Biodiversity and Ecology Screening Statement

Applicant: Mr Jack Depear
Site: Land adjacent to The Poplars, 164 North Road, Gedney Hill, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE12 0NS

Proposal: Retrospective siting and residential occupation of a mobile home to provide accommodation for the applicant's father, enabling care and support to be provided by family members residing at The Poplars.

1. Purpose of statement

This statement accompanies a retrospective planning application under section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for the existing siting and residential occupation of a mobile home.

It provides proportionate information regarding the previous and current character of the application site, the development already undertaken and its potential implications for biodiversity and ecology.

This document is a planning-agent screening statement. It is not presented as a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal or specialist protected-species survey.

2. Biodiversity Net Gain status

The application seeks retrospective planning permission for development and a use that have already taken place.

Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain does not apply to retrospective planning permissions made under section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The statutory biodiversity gain condition therefore does not apply, and neither a statutory biodiversity metric nor a Biodiversity Gain Plan is required.

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This exemption relates specifically to the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain regime. It does not prevent the Council from considering ordinary ecological and protected-species matters as material planning considerations.

3. Previous site characteristics

Before the mobile home was stationed, the application site predominantly comprised part of a managed grass paddock adjoining the existing access from North Road.

The grassed area was relatively uniform in appearance and of limited structural diversity. The area directly affected by the mobile home and associated surfaced areas was not known to contain buildings, ponds, watercourses or other obvious specialist habitat features.

Established trees and vegetation were present around parts of the site boundaries. These features were primarily located around the edges of the site rather than within the principal area occupied by the retrospective development.

The established trees and boundary vegetation shown on the submitted plans have been retained.

4. Development undertaken

The retrospective development comprises:

- the siting and residential occupation of a mobile home;
- the formation or use of associated hard-surfaced and tarmacked areas;
- access from the existing entrance onto North Road; and
- the continued retention of surrounding grassed land and boundary vegetation.

Part of the previously grassed land is now occupied by the mobile home and associated surfaced areas.

The remainder of the application site continues to comprise grassed land. The development has not resulted in the wholesale loss of the paddock or the removal of the established trees and vegetation around the site boundaries.

5. Habitat considerations

The part of the site directly affected by the development previously comprised managed grassland.

Although all vegetated land can provide some ecological function, the affected area was comparatively uniform, regularly managed and lacked the structural variety normally associated with habitats of greater ecological value.

The principal features within and adjoining the site that are capable of providing greater ecological value are the retained trees and boundary vegetation. These features have not been removed as part of the retrospective development.

The mobile home and tarmacked or hard-surfaced areas provide negligible direct habitat value. However, grassland remains around the development, and the retained trees and boundary vegetation continue to provide potential shelter, movement and foraging opportunities for wildlife.

6. Trees and boundary vegetation

No established trees are understood to have been felled to facilitate the siting of the mobile home.

The retained trees and vegetation around the site boundaries are shown on the accompanying plans and continue to contribute to:

- visual screening;
- potential bird nesting habitat;
- shelter and connectivity for wildlife; and
- the landscape character of the site.

No further removal of established trees or boundary vegetation is proposed as part of this application.

Any future vegetation management would be undertaken with regard to the statutory protection afforded to nesting birds.

7. Protected species considerations

The development has already been carried out, and the mobile home has been present at the site for approximately three years.

There is no known evidence available to the applicant or planning agent indicating that the area directly occupied by the mobile home and associated hardstanding previously supported a protected-species breeding site or resting place.

The development did not involve:

- the demolition or conversion of an existing building;
- the removal of mature trees;
- the removal of established boundary vegetation;

- the infilling of a pond; or
- works to a watercourse.

The retained trees, boundary vegetation and surrounding grassed areas remain available for use by wildlife.

This statement does not seek to provide a specialist ecological conclusion where professional survey work would be required. Should the Council identify a specific concern arising from ecological records, a designated site or a particular habitat feature, the applicant would respond proportionately to that identified matter.

8. Biodiversity enhancements

Although mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain does not apply, proportionate biodiversity enhancements could be incorporated into the site.

These could include:

- installation of a bird nesting box on a suitable retained tree;
- installation of a bat box in an appropriate position;
- retention and appropriate management of the existing boundary vegetation;
- avoidance of unnecessary external lighting directed towards trees and vegetation; and
- use of native or wildlife-friendly planting within suitable landscaped areas.

Details of any enhancement considered necessary could be agreed with the Council and secured by planning condition.

9. Conclusion

The retrospective development occupies land that previously formed part of a managed grass paddock of relatively uniform character and limited structural diversity.

The mobile home and associated surfaced areas have resulted in the loss of part of the grassed area within the red-line site. However, the wider grass paddock remains, and the established trees and boundary vegetation have been retained.

The development did not involve the demolition of buildings, removal of mature trees, loss of established boundary vegetation, infilling of ponds or works to watercourses.

The application is exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain because it seeks retrospective permission under section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Nevertheless, the existing trees and boundary vegetation will continue to be retained, and proportionate biodiversity enhancements can be provided where reasonably required.

On the information available, the retrospective development is not considered to have resulted in the loss of any obvious habitat feature of significant ecological value within the application site.

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