

Date: 24 May 2022

Andrea Andrews
Technical Manager
GreenSquare Homes Ltd
Methuen Park
Chippenham
Wiltshire
SN14 0GU

Dear Andrea,

Reference: Land at Tappers Farm, Oxford Road, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4BN

I am writing to provide an overview of the ecological enhancements proposed for the above site, to support the planning application for residential development of the site (Appeal ref. APP/C3105/W/19/3222428).

Site Description

The site occupies an area of 2.19ha. The majority of the site comprises improved (modified) grassland with several mature scattered trees. There is an area of hardstanding / artificially surfaced ground with buildings in the south. The site is bounded with a mixture of hedgerows, trees and fencing.

Habitat Creation and Enhancement

The following habitats and enhancements are to be delivered on site. Further information is provided within the Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy (Focus Environmental Consultants, 2022) prepared for the site.

Wildflower Grassland

Approximately 0.34ha of wildflower grassland will be created across areas of open space in the north of the site, and along the eastern and western boundaries. The grassland will be subject to traditional meadow management (annual 'hay-cut') which, once established, will:

- provide structural heterogeneity across the site, providing nesting and foraging opportunities for a range of wildlife, such as reptiles, amphibians, small mammals and birds.
- encourage flowering wild plants, which will provide a rich nectar source, attracting various butterfly, bee and moth species, which in turn will provide an invertebrate food source for bats and other fauna.
- increase the floristic biodiversity of the site over the existing situation (currently dominated by developed land and modified grassland).
- provide a source of food for declining seed-eating birds that may be present within the local area (e.g. house sparrow).
- facilitate species dispersal across the site and to off-site habitats through the provision of green corridors along boundary hedgerows.

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Native Hedgerows

The proposed development will result in the loss of c.0.04km of native hedgerow. However, the majority of the hedgerows on site (0.43km) will be retained and enhanced through interplanting. Additionally, approximately 0.16km of new species-rich, native hedgerow will be planted on site (e.g. along boundaries) and will be subject to a management regime beneficial to wildlife. Once established, native hedgerows will:

- provide feeding and nesting habitats for a range of fauna including bats, birds, herpetofauna, and mammals (e.g. hedgehogs).
- improve habitat connectivity and dispersal routes for wildlife across the site and to off-site habitats.

Trees

The proposed development will result in the loss of T6 and T8, situated within the modified grassland. However, new tree planting throughout the site will include at least 50 trees and will utilise a variety of native and non-native species, include flowering, fruit, nut and berry-bearing species. Once established, trees will:

- provide nesting and foraging habitat for a variety of species including birds, bats and invertebrates.
- improve habitat connectivity for wildlife across the site and with the wider landscape.
- provide features for bats, saproxylic invertebrates and hole-nesting birds, where deadwood / decayed wood is retained (either *in situ* or relocated to undisturbed locations on site).
- provide a foraging resource for a range of wildlife. The incorporation of fruiting trees (e.g. apple) will specially provide a food source for birds such as thrushes, and mammals like hedgehogs and badgers. Fallen and decomposing fruit will also attract insects such as moths, providing prey for bat species.

Ornamental Planting

Ornamental hedgerow, tree and shrub planting across the post-development site will also provide some benefit to wildlife with the use of a variety of species which are flowering, fruiting, berry-bearing and / or fragrant. Ornamental planting and the creation of areas of amenity grassland will provide further connectivity across the site for wildlife, as well as opportunities for foraging and nesting.

Wildlife Boxes

In addition to the above habitat creation, the following wildlife boxes will be installed within the post-developed site to benefit a range of birds, bats and invertebrates:

- 10x integrated bat boxes within new dwellings.
- 26x swift bricks within new dwellings.
- 6x sparrow terraces within new dwellings.
- 3x starling nest boxes within new dwellings.
- 1x invertebrate nest box within the public open space.

To conclude, new landscaping proposed across the site, together with the provision of wildlife boxes/features, is considered to result in an increase in the overall floristic diversity at the site over the existing situation, provide enhanced foraging opportunities for wildlife, and offer new roosting and nesting opportunities for a variety of bat and bird species.

I trust the above is clear, but should you require any further information please do not hesitate to get in touch with me directly.

Kind regards,

Natalie Walsh
Associate Ecologist

QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

Focus Environmental Consultants® has the expertise to provide sure-fire environmental solutions to a wide range of projects. The company ethos forges the highest standards of professional scientific practice with a best value approach for our clients. Our core area of expertise is in the production of specialist environmental reports and advice to support planning applications. Our comprehensive services include Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEA), Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA), Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and fulfilling protected species surveys, licensing and mitigation requirements. Focus Environmental Consultants is a CIEEM Registered Practice, with all ecological staff being members of this professional body. Our flexible approach, range of skills and broad project experience from major infrastructure contracts to small private developments allows us to adapt to your individual requirements. As well as offering a full suite of ecological services, Focus Environmental Consultants can provide expert arboricultural advice and reports and is building an enviable reputation for innovative habitat creation and management solutions. Focus Environmental Consultants is situated in Worcestershire, providing a convenient and central UK location.

Natalie Walsh BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

Natalie is an Associate Ecologist and has over seven years' professional experience in the field of ecology. She holds a BSc (Hons) degree in Wildlife Conservation from the University of Plymouth. Natalie is experienced in undertaking Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, Ecological Impact Assessments (EclA), Biodiversity Impact Assessments (BIA) and Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA) as well as surveying for European Protected Species including great crested newts, bats and hazel dormice. Natalie is also a competent surveyor of badgers, reptiles, barn owls, water voles and otters. Natalie holds Natural England and Natural Resources Wales survey licences for great crested newts and bats (Class 2) and is a Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

This report has been checked for quality and content by:

Fern Fellowes-Day BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM MRSB

Fern has over seventeen years of professional experience in the ecological consultancy field. She holds BSc (Hons) in Zoology from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and MSc in Habitat Creation and Management from Staffordshire University. Fern has considerable experience in conducting Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, Ecological Impact Assessments (EclA) and Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA). Fern's particular expertise is with protected species surveys. As a Registered User of the CL35 Badger Class Licence she has extensive knowledge in dealing with the badgers, with practical experience in artificial sett design and creation and has held numerous Natural England licences to close or disturb badger setts. In addition, Fern holds survey licences for great crested newts, bats and white-clawed crayfish. Fern has held Natural England Mitigation (development) licences for great crested newts (including being a Registered Consultant for the new great crested newt Low Impact Class Licence (LICL)) and Conservation licences for white-clawed crayfish. She is particularly experienced in dealing with newt issues affecting the quarrying, mineral extraction and landfill industry.