

12 ECOLOGY AND NATURE CONSERVATION

12.1 INTRODUCTION

12.1.1 This Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI) chapter of the ES assesses the likely significant effects of the changes to the Proposed Development in terms of ecology and nature conservation, and should be read in conjunction with Chapter 12 of the ES 2016.

12.2 ASSESSMENT APPROACH

12.2.1 There has been no change to the assessment methodology, or limitations and assumptions previously made that would affect ecology and nature conservation since the original Application, with details as per that set out previously.

12.2.2 There has been no change to other National Planning Policy, Regional Planning Policy or any other relevant guidance that would affect ecology and nature conservation since the original Application, with details as per that set out previously.

12.2.3 In regard to relevant legislation, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 consolidate and update the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) referred to previously. All protection and legislative offences set out previously remain. No other legislative changes have occurred that would affect ecology and nature conservation since the original Application.

12.3 BASELINE CONDITIONS

12.3.1 There is no known change to the condition of the Application Site since the original application. Accordingly, it is considered that there would have been no change to the baseline conditions previously described that would affect ecology and nature conservation since the original Application, with details as per that set out previously.

12.4 ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

12.4.1 The potential effects of the demolition, construction and completed development phase works on the ecological receptors identified as being of ecological importance have not changed since the original Application.

12.5 MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

12.5.1 The mitigation measures proposed for the identified likely significant effects during the demolition, construction and completed development phase works have not changed since the original Application and are still considered to be appropriate, with details as per that set out previously.

12.5.2 The enhancements proposed have not changed substantively since the original application, with details as per that set out previously. The proposed attenuation pond at the south-east of the Application Site has been increased in size, which provides further opportunities for aquatic habitat enhancement.

12.6 CUMULATIVE AND IN-COMBINATION EFFECTS

12.6.1 The developments to be considered with regards to cumulative effects has changed since the original Application, and are set out in Chapter 2. Consideration of potential cumulative effects arising with other developments in the local area, with particular focus

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on the Heyford Masterplan, is set out below; with an assessment made of any significant cumulative effects and whether any mitigation is required.

Ecological Designations

12.6.2 The proposed development area largely lies outside the zone of influence for the potential impact of residential development on the nearby SSSIs, such that development within the Application Site is unlikely to contribute to cumulative effects on these designations. In regard to non-statutory nature conservation designations, Rush Spinney LWS is not readily accessible by car with a lack of parking facilities, and Upper Heyford LWS lies within privately owned land with a security controlled entrance, such that neither of the designated sites is likely to be subject to significant cumulative increases in recreational pressure.

Habitats and Ecological Features

12.6.3 Habitats lost to the Proposed Development within the Application Site are of low intrinsic value, such that no cumulative losses of rare or notable habitat types are anticipated. In addition, the losses of semi-natural habitats under the proposals, will be compensated through a considered landscaping strategy, and so there will be no adverse residual effects in regard to habitats and ecological features. Accordingly, there is no mechanism by which cumulative or in-combination effects could occur to rare or notable habitat types.

Faunal Species

12.6.4 Cumulative effects on faunal species are largely relevant in terms of the other developments located within the immediate vicinity of the Application Site, which have a greater potential to impact on the same population or social group.

12.6.5 For European protected species recorded across this area, including bats, it is a requirement of licensing that favourable conservation status is maintained, such that other developments will need to mitigate or compensate for potential effects, such as habitat loss, avoiding any significant cumulative effects resulting from in-combination development.

12.6.6 Badger may experience a cumulative reduction in area of foraging habitat, although this species is of low conservation significance, and habitat losses are unlikely to be significant. In regard to other faunal species, cumulative effects are unlikely to occur as the Proposed Development will mitigate for adverse effects.

12.6.7 Overall, in the absence of residual adverse effects from the Proposed Development, and legislative and policy requirements relating to notable habitats and species, it is considered unlikely that significant effects will arise as a result of the Proposed Development in combination with other developments.

12.7 SUMMARY

12.7.1 The proposed changes to the original Application are not anticipated to have any significant effect on any of the identified important ecological receptors during the demolition, construction or completed development phases. All other factors requiring consideration, including planning policy and legislation, assessment methodology, baseline conditions and mitigation measures remain the same. No new potential cumulative effects have been identified. Overall the original conclusions of the Ecology and Nature Conservation chapter as reported in the ES (2016) are unchanged, insofar as there is no reason to conclude that any ecological designations, habitats of nature conservation interest, or any protected species will be significantly harmed by the proposals.