breezeblocks, corrugated sheet roof, and a single-skinned timber weatherboard gable end, B5 is a garage constructed from timber weatherboard and metal roof, and B6 is three shipping containers. All buildings on site have negligible roosting features due to a lack of suitable space, accessibility, and materials.

As the buildings offer a lack of suitability for bats, further surveys are not required, and we are satisfied with the information provided. Due to the surrounding area being suitable for foraging and commuting bats, we recommend an artificial lighting strategy be conditioned.

BIRDS

Natural England guidance 'Wild birds: advice for making planning decisions', states (for local planning authorities) *"you must have regard for the conservation of Section 41 species [under the NERC Act 2006] as part of your planning decision"*. Where birds of conservation concern listed as Species of Principal Importance (also known as 'priority

species') for conservation and/or species of conservation concern (red/amber) under Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) 5, are found within the proposed development site, mitigations/compensations for these species may be required as necessary.

The PEA highlights that B3 has a suspected inactive robin nest, with B4 having an inactive barn swallow nest, and surrounding vegetation having the potential to support nesting birds. We also highlight that the stables/barn buildings within the site have the potential to support nesting birds, including owls.

We are satisfied with the information provided and that no further surveys are required outside of bird nesting checks during the nesting season. A Nesting Bird Informative has been included to provide guidance for working around nesting birds and during nesting bird season (March to August).

Suggested Informative Wording:

All wild birds and their nests are protected from harm under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. As such, any works which may result in impacts to nesting birds should be conducted outside of the core nesting season which is March through August (inclusive) or under ecological supervision. A suitable exclusion zone should be established around any active bird nest in the event one is discovered during works; this exclusion zone should be maintained until all nesting birds have fledged and the nest is unoccupied.

ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING STRATEGY

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 hedgerows¹¹. 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 2026¹². Testing

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.

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.

Reason: To limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light in accordance with the NPPF 2026.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

Under the Environment Act 2021 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), all planning applications¹⁰⁷ for development (unless exempt^{108,109}), 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 information¹¹⁰, we consider a 10% biodiversity net gain is a statutory requirement of this proposed development.

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

Table 1: *To show whether the applicant has met the minimum validation requirements, expected information standards in line with planning practice guidance and any applicable national or local policies.*

Information Needed	Provided	Comments
Confirmation that the applicant believes that planning permission, if granted, the development would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition.	Yes	
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 05/02/26. 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.	N/A	
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 0.37 hectares 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. Baseline Habitats We are content with the baseline habitat classifications. We highlight to Gravesham Borough Council that the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was published 28th November 2025. The LNRS changes how strategic significance is considered and any BNG assessments with 'relevant dates' after the LNRS was

		published can no longer use <i>Location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy</i> . The baseline information has correctly reflected the published LNRS requirements.
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 '), and where they have: - a statement to the effect that these activities have been carried out; - the date immediately before these activities were carried out; - the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on this date; - the completed metric calculation tool showing the calculations, and - any available supporting evidence of this.	Yes	None reported or visible on most recent aerial imagery dated 08/03/36 (Google Earth Pro, accessed 02/10/26 date)
A description of any irreplaceable habitat (as set out in column 1 of 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).	N/A	None reported.
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	

Post-development Habitats

Habitat Creation and Enhancement Tabs

We consider that the proposed habitat creation/enhancement and proposed uplift of 19.57% BNG is achievable and realistic.

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.

Deemed Condition

The development, if permitted, will be subject to the deemed condition of planning permission relating to biodiversity gain as per Schedule 7A 13(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The condition is that the development may not be begun unless—

- (a) a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The condition cannot be varied or removed. An application must be made to discharge it as any other condition. We recommend it is referred to in decision notices in the form of an informative. The government's published Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) template should be used to discharge it: [Biodiversity gain plan - GOV.UK](#). Please note that the submission of

the finalised Statutory Biodiversity Metric/BGP is required by law prior to the commencement of any development.

We advise that regardless of the fact the BNG assessment is demonstrating that a BNG of over 10% can be achieved we advise that the deemed condition must still be discharged prior to works commencing on site (if planning permission is granted).

ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS

Other biodiversity enhancement measures, which are unrelated to BNG, are detailed in the submitted the PEA, section 4 and include the following:

- Integrated Bee Bricks
- Hung or integrated bird boxes
- Hung or integrated bat boxes
- Hedgehog highways

Policy N2 (NPPF 2026) states *“to contribute positively to the natural environment, and support nature’s recovery, development proposals should: ...Minimise any adverse impacts on biodiversity and include features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs. Development proposals should incorporate integrated nest boxes (commonly known as swift bricks) into their construction unless there are compelling technical reasons which prevent their use, or would make them ineffective”*.

Ecological enhancements unrelated to BNG can be implemented and evidenced via a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan.

LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT PLAN (LEMP)

Suggested Condition Wording:

Prior to any landscaping works commencing on site a landscape and ecological management plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall accord with the measures outlined in the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and the Preliminary Ecological Assessment associated with the planning application and shall include details of the following:

- a. Habitat creation measures, including full details of tree, shrub and hedgerow planting, modified grassland creation and aquatic planting around SuDS features;*
- b. A full planting schedule utilising primarily native species;*
- c. Full elevations plans detailing the model and location of integral swift boxes in accordance with BS 42021:2022 (north/east facing, 4m from the ground and with unobstructed access);*
- d. Details of externally-mounted bat and bird boxes which are to be of durable construction and suitably located;*
- e. Locations of 13×13cm holes in closeboard fencing provided for hedgehogs*
- f. Rolling, long-term maintenance measures covering up to a 30-year period; and*
- g. Details of responsible persons.*

The approved plan shall be implemented as described and retained thereafter.

Reason: To protect and enhance biodiversity in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework 2026, and in order for the Council to comply with Part 3 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

EVIDENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION - LEMP

Suggested Condition Wording:

Within twelve months of first use of the development hereby approved, photographic evidence of the implementation of such habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement measures as are required by condition X (the LEMP condition) shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval. The approved measures shall be thereafter retained.

Reason: To protect and enhance biodiversity in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework 2026, and in order for the Council to comply with Part 3 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Lucy McGinley
Biodiversity Officer

This response was submitted following consideration of the following documents:

- Application Form, Robinson Escott Planning,
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment, Ecology Partnership, Feb26
- Tree Survey Plan, Sylvanarb Arboricultural Consultants, July25
- Tree Protection Plan, Sylvanarb Arboricultural Consultants, July25
- BNG Metric, Ecology Partnership, Mar26
- BNG Assessment, Ecology Partnership, Mar26
- Proposed Site Plan, OSP Architecture, Sep25