



## ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

**TO:** *Richard Timms*

**FROM:** *Emma England*

**DATE:** *23 November 2023*

**SUBJECT:** *23/500899/OUT / Land North Of The A20, Hollingbourne*

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*The following is provided by Kent County Council's Ecological Advice Service (KCC EAS) for Local Planning Authorities. It is independent, professional advice and is not a comment/position on the application from the County Council. It is intended to advise the relevant planning officer(s) on the potential ecological impacts of the planning application; and whether sufficient and appropriate ecological information has been provided to assist in its determination. Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant or other interested parties may have must be directed in every instance to the Planning Officer, who will seek input from the EAS where appropriate and necessary.*

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### **SUMMARY – SUFFICIENT INFORMATION PROVIDED**

We have reviewed the additional information submitted by the applicant in relation to biodiversity net gain and advise that sufficient ecological information has been provided.

Under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and paragraphs 174 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023, biodiversity should be maintained and enhanced through the planning system.

### **Biodiversity Net Gain**

Further information has been provided with regards to off-site compensation land for biodiversity net gain. Soil sampling and DNA metabarcoding for fungi has established that the grassland within the off-site compensation land has high conservation value as a waxcap grassland. Active management of the site has the potential to be positive for biodiversity. The applicant is proposing to actively manage the grassland at the site for the benefit of waxcaps, and to improve the habitat value of the scrub at the site. The applicant has also indicated that the sward height and species diversity of the grassland will not be altered by management. Following an email exchange with the project ecologists, we are content that the management can also be sensitive to the presence of any protected species at the site, such as reptiles. As such, we are content that further surveys at the site are not required.

The applicant has shown an intention to provide a biodiversity net gain above 10%. Given the rarity of some of the fungi found at the site, and with the positive management proposed, in line with the NPPF 2023, we consider that the application should be supported.

Should planning permission be granted we recommend the following condition is attached:  
*Prior to commencement of works (including site clearance), a detailed Ecological Design Strategy (EDS) will be submitted to, and approved by, the local planning authority. An EDS or EDSs shall cover both the on-site and off-site habitat mitigation, compensations and enhancements. The EDS(s) shall be based on the Pegasus Group Illustrative Masterplan, drawing number P21-3546\_06, the SLR BNG Assessment dated 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023 revision 2 and the SLR Ecological Impact Assessment dated January 2023. The EDS(s) shall include the following:*

- *Purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed works;*
- *Review of site potential and constraints;*
- *Results of up-to-date protected species/botanical surveys to inform appropriate habitat management (as required);*
- *Detailed design(s) and/or working method(s) to achieve stated objectives;*
- *Extent and location/area of proposed works on appropriate scale maps and plans;*
- *Type and source of materials to be used where appropriate, e.g. native species of local provenance;*
- *Timetable for implementation demonstrating that works are aligned with the proposed phasing of development;*
- *Persons responsible for implementing the works;*
- *Details of initial aftercare and long term maintenance, and;*
- *Details for monitoring and remedial measures.*

*The EDS shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and all features shall be retained thereafter.*

If you have any queries regarding our comments, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

**Emma England**  
**Biodiversity Officer**

This response was submitted following consideration of the following documents:

*Avison Young (May 2023) Email: RE: 23/500899/OUT - Land North Of The A20, Hollingbourne, Ecology Lighting Response, dated 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023.*

*DFL (January 2023) Lux Survey Report: Wates Ashford Road, Maidstone.*

*Pegasus Group (February 2023) Illustrative Landscape Masterplan. Ashford Road, Maidstone. P21-3546\_06 Rev E.*

*SLR (February 2023) Land North of Ashford Road (A20): Biodiversity Gain Plan. (Including review of biodiversity metric excel spreadsheet supplied separately)*

*SLR (October 2023) BNG Assessment: Land North of Ashford Road (A20).*

*SLR (January 2023) Ecological Impact Assessment: Land North of Ashford Road (A20).*

*Ramboll (February 2023) Ashford Road, Maidstone: External Lighting Assessment.*