

The Lodge
1 Armstrong Road
Littlemore
OXFORD
OX4 4XT

25 July 2022

Sarah Greenall,
Senior Planning Officer,
Cherwell District Council

By e-mail only

Dear Sarah,

21/00517/F

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).

We have the following comments on this application. As a wildlife conservation organisation, our comments refer specifically to potential impacts on wild species and habitats which may occur as a result of the proposal.

Thank you for your previous letter providing further details on the issues raised in our previous response. Thank you for clarifying that there would be no increase in the extent of the track or frequency of use without an additional planning application. There remain some outstanding issues that we address below.

Potential impact on the biodiversity of the Sor Brook and on Horley Local Wildlife Site, which lies downstream on the Sor Brook

This is a matter of great concern. You have offered the use of a number of conditions to address the above. We consider that the conditions that you refer to as follows are of particular importance *“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.”* We would ask that these conditions ensure that for the duration of the existence of the motocross that management to protect the Sor Brook is maintained and that measures can be taken by the planning authority to require action if the protection of the Sor Brook is not maintained.

We note that paragraph 5.12 of the DAS states: *“5.12 The FRA report also considers surface water run-off and confirms that the drainage system across the track was designed to manage runoff and the high sediment loads within it. The upper or “silt” pond is cleaned out every three years and sediment is spread back on to the track. Additional structures have been recommended to manage*

sediment discharge in the western part of the track, associated with the starting grid. A series of short swales, aligned parallel with the contours are suggested to trap sediment.”

and paragraph 5.13 states:

“5.13 The Ecological Appraisal from Chris Seabridge and Associates Ltd and the Flood Risk Assessment (Lidar Logic 2021) both identify the potential for surface water runoff at the site. The Flood Risk Assessment has identified the measures that can be taken by the applicant to reduce this risk, to accord with both national and local plan policies. Please refer to the FRA, at Figure 31, ‘Recommended sediment control measures, along the track’s north eastern margin’ for details.”

The measures described in these two paragraphs (and in the accompanying documents they refer to) are of great importance, however the use of phrases such as “have been recommended” and “has identified” (e.g. as opposed to “will take place” or similar) do not give sufficient surety to ensure that all these measures will be both put in place, and maintained for the duration of the existence of the motocross site. We would ask that conditions or otherwise are used to ensure that all the above measures are put in place, and maintained for the duration.

Net gain in biodiversity

We welcome the submission of the net gain metric spreadsheet and the ecological enhancement measures. There are two concerns we have though in relation to these:

- a) There is a difference between the figures quoted for % habitat net gain in the submitted DEFRA 2.0 metric spreadsheet (8.19%, which is below the 10% net gain expected by the authority), and that stated in the ecological enhancement measures June 2021 report in Table 5 (60.11%). This may result from the calculations being done at different times based on different designs, but it is important for the applicant to make clear which of the two metric results it is their intention to achieve, so that the authority knows for which one to assess progress on that achievement if the application is approved. If the 60.11% is the figure for the design they intend to use then we would ask that the metric spreadsheet for this figure is submitted instead of the existing spreadsheet.
- b) There appears to be an issue in the metric spreadsheet submitted (the one showing the 8.19% net gain figure). It appears that it is probably as a result of a possible flaw in the original generic metric spreadsheet, or otherwise some other similar issue. It is not as a result of any error on the part of the applicant but it does cause a significant change in the outcome.

In tab A-04 Site Habitat Succession, the spreadsheet shows the formation of 0.04 ha of broadleaved woodland as creating over 12 biodiversity units. With our wide experience in the use of the metric it struck us that was a very large unit figure for such a small area of habitat. So we ran the metric with the 0.04ha area separated out in the baseline from the modified grassland habitat area that was due to have other outcomes, and it instead generated 0.26 units, which would be a more usual number for such a small area of land. The result of that change though is that the outcome becomes a 9.55% net loss (well below that required by planning policy), as opposed to a 8.19% net gain.

None of this implies an error on the part of the applicant though, since it is perfectly normal and legitimate to use one row in the baseline for habitat that will have several outcomes – it is just in this case it appears to have created an anomaly, which we do not understand. It is possible that we have made an error, so we suggest that you ask the advice of the Cherwell DC in-house ecologist to check this issue and the applicant may wish to check the issue as well. If it does turn out that the current design does lead to a net loss (contrary to planning policy) then one possible solution (if this particular solution was acceptable to the applicant, there are other solutions available) would be for habitat creation on additional land adjacent to the site, creating habitat such as gorse scrub, or species-rich grassland.

The conditions proposed go some way to addressing our concerns, but the matters raised above remain active.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Stanton', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Matthew Stanton
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