

CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Maria Philpott – Principal Planning Officer
(Development Management)

From: Paul Evans – Ecology Officer
(Enforcement – Development Management)

Date: 12th September 2018

Ref: 18/01333/F Extension to Existing Technical Site, Bicester Heritage, Buckingham Road, Bicester - Ecology Comments

I have reviewed the information provided regarding the proposal for the development including the Ecological Assessment by Ecological Solutions dated July 2018 and have the following comments to make.

The Great Crested Newt survey method does not follow Natural England Standing Advice, the two ponds identified in the survey were noted as dry in June 2018 which is highly likely given the particularly hot and dry summer we have had. So the assessment relies on old data from 2016 by a previous consultancy, this survey only undertook 3 out of the 4 minimum survey visits required to confirm presence/absence of Great Crested Newts. In addition none of the survey visits in 2016 were carried out in the peak survey season (mid-April to mid-May), a minimum of two visits are required, out of the 4, to take place in this peak season according to the Natural England Standing Advice.

The ponds maybe dry at this time but could refill in the future and be utilised by Great Crested Newts, removal of the ponds destroys a potential breeding site.

The report does not go into any further assessment of the impact of the proposals on Great Crested Newts or the ponds, in paragraph 4.6.4. it concludes "Given the results of specific survey work undertaken for amphibians, it is considered that the Application Site is not utilised by Great Crested Newt." Given the limitations of the survey data this conclusion is questioned.

There are two ponds identified on the phase 1 survey map (PlanEco2 Ecological Features p.33 of the report), these two ponds do not appear to be retained in the Proposed Site Plan submitted. I can only assume they are to be lost, assessment of this impact is not given in the submitted Ecological Assessment.

I would recommend therefore that a precautionary approach is adopted, retaining the ponds and surrounding terrestrial habitat to the south and east within the landscaping proposal. I would also condition the submission of a Great Crested Newt working method to avoid impacts on Great Crested Newts that could be present;

K2 Mitigation Strategy for Great Crested Newts

Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, including any demolition and any works of site clearance, a mitigation strategy for great crested newts, which shall include timing of works, pre-commencement survey, exclusion fencing, the location retained ponds/habitats together, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the mitigation works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason KR1

Should the proposals be granted permission I would also condition the delivery of the mitigation and enhancements detailed in section 5 of the Ecological Assessment in a suitably worded condition:

K15 Carry Out in Accordance with Survey

The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations set out in section 5 of the Ecological Assessment carried out by Ecological Solutions dated July 2018.

Reason KR1

Paragraphs 5.2.15 – 5.2.18 of the report outlines habitat enhancements including creation of calcareous grassland on banks, writing of a management plan for the habitat areas, native tree, shrub and hedgerow planting. The detail of this should be submitted for approval prior to the commencement of the development should the proposals be granted permission, this should be included in a suitably worded condition:

K20 Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)

Prior to the commencement of development hereby approved, a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the LEMP shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason KR2

This proposal forms part of a wider masterplan for the Bicester Heritage site as such it would be sensible to take a strategic approach to ecology matters across the whole area covered by the Bicester Heritage masterplan rather than piecemeal per application for different aspects of the masterplan as they come on line. This will allow the ecological opportunities and constraints of the whole site to be assessed in view of the masterplan, the masterplan design can then be adapted to take account of ecology on site to ensure the important ecological aspects are conserved, appropriate mitigation/compensation considered and integrated with future site development proposals.