Produced by Hornton Parish Council August 2020

Re. Wroxton MX track - LDC application

20/02126/CLUE: "Unauthorised change of use of land from agricultural to motorsport with significant intensification over recent years and erection of timber fence"

Conservation, biodiversity, wildlife & birdlife: Summary of site biodiversity, including many 'birds of high conservation concern', and the adverse effects of noise

A. Overview & Legal Obligations of Cherwell District Council

The rural landscape around Wroxton Motocross Track is rich in many wild species. Huge noise and traffic disturbance created by track race and practice days – which have become acute since 2017-18 – are causing untold harm. This is not being assessed or managed.

There is an urgent need for DEFRA and/or the RSPB to survey current species and their welfare – before it is too late. (See RSPB survey of 2011 - Figs 1 & 2.)

There is also an irrefutable obligation for Cherwell District Council (CDC) to act. The Council needs to conduct a biodiversity survey/report and curb noise at the site and, in so doing, abide by its own wildlife conservation rules plus relevant conservation legislation.

The Cherwell Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan sets out how CDC will contribute towards conserving wildlife and the natural environment. It includes aims, actions and targets relating to five themes:

- Planning and sustainable development
- Land and buildings management
- Council land and buildings management
- •Green space and conservation target areas
- •Health and well-being."

The CDC website states the legal requirement:

"Some of the most important sites, habitats and species in Cherwell are protected by legislation, others by planning policy."

Clear guidance is found in the 2014 Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire document: "Parish councils and communities can provide vital help for wildlife by appreciating, protecting and enhancing biodiversity in their local area."

In addition, and specifically, there are swifts in the Wroxton MX track zone. They need protection in line with <u>The Cherwell Swift Conservation Project</u> which aims to:

- •Identify and protect swift nest sites in the district
- •Increase nest places for swifts in identified suitable sites
- •Improve local knowledge of swifts, and the risks they face, particularly from building work."

B. Key evidence:

1. Proven harm caused by noise

Numerous respected/governmental studies highlight the importance of the impact of noise on wildlife. DEFRA's own words are unequivocal:

"Where noise adversely affects wildlife and ecosystems, particular consideration needs to be given to the potential effects of noisy development on international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity."

Hearing loss and rapid increase in heart rate are some of the ill-effects of noise pollution on animals. High intensity sound induces fear which can force habitat abandonment. Noise pollution also harms the health and well-being of wildlife: animals use sound for numerous vital reasons, including to navigate, find food, attract mates and avoid predators.

See: Bristol University's 2020 study, *The Effects of Noise on Biodiversity*, where they look specifically at motor vehicle noise:

<u>file:///C:/Users/Steve/Downloads/10048_NO0235_PublishedReport.pdf</u> and the related DEFRA page:

http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?

Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=18136

See also this 2019 Smithsonian Magazine article:

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/noise-pollution-impacts-wide-range-species-study-finds-180973635/

2. Bird haven

The area around Wroxton MX track is a wonderful haven and breeding site for some of Britain's most protected birds, including nine birds which have been listed on the RSPB register (of 2011) as 'of high conservation concern' ie. they have undergone more than a 50 per cent decline in UK breeding population or range over the last 25 years. (See Figures I and II.)

It should be noted that Balscote Quarry, which is a Banbury Ornithological Society Reserve, is situated less than 0.5km from the MX circuit. The reserve is a breeding ground for curlew. The UK's breeding population of curlews is recognised as being of international importance, their IUCN status is 'Near Threatened' and the bird is a UK BAP priority.

Some birds, listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) receive an extra level of protection which means that they cannot be disturbed during the breeding season; those likely to be found in the track area include red kite and barn owl.

3. Legally Protected Species

This area of land, around and near the track, has been identified formally as home to protected/declining mammal species including badgers, bats, water vole, dormice and brown hares:

file:///C:/Users/Steve/Downloads/Biodiversity and planning in Oxfordshire 2014.pdf



VOLUNTEER & FARMER ALLIANCE



Species List: Hornton Grounds Farm

This list includes all birds seen during the RSPB Volunteer & Farmer Alliance Surveys carried out during the 2011 breeding season. Note some birds may have been missed, and winter visitors are unlikely to be represented.

S	pecies	Status	
Е	Blackbird	Green	
Е	Blackcap	Green	
В	lue tit	Green	
Е	Buzzard	Green	
C	Canada goose	Green	
C	Carrion crow	Green	
C	Chaffinch	Green	
C	Chiffchaff	Green	
C	Coal tit	Green	
C	Collared dove	Green	
C	Coot	Green	
0	unnock	Amber	
F	eral pigeon	Green	
* 0	Soldfinch	Green	
C	Great spotted woodpecker	Green	
(Great tit	Green	
0	Green woodpecker	Amber	
* (Greenfinch	Green	
G	Grey wagtail	Amber	
H	lerring gull	Red	
H	louse martin	Amber	
H	louse sparrow	Red	
* J	ackdaw	Green	
J	ay	Green	
*	Kestrel	Amber	
L	esser black-backed gull	Amber	
* L	innet	Red	
L	ittle grebe	Amber	

Species	Status	
Long-tailed tit	Green	
Magpie	Green	
Mallard	Amber	
Mistle thrush	Amber	
Moorhen	Green	
Mute swan	Green	
Pheasant	Green	
Pied wagtail	Green	
Raven	Green	
Red-legged partridge	Green	
* Reed bunting	Amber	
Robin	Green	
Sedge warbler	Green	
* Skylark	Red	
Song thrush	Red	
Spotted flycatcher	Red	
* Starling	Red	
* Stock dove	Amber	
Swallow	Amber	
Swift	Amber	
* Tree sparrow	Red	
* Whitethroat	Amber	
* Woodpigeon	Green	
Wren	Green	
* Yellowhammer	Red	
TOTAL SPECIES	53	

Red Status: Birds of high conservation concern. These Species have either undergone ≥50% decline in UK breeding population or range over the last 25 years, a historical decline from 1800 – 1995, or are species of global conservation concern.

^{*} Farmland Bird Indicator Species

Figure II: Bird species noted around the track site in 2011. (See key in Fig I.)

