

Rachel Tibbetts

From: Megan Belanger
Sent: 24 January 2024 11:35
To: Chris Wentworth
Cc: Planning
Subject: Ecology Response - 23/03428/OUT

Dear Chris,

I've reviewed the ecological information submitted with this application. The surveys are up-to-date and provide a good overview of the ecology of the site. However, I have a few concerns about the lack of Skylark mitigation proposed. I also need to see the full BNG metric to ensure that it's accurate. I believe this outline application includes some vegetation removal and ground works – if this is the case, I'd like to see the CEMP up front, prior to a decision being made. I've explained this in further detail below. I also provided some comments on other conditions I'd recommend.

Breeding Birds:

The breeding bird surveys identified a Skylark territory in the west section of the site – which is where most of the development is proposed. I am concerned about the lack of mitigation and compensation proposed for this species. The development will result in the removal of suitable habitat for Skylark. While the proposed habitat enhancements include habitats that will benefit birds in general (woodland, hedgerows, pond/wetland areas) I do not think that there is sufficient mitigation in place for Skylark. A brief section of the ES mentions that a section of land will be managed for Skylark. However, there does not seem to be an overall mitigation strategy. Due to the conservation status of this species, more information should be submitted that shows how land will be specifically dedicated as mitigation for Skylark – including details on how this land will be managed long-term, and how this can be secured and monitored.

BNG/ Habitats

The Update Habitat and General Faunal Survey and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment provided by Aspect Ecology in November 2023 includes details on how BNG (at least 10%) will be achieved on site. It also includes the details of specific species enhancements (section 5.2.2) which should be incorporated into the development. I cannot find the actual metric (excel format) for this site. I would need to review this to determine if the BNG figures are accurate – could this please be provided?

The plans show that a significant number of hedgerows and trees will be planted on site – however, I am concerned about the lack of connectivity of these hedgerows. The development includes roads that cut across the hedgerows, which could negatively impact wildlife. I would like to see more information about how these issues will be addressed during the operational stage of the development.

CEMP

As this outline includes creation of new accesses (and other vegetation clearance, ground works?) a CEMP should be submitted prior to a decision being made. Alternatively, we could condition that no works, including ground works or vegetation clearance, can commence until the CEMP has been submitted and approved.

The CEMP should be produced in line with recommendations in the Environmental Statement, which include (but are not limited to):

- Precautionary clearance measures and timing for birds.
- Reasonable Avoidance Method Statement for amphibians and reptiles.
- Pollution Prevention Strategy to minimize impacts of pollution.
- Tree protection plan, to ensure retained trees have adequate Root Protection Areas (RPAs) in line with BS 5837:20 during construction.
- Further survey work prior to removal of any trees with bat potential (as identified in the ground level tree assessment for bats), with safeguarding measures put in place during felling.
- Method Statement for badgers, including pre-works survey requirements, buffers, preconstruction talks, any mitigation/avoidance requirements.

Other

An appropriate Natural England licence for bats must be obtained prior to demolition of the buildings, or removal of hedgerows connected to the buildings, informed if needed by up-to-date bat survey data, and any mitigation agreed with NE put in place. This should be conditioned.

There are several bat roosts on site as well as excellent commuting and foraging habitat for bats. A lighting scheme will be necessary to ensure impacts to bats don't occur. As such, we should condition that a detailed lighting scheme is provided, in line with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance note 08/23, with any reserved matters applications.

A Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) should be submitted with any reserved matters applications. The LEMP should be produced in line with recommendations in the Environmental Statement, which includes (but is not limited to):

- Creation of SuDs features, and wildlife ponds, designed to enhance the biodiversity value of the Site.
- Creation of woodland and traditional orchard under an appropriate management regime to maintain its value over the long-term.
- Creation of new hedgerows and enhancement of retained hedgerows via gap planting and supplementary planting to increase biodiversity and an appropriate management regime.
- Creation and enhancement of grassland areas with an appropriate native mix to increase botanical diversity and an appropriate management regime.
- Locations and nature of species-specific enhancements to include bat/bird boxes, amphibian and reptile refugia, an owl box, a kestrel box, hedgehog houses, and insect boxes.
- Management regime for Skylark mitigation.

Updated surveys are likely to be required for any reserved matters applications, surveys should be in date, in line with [CIEEM guidelines](#).

Pending the above, I am placing an objection on this application.

Kind regards,

Megan Belanger

Ecology Officer

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Cherwell District Council

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