

Planning Statement: Proposed Natural Wildlife Pond with Ancillary Recreational Swimming

Proposal Overview

The proposal seeks permission for the creation of a natural wildlife pond with limited capacity for recreational swimming. The development is conceived as a low-impact landscape and ecological feature, designed in accordance with the principles of sustainable development set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The pond will be formed using natural land contours and materials, with gently sloping banks and no concrete walls or engineered pool structures, and will operate without chemical treatment, integrating sensitively into the existing rural setting.

Principle and Operation of the Natural Swimming Pond

The proposed pond will function as a natural swimming pond, operating on ecological rather than chemical or intensive mechanical principles. Water quality will be maintained through a balanced system of aquatic planting, biological filtration, and natural circulation, allowing the pond to operate as a living waterbody that supports biodiversity while also accommodating occasional swimming.

The design will incorporate two distinct but interconnected zones: a deeper, largely vegetation-free swimming area and a planted regeneration zone. The regeneration zone will contain carefully selected native and aquatic plant species that absorb nutrients, suppress algal growth, and support beneficial microorganisms. As water slowly circulates through these planted areas, it is naturally filtered and oxygenated, maintaining clear and healthy water without the use of chlorine or other chemical disinfectants.

Water circulation will be achieved primarily through passive means, with low-energy pumps used where necessary to ensure consistent movement through the regeneration zone. The system will operate as a closed-loop, with no regular water discharge, minimising water consumption and aligning with sustainable drainage and water management principles.

Ecology and Biodiversity Enhancement

The primary function of the pond is ecological enhancement, delivering biodiversity benefits in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework's objective to secure measurable net gains for biodiversity. The existing site is currently managed as lawn and paddock, with limited ecological value, and includes a box hedge affected by blight and a number of diseased apple trees. These features offer minimal habitat diversity and are of declining condition.

The proposed pond will significantly enhance the baseline ecological value of the site by introducing a diverse range of aquatic and marginal habitats. The design incorporates varied depths, shallow shelves, and gently sloping margins to support aquatic plants, amphibians, invertebrates, birds, and other wildlife. Native planting will replace low-value managed grassland, increasing structural diversity and seasonal interest.

The absence of chemical treatment ensures that the pond will function as a healthy aquatic ecosystem, supporting wildlife without risk of contamination. In ecological terms, the proposal represents a clear improvement over the existing condition of the site, transforming a low-diversity landscape into a multifunctional habitat and delivering a demonstrable biodiversity net gain.

Recreational Swimming Use

Recreational swimming is proposed as a clearly secondary and ancillary use of the pond. The scale and frequency of use will be low and private in nature, resulting in no material impact on residential amenity, landscape character, or ecological value.

The filtration system has been designed to support occasional swimming use while remaining fully compatible with ecological objectives, ensuring that recreational activity does not compromise the pond's primary function as a wildlife habitat.

Landscape Character and Visual Impact

The pond will be designed to reflect natural landform and local landscape character, avoiding engineered or urbanising features. Excavated material will be reused on site, reducing waste and visual impact. The development will preserve the openness and rural qualities of the site and will not result in landscape or visual harm.

Sustainability and Planning Balance

Overall, the proposal represents sustainable development consistent with national and local planning policy. It delivers ecological enhancement, supports health and wellbeing, and does so through a low-impact and sensitively designed intervention. When assessed against the Development Plan and the NPPF, the proposal results in clear environmental and social benefits which significantly outweigh any limited and temporary impacts associated with construction.