

Statement as a Resident of Humber Lane - Please accept my apologies for not being able to attend today's TTC in person, I am working in Wales.

My name is Daniel Ahern, I have lived at Home Farm House on Humber Lane since March 2018. I hold a BSc in Botany awarded by the University of Reading in 2002. I'm a Chartered Environmentalist, a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and a Fellow of the Linnean Society.

Since 2002 I have worked as a professional ecologist spending 4 years with the Environment Agency as a Catchment Ecologist, a term with Somerset County Council as a Planning Ecologist and the remaining 15 years working as an ecological consultant. I hold Natural England personal licences for bats, great crested newt and white-clawed crayfish.

Having lived on the Home Farm site for two years prior to the current housing development taking place I have been lucky enough to gain a robust understanding of the ecology of the Home Farm site, the 8 acre paddock to the north, which I live immediately next to, and the wider local environment.

It is my professional opinion that the ecology report submitted in support of the planning application for the Home Farm development was not fit for purpose. Subsequently the housing development at the site has resulted in the destruction of barn owl and bat roosting sites when the derelict farm buildings were developed. There was mitigation provided as part of the development including the recommendation for wildflower meadow habitat creation on the 8 acre as part of an Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG). While visually appealing this was inappropriate as the habitats destroyed by the development were almost entirely built structures not grassland.

Having reviewed the plans for the proposed allotments on the Humber Lane 8 acre site it is clear that this organic development will result in a significant increase in plant, invertebrate and animal species on the site. I welcome the diverse range of habitats which are planned as part of the proposed development; native, species rich hedgerows, unmanaged wildflower areas, parkland trees and a range of fruiting and flowering plants on the allotments. These will provide a significant increase in habitat and food source availability for wildlife which in turn will prompt a significant increase in amphibians, bats, birds, invertebrates, mammals and reptiles using the site. This planned increase in habitat and food source availability is markedly more than that which would result from the ANG.

The proposed development, with its absence of artificial light and wildlife accessible design will encourage the bats (currently nine species using the 8 acre), birds and reptiles (currently three species using the 8 acre) in particular to prosper. I particularly welcome the design of the planned allotment building and the number of bat and bird habitat enhancement features. These will make a significant contribution to habitat enhancement which the original ecology report for the Home Farm development and associated mitigation measures failed to do.

NB: For reference there are no known stone curlew records north of the A303 or east of the Gomelden area.

In terms of some local residents' desire for an ANG, there are already extensive areas of wild and managed habitat to enjoy and freely access on the doorstep of Humber Lane.