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Ms R Horley
Public Protection and Development Management
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 4AA

28th March 2013

Your Ref: 13/00001/SCOP

Dear Ms Horley,

**Re: Scoping Opinion – Residential Development at Land Between Birmingham
London Rail Line and Gavray Drive Bicester.**

Thank you for consulting the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) on the above EIA Scoping.

As you are aware, we have been involved as consultees for this site for many years and would hope that this opportunity is taken to overcome some of the long running concerns that we and others have had in terms of the approach to ecology on this sensitive site.

I am generally in agreement with the scope of the Environmental Statement as set out in the Scoping Report. However, previous protected species surveys on this site, particularly for reptiles and amphibians, have not been undertaken under optimal conditions. We are therefore concerned that for this EIA, all protected species surveys are undertaken according to current best practice, at the correct time of year and in appropriate weather conditions. I note under paragraph 5.42 that it is proposed that only 5 visits to check reptile refugia are made. This does not meet the recommendations published by Froglife (Froglife Advice Sheet 10) which recommends a minimum of 7 visits.

Additionally, given the LWS status of the site, the variety of habitats and the known butterfly interest, I consider it reasonable to request an assessment of the wider invertebrate assemblage supported by the site.

I welcome the note in paragraph 5.24 that effects of localised raising of ground levels will be considered; any effect on the hydrology of the retained LWS needs to be taken into account in this assessment.

The EIA should demonstrate how the development will result in a net gain in biodiversity (in line with para 109 of the NPPF). This is particularly relevant given the location of the site within the Ray Conservation Target Area, and Policy ESD 11 in the Submission Cherwell Local Plan. Proposed mitigation and enhancement measures for all identified receptors need to be included within the EIA.

I hope these comments are useful; should you wish to discuss any of the matters raised, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Micklem
(Senior Conservation Officer) Oxon