

**Planning and Highways Committee**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023**

---

**REPORTS FOR CIRCULATION**

---

**REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – CITY DEVELOPMENT**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is circulated to the Committee. It includes additional information received after the preparation of the Committee Report. This information may allow a revised recommendation to be made.

**LIST OF CIRCULATED ITEMS**

**Application 5 of Item 3**

**23/00262/FUL - Land To The Rear Of Abbey Drive Houghton-le-Spring -  
Erection of 3 no. three bedroom terraced houses with front and rear  
gardens**

This report seeks to provide an update following the submission of the following information;

An updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal  
Habitat Plan  
A Location Plan showing Ecological information  
Elevation Plans showing Bat Boxes

And following further representations subsequently received from the Council's Ecologist.

The Council's Ecologist acknowledged that previous comments been provided by our framework consultant and in their latest comments (dated 6th May 2023) a number of inconsistencies and departures from industry good practice guidance were identified. Further to this the conclusion to the comments listed a number of minimum additional information requirements which included the following;

Amendments to the PEA to include a site boundary and habitats plan;  
identification of the potential impacts of the proposal upon the Wildlife Corridor

(and associated flora and fauna) as identified through the Allocations and Designations Plan (Draft) and a plan showing the habitat creation/mitigation measures to be implemented along the stand off area between the development and adjacent Wildlife Corridor.

The Council' Ecologist concluded that first point has not been addressed stating that while the agent (not the ecologist) has provided a plan annotated with existing habitats, this does not replace a habitat plan based on an appropriate level of ecological survey by a suitable qualified and experienced ecological. Such a plan should form an integral part of an ecological report and, in conjunction with appropriate desk study information, is the basis of the Ecological Impact Assessment process. It is not the role of the LPA ecological advisers to replicate the assessment of ecological impacts, which is the role of the applicant and their advisors.

The Council' Ecologist acknowledged that the second point appears to have been addressed to some degree, with some commentary included with the ecological report although it is not made clear that the proposal for a 'buffer zone of trees and shrubs will be planted on the western boundary' is related to the potential for harm to the identified Wildlife Corridor.

While the elevation drawings now show a bat box on the western gable, the latest site plan (drawing number: AL (90) 0200) does not include this proposed buffer zone mitigation. No indication of the required hedgehog access has been made within the plans. Therefore, the third point therefore has not been addressed.

The Council's Ecologist stated that the proposed plans contradict the proposed mitigation within the ecological report, specifically it has not been demonstrated that a buffer of trees and shrubs can or will be provided within the application boundary concluding that the proposals would result in harm to the ecological function of the adjacent wildlife corridor and as such raised an objection to the proposed development.

Taking the above into deliberation, it is considered that the proposed development fails to support the management of existing wildlife corridors, including reconnecting vulnerable and priority habitat and would have a significant adverse impact on the value and integrity of a wildlife corridor. The proposal does not accord with CSDP Policies NE1 (1 iii) and NE2 (6).

Given the above assessment, the recommendation in the Committee Report for this application should be amended to include an additional reason for refusal as detailed below;

#### Additional reason for refusal

The proposed development fails to support the management of existing wildlife corridors, including reconnecting vulnerable and priority habitat and would have a significant adverse impact on the value and integrity of a wildlife corridor. The proposal is contrary to CSDP Policies NE1 and NE2.

**END OF REPORT**