

Stourhead Garden Pathway Improvements

EclA Addendum and Response to Ecology Comments

1 INTRODUCTION

This technical report has been produced in addendum to the EclA Report (Johns Associates, 2025), to address impacts, mitigation and enhancement measures to the County Wildlife Sites and Veteran trees in proximity to the site.

The Western Section of the footpath is located within Stourhead Woods County Wildlife Site (CWS). The key priority habitats within this CWS are lowland beech and yew woodland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and areas of interest include streams and flushes with wet alder woodland. None of these priority habitats are present within or adjacent to the site boundary.

The Site is located within plantation ancient woodland, however, this is heavily managed and coniferous with non-native specimen trees. Whilst works are to take place in this habitat, the underlying habitat comprises modified grassland, other neutral grassland and bare ground.

The Garden Lake CWS falls within the centre of the Site and it comprises an ornamental lake of 7.56. The site surveys have confirmed the lake has limited vegetation and a simple structure, which provides limited habitat value.

The BNG has been updated with seven veteran trees with an RPZ within the RLB or within the construction compounds area. There are a further 45 trees located within/on the RLB that have been added into the BNG baseline.

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been updated to omit reference to the presence of hedgerows; this habitat was in fact non-native shrubs including cherry laurel and rhododendron.

Direct impacts that may occur to the CWS and veteran trees are predominantly associated with the construction phase. This includes compaction to tree roots from heavy machinery, pollution from machinery use and construction materials and; noise and light pollution.

Measures to prevent impacts to the CWS and veteran trees include:

- Materials will be delivered by heavy machinery to off-site compounds and stored outside root protection zones (as discussed in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan (Bosky Trees, 2025)).
- Materials are to be transported onto site using the tracks and footpaths present and using low impact machinery.
- Tree root protection zones and biodiversity protection zones will be demarked by temporary protective fencing, which will be erected in accordance with BS 5837:2012 and supervised by an Ecological Clerk of Works.
- Compaction to tree RPZ will be avoided with the use of specialist equipment and the redirection of the footpath away from RPZ as demonstrated by narrowing of the path to avoid the RPZ of T396, T454, T190 and T170.

- Due to specifications of the materials and methods of application, and events undertaken at Stourhead, construction is to occur between the months of April and September, with the avoidance of particularly wet weather. This will minimise the likelihood of runoff from pollution events.
- Construction will only occur during daylight hours and with no night-time illumination to avoid light and minimise noise pollution.
- An ecological toolbox talk will be delivered prior to work being undertaken.
- ECoW supervision will be delivered where works are undertaken in proximity to habitat, or where vegetation removal is required. A suitably qualified arborist will oversee groundworks within the RPZ of veteran trees.
- A full Construction Environmental Management Plan will be produced on condition. This will detail the measures in relation to:
 - Timings of work
 - Locations of machinery and material storage compounds
 - Locations of storage of fuels and hydrocarbons away from the Garden Lake CWS and other CWSs and a method statement for fuel spillage avoidance and mitigation.
 - Pollution prevention and hazardous material storage
 - Water consumption, drainage and water environment
 - A Site waste management plan
 - Vibration, noise and air quality
 - An accident/incident response plan
 - Site demarcation/biodiversity protection zones
 - Ecological Supervision required during construction phase
 - Phasing and method statement of vegetation removal where required

The minor positive enhancements that are to be delivered to the Stourhead Woods CWS and veteran trees include:

- The redirection of the footpath away from RPZ, including that of veteran trees. This will reduce compaction and in turn should increase the lifespan of trees.
- Once works are completed, a reduction in pedestrians straying from the path into the wider site is expected. This would reduce pressure on the adjacent woodland habitat, minimising erosion and compaction.
- Increasing the accessibility of Stourhead may redirect people from the adjacent wildlife sites and reduce recreational pressure on more sensitive habitats that are in close proximity to the Site.
- The development will result in a 1.39 habitat unit BNG and a 10.08% habitat BNG, achieved through the enhancement and creation of good condition modified grassland and the enhancement of individual trees through the redirection of the footpath from RPZs.
- Habitat immediately adjacent to the footpath is to be reseeded with a species rich native lawn mix.

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