

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
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**Greater Manchester
Ecology Unit**

Principal Ecologist:
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FAO Principal Planning Officer
Ribble Valley Council

12th April 2026

By e-mail

Dear Sir/Madam

Application number: 03/2026/0214

Address: Land at Albany Drive Copster Green

Description: Proposed erection of 26 affordable dwellings with associated access, gardens, parking and landscaping.

Thank you for consulting the Ecology Unit on the above planning application.

Ecology Surveys

The preliminary ecological assessment of the application site was undertaken in early December, not an optimal time of year for undertaking botanical surveys. However, I am aware of previous ecology surveys of the site carried out at a more appropriate time of year and given the current land-use and condition of the site I would be prepared to accept the overall assessment of the ecological status of the site.

Impact on Designated Sites

The development will not directly affect any sites designated for their nature conservation value.

Impact on Notable Habitats

The application site is dominated by horse-grazed grassland of rather limited ecological value, but there are some habitats of higher value on and close to the application site, including hedgerows and trees. These habitats are proposed to be partly retained as part of the development, and new landscaping will go some way towards compensating for these habitat losses.

I would advise that to protect retained habitats and as a general wildlife protection measure, as a Condition of any permission which may be granted to the proposals a Construction Environmental Management Plan (Biodiversity) is required to be prepared and, once approved, implemented in full.

Suggested Condition wording -

“No development shall take place (including ground works and vegetation clearance) until a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) must include the following:

- a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.*
- b) Identification of “biodiversity protection zones”.*
- c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements)*
- d) The location and timings of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.*
- e) The times during which construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.*
- f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.*
- g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.*
- h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs if applicable.*

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: to protect biodiversity

Impact on Notable Species

Badgers

Badgers are mobile in their habits and there is some habitat on the site of value to badgers. I would advise that

- A precautionary updated survey of the site for badgers is undertaken prior to any site clearance or groundworks commencing.

Badgers and their setts carry a high level of legal protection under the terms of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Bats

The site is used as a local foraging resource for bats and the loss of semi-natural habitats on the site may reduce this available foraging habitat. However, I note that –

- Habitats of most value to bats (hedgerows and trees) will be largely retained,
- There is extensive bat foraging habitat in the wider area,
- New landscaping is planned which will have some value for foraging bats,
- It would be possible to install features of value to roosting bats on the site, including bat boxes and features integrated into buildings.

I would conclude that it ought to be possible to allow the development without causing long-term harm to local bat populations.

I would advise that the development should avoid overly intrusive lighting of habitats of most value to bats and should incorporate opportunities for bat roosting (bat boxes and integrated features for bats). A sensitive lighting plan should be required by Condition.

Suggested Condition Wording – Lighting Design Strategy for Biodiversity

Notwithstanding the submitted details, and within 6 months of the date of this approval, a "lighting design strategy for biodiversity" in accordance with ILP Publications' "Guidance Note 8 Bats and artificial lighting" shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority for all existing and proposed lighting within the development hereby permitted.

The strategy shall:

- a. identify those areas /features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and other nocturnal wildlife that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and*
- b. show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy.*

Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

Reason – conservation of biodiversity

Nesting Birds

A range of bird may use the site for breeding, including ground nesting birds. Some nesting habitat will be retained as part of the scheme, and new landscaping will benefit some bird species.

Precautions will need to be taken throughout any site clearance works and groundworks to avoid harm to nesting birds. All nesting birds their eggs and young are protected under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Recommended Informative

The Applicant is reminded that under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended (section 1), it is an offence to remove, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built. Planning consent for a development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this act. Trees and scrub are likely to contain nesting birds between 1st March and 31st August inclusive. Trees / scrub are present on the application site and are to be assumed to contain nesting birds between the above dates, unless a recent survey has been undertaken by a competent ecologist to assess the nesting bird activity on site during this period and has shown it is absolutely certain that nesting birds are not present.

It should be possible to install a range of bird nesting boxes throughout the site, post-completion, as part of any detailed landscaping proposals.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The development is required to achieve at least a 10% Gain in Biodiversity as measured using a statutory Metric. The Metric provided with the application currently shows that the development will not be able to reach a 10% gain on-site, and therefore off-site habitat units will need to be sourced.

I would advise that a comprehensive Biodiversity Gain Plan and a long-term Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) should be required to be provided by the statutory Biodiversity Gain Condition which will apply to any permission which may be granted to the proposals. The Biodiversity Gain Plan must give full details of how and where off-site habitat units have been obtained.

I would regard the biodiversity gain provision to be significant, and therefore I would advise that management and monitoring of the habitat creation is secured by means of an S106 agreement.

I hope that these comments are useful.

Yours

Derek Richardson
Principal Ecologist