

From: Squire, Sandra [REDACTED]
Sent: 18 February 2025 16:05
To: Section 62A Applications Non Major <section62anonmajor@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: Land at Colne Spring Villa. Colney Heath, St Albans, AL4 0PB - S62A/2025/0076

Thank you for consulting the Forestry Commission on this application.

As a Non-Ministerial Government Department, the Forestry Commission provide no opinion supporting or objecting to an application. Rather we provide advice on the potential impact that the proposed development could have on trees and woodland including ancient woodland.

There is no Ancient Woodland in or in the vicinity of the site, however there is a section of mixed deciduous woodland approximately 25m from the development site, some of which is in the same ownership.

Priority Habitat:

These Mixed deciduous woodlands are registered on the National Forest Inventory and the Priority Habitat Inventory (England).

They were recognized under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan as being the most threatened, requiring conservation action. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan has now been superseded but this priority status remains under the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006. (NERC) Sect 40 "Duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity" and Sect 41 – "List of habitats and species of principle importance in England".

Fragmentation is one of the greatest threats to lowland mixed deciduous woodland. Woodlands can suffer loss or deterioration from nearby development through damage to soils, roots and vegetation and changes to drainage and air pollution from an increase in traffic and dust, particularly during the construction phase of a development.

In the event this application is recommended for approval, we would recommend measures are taken to minimize dust pollution and that all lighting is directional to avoid illuminating the woodlands. We also recommend that protection fencing is used to create a construction exclusion zone to prevent any unintended incursions into the root protection area of the woodland during construction.

Net Deforestation and Tree Planting:

We note the plans include the removal of 12 individual trees, 3 tree groups and one partial tree group with plans to plant some level of replacement trees. We would expect mitigation measures to minimize any risk of net deforestation and loss of canopy cover, in addition to plans for biodiversity net gain.

With the Government aspiration to increase tree and canopy cover to 16.5% of land area in England by 2050, The Forestry Commission is seeking to ensure that tree planting and an increase in canopy cover is a consideration in every development not just as mitigation for loss.

The species and provenance of new trees and woodland needs to be considered to ensure a resilient treescape which can cope with the full implications of a changing climate. The biosecurity of all planting stock also needs to be considered to avoid the introduction of pests and diseases, particularly in areas where there are priority habitat woodlands.

We also note plans include the planting of cherry laurel on site. Laurel is a non-native invasive species usually used for screening, that would not be recommended to be planted in or near woodland. We would recommend a more suitable native tree species is used as an alternative.

We hope these comments have been useful to you. If you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes

Sandra

Sandra Squire

Local Partnership Advisor
East & East Midlands



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