Biodiversity

Condition 7 - PL/2023/00493

The Paddocks, Barsmore Farm, Tytherton Lucas, Chippenham, Wiltshire

November 2023

1. Introduction

1.1. Planning consent (Ref: PL/2023/00493) with conditions, for change in land use to equestrian, formation of vehicular access, erection of equestrian buildings, horse walker and arena is sought for a site known as 'The Paddocks' located to the east of the town of Chippenham. The consent is subject to a number of conditions, of which Condition 7 is relevant to ecology and states:

Condition 7

"Within three months of the date of this planning permission, a scheme of hard and soft landscaping shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the details of which shall include:

- *Location and current canopy spread of all existing trees and hedgerows;*
- *full details of any to be retained;*
- *a detailed planting specification showing all plant species, supply and planting sizes and planting densities;*
- *means of enclosure; and*
- *all hard and soft surfacing materials.*

The soft landscaping scheme shall enable the site to achieve no net loss in biodiversity (i.e. no net loss from before the operational development commenced and/or the equestrian use first started).

The approved scheme shall then be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: The application contained insufficient information to enable this matter to be considered prior to granting planning permission. The site is located in the open countryside and in proximity to a listed building, such that it is important the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, to ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting. It is also important for the development to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity through appropriate planting."

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2. Site Description & Background

2.1. The site is situated in a rural context, with the town of Chippenham to the west and the town of Calne to the south-east. The site comprises a pastoral field bound by hedgerows and a proportion of a larger pastoral field adjacent to the north. An unnamed tarmac road bounds the site to the west beyond which lies further agricultural land. Agricultural land bounds the site to the north, east and south.

2.2. A third-party consultancy carried out a Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site in March 2017 and prepared an Ecological Impact Assessment report (April 2017)[1], hereafter referred to as 'The 2017 Ecology Report'. The 2017 Ecology Report described the site as being comprised of two improved grassland fields (with limited species diversity), with four associated native species-rich hedgerows and a pond at the northern most corner the site. The improved grassland fields were assessed as having an overall low biodiversity value. Implementation of the proposals, requiring the loss of a small proportion of grassland within the southern field was considered to be of negligible ecological significance. The hedgerows and pond associated with the site were considered to be of elevated ecological value and were to be retained and therefore unlikely to be affected by the proposals. The 2017 Ecology Report recommended a new native hedgerow be planted at the northern most boundary of the site, where no such boundary feature existed. The 2017 Ecology Report concluded overall, that given the negligible loss of biodiversity resulting from the proposal, the retention of habitats of elevated ecological value, in additional to the planting of ~300m of new species-rich native hedgerow planting, and subject to the implementation of safeguarding recommendations, the proposals would avoid potential adverse impacts and result in an overall positive impact on biodiversity.

2.3. Update Ecology Walkover

2.4. Icon Ecology undertook an update ecological walkover of the site in October 2023 and found no significant changes to the habitats within the site since 2017. The grassland within the site remains species-poor. Spot checks of the grassland during the 2023 ecology walkover found it to contain ~6 species per m^2 with few herbs present, albeit discrete areas were dominated by White Clover *Trifolium repens*. The recommendation for the planting of a species-rich native hedgerow along the northern site boundary had been enacted (see Photograph 1) and equestrian buildings etc. have been constructed.

3. Purpose of this Report

3.1. Accordingly, Icon Ecology has been commissioned by Mr & Mrs James in October 2023 to prepare a Technical Note, to recommend and provide details of additional net gains for biodiversity to be provided by the scheme. These recommendations for biodiversity are in addition to those previously recommended within the 2017 Ecology Report. This report supplements the details provided within the hard and soft landscaping scheme

1 Protected Species Ecology Ltd (2017) *Ecological Impact Assessment – Basmore Farm, Tytherton Lucas, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3RL*

and should be read in conjunction with the 'Landscape Implementation and Management Plan' (October 2023), prepared by WHLandscape.

4. Ecological Enhancements and Net Gains for Biodiversity

4.1. The ecological recommendation for net gains for biodiversity presented in the 2017 Ecology Report are repeated below for clarity, with further information provided as necessary. Furthermore, additional ecological recommendations, supplementary to the 2017 recommendations, are also made within this report. The recommendations and enhancements detailed below are considered appropriate given the context of the site and the scale and nature of the proposals. Through implementation of the ecological enhancements presented below, the opportunity exists for the proposals to deliver a number of net gains for biodiversity, thereby ensuring no net biodiversity loss. These ecological enhancements are illustrated in the enclosed plan P-1058/IE-C7.

Previous Ecological Enhancement Recommendations (as per the 2017 Ecology Report)

4.2. New hedgerow (Ref HA on plan P-1058/IE-C7) to be planted on the northern boundary. This hedgerow has been planted in 2017 and was present during the 2023 update walkover (see Photograph 1 enclosed). This hedgerow (HA) at the time of the 2023 update survey was ~1.5m tall, ~1m wide and forms a continuous feature ~300m in length with an associated wooden post and rail fence. Woody species present include Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, Wayfaring-tree and Dog rose *Rosa canina* agg. This hedgerow is considered species-rich[2] and meets the Priority Habitat definition of hedgerows, which includes any boundary line of trees or shrubs (>20m long and <5m wide) consisting predominantly (≥80%) of at least one native woody species[3]. Given that this hedgerow has been relatively recently planted (within the last 30 years), it would not qualify as ecologically 'important' under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997.

4.3. New planting should comprise locally sourced native species of trees and shrubs, together with fruiting species.

4.4. Future management of the hedges should be undertaken to achieve an 'A'-shaped hedge.

New Ecological Enhancement Recommendations for 2023

4.5. Hedgerow HA is to receive further enhancement via the planting of standard native trees spaced across its length. The standard trees will provide an additional functional layer to this species-rich hedgerow.

4.6. A new native hedgerow (Ref HC on plan P-1058/IE-C7), to be planted at north of the site, will link the new hedgerow (HA) planted in 2017 with the existing hedgerow to the east (Ref HB).

2 i.e. five or more native woody species within a 30m length (or four or more in Northern England) – FEP Manual

3 Based on: Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group (2011) '*UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat Descriptions*',

4.7. The existing hedgerow HC is gappy in nature. It is recommended that new native shrub species be planted to gap up and bolster this hedgerow such that it provides a continuous boundary feature.

4.8. The measures listed above in paragraphs 4.2, 4.5 and 4.6 (namely the creation of two new native hedgerows [HA & HC] and the enhancement of an existing hedgerow [HB]) will provide a substantial net gain for biodiversity. Together these enhancements shall create ~450m of continuous native hedgerow, providing a new faunal commuting feature in the local landscape, which would be of particular benefit to local bats. Furthermore, these new and enhance hedgerows will provide an additional foraging and nesting resource for local birds and provide foraging and shelter opportunities for small mammals.

4.9. An area of grassland at the western side of the site is to be over sown with a wildflower seed mix to increase species diversity of this grass area, which is currently species-poor. Management of this area of grassland will allow wildflower seeds to set, encouraging the development of floristic diversity over time. This will provide an enhanced resource for local invertebrates, which will in turn provide additional prey for a range of local fauna.

5. Conclusion

5.1. The proposals result in the loss of a relatively small area of species-poor grassland, which is of negligible ecological significance. The hedgerows and pond within the site are of elevated ecological value and are to be retained and unaffected by the proposals.

5.2. The 2017 Ecological Report recommended a new native hedgerow to be planted along the northern boundary of the site, a location which had no existing boundary feature. The 2017 Ecology Report concluded, that the impact of the proposals to existing habitats was of negligible ecological significance. Furthermore, subject to the implementation of the planting of ~300m of new species-rich native hedgerow, the proposals would avoid potential adverse impacts and result in an overall positive impact on biodiversity. As per these recommendations, a species-rich native hedgerow was planted at the northern boundary of the site in 2017 and was present during the 2023 update ecological walkover.

5.3. Further to the net gains for biodiversity provided by the scheme since 2017, this report recommends additional measures to achieve further net gains for biodiversity. These include the provision of an additional native hedgerow and the bolstering of an existing gappy hedgerow. Together these measures shall provide ~450m of continuous native hedgerow at the north of the site. An area of species-poor grassland is to be enhanced via over sowing of a wildflower seed mixture and sensitive management. These measures shall increase floral diversity as well as create foraging, nesting, shelter and commuting habitat for a wide variety of local fauna.

5.4. Overall, the scheme provides a number of net gains for biodiversity, thereby ensuring no net loss to biodiversity.

Enclosed:

Photograph 1 – New Hedgerow HA (planted in 2017)

Plan P-1058/IE-C7 – Net Gains for Biodiversity

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Photograph:

Photograph 1: New Hedgerow HA (planted in 2017)




Bolster with Standard Trees
New Native Species-rich Hedgerow, planted 2017
HA
HC
New Native Hedgerow
HB
Bolster of Existing Gappy Hedgerow with Native Species
Oversown Existing Species-poor Grass with Wildflower Seed Mixture and Tree Planting
Drain
52m
Drain
Drain
Track
Key:
Site Boundary
New Native Species-rich Hedgerow
New Native Hedgerow
Bolster of Existing Hedgerow
New Wildflower Grassland with Trees
Bolster with New Standard Trees
N
Icon Ecology
The Paddocks, Barsmore Farm, Chippenham
PROJECT
Net Gains for Biodiversity
TITLE
P-1058/IE -C7
FIGURE No
A
REVISION
November 2023
DATE