

**SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL  
MEMORANDUM**

To: Peter Gittens – Principal Planning Officer  
(Development Management)

From: Paul Evans – Ecology Officer  
(Enforcement – Development Management)

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020

**Ref: S/2020/0930/MAO Land South of Station Road Blisworth Northamptonshire NN7 3DN –  
Ecology Comments**

Having reviewed the following submitted reports for this application, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) by deltasimons dated 18<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and Bat Survey Report dated 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020, I have the following comments. I confirm the reports are appropriate and on fit for purpose. It follows the appropriate industry guidelines and best practice.

No statutory or non statutory designated sites are located within the site boundary or the zone of influence, therefore there will be no impact from the proposals on designated sites.

Protected Species

No evidence of badgers was found during the surveys and no local records were returned from data searches. The site contains suitable foraging and commuting habitat and the hedgerows are suitable for set building. Mitigation measures for mammals are recommended (paragraph 6) including precautions during the construction phase and a pre commencement survey to check that the status on badgers has not changed prior to construction may be a useful additional to CEMP.

In respect of roosting bats the site a number of buildings which offered low potential to support bats and scattered trees in the hedgerows which offered low and moderate potential to support bats, as a result further surveys were recommended and undertaken in line with national guidance. No bats were recorded emerging from the building during the surveys. The trees are identified to be retained so there was no survey carried out on these. Suitable mitigation measures are given in paragraph 6 of the bat survey report including appropriate timing of demolition and sensitive lighting strategy e.g. directing light away from the trees and hedgerows.

The hedgerows around the site provide some suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats, which provide connectivity to the surrounding landscape. The hedgerows on site are largely to be retained so impacts are likely to be minimal if the mitigation measures contained in paragraph 6 of the bat survey report are followed including retaining hedgerows and a sensitive lighting strategy.

The overall suitability for reptiles on site is low being predominantly short close grazed grassland, there is a low potential for reptiles to be present in the adjacent habitat along the boundaries, therefore the report (paragraph 6) details appropriate mitigation measures including precautionary vegetation clearance measures.

The site is likely to support a range of common nesting birds within the hedgerows and surrounding trees, these habitats are due to be retained so possibility of impact is low. Mitigation measures are given in section 6 should works be required in the vicinity of these habitats including appropriate timing.

The stream has the possibility to be used by Otters and there are records of this species in the locality. However the indicative site layout shows that the stream and surrounding vegetation will be retained and buffered from the development with public open space (POS), therefore the potential impact on Otters is thought to be low.

The impact of the proposals on Great Crested Newt (GCN) has been assessed, with five waterbodies located within 500m none of which were within 250m of the site with some barriers to dispersal, the habitat on site has small areas of suitable habitat for commuting/foraging GCN along the hedgerows but on the whole the grassland is most likely unsuitable.

#### Habitats and Net Gain in Biodiversity:

The proposals will result in the loss of grassland which has been assessed as being of low ecological value. In line with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the development should seek to achieve net gain in biodiversity, provision should therefore be given in the proposals for areas of grassland to be retained and enhanced to ensure a net gain is achieved. Section 7 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal indicates some measures that could provide enhancements to achieve a net gain in biodiversity, these include;

- Installation of bat boxes or bat bricks on buildings and trees to be retained around the Site. This should include the installation of two bat boxes on to hybrid black poplar trees retained in the south-west corner of the Site.
- Tree and shrub planting

This is not likely to be sufficient to offset the loss of the grassland, I would therefore recommend that within the site for example the public open space is retained as grassland and enhanced to create a species rich wildflower meadow that is managed for wildlife in the future. The proposed SUDs basin could also be designed so it has more potential to be of benefit for wildlife for example by having shallow sloping sides and allowing native wetland vegetation to establish for the benefit of amphibians and other wetland species. New native tree and shrub planting could be provided on the boundaries of the site and the current hedgerows enhanced with supplementary plants and favourable management for wildlife in the future. Further details of the enhancements to ensure net gain is achieved on site should be submitted at the reserved matters stage.

Monitoring and management of biodiversity enhancements should be detailed in a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) which I recommend is attached as a condition should planning permission be granted. The LEMP should ideally accompany any future reserved matters applications.

#### Summary

The outlined mitigation for protected species proposed within section 6 of both reports is appropriate. If these mitigation measures are carried out fully and successfully then the development proposals are not thought to have a significant impact on protected species or habitats.

If permission is granted for this development, in order to ensure impacts are minimised then the mitigation and compensation measures included section 6 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and the Bat Survey Report should be included in a suitably worded condition.

For the reasons above I would recommend the inclusion of the following or similarly worded conditions should permission be granted for this application;

11.2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations, mitigation strategy and enhancements set out in section 6 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) dated 18<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and Bat Survey Report dated 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020 by deltasimons unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

*Reason: To protect habitats and/or species of importance to nature conservation from significant harm in accordance with the Government's aim to achieve sustainable development as set out in Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

11.8 No external lighting shall be installed within the public open space, ecology mitigation and biodiversity enhancement areas.

*Reason: To ensure that the development does not cause harm to any protected species or their habitats in accordance with Policy BN2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.*

11.16 If the development hereby approved does not commence by 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022. A revised ecology survey report including bat, reptile, great crested newts, badger and breeding bird survey shall be undertaken prior to the commencement of the development to establish changes in the presence, abundance and impact on protected species. The survey results, together with any necessary changes to the mitigation plan or method statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: To ensure that the development does not cause harm to any protected species or their habitats in accordance with Policy BN2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. This information is required prior to commencement of the development as it is fundamental to the acceptability of the scheme.*

11.17 A method statement for enhancing biodiversity shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the development commencing. Thereafter, the biodiversity enhancement measures approved shall be carried out prior to occupation and retained in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: To protect habitats of importance to biodiversity conservation from any loss or damage in accordance Policy BN2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Government guidance contained within Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

11.19 Prior to commencement of the development hereby approved, a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the LEMP shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: To protect habitats of importance to biodiversity conservation from any loss or damage in accordance with Policy BN2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Government guidance contained within Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

11.21 No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CEMP: Biodiversity shall include as a minimum:

- a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities;
- b) Identification of 'Biodiversity Protection Zones';
- c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements);
- d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features;
- e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works;
- f) Responsible persons and lines of communication;
- g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person;
- h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs

*The approved CEMP: Biodiversity shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

*Reason: To protect habitats of importance to biodiversity conservation from any loss or damage in accordance with Policy BN2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Government guidance contained within Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This information is required prior to commencement of the development as it is fundamental to the acceptability of the scheme.*

*11.23 All species used in the planting proposals associated with the development shall be native species of UK provenance.*

*Reason: To conserve and enhance biodiversity and prevent the spread of non-native species in accordance with Policy BN2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Government guidance contained within Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework*