

Your ref: WA/2017/124095/01-L01 (RBC ref: 171108)

Our ref: CBH/28791/SM/RMF



26 February 2018

Environment Agency
Red Kite House
Howbery Park,
Wallingford,
Oxfordshire,
OX10 8BD

Peter Brett Associates LLP
Caversham Bridge House
Waterman Place, Reading
Berkshire RG1 8DN
T: +44 (0)118 950 0761
E: reading@peterbrett.com

Attn: Oliver Rathmill – Sustainable Places

Dear Oliver

**RE: PROPOSED EAST READING MASS RAPID TRANSIT (EAST READING MRT)
LAND BETWEEN THAMES VALLEY BUSINESS PARK AND NAPIER ROAD, READING
RESPONSE TO EA COMMENTS DATED 21/09/17 (ECOLOGY)**

The Environment Agency (EA) provided comments in response to the planning application for the proposed East Reading MRT scheme in their letter response dated 21st September 2017 (EA ref: WA/2017/124095/01-L01), hereinafter referred to as the 'proposed scheme'. Some of the comments raised concerns over the impacts to biodiversity and it was requested that additional information be provided. Responses were provided within: Peter Brett Associates LLP (PBA): 2017: East Reading Mass Rapid Transport Scheme – Ecology and Landscape Consultation Response to the Environment Agency.

Outstanding queries were discussed with the EA 'in person' during an on-site meeting on 4th January 2018.

PBA have produced this response to provide further information relating to the outstanding ecological queries raised by the EA, to enable them to remove their objection in relation to biodiversity with respect to the proposed scheme. These outstanding concerns primarily relate to:

- ecological mitigation and enhancement measures; and
- details of management responsibilities.

Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement

To address comments relating to ecological mitigation and enhancement, and the management of these measures, further consultation has been carried out with Reading Borough Council's (RBC) Parks Team and the EA, as detailed below. The purpose of this was to discuss and agree in principle the package of ecological mitigation and enhancement measures to be implemented in association with the proposed scheme, and how these would be managed. Table 1 below provides a summary of the proposed measures. These measures have been discussed and agreed in principle with Carolyn Jenkins from the RBC Parks Team. Figure 1 shows their locations, drawing on the measures already put forward as part of the original submission, as well as those suggested by the EA and RBC's Parks Team.

J:\28791 RBC BLTB LA Scheme\03 East Reading MRT\Ecology\AA Post Application\5. Reporting\Consultation Response\EA Response\Feb 2018\28791_Ecology Response EA 260218_rmf.docx

Registered Office: Caversham Bridge House, Waterman Place, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 8DN. UK. T: +44 (0)118 950 0761 F: +44 (0)118 959 7498

Peter Brett Associates LLP is a limited liability partnership and is registered in England and Wales with registered number OC334398.

A list of members' names is open to inspection at our registered office.

www.peterbrett.com



Table 1: Summary of Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Proposals

No.	Measure (see Figure 1 for location).
1	Habitats on-site to be retained and / or enhanced through inclusion of native and species rich planting, to be managed for biodiversity. Habitat types to include: • Acid grassland; • Woodland (including native understory planting); • Tussocky grassland; and • Trees.
2	Installation of a marginal shelf to provide a naturalised river edge of value to biodiversity.
3	Removal of invasive, non-native plant species.
	Selective tree management.
	Native understorey planting.
4a	Planting of four black poplar trees.
4b	Rotational management to reduce invasive species within the belt of vegetation at the north of King's Meadow.
4c	One-off project to resolve tree and undergrowth management, followed by rotational annual maintenance of the belt of vegetation at the south of Hills Meadow.
4d	Installation of bird and bat boxes within Hills Meadow and / or the off-site portion of the LWS (assuming 6 x bird boxes, 6 x bat boxes (general) and 1 x bat box (hibernation)).

In combination, this package of measures is considered likely to deliver a small net gain in biodiversity, therefore demonstrating compliance with planning policy.

The costs associated with these measures (both implementation and management) will come from the capital budget for the scheme.

A Landscape and Ecology Management Strategy was drafted previously during the consultation period and issued for comment to the RBC Parks Team. The purpose of this document was to outline the broad principles of how ecological mitigation and enhancement measures will be managed. A detailed Landscape and Ecology Management Plan will be conditioned and delivered as part of the scheme. The purpose of the Plan will be to provide the detail relating to the mitigation and enhancement measures and the specifics of how they are to be managed. Once the condition is released, the format of the Plan will be discussed and agreed with the RBC Parks Team, to ensure a cohesive approach to management across the relevant areas is achieved.

Further Clarifications following Meeting with EA

During the meeting with the EA (4th January 2018), it was queried whether there was scope to locate off-site ecological mitigation / enhancement within Oracle owned land. Following this, PBA consulted Todd Sullivan, Thames Valley Park Operations Manager. A summary of this consultation is provided below.

The area to the north of Thames Valley Park Drive (as shown in Plate 1 below) identified as a possible off-site mitigation area is used primarily for recreational purposes (including, for example, the weekly Reading Park Run as well as other activities) and it would need to be maintained in such a way.

To the east, there is an area of meadow and a nature reserve.

A habitat management plan is already in place for the nature reserve and, it is presumed, the associated meadow habitat. This includes for bird boxes, bat boxes, wildflower planting, ongoing management of ponds and woodland, etc. The management of the nature reserve and any new initiatives (some of which are already in the pipeline) are funded by the service charge paid by the Thames Valley Park tenants.



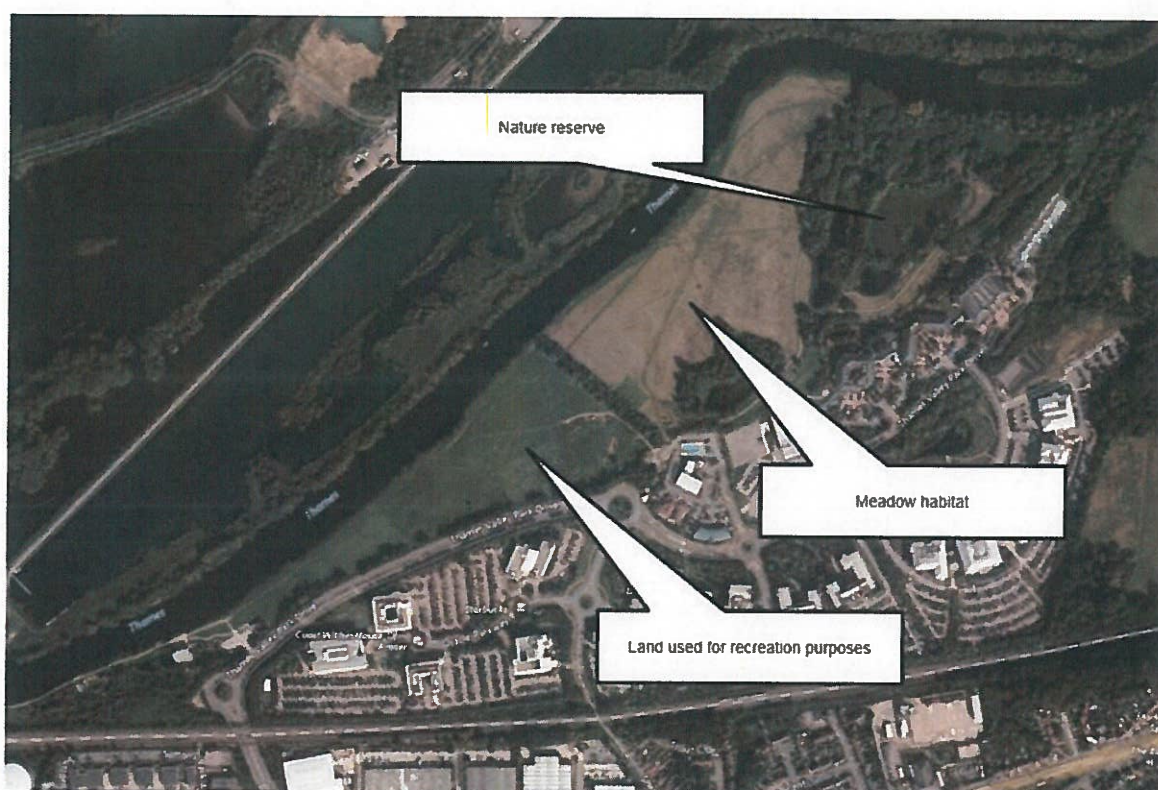
There are already ecology information boards and ecological advice is provided by a retired EA biodiversity advisor. Given:

- the already well funded and managed nature of this land, and therefore its existing biodiversity value;
- that ecological advice is already being provided; and
- its distance from the East MRT;

this will not be pursued as a preferred option for off-site ecological mitigation and enhancement; particularly given that the land put forward within RBC ownership / management (as per Table 1) is (i) likely to be of less biodiversity value, (ii) without existing management / funding and (iii) closer to the East MRT.

During the meeting with the EA (4th January 2018), it was also identified that any fencing beneath the structure would need to accommodate the movement of wildlife; in particular, otter *Lutra lutra*. The design of the undercroft fencing will allow for this, with the exact detail to be conditioned.

Plate 1: Thames Valley Park.



We hope this response and attachments provides clarification of the mitigation measures and address the outstanding concerns on ecology. If you have any queries please get in touch.

Yours sincerely

Johanna Stewart
Senior Ecologist
For and on behalf of
PETER BRETT ASSOCIATES LLP

Encls. PBA Figure 1A 'Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Proposals'

