

MEMORANDUM

From:	Tina Cuss Ecology Officer		
Service	WBC Ecology	App No:	242936
Address:	Land At Rear Of, 6 Johnson Drive, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3NW.		
Proposal:	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 223592 dated 09/06/2022. Condition 5 relates to a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), 8 to biodiversity mitigation and enhancements, 9 to a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) and 13 to drainage details.		
Type of Development:			
Site Visit Made:	No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☒ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☐ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

Further to my previous comment I have following comments to make on the Construction Environmental Management Plan, Biodiversity Enhancement Plan, and Landscape and Ecological Management Plan submitted to discharge conditions 5, 8 and 9.

5. Construction Environmental Management Plan

The purpose of the CEMP condition is to identify sensitive areas and constraints, agree methodologies and the mitigation measures to be implemented pre-construction and during construction to minimize impacts on habitats and protected/notable wildlife. It should set out detailed timetables and detail contractor responsibilities and on-site supervision by the ECoW.

The list of potentially damaging activities identified should be comprehensive and additionally include tree works, excavation of archaeology trenches, and construction of the drainage outfall and site-set-up including construction of the new access road.

BIODIVERSITY, ECOLOGY & TREE PROTECTION

Reptile and braced Tree Protection Fencing that form the Construction Exclusion Zone as well as all moderate and high-risk zones from the Reptile-proof Fencing Plan as well as both the high and low bat roost potential tree and badger holes should be shown on the final Site Set Up Plan. I am happy that the Site Set Up Plan JDF-1002 provides the name and contact number of the Site Manager and site operating hours.

Bats

The CEMP should be amended to confirm that Alder tree with high roosting potential is to be retained and protected during ground works, and landscaping operations and should therefore be identified on the Tree Protection Plan, Site Set Up Plan JDF-1002, and the Soft Landscaping Plan TTL-SM-PHJD181024. Reference to the removal of the Alder in the Landscape Wildlife Area should therefore be omitted from the CEMP. The Cypress in G34 with low roost suitability and the group of poplars in G32 should be removed following the 'soft' felling technique secured in Ecological Appraisal section 5.1.5.

Badgers and Hedgehogs

The proposal to raise temporary fencing off the ground to allow badgers unrestricted access through the construction site must be removed from Section 3.5 and the toolbox talk appendix. Raising fencing conflicts with the proposal for erection of reptile fencing that could be damaged by badgers. The location of the on-site holes and off-site setts and outliers has not been shown on the Site Set Up Plan to identify the badger protection zone and prevent vehicles and plant operating within 30m of the active setts. I am otherwise satisfied with the avoidance measures set out in the CEMP.

Reptiles and Amphibians

I understand that the groundworks, soil deposition and clearance which took place in October 2024 were taken into account in the Reptile Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy. I'm not satisfied that the Reptile Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy sensitivity plan takes account of multiple artificial refugia and suitable hibernation habitat for reptiles particularly on the east and centre of the Landscape Wildlife Area. In my experience, the site controls for the amber area will not be adequate to ensure injury or death of slow worms is prevented. The order in which the construction site boundary Tree Protection Fencing and reptile fencing will be erected is not adequately clear, nor whether any excavation for services and drainage outfall, tree works, and site set-up is agreed before the Reptile Strategy mitigation is implemented. I note there is no reference to common toad or Great crested newts in the toolbox talk or Reptile Strategy as a whole. I don't agree that it is necessary to strip soils in the Landscape Wildlife Area or the eastern Landscape Wildlife Corridor.

To address the concerns I suggest that a timetable is included in the CEMP (and CMP) that includes construction of hibernacula, erection of the reptile fence and the temporary fence shown as a dotted blue in Site Set Up Plan JDF Rev B – 1002 05/02/25 and a realistic timescale for translocation effort completion of the destructive search in the construction compound and the Landscape Wildlife Area. I welcome clarification why the retention of existing rubble piles/hibernacula has not been considered. Timetables should include and additional measures should be

included for the groundworks, soil importation, planting and grassland creation within the reptile receptor inside the reptile proof fencing in particular removal of rubble piles which are not retained. Reptile fencing should be removed under the supervision of the ECoW.

Nesting Birds

According to Natural England advice bird nesting runs from mid-February to September. Where it is not possible to undertake vegetation clearance and removal of all existing brash piles before March or after August, the ECoW must undertake nesting bird surveys proposed in 3.9 and implement mitigation in line with 3.10.

Tree Protection

Tree protection is not included in section 1.4 listing works which could impact protected species and wildlife habitats. Tree protection fencing should be erected in front of the reptile fencing to prevent construction traffic and operatives entering the construction exclusion zone and reptile receptor area.

A drawing/ copy of the text of the warning notices that will be fixed next to sensitive features or appropriate locations explaining the importance of protecting the important biodiversity features to Contractors and personnel should be large enough to be visible and clearly legible from construction machinery that might be operating close by should be in the CEMP (see BS42020 section 10.9.6 & 10.9.7). I request that a to be including on the warning notices that will be attached to the Tree Protective Fencing is included in the CEMP.

To make clear all of the times when the ECoW will to be need to be present on site and oversee works, it would be helpful to include a clear timetable of pre-commencement surveys, schedule of erection of fencing and reptile mitigation. I recommend that a pre-commencement meeting between Retained Arboriculturalist, Site Manager and the ECoW is include in CEMP schedule.

Ditch

The timing and impacts of the excavation of the surface water drain and outfall headwall construction to the ditch in the Landscape Wildlife Corridor CEZ supervision or attendance of site meetings with the Retained Arboriculturalist is not set out in section 1.4-1.8 or 3.13-3.15.

The site description in 1.4 excavation of the drain and construction of the headwall. I have no objection to the drainage proposals and design submitted in connection with Condition 13. The drainage works through the wildlife corridor are not shown on the revised Site Set Up Plan JDF-1002 Rev B. Relevant mitigation measures during construction and details of timing to replace foul sewer, construction the outfall headwall and excavate drains through the landscape wildlife corridor, liaison with the Retained Arboriculturalist and engineers will however need to be covered in the CEMP.

Dust

No burning is proposed on site and dust and air pollution are not likely to have an impact on protected species and biodiversity. I suggest that the relevant parts of the

CEMP section on Dust and Air Quality be included in the Construction Management Plan JDF-1002.

Lighting

The Construction Management Plan report submitted to discharge condition 4 states that no temporary lighting will be required, and hours of operation have been approved by the LPA. Any additional temporary construction lighting and hours of operation must be agreed with the ECoW and the LPA.

Management of Unforeseen Incidents

The ECoW's and Site Manager's responsibilities in investigating, recording and reporting incidents should be agreed by the contractor and set out in the CEMP. The CEMP should set out procedure and reporting to the LPA of impact of any breaches of habitat or protected species mitigation. Records of ECoW site inspections, records of bat roosts, or injury of protected species should be submitted to the LPA or made available on request.

In summary in order to support approval of the CEMP and Reptile Strategy to better satisfy condition 5 a, d e and h, a revised Site Set Up Plan and Reptile Proof Fencing Plan which show the moderate and low bat roost potential trees, temporary exclusion fencing from amber and red reptile sensitive areas until completion of reptile destructive search, headwall construction in the LWC, and features/habitat suitable for nesting birds should be submitted. The CEMP should include a clear timetable of surveys, supervision and measures being undertaken to avoid impact on protected species and details of biodiversity protection zone notices to be erected on the Tree Protection Fencing.

8. Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

I would be happy to recommend approval of the Ibstock bat bricks but to ensure they are constructed at least 3.5m above the ground I suggest that the bat brick in plot 2 is installed on the south-facing gable end and not the single storey garage.

As the bird boxes currently proposed are all integrated into the building and should remain on Site for the building's lifetime, it's onerous to expect householders to clear out and periodically replace boxes as proposed by AAE. Deepdene state that integrated bird boxes do not require maintenance.

In line with Deepdene Ecological Appraisal Appendix F the number of Eco Kent Bat Boxes that will be hung on mature trees around the site should be added to the BES and Annotated Plan. Condition 8 secures that at least five Vivara Pro Seville bird boxes with a 32mm holes (or similar) are installed on a retained trees around the site. While reference is made to installation of additional Woodcrete bat boxes and possibly bird boxes to be erected in trees, neither are shown in figure 1 or the numbers of boxes proposed.

To recommend that the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan fully complies with condition 19 and Ecological Appraisal, the details of how many additional boxes are proposed should be provided. Once the location of bird and bat boxes are approved by the LPA they must only be amended with written agreement of the Council and/or the project ECoW.

Figure 1 Annotated Site Plan (AAE, 18 November 2024) and Hard Landscaping Plan JDF-1001 do not show hedgehog gaps in the close board fence of plots 1-3. At least one hedgehog gap should be shown in each fence as well as the southern site boundary to maintain connectivity throughout and out of the site.

Hibernacula

I support construction of 2 hibernacula but need to be provided with the detail of whether the existing rubble piles will be retained, and the Reptile Strategy should confirm that the hibernacula will be created before the start of any habitat clearance and the destructive search.

Hedge Planting

On the eastern boundary of the west Landscape Wildlife Corridor parallel with 20 and 21 Johnson Drive, I recommend that the ornamental border planting and bulbs to the west of the fence are replaced by the hedgerow planting approved in Site Plan 2554 Dwg 13A.

Trees

According to the Ecological Assessment the LPA have secured on completion of the project, the landscape wildlife corridors and wildlife area must be managed appropriately to ensure that the habitats remain suitable for reptiles. "Any planting within the site as part of the proposed development should use native trees species that will enhance the biodiversity of the Site. I recommend that the soft landscaping proposals are amended to include planting of locally native trees suitable for the soil conditions to gap up the western boundary trees proposed on Site Plan 2554 Dwg 13A and secured in 223592 condition 2. I note that planting of ornamental non-native flowering plants and trees within the Landscape Wildlife Corridors is contrary to conditions 7, 8 and 19 and I recommend that Landscaping Plan (Treetop Dwg TTL-SM-PHJD181024) is amended in line the layout of hedges and trees in drawing 13A.

Boundary Treatment

In line with the request from the Binfield Badger Group I request that close board fences are not raised off the ground. However, that at least one 150x150mm hedgehog gap needs to be included in the close board fence for each property and shown on the Hard Landscaping Plan JDF- 001 and BES Annotated Site Plan Figure 1. To prevent access by dogs, I request stock netting is added to the post and rail fence to plots 1 and 2 on the southern boundary of the Landscape Wildlife Area and shown in an amendment to the Hard Landscaping Plan.

9. Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

The condition requires that the LEMP includes schedules for Landscape Wildlife Area and Landscape Wildlife Corridor and any area other than privately owned gardens setting out long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance are approved. To recommend approval of the LEMP I request it provides a clear assessment of constraint on the site which may influence the establishment and achievement of appropriate condition of the biodiversity habitats secured and maintenance of badger, bat and reptile populations. Site, species and habitat specific aims and objectives should be agreed in order set out a detailed, month by month prescription of management measured to be

implemented by competent landscape contractors and monitored qualified ecologists and consultants to demonstrate progress against the aims and objectives of habitat condition, protection of the TPO protected woodland and maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity. The LEMP should be revised to demonstrate what mechanism the owners have put in place to ensure that adequate funding for the management of the Landscape Wildlife Corridors, Landscape Wildlife Area and native hedgerows, shrubs and grassland within shared spaces are until they are established and in perpetuity. The details of the landscape contractor or management body who will be responsible for implementing the LEMP and reporting the conservation aims and objectives have been met and agree remedial actions with the LPA.

Site Description and Proposals

The description should include the Landscape Wildlife Corridors, the Landscape Wildlife Area and the soft landscaped areas for which management objectives will be prescribed, detailed management actions and long-term work schedule and monitoring will be specified.

I request that objectives for habitat condition, and maintenance of the landscaping and landscape wildlife corridors and landscape management area to deliver landscape and wildlife conservation aims and objectives that demonstrate that with development will not result in a net loss of biodiversity. Aims and objectives should be timed, measurable and the specific.

The items in the summary table and checklist in Appendix A and B are not specific to the set of aims and objectives for management of the LWC and LCA that should have been set out. Management prescription should be set out in month-by-month schedules, which will vary and habitats implemented establish and management operations need to change. To monitor success/efficacy of management prescriptions, any monitoring recording spreadsheets must include the targets for assessing habitat condition and maintenance of wildlife populations as set out in the management prescription to achieve the objectives agreed by the LPA. A number of the management operations set out in Appendix A are not suitable for newly planted neutral grassland woodland buffers, scrub and woodland. For example, newly planted trees will require minimal pruning. Each of the habitat areas approved in the final soft landscaping plan should be separately listed and set out how habitat will be measured by sward density, height, percentage bare ground, weeds, hedgerow thickness, canopy cover etc.

Prescriptions

The Management Prescriptions and Checklist in Appendix A does not satisfy the requirements of condition 9 (g). I request that the LEMP is revised to provide detailed prescriptions for management actions, a detailed work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five, ten and 30-year period for example). The schedule in Appendix 1 should be amended to achieve revised detailed objectives and set out works to be carried out prior to commencement, during the construction phase and post-occupation when the landscape wildlife area will be maintained by a named management organisation or body.

There are no formal lawns outside of private gardens, therefore reference to maintenance of “short sward for amenity use” should be omitted.

Hedgerows and Trees

Native hedges will not need cutting every 3 years after initial management, and the minimum hedgerow height which needs to be achieved should be set out in prescriptions. I recommend that the LEMP refers to the Tree Preservation Order covering the western and eastern landscape/wildlife corridors and the need to get LPA approval for any works to any tree covered by the orders. The tree species included in the current planting schedule are not suitable to be managed by pollarding. If species fail or do not thrive due to soil conditions alternative species must be agreed by the LPA.

Responsibilities

To ensure consultants are qualified, the LEMP should set out when monitoring by an ecologist is proposed and where landscape contractors or staff of a management company are considered competent to monitor habitat condition, tree health, sward density, weed species, or reptile populations and bird boxes landscape wildlife corridors/area or the monitoring ecologist. The LEMP must detail who is responsible reporting for the landscape wildlife corridors and landscape wildlife area, when reports will be issued to the LPA, and how remedial measures agreed with the Council.

Reptile Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy

Amendments are needed to ensure sure no work is undertaken in red and amber suitable reptile habitat and

13. Drainage Layouts

There are no objections to the drainage layout.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Date:	2/1/25	Signed:	T Cuss
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