



Worton Grange, Imperial Way, Reading

Ecological Information to Support the Discharge of Condition 63

February 2017

Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Limited

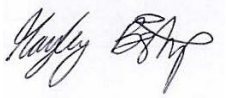
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Quality Assurance – Approval Status

This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with
Waterman Group's IMS (BS EN ISO 9001: 2008, BS EN ISO 14001: 2004 and BS OHSAS 18001:2007)

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Comments

Comments

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1. Introduction

1.1. Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd (Waterman) was commissioned by Kier Reading LLP (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant') to provide ecological information to support the discharge of a planning condition associated with the permitted commercial development at Worton Grange, Reading (hereafter referred to as "the Site").

1.2. The Site was granted planning permission (Planning Application Number: 151944) on 14th April 2016 by Reading Borough Council (RBC) for the following:

"A Hybrid application seeking outline planning permission for the development of up to 175 new homes, including affordable housing (with all matters reserved apart from access), and full planning permission for the development of 12 commercial units in flexible use within Classes B1(c), B2 and B8, two car showrooms with MOT and servicing (Sui Generis), three retail warehouse units (Class A1), 120 bed hotel Class C1), pub with restaurant facility (Class A4), coffee shop (Class A1), restaurant (Class A3), and bank (Class A2). New vehicular access from Basingstoke Road and Imperial Way. Bus stop facilities, hard and soft landscaping and other ancillary development (Summarised Description)" (hereafter referred to as the "Development").

1.3. A number of conditions were attached to the above planning permission and this report specifically relates to condition 63 which states:

"Prior to construction of the relevant part within the Detailed Element, details of both hard and soft landscaping shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Landscape details shall include:

- Planting plans*
- Written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment)*
- Schedules of plants and trees, to include large canopy, native and wildlife friendly species, and species likely to prove adaptable to climate change, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers / densities,*
- Full details of tree pits.*
- Details of sustainable drainage and irrigation systems such as rain gardens, and temporary pools and swales*
- Implementation timetables*
- Biodiversity enhancements, including integral bird nesting opportunities on and around the new buildings*
- Specifications for fencing demonstrating how hedgehogs and other wildlife will be able to continue to travel across the site (e.g. fences slightly raised above ground level or with gaps in appropriate locations)*
- Above and below ground service routes (ensuring they do not conflict with new or existing planting)*
- Permeable hard surfaces*

Reason: To ensure the provision of amenity, and biodiversity enhancements, afforded by appropriate landscape design and to comply with Reading's Core Strategy and paragraphs 1, 99 and 109 of the NPPF."

1.4. The aim of this report is to provide information to support the discharge of the ecological aspects of planning condition 63. Where additional information is required to discharge all aspects of this planning condition this is stated in this report where relevant.

1.5. In summary this report provides the following information to aid the discharge of condition 63:

- A statement on how the soft landscaping, bird boxes and hibernaculum will enhance the Site for biodiversity;
- Specification, location and number of the bird boxes and hibernaculum; and
- A statement on how the fencing specification has been designed to allow wildlife movement across the Site.

2. Information to Support the Discharge of Condition 63

- 2.1. The information below has been written to support the discharge of two elements of Condition 63, notably:
- *“Biodiversity enhancements, including integral bird nesting opportunities on and around the new buildings”; and*
 - *“Specifications for fencing demonstrating how hedgehogs and other wildlife will be able to continue to travel across the site (e.g. fences slightly raised above ground level or with gaps in appropriate locations)”.*
- 2.2. It is understood that the requirements of the remaining parts of this condition will be prepared by Kier Reading LLP, Mouchel Consulting and Saunders Architects.

Biodiversity Enhancements

Summary of Existing Site Conditions

- 2.3. The existing vegetation at the Site is dominated by semi-improved grassland with some trees and scrub around the boundaries of the Site. Most of the central area of the existing Site is dominated by hardstanding which is of negligible ecological value. The ecology surveys undertaken in 2015 identified the boundary habitats as sporadically utilised by foraging and commuting common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula* and *Myotis* species of bats. The boundary habitats also have value to hedgehogs and nesting birds.
- 2.4. Overall the existing Site is of low ecological value and supports a low diversity of protected / notable fauna. The proposed landscape scheme will provide ecological enhancement through the provision of extensive diverse planting (see below).

Soft Landscaping

- 2.5. The Development will provide the following habitats:
- Trees;
 - Hedges;
 - Shrub planting and ground cover;
 - Perennial bulb planting; and
 - Wildflower planting (pond edge mixture and meadow mixture for clay soils).
- 2.6. The diverse palette of habitats to be included in the Development will promote ecological enhancement and habitat creation at the Site which will be a considerable improvement to the habitats currently present on Site.
- 2.7. Through the inclusion of a variety of habitats within the Development's landscape design, enhancement will be provided for foraging and commuting bats, as well as hedgehogs and birds. Furthermore, Basingstoke Road currently lacks linear commuting habitat features for bats, so the inclusion of a linear native hedgerow will provide further enhancement.
- 2.8. Where existing hard standing is present at the Site, the landscape proposals for this area include the provision of shrubs and trees. The provision of these habitats will provide a net gain with regards to enhancement for local fauna.

- 2.9. The landscape design for the Development once complete will comprise a number of native and non-native species. Several species which are not native are considered to be of wildlife benefit due to the fact that they produce seeds, pollen, nectar and / or berries which will provide a food source for invertebrates and birds and also provide suitable nesting habitat for a range of common bird species.
- 2.10. The plants species chosen for the Development also have varying growth heights which will provide texture and a contoured topography of habitats at the Site. This will create a range of opportunities for invertebrates which utilise different sward heights at different stages during their life-cycle.

Bird Boxes

Bird Box Specification

- 2.11. A total of two Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace Nest Boxes and three Schwegler 1B Nest Boxes (**Appendix A**) will be installed at the Site as part of the Development. These will be installed on the underside of eaves on the external walls of buildings located within the south of the Site, as detailed within the detailed landscape planting plan (Mouchel drawing ref: 1072687-P001-1200). This area is considered the most favourable on Site to locate the boxes given they are positioned on the edge of the site overlooking to potential foraging habitat supporting invertebrate food source.
- 2.12. The Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace Nest Box provides nesting opportunities for species of sparrow such as the house sparrow *Passer domesticus*. The Schwegler 1B Nest Box will provide more generic nesting opportunities for birds. Such nest boxes are often occupied by tit species.
- 2.13. The bird boxes will be placed at least 3m above ground level to prevent vandalism. The boxes do not require any cleaning maintenance. If any bird boxes become damaged they will be replaced (in their original positions) or repaired as necessary.

Fencing Specification

- 2.14. As detailed on Saunders Architects 'Proposed Site Plan Boundary Treatment' plan (Drawing ref: 1894-P-76), the 3m high acoustic screen fence and 2.4 high boundary fence will have 150 x 150mm holes¹ at the base at intervals of a maximum 15m to allow hedgehogs and other wildlife to move across the Site.
- 2.15. No gaps for hedgehogs will be provided at the base of the service yard fences given the risk of mortality of wildlife in these areas as a result of service traffic.
- 2.16. The inclusion of hedgerows at the Site will also provide green corridors to enable hedgehogs and other wildlife to cross the Site with sufficient vegetation cover.

Additional enhancement

- 2.17. During the determination of the application, RBC's Ecologist (Giles Sutton) suggested that a pond should be provided within the Development to provide additional ecological enhancement. However, the drainage of the Site does not provide a natural opportunity to provide a pond and there are also associated concerns regarding health and safety matters with the provision of a pond on the Site. As such a pond was never shown within the final planning submission documents. Furthermore, wetland ecological enhancement measures are being proposed within

¹ Size of holes chosen based on guidance provided by the Hedgehog Preservation Society
<http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/hedgehog-awareness-week-2016/>

the ditch in the south-west of the Site, as shown within the detailed landscape planting plan (Mouchel drawing ref: 1072687-P001-1110).

- 2.18. However, the provision of the hedgehog hibernaculum provides an additional ecological enhancement aimed at a species which has been recorded utilising the Site and therefore forms a more appropriate mitigation measure. Further details of this are set out below. To provide enhancement within the Development for hedgehogs, a hedgehog house will be installed at the Site. The hedgehog house will provide shelter for hedgehogs to hibernate during the winter months. The rectangular hedgehog house will be constructed from wood (not creosoted or tanalised, but can be treated with water based preservative) and the main chamber will measure approximately 40cm length x 30cm width x 26cm height with a 13cm length x 30cm width x 13cm height entrance tunnel. The box will be covered in plastic sheeting to prevent water damage. This design is based on the Hedgehog Preservation Society's 'Hedgehog Homes' specification.
- 2.19. The hedgehog house will be set within a purpose built hibernaculum. The hibernaculum will be constructed from logs and rubble placed either side of the hedgehog house. The total area of the hibernaculum (including the hedgehog house) will measure approximately 2m length x 1m width x 0.5m height.
- 2.20. The hedgehog hibernaculum will be located adjacent to a hedgerow to provide immediate cover for the hedgehogs as they leave the hibernaculum, as detailed within the detailed landscape planting plan (Mouchel drawing ref: 1072687-P001-1200). The entrance tunnel will face south.
- 2.21. The logs and rubble within the hibernaculum will also provide a variety of habitat pockets and refuges for a range of invertebrate species. Which in turn will provide a food source for hedgehogs, as well as birds and bats.
- 2.22. Once installed, the hedgehog hibernaculum does not require any specific management, however the entrance tunnel should be checked on an annual basis to ensure it is free of any obstructions.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. The information provided in this report is considered sufficient to satisfy the ecological aspects of condition 63 of the Development's planning permission.

APPENDICES

A. Bird Boxes

Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace



Schwegler 1B Nest Box



(Images from www.nhbs.com)

Appendices

Worton Grange, Imperial Way, Reading
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UK and Ireland Office Locations

