



ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

TO: *Mark Davies*

FROM: *Helen Forster*

DATE: *31 August 2021*

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

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.

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 space identified as the country park had increased.

The ecological surveys have been or are currently being updated in 2021. We have reviewed the additional ecological information submitted in conjunction with the ecological submitted with the current and original planning application. We are satisfied that the submitted information does provide a good understanding of the ecological interest of the site.

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

- Invertebrates
- Dormouse*
- Badger

**Updated surveys currently on going or not provided.*

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 59 trees with potential to be used by roosting bats
- At least 9 species of foraging/commuting bats within the site
- At least 38 species of birds of which at least 22 species were considered to be breeding within the site – 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
- At least 366 species of invertebrates (including species of principle importance)
- Badger sett in the NE of the site.

The proposal has provided an overview of the mitigation proposed and we have discussed the application in detail with the applicants ecologists and we do accept that if hedgerows and ponds are retained, the lighting can be designed to have minimal impact and the wider site managed as proposed it's likely that there is capacity within the site to retain and enhance the protected/notable species interest of the site – for example during the site meeting with the applicant we discussed the enhancement of ponds to improve there interest for amphibians and invertebrates.

Habitats

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. A biodiversity net gain metric has been submitted and it has detailed that the proposal will result in an anticipated biodiversity net gain of 15% biodiversity net gain of habitat units and 23% anticipated biodiversity net gain of hedgerow units. This would largely be achieved by improving the grassland which has been assessed as poor/fairly poor condition to good/fairly good through the implementation of management. We do accept that appropriate management can improve the ecological interest of a site we do have concerns that in the long term the proposed management will not be carried out as intended or residents implement unapproved management. *Please note that the management comment is not unique to this application – it's a comment we do raise on other applications.*

Limited information has been provided 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. From speaking to the applicants ecologist we understand that the conclusions of the grassland habitat assessment was largely due to the high grass content across much of the site and the low forbs content (*forbs are flowering, nongrassy "herbaceous" plants*). We understand that a botanical survey has been carried out this year and the submission of the updated survey is likely to provide additional information to help address this point. In addition we do recommend that a plan is submitted clearly demonstrating the areas demonstrating where anticipated creation/enhancements will be implemented and clarification that the plan has taken in to account constraints which may impact the implementation of the management – for example utilities required for the site, land levelling required or habitat requirements for species mitigation.

The additional information will help us understand if the anticipated quality of grassland habitat is achievable. The applicant has provided some photos on other applications which indicate that natural habitats are present on site however no covering letter has been provided with these photos clarifying how the habitat has established on site and/or quality improved.

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.*

Therefore is a need for ABC to be satisfied that proposal can be designed to ensure that there will be minimum lighting within the proposed development. As discussed within the submitted

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.