



Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust

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04/12/2023

Application Reference: DC/23/68822

Site Address: Land Adjacent To Q3 Academy Wilderness Lane Great Barr Birmingham B43 7SD

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for giving the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust (BBWT) the opportunity to respond to this full planning application.

Upon review of the documents submitted in support of this planning application to date, we would like to make the following comments and recommendations with regard to this application.

FPCR, 2023. Wilderness Park, Land North of Wilderness Lane, Great Barr. Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Assessment. Rev. C

This report correctly cites from the NPPF that;

'Inappropriate Development is... harmful to the green belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances'.

However, the report fails to mention that this section of the NPPF goes on to say;

'The construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the green belt. Exceptions to this are:

- e) limited infilling of villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan;
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land...
- f) development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order'

We are of the opinion that the development does not fall under any of these development types, and must therefore be considered Inappropriate Development.

The report goes on to lay out the Consultant's own Green Belt Analysis of the site. We would also disagree with their assertion that the Harm Rating of bringing the site out of the Green Belt can be revised to Low. The reasoning for providing a Low rating for Purpose 2 of this analysis is flawed, as the parcel clearly separates the 'Towns' of Birmingham and Walsall, as given in Figure 3.1 of the Black Country Plan, and defined in the same document.

FPCR, 2023. Wilderness Park. Land North of Wilderness Lane, Great Barr, Birmingham. Ecological Impact Assessment. Final.

In the first instance, we feel the need to highlight the surprising density of typographical errors in the latter sections of this document. This is a professional document for what was always going to be a controversial development, and it seems as though this report could have used another check before being submitted.

In Section 5.5 of this report, it is stated that there is some 'uncertainty' on the status of the site being a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. The site was formally adopted by the Sandwell Borough Council 2019 as a SINC, which is quite certain.

Section 6.4 asserts that ‘whilst all habitats are included within the designation, the grassland and the hedgerow network are considered to be those forming the designation of the site’ These habitats could be argued to be the most valuable within the SINC, but it is reductive to consider these to be integral to the site’s designation. The site also scored highly in Naturalness, Position & Connectivity, Historical & Cultural and Aesthetic during the 2018 Local Wildlife Site Assessment.

Table 13 assesses the predicted and residual impacts of the development upon identified ecological receptors, both before and after mitigation. When assessing the Predicted Effect of the development on Peakhouse Farm SINC before mitigation, the report assesses that there will be a Minor, Adverse, Short-Term impact at a Regional level. As the development proposes to permanently destroy part of the site, this should be amended to a Permanent impact, rather than Short-Term.

The table goes on to assess the impact on Mature Trees. The Predicted Effect is assessed as Minor Adverse at a Local Scale, but this appears to take mitigation (Root Protection Areas and protective fencing) into account prematurely. Predicted Effect should be assessed without mitigation and Residual Effect with it. This is the same for Hedgerows later in the table.

Grassland is assigned Regional importance in Table 12, but Table 13 states that the Predicted Effect on grassland will be Minor Adverse, Local. This is incorrect in two ways; in that grassland is being Permanently destroyed, and that the effect will be Regional.

Finally, this table states that even after providing enhancement for bird species, there will be a Negligible effect at the Site scale. We would hope that enhancements aimed to improve the site for a species or group would result in at least a Minor, Positive effect.

In Section 7.7, the report states that ‘Policy ENV1 of the Adopted Core Strategy provide a degree of policy protection for locally designated site both SINC and SLINC’. Whilst this is technically correct, there is more nuance to the matter and this should be noted in the report;

ENV1 of the Black Country Core Strategy states that:

“...Development is not permitted where it would harm... Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation”

and;

“Locally designated nature conservation sites (Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation)... are protected from development proposals which could negatively impact upon them”

FPCR, 2023. Land North of Wilderness Lane, Great Barr. Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan. November 2023

No comments on this document.

FPCR, 2023. Land North of Wilderness Lane, Great Barr. Technical Note – Biodiversity Net Gain Metric 4.0 Calculations

No comments on this document.

FPCR, 2023. Land North of Wilderness Lane, Great Barr, Birmingham. Illustrative Masterplan. Ref: 09364-FPCR-XX-ZZ-DR-L 0012. P07.

No comments on this document.

General Comments

We would like to state that, based on the impact the development will have on a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation, that the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust formally Object to the application.

I hope this document has been useful. Should clarification or further detail be needed regarding any of the issues raised please contact me.

Yours sincerely



Senior Biodiversity and Planning Officer