

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 [The Cherwell Swift Conservation Project](#) 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:

file:///C:/Users/Steve/Downloads/10048_NO0235_PublishedReport.pdf

and the related DEFRA page:

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

[Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=18136](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

Figure I:



