



## ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

**TO:** *Mark Davies*

**FROM:** *Helen Forster*

**DATE:** *21 June 2021*

**SUBJECT:** *21/00790/AS Land btw Woodchurch Road etc, Tenterden*

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*The following is provided by Kent County Council's Ecological Advice Service (EAS) for Local Planning Authorities. It is independent, professional advice and is not a comment/position on the application from the County Council. It is intended to advise the relevant planning officer(s) on the potential ecological impacts of the planning application; and whether sufficient and appropriate ecological information has been provided to assist in its determination.*

*Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant or other interested parties may have must be directed in every instance to the Planning Officer, who will seek input from the EAS where appropriate and necessary.*

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A revised application has been submitted with this site and we advise that our comments are largely similar to what we have previously provided. The proposal is for a reduction of house numbers however the indicative layout suggests that the area covered by the residential aspect of the proposal will be largely similar to what has previously been proposed - although we acknowledge that the green spaces within the residential areas has been increased. From an ecology perspective it would have been preferable if the total area of the area identified as the country park had increased

The following surveys have been carried out and, while some of the species survey data is 5 years old, it's likely that they provide a reasonable understanding of the ecological interest of the site particularly as it was supported by an updated walkover survey carried out in 2021

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Bat
- Botanical
- Breeding birds
- Amphibians
- Reptiles
- Invertebrates

- Dormouse

[REDACTED]

The surveys have detailed the following:

- Neutral and Acid Grassland (11 species indicating unimproved grassland were recorded).
- Area of rush pasture (previously assessed as a pond)
- Ponds and ditches throughout the site (5 of the 7 ponds on site retained significant amount of water during the updated survey).
- Hedgerows recording Ancient woodland Indicator species
- At least 49 trees with potential to be used by roosting bats
- At least 9 species of foraging/commuting bats within the site
- 34 species of birds – including birds of conservation concern and species of principle importance.
- Breeding population of GCN
- Smooth Newt, Palmate Newt and Common Frog.
- 3 species of reptiles
- 161 species of invertebrates (including species of principle importance)

[REDACTED]

The proposed development is intending to retain habitats which support the species which have been recorded within the proposed development site. However as discussed in detail below (in relation to the biodiversity net gain metric) we are concerned that the retained habitats (particularly the grassland) cannot be created/ enhanced to the quality anticipated by the Biodiversity Net Gain Metric. Therefore there is a risk that the number of species recorded within the site may decline as a result of the proposed development. On receipt of the additional information requested in relation to the biodiversity net gain metric we will re-review the impact on the species and habitats from the proposed development.

The biodiversity net gain metric is a tool to assist in understanding the ecological impact of the proposed development and considering if the proposed mitigation is appropriate and achievable – we have a number of concerns with the submitted Biodiversity Net Gain Metric and the associated information used to inform the metric.

A biodiversity net gain metric has been submitted and it has detailed that the proposal will result in a 15% biodiversity net gain and we query how this is achievable within the proposed development site.

There is no information with the Metric demonstrating how the applicants have reached the conclusions about the condition of the existing, enhanced or proposed habitat and no map has been provided clearly demonstrating where the habitat creation/enhancement works (as detailed within the metric) will be carried out to support our understanding of the metric.

The metric currently details that the neutral/acid grassland habitats are currently in poor/fairly poor condition and subsequently once the management has been implemented the metric had detailed that the condition of the neutral and acid grassland will improve to good/fairly good – we have the following concern with those conclusions:

1. The presence of Ant hills within the slight indicated that the site has been unploughed for a number of years and the previous metric assessed the condition of the majority of the neutral and acid grassland as moderate and therefore we question whether the condition of the grassland has been under represented within the current metric.

2. The reduction of grassland and the increase in pressure from the proposed development (including recreation) we question if an increase in quality of the grassland is achievable and additional information must be provided demonstrating why the applicant is satisfied that the management can achieve what it details in the metric.

Due to the reduction of grassland and the increase in pressure from the proposed development we question if the increase in the quality of grassland habitat is achievable. The proposal is to actively manage the grasslands on site to benefit biodiversity and the management plan details that within the country park it will be wildflower meadows and within the residential areas it will be a mixture of wildflower grassland and amenity grassland. On paper we do understand the reasoning behind this proposal but in practice we do question if it can be achieved – particularly within the residential areas which will have a higher level of impact such as from recreational pressure, residents implementing their own management due to the area being messy or impacts from car parking on verges etc. We advise that additional information must be provided demonstrating how the applicant can be satisfied that the proposed management is achievable across the whole site and will achieve the intended conclusions.

We question if the metric calculation has taken in to account the installation and maintenance of the utilities required for the site or any land levelling required. Any underground cables/pipes required for water/gas/electricity may have to be accessed at short/no notice and subsequently impacting any habitat creation/enhancement which had previously been implemented.

The reptile mitigation is proposed for the NE corner of the proposed development site and it will be managed as a scrub / grassland mosaic. Typically the grasslands within receptor sites are managed on a rotational basis with sections of the grassland cut on alternative years to create a tussocky grassland. The management of the grassland in this fashion may result in a decrease in botanical interest due to the reduction in mowing. This is a conflict in management requirements and due to this we question if the quality of the grassland can be improved as suggested by the biodiversity net gain metric.

Based on the above it's our view that the metric needs to be updated and additional information provided to ensure that the information is based on the proposed development.

We recommend that the metric is submitted as an excel spreadsheet rather than a PDF to enable the data to be reviewed in more detail.

#### Lighting

The Ecological Assessment has provided the following information about lighting within the proposed development: *During the operational phase, lighting will be limited only to areas of development (i.e. street lighting) as well as expected to be utilised within areas of anticipated high footfall within development space for the purposes of preserving public health and safety.* We advise that a light spill plan is submitted demonstrating what the anticipated light spill

from the proposed development will be to enable consideration of the impact the proposal will be on foraging/commuting/roosting bats and other nocturnal animals. The increase in lighting within the proposed residential area may mean that suitable habitat may not be utilised by species recorded within the site due to increased lighting levels.

LEAP

The submitted site plan currently shows the proposed LEAP within close proximity to the residential housing. We presume it's been located within this area due to previous concerns raised about if the quality of the grassland within the LEAP area previously located within the proposed country park. However we highlight that ABC must be satisfied that the proposal will be located within that area and not, if planning permission is granted, moved in to the country park area.

If you have any queries regarding our comments, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

**Helen Forster MCIEEM**  
**Biodiversity Officer**

This response was submitted following consideration of the following documents:  
*Ecological Assessment; Ecology Solutions.*