

Lynda King
Planning Officer
Wiltshire Council
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

14 December 2022

Dear Lynda,

Land to East of Wagtails, Southampton Road, Alderbury, SP5 3AF – PL/2022/03103

Thank you for forwarding the comments from your ecology officer on the above application. We have reviewed with the project team and set out a response to the comments below together with providing additional information where required.

Assessment of pond

There is no pond on the site nor in close proximity. It is therefore assumed this comment is made in error.

Botanical survey

FPCR conducted a botanical survey in February 2022 of which a copy is attached. The Wiltshire Council planning consultation response states 'a botanical survey carried out in the optimum season is required to accurately determine the status and diversity of the grassland unless justification of otherwise is provided'. Please find attached the botanical survey conducted in the optimum season, by Daniel Ahern CEnv MCIEEM in August 2018. The species recorded during the survey can be found in the Appendix. While we appreciate that the report was conducted just over 3.5 years prior to submitting our planning application, Core Policy 50 states 'The shelf life of any given survey depends on the type of survey undertaken and whether environmental conditions within the study area were "normal" or unusual at the time undertaken (e.g. extreme weather), or are likely to have changed or remained the same. The greater the recent change, the greater the need for up-to-date information.' The environmental conditions on the site have remained the same from August 2018 to present date and consequently, the botanical survey conducted in the optimal season in 2018 can be used to draw conclusions in relation to this planning application.

As it is currently December and we are 6 months away from the optimal season, due to time pressure, if a third botanical survey is required, it is considered that this could be secured by

way of appropriately worded condition on the basis that we have already submitted 2 botanical surveys, one of which was conducted in the optimal season. This would be provided as part of the Reserved Matters Application and would ensure that this was provided in conjunction with the detailed layout for the proposed development.

Suggested condition wording; An updated botanical survey will be provided as part of the Reserved Matters Application. No dwelling shall subsequently be occupied prior to the submission of a detailed scheme of works in line with the findings of the survey.

Reptile survey and mitigation strategy

The Wiltshire Council planning consultation response states ‘it is reported in the Ecology Appraisal that the site is suitable for use by reptiles. The results of the detailed reptile survey and mitigation strategy mentioned in Section 6.41 of the Ecology Appraisal have not been submitted’.

A phase 1 habitat survey of the site was conducted on 13th August 2018 by Daniel Ahern CEnv MCIEEM. The consequent report stated ‘No signs of any reptile species were recorded during the survey. The site is characterized as being sub optimal for this group due to the fragmented nature of any areas of vegetation and high levels of disturbance from machinery. No further survey work is recommended’.

As the environmental conditions have remained the same, including the high levels of disturbance from machinery, FPCR was not instructed to carry out a reptile survey.

The FPCR report states that ‘given the small size of the site and it’s poor connectivity with higher quality reptile habitat within the local area it is considered the site only has the potential to support a low population of reptiles although this will be confirmed through targeted survey within the determination period of this application’.

The ODPM Circular 06/2005 states that ‘bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development.’ The surveys conducted have concluded there is not a ‘likelihood’ that reptiles are present on site.

As we are advised that there is not a likelihood of reptiles being present on the site and the fact that reptile surveys are seasonally limited to the summer months, due to time pressures, we request that a reptile survey is secured via a an appropriately worded condition attached to outline planning consent. A carefully worded planning condition can secure any mitigation measures necessary as part of any Reserved Matters application in the unlikely event that reptiles are found to be present on the site.

Suggested condition wording;

An updated reptile survey and mitigation strategy will be provided as part of the Reserved Matters Application. No dwelling shall subsequently be occupied prior to the submission of a detailed scheme of works in line with the findings of the survey.

Amended tree impact assessment

1215 Heritage Homes Ltd confirms that all root protection areas will be preserved. The 15m buffer around the mature oak at the north eastern corner which was requested by the tree officer will be preserved by way of a minor amendment to the site layout. Please find attached a plan illustrating the buffer zone.

In any event, the application is made in outline form with all matters reserved apart from access. It is considered that the requirement to provide the 15m buffer to the oak tree can be secured by way of appropriately worded condition. This would enable the buffer to be secured within the detailed site layout.

Unlocked BNG spreadsheet

Please find attached.

Mitigation and enhancement plan to achieve no net loss of biodiversity (This must align with the EPP)

Section 6.26 of the FPCR report states that 'Given the small scale of the proposed development in a location largely surrounded by existing residential housing, full on-site mitigation is not considered achievable post intervention and the development has been calculated to deliver on-site biodiversity net gain of -2.53 habitat units. It is agreed in principle that given this loss, compensation for residual harm is required and, in this instance, this will be delivered off-site.'

Off-site compensation will be delivered through one of two mechanisms, financial contribution to a biobank scheme (such as a biodiversity trading platform like Biobank) or through habitat creation on additional land under an Biodiversity Management Plan and agreed with Wiltshire Council.

Core Policy 50 states 'Conditions should be used where it is necessary to secure the design and implementation of measures intended to.... mitigate or reduce the effect of impacts on biodiversity'.

The principle of off-site compensation measures to ensure a biodiversity net gain can be adequately secured for the proposed scheme via a condition attached to planning consent and can also be added as an obligation within any legal agreement.

Suggested condition/planning obligation wording; Details of the proposed off-site compensation measures shall be submitted as part of any reserved matters application and agreed in writing by the LPA prior to determination of the application. No dwelling shall then be occupied prior to the off-site mitigation being secured and provided in agreement with the LPA.

Plan/s (EPP) demonstrating where proposed for mitigation or for BNG will be provided

Please find attached an Environmental Parameters Plan

I trust the information within this report is helpful and we would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss these matters with you at a meeting with yourself and the ecology officer.

Yours Sincerely



Andrew Black