Derbyshire Wildlife Trust

Sarah Brooks
Head of Planning
Amber Valley Borough Council
PO Box 18
Town Hall
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DE5 3SZ

For the attention of Laura Anthony

Your Ref: AVA/2025/0706
Our ref: DWTAVA2164

04/11/2025

Dear Laura,

Proposal: Conversion and change of use of agricultural barns to form two dwellings

Location: Yew Tree Farm Gunhills Lane Windley Belper Derbyshire DE56 2LR

Application Ref No.: AVA/2025/0706

With reference to the above application, I am responding as the Biodiversity Planning Officer responsible for work relating to the Service Level Agreement, which the Amber Valley Borough Council and the Trust have signed. The following comments are aimed at providing accurate and up to date information on nature conservation issues associated with the proposed development.

Response

We have reviewed the information submitted including Preliminary Roost Assessment report (Wildlife consultants Ltd, July 2025) and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment documents (G&G Ecology Consultants Ltd, August 2025) as well as

the Derbyshire Biological Records Database and have the following comments to make.

According to the DBRC there are no local records of protected/notable species on or adjacent to the site nor are there any designated sites that will be impacted by these proposals.

The site is dominated by buildings with modified grassland and trees, three of which will be lost as a result of the proposals.

Protected Species

The buildings within the site were assessed as having 'low/moderate' suitability for use by bats. The photographs of the exterior/interior of the barns suggest 'moderate' potential.

Two nocturnal surveys were undertaken in July & August 2025 in line with current guidance, but no roosting bats were observed during either of these. No further surveys are considered necessary. However, we advise that works proceeds with caution and should evidence of bats be found during demolition then work should stop immediately, and the advice of an ecologist requested urgently.

The site offers habitats for nesting birds with swallow nests identified in some of the buildings. Given the habitats onsite precautions should be taken to avoid harm to wildlife during site clearance including hedgehogs.

Trees

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) seeks to ensure that new development is sustainable. It considers the importance of Green Infrastructure, of which trees typically play an integral role providing various functions and ecosystem services. The NPPF aims to protect and enhance landscapes and achieve a net gain in biodiversity. It also identifies veteran and ancient trees and ancient woodland as irreplaceable habitats.

We would advise that all retained trees should be protected from damage during construction by the erection of adequate temporary fencing, in line with BS5837, prior to the commencement of groundworks. This fencing should remain in place for the duration of construction as a condition of any permission. These details should be provided in an Arboricultural Method Statement.

Biodiversity Net Gain

We have reviewed the small sites metric submitted. The proposals are anticipated to result in a +44.93% gain in habitat units from the creation of other neutral grassland, vegetated garden and tree planting. Trading rules are satisfied for habitat units.

The following conditions are advisable to secure the BNG as calculated and to prevent harm to protected/notable species/habitats as well as provision of species enhancement in line with NPPF.

Conditions

Nesting Birds

No site clearance shall take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless preceded by a nesting bird survey undertaken by a competent ecologist no more than 48 hours prior to clearance. If nesting birds are present, an appropriate exclusion zone will be implemented and monitored until the chicks have fledged. No works shall be undertaken within exclusion zones whilst nesting birds are present.

Swallows

No development work to the barn shall commence until a scheme for the provision of suitable alternative nesting sites for swallows along with a timetable for the implementation of such measures, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme.

Continued overleaf

Lighting

Prior to the installation of lighting fixtures, a detailed lighting strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA to safeguard bats and other nocturnal wildlife. This should provide details of the chosen luminaires, their locations and any mitigating features such as dimmers, PIR sensors and timers. Dependent on the scale of proposed lighting, a lux contour plan may be required to demonstrate acceptable levels of light spill to any sensitive ecological zones/features. The Strategy should refer to Guidance Note 08/23 - Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night (BCT and ILP, 2023) and explain how proposals have been designed in compliance with this document. Such approved measures will be implemented in full.

Precautionary Measures: hedgehogs

Site clearance shall be undertaken in a manner by which to safeguard hedgehogs as well as other wildlife. All rubble piles, leaf piles, compost heaps, dense vegetation and other general debris that could be used for shelter shall be carefully cleared by hand to a location such as a skip, other container or raised pallets. This shall be undertaken prior to machinery entering site and avoiding the core hibernation period (November-February). If a hedgehog is discovered during clearance, it shall be moved immediately and carefully with gloved hands to an area of shelter such as beneath adjacent hedgerow/bushes. A short statement of compliance shall be submitted to the LPA upon completion of clearance works to discharge this condition.

Species Enhancement Plan

Prior to building works commencing above foundation level, a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Approved measures shall be implemented in full and maintained thereafter. The Plan shall clearly show positions, specifications and numbers of features, which will include (but are not limited to) the following:

- universal nest boxes at ratio of 1:1, in line with British Standard 42021:2022.
- integrated bat boxes in 30% of dwellings.
- insect bricks in 30% dwellings and / or towers in public open space.

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- fencing gaps 130 mm x 130 mm to maintain connectivity for hedgehogs in all gardens (if applicable).

A statement of good practice including photographs shall be submitted to the local planning authority to fully discharge this condition, demonstrating that the enhancements have been selected and installed in accordance with the approved Plan.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP)

A HMMP shall be submitted to, and be approved in writing by, the LPA prior to the commencement of the development. If the standard HMMP template is not used, the HMMP checklist shall be consulted to ensure all appropriate information is included. The HMMP shall identify the habitats to be retained, created and / or enhanced on the site and specify the appropriate management prescriptions to secure the predicted condition targets, as per the approved biodiversity metric for the application. The HMMP shall also set out a monitoring schedule to ensure targets are met and remedial actions to take if not. Guidance on producing a HMMP can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/creating-a-habitat-management-and-monitoring-plan-for-biodiversity-net-gain

It is hoped that the information provided is helpful to the Council. If you require any further information or wish to discuss any of the comments made, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Jenny Wheeldon

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