



7884M: INNOVATION QUARTER - SPY, BICESTER MOTION, BICESTER, OXFORDSHIRE

ECOLOGY BRIEFING NOTE: CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED SCHEME AMENDMENT

Introduction

1. Ecology Solutions Limited have been asked to consider a revised scheme layout for the consented Innovation Quarter (IQ) Site Proposals (19/02708/OUT), which was subsequently varied via a Section 73 application (23/01941/F), in support of a Reserved Matters application for a mixed-use HQ building. This relates primarily to the section of the IQ site known as SPY.
2. The entirety of the IQ Site has been subject to extensive ecological assessment work by Ecology Solutions over multiple years, with a comprehensive ecological avoidance, mitigation, and enhancement strategy included within the approved Ecological Assessment (2019).
3. This Ecology Briefing Note serves to consider the revised scheme and summarise and assess the pertinent alterations (insofar as these relate to biodiversity matters).
4. In summary, relative to the consented scheme, the Reserved Matters Proposals offer opportunities for an increased extent of ephemeral/perennial habitats, marginally decreased extent of semi-natural habitat and a marginal increase in built form and hardstanding, whilst remaining compliant with the ecological principles identified within the submitted Ecological Assessment (2019). As such, the Reserved Matters Proposals would secure identical (if not marginally improved) biodiversity opportunities post-development. They are therefore deemed to remain appropriate in nature, and compliant with planning policy and legislation of relevance to nature conservation.

Planning Context and Comparative Assessment of Reserved Matters Proposals.

5. As detailed in the Introduction above, the Application Site is in receipt of Outline Planning Permission (planning ref: 19/02708/OUT) to deliver mixed employment use development. Following receipt of this permission, a subsequent S73 amendment was secured which marginally altered the footprint of the site's layout. It should be noted that there is an ongoing Reserved Matters application (23/03438/REM) which relates to a different part of the IQ site.

6. This Reserved Matters application seeks to retain the proposed use types and broad scale of development, with marginal changes limited to the precise footprint of built form, semi-natural habitat and ephemeral/perennial habitats. For clarity, the revised extent of built form (inclusive of hardstanding), allows for a consolidated and focused scheme layout.
7. It retains the full quantum of ecologically valuable open space identified as part of the previously submitted Ecological Assessment (November 2019), with a marginal decrease in the total area of semi natural habitat (-0.15ha), allowing for a marginal increase in built form (+0.16ha). The Reserved Matters design then permits a minor betterment (+0.07ha) to ephemeral/perennial habitats.
8. Importantly, the Reserved Matters Proposals seek to adhere to the ecological principles secured within the Ecological Assessment (inclusive of the *Ecological Mitigation & Enhancement Plan* submitted as part of the ecological information). Crucially, this includes the continued retention of a 2.85ha dedicated ecology area, amongst other semi-natural habitat provision, and a commitment for long-term, biodiversity led management. It should be noted that the loss in semi-natural habitat relates solely to a decrease in area of amenity lawn (-0.15ha).
9. In order to allow for a clear, quantifiable comparison between the original outline permission proposals, S73 Proposals and the Reserved Matters proposals, a post-development comparison table is provided below.

Habitat Type/Grouping	Extent Proposed as part of the Consented Scheme (19/02708/OUT)	Extent Proposed as part of S73 Proposals (23/01941/F)	Extent Proposed as part of Reserved Matters Proposals	Notes
Combined built form and hardstanding	3.01ha	2.66ha	2.82ha (+0.16)	A slight increase in built form from S73 scheme but reduction from consented scheme, reflects an increase in built form joining buildings 401, 402 & 403.
Semi-natural habitats (Grassland, Scrub, Woodland)	6.18ha	6.19ha	6.04ha (-0.15)	Minor decrease of semi-natural habitat provision in the form of a decrease in total area of amenity lawn. No net change to other semi-natural habitats (i.e. calcareous grassland, woodland etc.)
Ephemeral/perennial	0.82ha	1.16ha	1.23ha (+0.07)	Increase in the S73 application reflects an increased extent

				of grass-crete surfacing (e.g. ecology car parks) and ephemeral habitats relative to hardstanding.
Total Site Area	10.01ha	10.01ha	10.09ha	

Table 1. Quantitative comparison in post-development habitat provision between consented (19/02708/OUT) scheme, S73 Proposals (23/01941/F) and suggested Reserved Matters Proposals.

10. On the basis the Reserved Matters Proposals retain a comparable quantum of post-development habitats, whilst adhering to the ecological principles previously approved for the Application Site (19/02708/OUT & 23/01941/F), the revised scheme layout are not assessed to give rise to any additional ecological impacts, nor require additional assessment in this regard.
11. Indeed, the Reserved Matters Proposals are assessed to permit a marginally improved biodiversity outcome, due to the minor increase in ephemeral/perennial habitat over the slight loss of amenity lawn. Given the minor scale of changes, these positive impacts are considered immaterial.
12. Given the above, the ecological implications of the Reserved Matters Proposals are assessed as non-significant. The ecological safeguards identified within the previously submitted Ecological Assessment (November 2019), in addition to the ecological conditions attached to the planning permission (see Conditions 22 to 25) remain appropriate and sufficient to safeguard and enhance the ecological interest of the Site.

Summary and Conclusion

13. In summary, the Reserved Matters Proposals seek to secure a comparable scale of development, albeit with a minor increase in built form relative to semi-natural habitat provision (i.e. amenity lawn).
14. The ecological implications of the Reserved Matters Proposals are assessed as positive but non-significant, noting the minor change in habitat provision.
15. On the basis of the ecological safeguards previously secured through the Ecological Assessment (November 2019) and ecological planning conditions associated with the consented scheme (all of which remain relevant and should remain), it is considered the Reserved Matters Proposals remain equally appropriate in ecology terms. The Reserved Matters Proposals can therefore be safely granted, in accordance with relevant planning policy and legislation.