BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

PLANNING CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Application No	2026/0875
Proposal	Construction of a new car park to serve Penistone Railway Station with associated access, landscaping, lighting, drainage, utilities, relocation of the existing substation, boundary treatments and other ancillary works
Address	Land to the west of Lairds Way, Spring Vale, Sheffield
Date of Consultation Reply	20/10/2026
Consultee	Claire Wilson, Planning Ecologist

Consultation Assessment and Justification

An EcIA containing a number of appendices and statutory metric have been provided to support the application.

There is some duplication between the EcIA and the PEA, within the appendix. Ideally, the PEA would have been updated to incorporate the additional survey results and subsequent ecological assessment, thereby providing the relevant ecological information in a more concise format.

There was no requirement to reproduce the Arboricultural Report within the appendices of the EcIA, as this has been submitted separately as part of the planning application. Its inclusion adds considerably to the length of the EcIA and results in unnecessary duplication. I have therefore not reviewed the arboricultural information contained within the EcIA appendices, as the submitted arboricultural information will be considered separately by the forestry officer.

Initial ecological surveys were undertaken in February 2026 and comprised a PEA, Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) and Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA). Subsequent survey work included reptile surveys, invertebrate surveys, bat activity surveys and an updated habitat assessment, undertaken in June 2026. The original survey covered a wider red line boundary which has subsequently been reduced, meaning that some of the habitats originally assessed no longer fall within the application site.

Whilst the initial habitat assessment was broadly acceptable, the February survey was undertaken during a sub-optimal period for botanical assessment. There was therefore potential for additional species to be present, particularly within areas identified as other neutral grassland. Further habitat surveys were subsequently undertaken in June 2026, including additional consideration of the potential presence of Open Mosaic Habitat (OMH). I am therefore satisfied that the habitats have been assessed at an appropriate time of year. However, clarification is required as to whether quadrat surveys were undertaken to determine species numbers per square metre within the grassland. Based upon the species information currently provided, it is not clear that habitat parcel g3c-2 supports a particularly diverse or species-rich sward, and further justification for the condition assessment would therefore be beneficial.

The woodland to the north of the site has been mapped as lowland mixed deciduous woodland, with no coniferous species present, and the species composition provided does not appear to correspond with a recognised National Vegetation Classification (NVC) community. The woodland condition assessment scores the relevant criterion as 2, indicating that a recognisable woodland NVC plant community is present at ground-layer level. Further clarification and justification for this assessment should therefore be provided, particularly as the species information appears to identify only wild strawberry within the ground flora.

A review of historical mapping/images indicates that the woodland appears to have been present since at least the 1890s. However, the woodland is not proposed to be directly affected by the development.

The PRA and GLTA identified the need for further bat surveys, which were undertaken during June and July 2026. No evidence confirming the presence of roosting bats was identified.

The bat surveys were undertaken in accordance with relevant Bat Conservation Trust guidance and did not confirm the presence of roosting bats. Bats are therefore considered likely absent from the buildings and trees surveyed. It is advised that T1 and T2 are removed using soft felling techniques. This can be detailed within a CEMP-B.

Seven reptile surveys were undertaken, with no reptiles recorded. Reptiles are therefore considered likely to be absent from the site. However, precautionary methods regarding vegetation clearance should be adhered to during site clearance. This again can be detailed with a CEMP-B.

The invertebrate surveys recorded a total of 137 species, four of which were identified as having national status. The survey also recorded habitats of value to invertebrates, including species-rich grassland with areas of bare ground, together with scrub/woodland edges and deadwood habitat.

Dingy skipper, a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, has also been reported as present on site with bird's-foot trefoil, its larval foodplant, noted as abundant. However, it is unclear when and where dingy skipper was recorded, and how many individuals were identified, particularly as the species does not appear to have been recorded during the targeted invertebrate surveys. Further clarification should therefore be provided by the ecologist.

The development will result in the loss of habitat of value to invertebrates and the EcIA identifies the loss of the flowering sward and open, patchy bare ground and short turf habitats to be a significant effect on the invertebrate assemblage. However, invertebrates are not considered within table 5.1 Evaluation of important ecological features and the residual impact does not state the same conclusion within table 12.1. I seek clarification on this.

Consequently, specific invertebrate mitigation is required. The mitigation measures set out within the invertebrate survey report should be secured as part of any permission, alongside additional features including invertebrate banks and green roofs (see below).

It is advised that green roofs be incorporated within the cycle and waiting shelter to provide mitigation for dingy skipper and other invertebrates. Detailed specification should ensure that the green roofs provide appropriate habitat and include suitable larval foodplants, including bird's-foot trefoil. This detail can be provided within a Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan.

A sensitive lighting strategy should be secured to minimise potential impacts upon bats and other nocturnal wildlife.

The submitted biodiversity metric identifies a baseline value of 7.55 habitat units. The development results in the removal of the majority of the existing habitats to accommodate the proposal, with woodland and relatively limited areas of grassland being retained or created. The resulting grassland habitats also appear relatively isolated and therefore unlikely to be suitable to provide mitigation for invertebrates.

There is an inconsistency in relation to the proposed grassland condition. The BNG report/condition information identifies the created grassland as capable of achieving moderate condition, whereas the biodiversity metric records the habitat as being in poor condition. I consider moderate condition to be achievable, subject to an appropriate specification and management regime. The metric should therefore be amended to ensure that the documents are consistent.

No post-development condition assessment appears to have been provided for the proposed scrub habitat. This should be provided to substantiate the proposed condition entered within the metric. A UK Hab condition assessment for the OMH habitat is still required, as previously requested. An assessment against the JNCC criteria for identifying OMH has been provided; however, this establishes whether the habitat meets the relevant OMH criteria rather than determining its condition for BNG purposes.

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	Defer – further information required	

*Delete as applicable

Consultation Suggested Conditions:

Consultation Informative(s):

Planning Obligations required: