

MWE – 23/07/26

Wiltshire Council planning consultation - Ref: PL/2026/000440

**Response to comments by Cranborne Chase National Landscape & Nature
Recovery Officer – email 14/07/26**

Comments by CCNL and Nature Recovery Officer have been taken into consideration and answered where possible. Any interventions or responses to follow best practice guidelines and managed in accordance with the Landscape and Environmental Plan.

A crucial element is where does the volume of water needed to fill the lake come from, and how is that maintained. The D&AS is silent on that key matter and the LEMP does not appear to address water levels.

- 1) Water to be extracted/pumped from borehole (location TBC) to a level of 89.2 as shown on drawing No: MWE_24194_HCF_PROP-PLAN_SECTIONS-02-03.26-P02
- 2) Water level to be maintained/topped up from borehole as/when required.
- 3) Freeboard of the pond (vertical distance from top of crest to water level) is 300mm.
- 4) Overflow: If water level reaches 89.35 (150mm below crest height) this overtops into the spillway and subsequently into the swale.

The public perception of the project is likely to come from 3 positions; the highway where there is already a hedge, the bridleway which crosses the site and therefore possibly the most sensitive to local people, and from the railway where passengers will have an elevated view of the site. Ensuring the vision is speedily established is, therefore, important but the lack of precision in the details does not, as yet, give CCNL confidence that will happen.

There is, for example, no width specified for the bridleway, and particularly the crossing of the swale. CCNL recommends that should be at least 3m wide. That will meet British Horse Society guidance as well as providing width for site management machinery.

Minimum width of bridleway to swale crossing – 3 metres

Although the landscape and planting plan is an advance, it does not identify which trees would go where, what species, and the sizes. To achieve an immediate effect, all trees should at least meet the criteria for 'Standard' trees. Furthermore, as some of the planting is on the made ground of the created bunds the special planting method for those locations needs to be specified.

Trees to be planted in groups of x3 – 4 No. as BNG Proposed Plan / Planting Plan - native

species only: Oak (anchor species), Silver Birch, Rowan, Hawthorn

Bunds to be constructed in consolidated 300mm lifts.

The plans are apparently not to scale so it is unclear how the steeper, outer, face of the bunds will limit access to the existing roadside hedge and thereby impact on the management of that hedge. That hedge appears to be the backdrop to the proposed habitats in views from both the house and the southern section of the bridleway and hence an important element in the perception of the landscape being created.

The LEMP is helpful but it does not seem to be consistently addressed at the actual project. There appear to be a number of 'cut and paste' elements from other documents. For example, in 2.1.1 where is the 'residential development'; 2.2.1 what 'buildings on the site'; and 5.2 the 'Adopting Authority' is not defined anywhere. In 4.6.2 ii the different watering frequencies are confusing and the hedge height in 4.7.2 is not identified.

There seems to be little landscape focus in the LEMP and that understatement does not give the confidence that the bigger landscape picture will be addressed going forward. The helpful schedule 6.4 seems to confirm that the LEMP focus is on the initial 5 year establishment, and both implementation and longer term management would benefit from more explicit attention. A more obvious three part Implementation, Establishment, Long-term Management structure to the document could focus attention on those phases.

The inclusion of monitoring and review is positive but that should be undertaken by an appropriately qualified landscape manager / landscape architect / landscape scientist. That monitoring should reference back to the overall landscape and ecological aims and objectives of the project on a quinquennial basis. The LPA and NL should be party to the monitoring and review phases.

Our Nature Recovery Officer also has a number of queries:

1. *Why is the pond being 'topped up', rather than allowing natural seasonal and rainfall related fluctuations which will allow a more naturalistic variation in and use of the draw down zones?*

A consistent water level in a conservation pond promotes habitat stability, biodiversity, water quality, shoreline protection, and ecosystem resilience. By minimising environmental stress and maintaining suitable conditions for plants and animals, it helps the pond function as a healthy and productive conservation habitat.

What is the proposed minimum water level/height at which 'topping up' will be instigated? 89.2

Where will the proposed pump extract water from?

Ground water within daily extraction allowance of 20m³ per day

2. Will the proposed oak constructed jetty have a handrail?

No handrail to jetty

If so, please provide a sectional detail

He also has some follow up [in red] to the responses, or lack of them, to his earlier comments:

a. The overall shape of the pond is basic and does little to enhance complex and dynamic edge habitats and draw down zones

Would prefer to see

- more of an irregular shape no change to proposed shape evident*
- non-uniform edge profiling to create extensive areas of shelving, pooling and extended/more complex marginal and ephemeral zones no additional information provided. Proposed design remains 'regular' and 'lacking complexity'*
- extended areas/zones of non-intervention management in place around the perimeter of the pond to increase structural diversity and provide refuge for amphibians* Welcome the amended proposal to include a '5m unmanaged area' around approx 1/3rd of the pond perimeter

The pond is irregular and over time marginal planting and bankside plants will naturally blur the overall shape of the pond. A 5 metre wide unmanaged area has been included to the NE pond perimeter– see drawing 'MWE_24194_HCF_PLANTING-PLAN_07_06.26'

He has helpfully provided a number of detailed comments on the LEMP:

4.2 recommend including physical protection of existing trees during 'construction phase' such as Construction Exclusion Zones as set out in BS 5837:2005

Noted and understood

4.2.3 iii Recommend that fallen dead wood, or dead wood created from tree works operations (where absolutely necessary), be left in-situ to enable/promote localised biological enhancement such as that promoted for the creation and management of Wood-pasture and parkland (UK BAP Priority Habitat description) – Revised 2011

Noted and understood

I see this is mentioned in 4.4.3 ii and 4.8.3 ii. Suggest these actions be also included within 4.2.3 iii

4.4.1 The proposed plan Fig 6.1 is MWE_24194, not within the BNG Plan

The two objectives to '*maximise biodiversity/maintain healthy and biodiverse sward*' appear contrary to likely outcomes of the subsequent prescriptions 4.4.3 i, where the '*thatch layer*' is to be encouraged.

Noted and understood

4.5.1 Considering this is the primary element of the project and well designed freshwater habitats of this scale are a very effective way to enhance biodiversity, there remains a significant lack of detail about how the design and construction will provide '*a high-quality aquatic and marginal habitat, incorporating areas of varying depth, gently shelving edges*', as referred to previously.

Suggest that a detailed design that focusses on creating localised complexity or microtopographic variation is included within this section.

Conservation lake with shelving and marginal planting as previously specified will develop complex ecology over time – see drawing 'MWE_24194_HCF_PLANTING-PLAN_07_06.26'

In s4.10.5, bullet point 6, there are some functional examples of simple ways to create ecological complexity beyond the physical design of the pond. Suggest that these and others be considered as part of the overall pond design and construction.

4.5.2 How will '*good water quality*' be assessed and what actions or interventions will be employed to '*maintain good water quality*'?

Key principle for maintaining good water quality is to reduce nutrient and sediment inputs from the surrounding watershed and maintain vegetated buffers and seasonal removal of excess debris. Water quality to be regularly assessed using key indicators e.g. water clarity - green or pea-soup coloured water, frequent algal blooms, excessive duckweed growth, dense reed or aquatic weed growth or thick organic sludge on the pond bottom.

4.5.4 How will '*pond depth or ecological function*' be assessed to determine 'de-silting' interventions?

By annual inspection – see 4.52

4.6.2 i The application of fertilisers to newly planted trees is generally discouraged as it promotes excessive shoot growth, rather than root establishment, leading to an overall reduction in long term resilience.

Species selection, specimen sourcing, localised site preparation, planting methodology and establishment aftercare should all combine to enable long term viability and tree health without the need for fertiliser use.

Noted and understood

4.7.2 what is the '*pre-determined ultimate height, shape and width*' for proposed hedgerows?

To compliment/match existing adjacent hedgerow

I'm unsure of the meaning of this paragraph '*To ensure that leggy and unkempt growth is pruned back and maintained at a functional size so that the hedge does not hold litter or present Health and Safety problems*'.

4.7.3 Suggest the prescription to create a '*neater profile*' and '*even and tidy hedge alignment*' does not support ecological enhancement or enhance landscape character.

Would recommend the inclusion of hedge laying at about 8-10 years growth, alongside cyclical management interventions that promote structurally robust and diverse hedgerows.

Noted and understood

[Hedgerow Management Advice | Hedgelink](#) provides some very useful practical advice.

The establishment of rough grassland and/or scrubby margins (managed in cyclical rotations), running parallel to existing and proposed hedgerows can add additional ecological complexity and should be encouraged.

Noted and understood

4.8.3 Agree that cut and remove is an essential element to enable effective establishment and support long term management.

Would suggest that some areas may be left uncut (up to approx. 10%) within single years to create an element of structural diversity and potential refuge areas for invertebrates and small mammals. These areas should not be isolated, but connect with established habitat

Noted and understood

4.9 how are '*manageable levels of the planting*' to be determined?

Noted and understood

4.9.2 Suggest the removal of leaf litter would be detrimental to the establishment of aquatic invertebrate communities, so should not feature within an annual works programme.

Noted and understood

How will *'other marginal species to be cut as required to reduce growth'* be determined?

Noted and understood

4.10.4 *'Remove excessive fallen leaves...in the autumn...'* appears to contradict

Noted and understood

4.10.5 *'leave the dead stems and leaves over winter'*.

Noted and understood

4.10.5 bullet point 7, *'ensure trees and shrubs substantially overhang...'* appears to contradict 4.10.7 bullet point 4, *'ensure vegetation...do not shade or substantially overhang...'*

Noted and understood

In summary, we note the comments from the Cranborne Chase National Landscape & Nature Recovery officer. The lake has been designed to deliver habitat enhancement and landscape diversification as well as human enjoyment. The management of the lake will be based on best practice with reference to guidance documents such as the Defra/RPA – Manage Ponds and Bodies of Water and Freshwater Habitats Trust – Pond Management. This will ensure the clients aims are aligned with nature, delivering a high quality and diversified habitat for both humans and nature to enjoy.