BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

PLANNING CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Application No	2025/0997
Proposal	Demolition of existing structures and outline planning application for up to 200 dwellings with associated infrastructure and open space. All matters except for means of access to, but not within, the site to be reserved.
Address	Low Valley Farm, Pitt Street, Darfield, Barnsley, S73 8AX
Date of Consultation Reply	29/01/2026
Consultee	Katie Lawrence, Planning Ecologist

Consultation Assessment and Justification

Thank you for consulting me regarding the above application. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) and Statutory Biodiversity Metric with associated condition assessment sheets have been submitted in support of the application. The EcIA sets out the results of initial habitat surveys and site assessment and subsequent specialist surveys undertaken in relation to bats, breeding birds and reptiles. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) information proposes measures on how 10% net gain will be achieved. My comments in relation to biodiversity are as follows:

Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)

- Mammal holes indicative of badger setts were identified within proximity of the site. Although these appeared not to be used by badger at the time of survey it is considered prudent that an updated badger survey is undertaken prior to any construction works commencing to reassess the use of the site/adjacent areas by badgers due to the suitability of habitats within and adjacent to the site. This can be detailed within a Construction Environmental Management Plan – Biodiversity (CEMP-B), which can be secured by a planning condition if planning permission is to be granted.
- An assessment of ponds within proximity of the site has been made in regard to great crested newts (GCN). Pond 3 has been enhanced under the GCN District Level Licence (DLL) scheme in 2024. The low HSI score is likely to be due to recent works to the pond, including removal of leaf litter, deepening in sections, etc. The pond will be subject to an eDNA monitoring survey in the survey season of 2026. If the eDNA monitoring results indicate the presence of GCN in this pond a District Level Licence application should be made in relation to this development. Although Pitt Street does create some severance between pond 3 and the development site, this isn't considered to be a major dispersal barrier to amphibians as it will likely be subject to low levels of traffic at night. It is not known when an eDNA survey will be undertaken of pond 3 within the upcoming survey season (mid-April to late June) so the applicant may wish to carry out their own surveys to consider the presence/absence of GCN and the requirement of a DLL or alternatively apply for a DLL to avoid potential delay to the planning application. If this route is chosen the applicant must submit an impact assessment and conservation payment certificate (IACPC) as part of the planning application.
- Barn owl have been recorded using two of the farm buildings on site, with this species recorded emerging from one of the buildings and owl pellets found in another. No nesting activity was recorded within these buildings, so it is likely that barn owl are using the buildings for roosting purposes. Prior to demolition of farm buildings, a pre-commencement checking survey should be undertaken to reassess the use of the barn owl to ensure appropriate mitigation measures are implemented. The EcIA recommends the installation of two barn owl boxes, which is welcomed. Precautionary working methods and the provision of mitigation can be secured by a planning condition, if planning permission is granted.
- Reptile surveys were undertaken during the appropriate period, with an appropriate number of reptile refuges used. No reptiles were identified on site. Precautionary measures are recommended for reptile species and these can be secured by a planning condition if permission is granted.

- Precautionary measures for hedgehogs and the incorporation of hedgehog access points are recommended. This is welcomed. Again, such measures can be secured by a planning condition.
- The EcIA sets out that integrated bat, bee and swift bricks will be incorporated into 10% of the proposed dwellings. The Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPD requires 100% of new dwellings to incorporate bat, bird and insect boxes. This can be secured by a planning condition.
- Building inspection surveys assessed a number of buildings as having potential for roosting bats. An appropriate number of emergence surveys undertaken at dusk were carried out by suitably qualified ecologists and to the Bat Conservation Trust survey guidance (2023) methodology. No bat roosts were identified during the survey and therefore it is anticipated that there will be no adverse impact upon roosting bats as a result of the development and no requirement for a protected species licence. Due to the suitability of a number of buildings, updated surveys would be required prior to building demolition taking place if this is not carried out within 18 months of the emergence surveys being undertaken. Again, any pre-commencement surveys required can be set out within a CEMP-B, which can be conditioned as part of a planning permission.
- Bat foraging and commuting activity surveys were carried out during the appropriate survey season to methods set out within the Bat Conservation Trust survey guidance. The results of the surveys indicate that the site to has a low level of use by foraging and commuting bats. The majority of bat activity was associated with the north-west corner of the site in association with the adjacent woodland habitat. Proposal drawings show a linear green space in association with the western boundary, which is welcomed. To try and avoid any indirect impact on foraging and commuting bats through lighting, a sympathetic lighting scheme can be conditioned as part of a planning permission.
- Breeding bird surveys were carried out, with six survey visits made. Bird species recorded during the surveys largely comprised those typical of a semi-rural residential property, comprising a mix of common garden, woodland, and farmland species. Red list species recorded included song thrush, common gull, house sparrow and linnet. The breeding bird results section of the EcIA and table included within the appendix of the report doesn't set out confirmed breeders, probable breeders, non-breeders, etc. This information should be included. Were linnet recorded as breeding on site? This is a species of principle importance (Section 41 of the NERC Act) typical of farmland habitat and the loss of habitats on site could represent an impact. This needs to be discussed further within the report and appropriate mitigation set out, if necessary.
- Section 3.9 of the EcIA discusses potential impacts of the proposals upon Dearne Valley Wetlands (DVW) Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It highlights that Wombwell Ings, which forms part of the DVW SSSI complex will likely receive additional visitors as a result of the development. It states that the site has clearly established footpaths capable of handling the additional capacity of the development, which is small in scale; however, the SSSI Impact Risk Zone development list includes residential development of 100 units or more dwellings as having a potential effect on the SSSI. The proposed development is for up to 200 dwellings and therefore I believe there will be a potential impact from increased recreational use without appropriate measures being adopted. This could include the installation of an interpretation board within the proposed area of public open space on site which details alternative green spaces to visit within the surrounding area, such as Netherwood Country Park, Netherwood Nature Reserve and Wombwell Canal. In addition to this, the developer should fund the provision and maintenance of dog waste bins at Netherwood Country Park to address the likely increased recreational use of this site once the proposed site becomes occupied. This measure can be secured through a Section 106.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment (included within EcIA), Statutory Biodiversity Metric and condition assessment sheets.

- Section 3.10 of the EcIA sets out proposed Biodiversity Net Gain offsetting within an area of land in Wombwell. This site is subject to a planning application (ref: 2022/1285) which is currently under consideration and one that I have visited several times. The EcIA states that the site does not represent an area of Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land (OMH), a habitat of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and that each habitat has a clear defined boundary and is over 0.25ha in size. I do not agree with this assessment with the central section of the

site comprising a mosaic of habitats within an area of approximately 0.95ha, with boundaries of such habitats not being clearly defined. From assessing this area of the site against the criteria set by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee in the identification of this habitat, I believe the site is representative of OMH, as follows:

- ***The area of open mosaic habitat is at least 0.25ha in size*** – the former development footprint covers an area of approximately 0.95ha.
- ***Known history of disturbance at the site or evidence that soil has been removed or severely modified by previous use(s) of the site. Extraneous materials/substrates such as industrial spoil may have been added*** – disturbance has occurred on site from former development and subsequent demolition of buildings, which has caused the addition of extraneous materials.
- ***The site contains some vegetation. This will comprise early successional communities consisting mainly of stress-tolerant species (e.g. indicative of low nutrient status or drought). Early successional communities are composed of (a) annuals, or (b) mosses/liverworts, or (c) lichens, or (d) ruderals, or (e) inundation species, or (f) open grassland, or (g) flower-rich grassland, or (h) heathland*** – the former development footprint was found to support stress tolerant annual species such as common centaury *Centaurium erythraea* and fairy flax, mosses, ruderal species such as rosebay willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium,* wormwood *Artemisia absinthium* and tansy *Tanacetum vulgare,* inundation species including hard rush *Juncus inflexus* and false fox-sedge *Carex otrubae* and areas of flower-rich grassland, with frequently occurring species such as common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus,* oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare* and meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris.* The site was also found to support 22 characteristic species of OMH, taken from the list included within annex 1 of UKBAP Priority Habitat Descriptions document for this habitat type, with 13 of these species being typical of OMH sites in the north of England.
- ***The site contains unvegetated, loose bare substrate and pools may be present –*** The former development footprint comprises loose bare substrate Inundation vegetation recorded on site also indicates the occasional presence of standing water.
- ***The site shows spatial variation, forming a mosaic of one or more of the early successional communities (a)–(h) above (criterion 3) plus bare substrate, within 0.25ha –*** As set out above, the former development footprint includes annuals, mosses, ruderals, inundation species and flower-rich grassland plus bare substrate in an area approximately 0.95ha in size.

- It is appreciated that more extensive areas of grassland and scrub to the northern and southern sections of the site do not meet the OMH criteria, with these areas falling outside of the former development footprint. These habitats could potentially be subject to enhancement to offset the proposals BNG requirements, although this may not address the entire shortfall in biodiversity units.
- Consideration could be given to addressing any BNG shortfall through enhancement of habitats within the nearby Netherwood Country Park and Netherwood Nature Reserve, particularly with this site likely to be utilised for recreational purposes once the site becomes occupied. There are opportunities to enhance waterbodies, plantation woodland and grassland habitats that occur within these sites. This can be discussed further with the council if the applicant wishes to pursue this option.
- Paragraph 4.2.5 of the EcIA includes a table indicating created on-site area habitats which are set out within the metric. This table and the metric submitted do not include the proposed SUDS basin to the south-east corner of the site. Areas around the SUDS basin could also incorporate more semi-natural habitat such as other neutral grassland to try and address the shortfall of on-site biodiversity units. Furthermore, more effort should be made in retaining current areas of other neutral grassland to the western boundary of the site as linear areas of green space are proposed along this boundary. It may only be possible to retain them in their current poor condition, as they may be subject to disturbance if this boundary is publicly accessible, but this would partly address the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy in that loss of habitats of medium distinctiveness or above should be avoided. This is also the case for the area of mixed scrub to the north of the site. This area is mapped as currently comprising mixed scrub habitat and the same habitat is mapped within the post-development map; however, within the metric the mixed scrub within the baseline tab is set as lost. This should be reviewed and the aim should be to avoid the loss of this established habitat rather than replacing with the same habitat type. There may also

be the option to retain some of the mixed scrub habitat to the western boundary in association with the proposed green space in that location. More effort should be made to address the shortfall in habitat and hedgerow units on-site where possible and even look potentially achieve on-site gain, again addressing the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy.		
~~**NO OBJECTION***~~	**Defer for amends/further information***	~~**OBJECT***~~