

Planning and Development

David Peckford, Assistant Director – Planning and Development



Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust
The Lodge
1 Armstrong Road
Littlemore
Oxford
OX4 4XT

Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 4AA

www.cherwell.gov.uk

Please ask for: **Sarah Greenall**

Direct Dial: **01295 221559**

Email: **sarah.greenall@cherwell-dc.gov.uk**

Reference: **21/00517/F**

20th May 2022

Dear Sir/ Madam

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

Application No.: 21/00517/F

Proposal: Creation of a motocross track and soft landscaping scheme and the change of use of agricultural land to hold moto-cross events including set-up, take down and private practice sessions, with associated camping site, for up to 65 days per year and agricultural grazing (retrospective)

Location: Land used for Motocross
Stratford Road A422
Wroxton
OX15 6HX

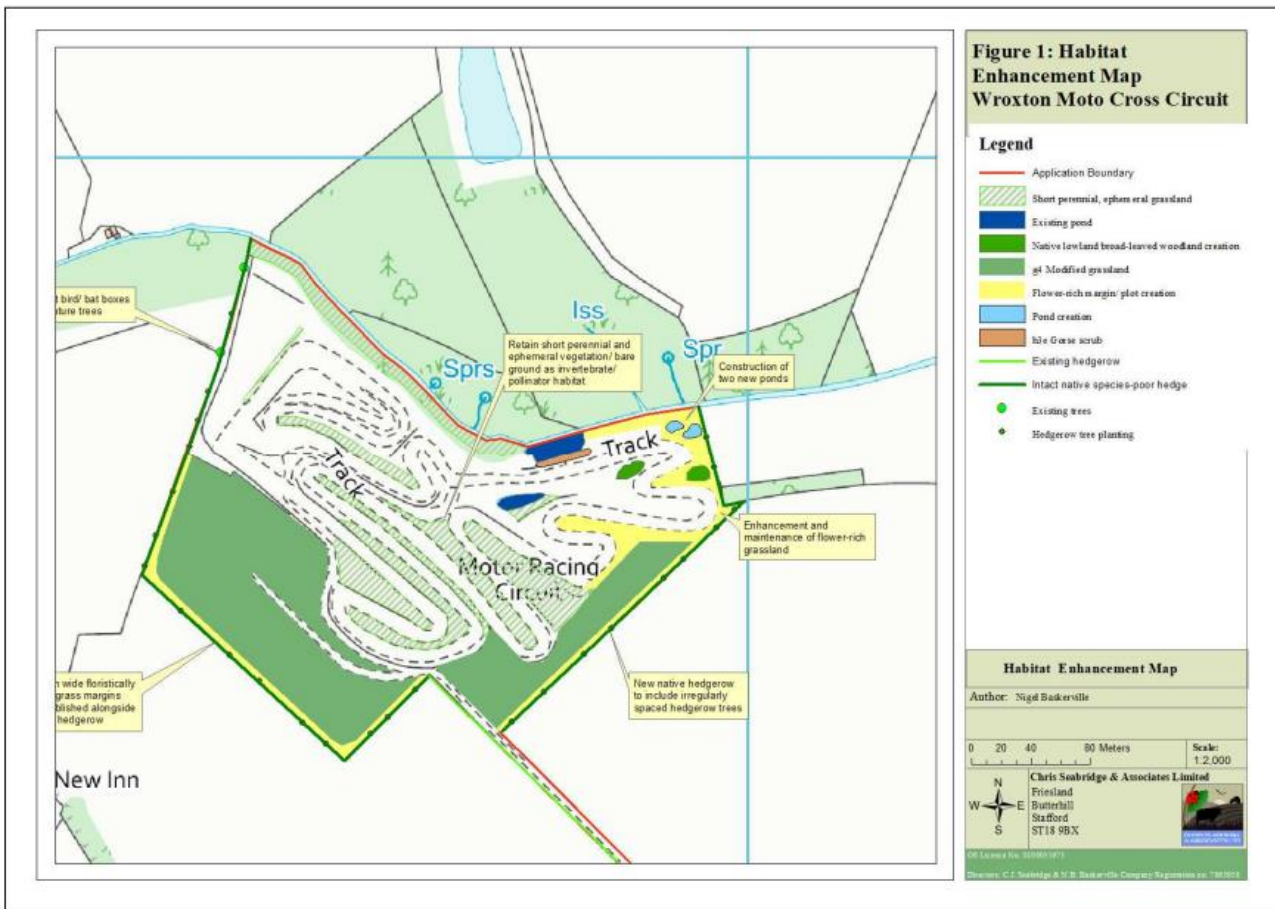
I write with regards to the above planning application of which Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) have previously provided comments for. Your most recent comments suggested that your resources were particularly low at the moment, and referred back to the original comments submitted in June 2021. As this is the case, I was hoping to summarise both sets of comments as well as additionally submitted information, and suggest some solutions that could overcome the issues you have discussed to see if a resolution could be found.

Firstly, I note that you have specifically objected to any increase in the extent of the motocross track, or frequency of meets, making reference to the fact the current application seeks up to 65 days.

To confirm, the track would not be extended any further than what is currently seen on site. If planning permission were to be granted the track could then not be extended any further without submitting an additional planning application to the Local Planning Authority. Further to this, the proposed conditions seek to ensure that the track is to be used for no more than 65 days in a year including set-up, take down and private practice sessions. However, the use of the track would be limited to no more than 20 of those 65 days for racing or practising.

The next point raised by BBOWT, was that ideally there would be less exposed soil overall, and certainly no increase, and in particular not so close to the brook as presently. The applicants have submitted an amended 'Habitat Enhancement Proposals' plan (Figure 1) that shows that further landscaping would be provided along the northern boundary, and that much of the exposed track would be planted.

Figure 1: Map of Habitat Enhancement Proposals



The proposed conditions would request further detailed landscape and landscape maintenance plans. These details would then come forward as applications to discharge the relevant condition, this process would involve further consultation with you to allow you to make further comments on the details of the landscaping and its suggested maintenance. On the basis of the landscaping plans already submitted, there will certainly at the very least be much less exposed soil then there currently is on the site at the moment.

The next point in the comments states that you would advocate for requirements to be made for biodiversity net gain, ideally 20% and referenced against reasonable estimates of pre-motocross use biodiversity levels for the land. We require clarification on whether your comments represent a specific objection, or indicate a desire to encourage that a biodiversity net gain is secured where possible. The applicants have since submitted an Ecological Enhancement Measures document, which includes a biodiversity net gain section. It states that the habitat baseline used is prior to the construction of the site, and a separate metric calculation tool used to make the calculations has also been submitted. It concludes that there would be a biodiversity net gain of 60% in habitat units, and nearly 74% in hedgerow units.

Further to this, the original BBOWT comments submitted make reference to Great Crested Newts (GCN) being recorded on site and the need for them to be respected and suitable mitigation requirements strictly followed. Earlier this year the Council's Ecologist went out on site to have a look at the existing ponds, and the location of the proposed additional ponds. Following some suggestions from the Council's Ecologist, the applicants have since made some amendments to their Great Crested Newt Mitigation Measures document. The Council's Ecologist has advised that, subject to the provisions of this document being secured via planning conditions, they agree that the proposed approach to mitigating the impact of Great Crested Newts on the site is acceptable.

The comments submitted by BBOWT in June 2021 go on to highlight a key area of concern to be the impacts upon the river catchment. Of particular concern appears to be the Sor Brook, and you suggested that activities at the site should not increase sediment inputs or water run-off rates, and that good protection must be in place for the watercourse. A detailed Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted with the application, which is acknowledged in the submitted comments, that also outlines issues of sediment transfer. We have since re-consulted the Lead Local Flood Authority who have confirmed that the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is acceptable and they have no objections to the application, subject to a condition ensuring the FRA is adhered to.

BBOWT's comments do however note that ongoing active management and monitoring all year round, plus regular reviews of whether the system is coping should be required. The FRA does outline maintenance, however, the Council is also minded to address this issue through the imposition of conditions to: (i) require regular management; and (ii) to secure an appropriate exit strategy management plan for when the site ceases use as a motocross site.

In terms of the *other points relating to catchment matters* section, you have offered a number of suggestions. These include; swales to have varied sward heights, increase of hedgerows along contours, minimising ground disturbance by vehicles, no herbicides or pesticides, and the consideration of oil absorbing fabric within swales. It is the Council's intention to advise the applicant of these suggestions in order to guide any future submission they make to discharge condition relating to landscaping and its associated maintenance.

The June 2021 comments go on to note that noise and artificial lights should be minimised as much as possible. To confirm, there would be no night time use of the track. The GCN mitigation measures document also goes on to confirm that operating and maintenance of the race circuit would only be during day light hours. A condition is proposed that would limit the noise at the site, and the number of days the track can be used for would be limited. For context, the much of the track has been used for 40 years as a Motocross track and so the applicant may have a fallback position that would allow for some degree of unrestricted activity to take place even if this application is refused.

Lastly, your comments have included recommendations for the meadow creation/flower-rich grassland, which include suggestions such as using donor green hay cut from local rich grassland with commercially bought seed, only using scarification rather than the creation of bare soil, wider margins, and leaving areas of bare free-draining soil for burrowing insects. The comments go on to state that natural regeneration should be used where possible, areas of rough grassland should be allowed to develop and persist, natural regeneration of gorse is valuable, and makes the suggestion of how to achieve better quality and extent of hedgerows. These suggestions will be passed to the applicant in order to guide any future submission they make to discharge conditions relating to landscaping.

To summarise, it is proposed to impose conditions that would require further landscape plans and maintenance details, that could help to alleviate some of the concerns you have raised.

I would be grateful if you could review the above information and confirm: (a) does BBOWT continue to formally object to this application; or (b) whether this update and the proposed restrictive conditions suggested sufficiently address your previously stated concerns such that you are able to confirm the withdrawal of your objection.

Yours faithfully

Sarah Greenall