

MEMORANDUM

From:	Tina Cuss Ecology Officer	To (Case Officer):	Kieran Neumann
Service	WBC Ecology	App No:	242913
Address:	Berks County Sports Club, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Wokingham, RG4 6ST.		
Type of Development:	Minor All other developments		
Proposal:	Full application for proposed erection of 3no. covered padel tennis courts and 3no. outdoor tennis courts with associated flood lighting, parking and club huts.		
Site Visit Made:	No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☒ Recommend approval but with condition(s) & reason(s) **stated below**;
- ☐ Recommend approval with no conditions
- ☐ Recommend refusal for the reason(s) **stated below**;
- ☒ **Negotiate the amendments stated below; or**
- ☐ Request further information before determination as **stated below**.

Comments On Proposal

I have read revised Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (Arbtech, 7 March 2025), Preliminary Ecological Appraisal V4 (Arbtech, 7 March 2025) and covering response email. I have also reviewed the condition assessments and the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Arbtech 7 March 2025).

Hours of Operation

According to the planning history of the Berks County Sports ground there do not appear that any other facilities which have planning permission to operate from 6.30am. Permissions 191526, 193377 and 240721 do not permit lighting before 8am. To reduce impact to bats and wildlife the hours of operation and lighting must be restricted to 7am – 10pm as proposed in the covering email. only are in use. Hours of operation and curfew and use only when the courts are in operation should be secured by planning condition.

Artificial Lighting Impact Assessment

I acknowledge that there are no the columns and floodlights proposed on the easternmost court.

The colour temperature for the LED FloodOly-P Re600- 800W-740-AS-LUM luminaries appears to be 4000K and not in line with the guidelines which the

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal state the lighting strategy will comply. Can the applicant confirm if options for warm white (or equivalent LED) lighting are available and whether less than 3000k can be specified?

The Artificial Lighting Impact Assessment and email of 7 March 2025 does not provide analysis of why the floodlights are tilted upward by 20°. I must disagree with section 6 best practice measures. ILP/BCT Guidance Note GN08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting states that *luminaires should always be mounted horizontally, with **no light output above 90°** and/or no upward tilt*". *"..if all other options have been explored, accessories such as baffles, hoods or louvres can be used to reduce light spill and direct it only to where it is needed. However, due to the lensing and fine cut-off control of the beam inherent in modern LED luminaires, the effect of cowls and baffles is often far less than anticipated and so should not be relied upon solely"*.

To avoid light pollution on the compensation habitats and wildlife corridors which are proposed to mitigate the loss of hedges and grassland, I request more information on the tilt and consideration of the use of accessories.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

I am satisfied that precautionary working methods can be secured by condition to protect wildlife in the clearance and construction phase of the development. In the absence of bat activity surveys, it is not possible confirm that corridors to the east of the north provide better connecting habitat and are more likely to be used by bats roosting and foraging around the site. The proximity to ideal habitat on and round the River Thames is not referred to. In order to maintain and enhance wildlife and the local bat population, the provision of and the permanent retention and management replacement hedgerows must be secured in accordance with planning policy CP3, CP7 TB23 and TB24 and the NPPF and dark corridors maintained. Further consideration may be given to gapping up the tress and hedgerows on the northern boundary of the access track and tagging trees in the eastern hedgerow.

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

The Ecologist has not adequately justified that the beech hedgerow should be classed at a non-native hedgerow and ornamental in poor condition. UK Habs states that garden varieties of ornamental native species such as yew, box and privet are treated as non-native. Other native hedgerows h2a5 are defined as native hedgerows with 4 or fewer species. As native h2a are defined as a hedge with >80% canopy cover of UK native or achaeophyte woody species, it is unclear why the Ecologist defines native beech at an ornamental hedgerow.

I don't agree with the condition assessment of the native beech hedge. There are no notes justifying the claim that there are vertical gaps greater than 0.5m or invasive species and the guideline in the Hedgerow Survey Handbook regarding exceptions are not considered. The Ecologist does not provide details of whether cutting of the hedgerows is recent or a long-term practice. Aerials and Streetview photos do not appear to confirm the gaps in bottom of the hedge recorded in the PRA.

For the above reasons I request that the metric baseline hedgerow habitat units revert to the units calculated in metric version 2. As the constraints on the site and management of habitats appear unlikely to be changed, I must still disagree that it

is likely that new replacement hedgerow are likely to achieve moderate condition within 5 years or be maintained in moderate condition for a minimum of 30 years. Particularly as the issue of the hedgerow next to the newly installed path would be likely to suffer from being cut back to halt growth just as the Ecologist states the existing beech hedges are. I have provided additional LPA comments on Metric version 4 where I do not agree with baseline values assessed by the ecologist. I do not agree that all of the habitats are likely to achieve the targets set out in the Metric Condition Assessments RG4 6ST - Proposed - v4.0 submitted in the revised information or that all of the constraints and the experience and capabilities of the applicant have been taken into consideration.

To ensure adequate on-site habitat enhancement and creation are delivered, a pre-commencement a biodiversity gain plan condition must be imposed. A Habitat Management Monitoring Plan should submitted and approved by the LPA prior to commencement of habitat clearance to ensure that the habitat condition targets are achievable, detail habitat creation and enhancement, management, and reporting for on-site habitat and off site units for 30 years post establishment, and a biodiversity plan monitoring fee for on-site BNG must be secured by S106.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Awaiting additional detailed lighting proposals and mitigation
Awaiting a revise statutory biodiversity metric in order that the baseline habitat and hedgerow habitat values can be agreed.

As of 2nd April 2024, a 10% Biodiversity net gain (BNG) for minor developments is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, this planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met (the biodiversity gain condition). The biodiversity gain condition is a pre-commencement condition: Once planning permission has been granted, a Biodiversity Gain Plan must be submitted and approved by the planning authority before commencement of the development.

Development may not be begun unless a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority and the planning authority has approved the plan

The biodiversity gain plan must include:

- a. information about the steps taken or to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the onsite habitat and any other habitat;
- b. the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat;
- c. the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat;
- d. any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development and the biodiversity and the biodiversity value of that gain in relation to the development;
- e. any biodiversity credits purchased for the development; and
- f. any such other matters as the Secretary of State may by regulations specify.

The development shall not commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan and including:

- a. a non-technical summary;

- b. the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
- c. the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
- d. the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
- e. the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority,

has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.

Notice in writing shall be given to the Council when the:

- a. [HMMP] has been implemented; and
- b. habitat creation and enhancement works as set out in the HMMP have been completed.

No occupation shall take place until:

- a. the habitat creation and enhancement works set out in the approved HMM] have been completed; and
- b. a completion report, evidencing the completed habitat enhancements, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved HMMP shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved HMMP.

Monitoring reports shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Local Plan policy

Condition: Prior to the commencement of the development, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include, as appropriate, proposed finished floor levels, means of enclosure, car parking layouts, and pedestrian access and circulation areas, hard surfacing materials and minor structure (e.g., play equipment, refuse or other storage). Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of thirty years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained

Reason: To ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity habitat and wildlife and protected not adversely affected by the proposals. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15, Core Strategy policies CP3 and CP7 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB23.

Date:

24/03/25

Signed:

T Cuss

