

Ecology response 30 7 25 for F/24/98592 Ridge Farm, Grange Road, Bursledon Southampton SO31 8GD

Change of use of former agricultural land to hardstanding ancillary to existing commercial premises (Retrospective Application)

Gary Osmond

30/7/25

Summary

The biodiversity enhancement proposals are appropriate for this site and should be implemented. Surface water drainage information is required.

Biodiversity Net Gain

I have reviewed the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment by LC Ecological Services (June 2025). The baseline habitats were assessed as *modified grassland, other neutral grassland, bramble scrub, individual rural trees, non-native and ornamental hedgerow, artificial unvegetated unsealed surface, developed land; sealed surface, and developed land; sealed surface (buildings)*. Cleared habitat included modified grassland. This is assumed to be in the same condition as the adjacent retained modified grassland. *The combined current habitats and cleared habitats have a baseline value of 3.44 habitat units and 0.40 linear units.*

The current proposals result in a net loss of – 0.47 habitat units (- 13.74%) and – 0.08 linear units (non-native ornamental hedgerow) (-20.55%) and could achieve a net gain of + 0.37 habitat units (10.72%) and + 0.05 linear units (+ 13.21%) with the trading rules being satisfied.

*The site provides the potential to support badger (*Meles meles*), foraging and commuting bats, nesting birds, and common reptile species and will continue to do so.*

The biodiversity net gain enhancements proposed for this site include enhancing 0.2 ha of modified grassland on site to other neutral grassland in moderate condition and creating 0.07 km of native hedgerow. This would deliver 1.24 area habitat units and 0.14 linear habitat units.

The report also recommends native planting to provide resources for pollinating insects, habitat for nesting birds, foraging bats, amphibians and reptiles.

I think that these biodiversity enhancement proposals would provide a good outcome for this site.

A Biodiversity Net Gain Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be required, with significant habitats to be managed and monitored for 30 years. This can be conditioned rather than secured by S106.

Surface Water Drainage

Surface water drainage information has not been provided for this proposal. The change from agricultural land to hardstanding has implications for surface water drainage and water

quality. The use of the land for parking involves increases in pollution hazards and soil compaction. The requirements of DM6 must be satisfied. The simple index approach to pollution hazard mitigation is available in the CIRIA SuDS manual and must be used to demonstrate that all pollution hazards have been mitigated.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist

11/12/24

In my opinion, this application is not exempt from the requirement to provide 10% biodiversity net gain. The Local List biodiversity net gain validation requirements must be provided.

On the application form, dated 5/12/2024, the applicant has filled in the following:

Reason biodiversity net gain does not apply: *Retrospective planning permission* Please justify the reason why biodiversity net gain does not apply: *Parking area in situ prior to BNG adoption*

If yes, please state the date when the work or change of use started (date must be pre-application submission) Has the work or change of use been completed? *Retrospective application for change of use of former agricultural land to hardstanding ancillary to existing commercial premises* Yes No 05/09/2021

Aerial photos taken from Google Earth using the time slider show that although there was some disturbance in this area and it appears to be used for parking it did not appear to be paved in July 2021 or in January 2022, but there is pavement in evidence in the March 2024 photo.

Site area is listed as 0.39 ha.

From government guidance: [Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments)

The development is not below the threshold, as it impacts more than 25 square metres of habitat. A development impacts a habitat if it decreases the biodiversity value.

If a planning application for a development was made before day one of mandatory BNG on 12 February 2024, the development is exempt from BNG. This application was made on 5/12/2024, which is after 12/2/2024 so it is not exempt.

If habitat is cleared before an application is submitted, the baseline habitat value of the site will be taken to be its biodiversity value immediately before the carrying on of the activities, as per Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021, Pt 1, Para 6a-b with a cut-off date of 30th January 2020. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or damage to any of the habitats and species, their deteriorated condition will not be taken into consideration and the ecological potential of the site will be used to decide the acceptability of any development proposals.

The pre-development biodiversity value of a site is the biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on the date of the planning application. However, if any activity on the site after 30 January 2020 degrades the onsite biodiversity, and was not authorised by a planning permission, the pre-development biodiversity value will be as the value existing immediately before the activities were carried out.

Net loss of biodiversity is also not acceptable under Local Plan policy DM 11 and NPPF paragraph 180.