Derbyshire Wildlife Trust

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For the attention of Laura Anthony

Your Ref: AVA/2025/0651
Our ref: DWTAVA2161a

5th March 2026

Dear Laura,

Proposal: Remedial soil nail stabilisation works at Hilt Quarry, Crich

Location: Hilts Quarry Dimple Lane Crich Matlock Derbyshire

Application Ref No.: AVA/2025/0651

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 the nature conservation issues associated with the proposed development.

Response

Further to my initial letter of 18th December 2025, I have reviewed the additional reports and checked DWT/DBRC species and habitat datasets. The ecological reports reviewed now include the following:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Hilts Quarry (Peak Ecology, August 2024)

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- Night-time Bat Walkover Survey and Static Monitoring, Hilts Quarry (Peak Ecology, 21st November 2024)
- Ground Level Tree Assessment and Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of Rock Hilts Quarry, Crich (Peak Ecology, March 2025)
- Bat Emergence and Re-entry Surveys (Arbtech, August 2025)
- Bat Mitigation Plan (Arbtech)
- Badger Survey (Peak Ecology March 2025)
- Great Crested Newt eDNA Sampling (Arbtech, June 2025)
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, September 2025).
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric, (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, September 2025)
- Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) (Arbtech, 27th January 2026)

The PEA provides a thorough review and assessment of the ecological features associated with the site or close to the site. Whilst there are no nature conservation designations associated with the site, the ecological surveys have identified several Habitats of Principal Importance and protected species that will need to be addressed through appropriate mitigation and compensation. Species surveys have now been undertaken in accordance with the findings of the PEA.

Biodiversity Net Gain and the impact of the proposals on habitats

The PEA and the Biodiversity Net Gain assessment have identified two Habitats of Principal Importance (Lowland mixed deciduous woodland and Lowland calcareous grassland) within the red line boundary. The calcareous grassland is species rich and in this part of Derbyshire (Amber Valley) it is a very rare habitat. Other

habitats include inland rock, modified grassland, bramble scrub and vegetated garden as well as artificial unvegetated and developed sealed land. There are no hedgerows or watercourse affected by the development.

Potential impacts

The metric records a loss of 0.2 ha of Lowland mixed deciduous woodland. Whilst the PEA has identified that there could be a minor adverse impact on the calcareous grassland, this does not appear in the metric. Presumably this impact has been ruled out. The proposed habitat creation and enhancement measures include the on-site creation of 0.2 ha of calcareous grassland and the on-site enhancement of 0.794 ha of Lowland mixed deciduous woodland. There are also proposals for off-site habitat enhancement comprising 1.2 ha of other neutral grassland and 1.07 ha of Lowland mixed deciduous woodland. In both cases the enhancement is from moderate to good condition.

The proposals result in a net gain of 2.65 habitat units (15.65%). However, the trading rules are not met as stated in the report as follows:

The proposal has resulted in unmet trading conditions. In line with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (2024), any loss of a habitat must be replaced on a like-for-like or like-for-better principle. At present, trading conditions are not satisfied for the loss of 0.204ha of lowland mixed deciduous woodland (high distinctiveness). With unmet trading conditions, the proposal fails principal Rule 1 of BNG and is not compliant with current legislation (Environment Act 2021) and planning policies (National Planning Policy Framework, 2024).

As stated in the BNG Assessment to satisfy trading rules, a minimum of 1.43 units of lowland mixed deciduous woodland will need to be purchased or delivered off-site (and outside of Hilts Quarry). Ideally this should be located as close as possible to the point of impact and will need to be on land registered as a Habitat Bank with Natural England.

I note that some of the proposed habitat creation and enhancements occur within the red line boundary for the development and others occur within the blue line boundary for Hilts Quarry. The enhancement of habitats of high distinctiveness within the blue line boundary is significant and it is advisable to secure this with a legal agreement.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP)

I note that a HMMP has already been submitted for the whole of the site (red and blue line boundaries). This document is usually required as a condition of planning. The HMMP only addresses some of the habitats within the development. The retained habitats also need to be considered in terms of management over the 30-year period as per Natural England's HMMP template and checklist. NE's template includes a section for Habitat Retention which states that habitats being retained may require ongoing management in order to maintain them as per the baseline. The wider site (everything within the blue line) supports Lowland Calcareous Grassland (Priority Habitat) and non-priority habitat including a pond, willow scrub and mixed scrub. These retained habitats will need to be maintained in their current condition, and any management requirements need to be included

in the HMMP. It is advised that a revised HMMP is re-submitted with the Gain Plan as a condition of planning.

Species

Bats – bats are known to forage and commute within the quarry and there is suitability for roosting in the rock crevices and possibly in some of the trees. The bat survey report recommends that further surveys are undertaken to ensure that potential roosts have been identified or can be ruled out. This includes a Ground Level Tree Assessment survey. The report states that this '*should be carried out on those trees to be directly impacted, to identify which, if any, have the potential to support roosting bats. The identification of any trees with multiple potential roosting features (PRFs) could trigger the requirement for additional survey effort, either via aerial inspection or dusk emergence surveys'*.

The report goes on to say that '*Once the pre-works vegetation clearance has taken place, a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA) may be recommended on those sections of the quarry rockface to be directly impacted by either the remedial works or the transportation of materials, equipment or machinery which may result in the disturbance of bats roosting within the rock face'.*

A GLTA and Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of Rock has subsequently been completed and submitted to the Council in January 2026. The survey identified several trees with potential roost features.

Tree 1 is currently retained and will not be directly impacted. The assessment does not consider that indirect impacts will be significant. However, should the scope of the works change and result in potential direct impacts on this tree the recommendations in the GLTA report (section 5.1) must be followed. Trees 2 and 3 will require a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) to prescribe the soft felling of these trees.

The survey identified that there is a bat box present which, although located in a sub-optimal position, could be used by roosting bats. The GLTA has recommended that the bat box is checked by an ecologist prior to work starting.

The survey has also highlighted the presence of a small mine or cave within Hilts Quarry that is suitable for roosting bats. The mine / cave is not likely to be directly disturbed by these proposals but could be affected if works expand to include other areas of the quarry at some future date.

The Bat Emergence and Re-entry Surveys report found no evidence of bats emerging or re-entering the rock-face. The surveys did confirm foraging and commuting of bats along the rock-face and associated woodland habitat. The importance of the rock face and woodland as a dark corridor for bats was highlighted in the reports.

The development is likely to have some impact on bats due to loss of habitat and disturbance, noise and vibration. However, at this point direct impacts on roosting bats have not been identified. Some of these impacts are temporary and though there is loss of woodland cover there are retained woodland stands elsewhere

within the quarry and other habitats that can provide food sources for bats (e.g. grassland and scrub). It seems reasonable to assume that bats will continue to use the quarry including the area affected by the works post completion.

A Bat Mitigation Plan has been prepared, and this sets out mitigation and enhancement measures for bats. The approach is acceptable and the plan should be implemented in full. A condition to ensure that this is the case is recommended below.

Great crested newt (GCN)

The surveys have not confirmed presence / absence of GCN at the site. There is a pond 100m from the proposed works that does provide suitable conditions for GCN. Records for GCN locally are limited but do include observations to the east. Whilst the risk to newts is low there is a risk that amphibians could be injured as part of the remedial works and pre-works vegetation clearance.

The PEA recommended carrying out an eDNA test of the pond during the optimal window for eDNA testing (mid-April to the end of June). This assessment has been completed, and the results are provided in the Great Crested Newt eDNA Sampling (Arbtech, June 2025). No evidence for great crested newt was found in the eDNA sample. The report has set out precautionary working practices, and these should be included in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan.

Reptiles – the risk to reptiles can be addressed through precautionary working methods.

Breeding birds – there is a risk to breeding birds and works should ideally avoid the bird breeding season or have carried out a bird breeding survey to determine if impacts are likely. It should be noted that the quarry could support Schedule 1 bird species including Barn owl and / or Peregrine falcon. However, the surveys undertaken by the applicant have not observed any activity in the quarry in 2024 and 2025 and did not find any records for peregrine within 1km. However, they are mobile species, and the site does have some suitability for both barn owl and peregrine. The GLTA and PBRA report recommends a survey for Schedule 1 bird species prior to any physical works commencing. I support this conclusion and have made a recommendation below.

Conclusions

As stated previously the impacts on habitats have been fully assessed and the strategy for mitigation and compensation is clearly set out in the PEA, BNG Assessment and quantified in the metric. The Council is advised that some of the proposed habitat creation / enhancement measures are off-site (but still within Hilts Quarry) and in accordance with Defra guidance should be secured by a legal agreement with the owner of the land.

With regard to satisfying the Trading Rules of the metric the applicant will need to purchase units off-site to resolve this issue. Details of the purchase of units off-site must be provided at the same time as the Biodiversity Gain Plan is submitted assuming the application is approved.

Conditions and Biodiversity Gain Plan

The following statutory requirements and conditions are recommended.

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Biodiversity Gain Plan

The statutory framework for biodiversity net gain requires a Biodiversity Gain Plan to be submitted and approved by the planning authority to discharge the mandatory biodiversity gain condition prior to the commencement of development.

The Biodiversity Gain Plan must be accompanied by a final completed metric so that the LPA is able to accurately report on losses and gains as a result of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. The on-site and off-site tabs must all be completed and the Trading Rules must be satisfied.

Guidance for LPAs regarding Gain Plans can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain#para25 and the Gain Plan template is here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-gain-plan

Listed conditions

The following conditions are recommended.

Nesting Birds

No tree, scrub or hedgerow 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.

Schedule 1 Bird Species

No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance and movement of plant, machinery and materials) until a survey has been completed to determine the status of protected Schedule 1 bird species within the quarry.

Bats

The development must be carried out in strict accordance with the Bat Mitigation Plan (Arbtech) with all mitigation and enhancement measures implemented in full.

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP: Biodiversity)

No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance and movement of plant, machinery and materials) until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall be produced by an ecologist and shall include the following.

a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
b) Identification of "biodiversity protection zones" to include sensitive or high value areas or features located within Hilts Quarry.
c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts on protected species (birds, amphibians, reptiles, badger and hedgehog) and sensitive features and habitats during construction.
d) Details for the control of invasive non-native species.
e) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.

f) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
g) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
h) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.
i) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP)

A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (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 over the mandatory 30-year period 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

If you require any further information or wish to discuss any of the comments made, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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Yours sincerely,

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