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Your Ref: /

2nd September 2021

ECOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS – GREAT BARFORD

Collington Winter Environmental Ltd have been instructed by WSP to produce a Technical Note regarding Ecological Considerations at the site at Land off High Street, Great Barford. This Technical Note includes a desk study assessment of any potential ecological constraints as well as opportunities for ecological enhancements and benefits to local wildlife.

The author of this report is [REDACTED] MEnvSc, CEnv, Director and Principal Ecologist at Collington Winter Environmental Ltd. [REDACTED] is highly experienced managing schemes and has produced many ecological reports to inform planning permission, as well as supporting sites through promotion to relevant Local Plans across the country.

SITE CONTEXT

The Site is located within the rural village of Great Barford in Bedfordshire. The site is situated to the south of High Street and is surrounded to the west and south by other agricultural fields, which from aerial photography, appear to be used for cereal crops.

Habitats anticipated to be of high importance within the local landscape include Breeding Willington Lake, located approximately 1.2 km south of the site which comprises a large waterbody with broadleaved woodland and grassland habitats. In addition, the River Great Ouse runs from the south to the south east of the site, approximately 350 m east of the site at its closest position. The river forms a significant tree lined linear corridor within the local landscape which is anticipated to act as an important commuting feature for a range of local species including birds, bats, terrestrial mammals, water vole and otter.

PROPOSALS

The proposals comprise the construction of four new residential dwellings to the west of the site as well as a new access road from High Street. The majority of the site to the east is to remain undeveloped and retained as open space, which provides significant opportunities for landscaping and ecological enhancements by way of the creation

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of a wildflower meadow. Other habitats which could be included within the open space include tree planting and allowing small pockets of scrub to develop to provide structure and further terrestrial habitats for wildlife.

DESIGNATED SITES

The site is not located within the Impact Risk Zone for any statutory designated sites, as identified on Magic.gov.uk. No Local Nature Reserves (LNR's) were identified within 1 km of the site.

NOTABLE SPECIES

A review of aerial photography, local knowledge and review of Magic.gov.uk has been undertaken to establish an understanding of any protected and notable species which could be present within the Site.

Breeding Birds

From aerial photography, the site appears to comprise a grassland field used for agriculture, with a small number of scattered trees around the boundaries and a hedgerow defining the western boundary. These features are anticipated to provide value for a range of passerine species for nesting and foraging. It is unknown the management practices of the field, and therefore unknown if ground nesting birds could use the field.

Based on the site proposals, only a small area of the existing grassland will be lost to the construction of the new dwellings, with the remainder being retained and enhanced into wildflower meadow. The new meadow would create new opportunities for ground nesting birds.

It is not anticipated the scattered trees or hedgerow would require removal for the development to proceed, and therefore no loss in nesting habitat would be required. Additional tree planting and installation of bird boxes could be provided to create additional resources for birds.

Bats

The site, comprising of a managed grassland field associated with agriculture, is anticipated to have limited value for foraging bats. However, the mature hedgerow to the south could act as a commuting feature for the species. The proposals are not anticipated to impact the hedgerow to the western boundary. The provision of a large area of wildflower area to the east post development will enhance the site for foraging bats, increasing invertebrate prey numbers within the site which would be a benefit to local bat populations.

Additionally, bat boxes could be installed within the site post development to enhance the site for roosting bats.

Amphibians

No great crested newt Mitigation Licences from Natural England are shown on Magic.gov.uk (accessed 02/09/2021) within 1 km of the site. A single waterbody is located within or within 250 m of the site, based on aerial photography and OS mapping.

The waterbody is located in the northwestern corner of the site, under a small group of trees. It is unknown if the waterbody remains present, holds water, or is suitable for great crested newts, and further survey work would be undertaken as part of a planning application. A series of wet ditches are shown on OS mapping to the west, northwest and southwest of the site and it is unknown if these show any suitability for the species, however the general consensus is that great crested newts rarely use wet ditches for breeding, especially if the water is flowing.

The development proposals involve only the development on the land to the west of the site, meaning that if present, significant open space would be available to create new habitats for amphibians which could include the presence of a wildlife pond within the wildflower meadow. The wildflower meadow itself will provide new terrestrial resources for amphibians within the local area.

It is my opinion that, in the case great crested newts are found to be present within the waterbody, sufficient space is present within the site which could be used for mitigation. It is not thought that the proposed development would have an adverse impact on the local population of great crested newts and could provide a positive enhancement for local amphibians by way of additional terrestrial resources.

Water Vole and Otter

No habitats suitable for water vole or otter are present within the site, however a network of ditches is present to the west of the site. It is unknown if these ditches have the potential to support water vole, however the species are known to be prevalent in the Bedford area.

The River Great Ouse located approximately 320 m south of the site at its closest extent is anticipated to have value for otter, and act as a commuting feature for the species. The wet ditches are connected to the river and therefore otter could commute towards the site, however there would be negligible motivation for the species to commute towards the residential village with no additional habitat resources available.

Badgers

The local area is assessed as highly suitable for badger, and the species are anticipated to be present locally. The small scale sensitive development on the site is not likely to cause any significant negative impact on local badger populations. The provision of wildflower meadow will enhance the site for the species post development. If any badger setts are located within the site, sufficient space is available to adequately mitigate.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT

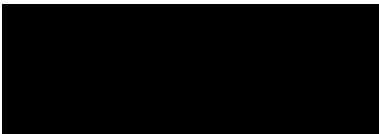
The site proposals have been sensitively created with ecology and nature conservation at the forefront of design. The site is proposed for incredibly low-density residential housing, with the majority of the site retained as open space designated as wildflower meadow which will create new opportunities for wildlife. It is anticipated that the site will be able to meet emerging policy for Biodiversity Net Gain and be able to provide greater than 10% net gain.

Additional enhancements within the site could include the installation of bird and bat boxes and hibernacula. Sensitive footpaths could be provided within the meadow area to ensure trampling of the grassland does not take place and protect the habitat. Information posters could be displayed regarding the value of the meadow to encourage the public to protect the feature.

CONCLUSION

Based on the desk-based assessment of the site, it is not anticipated that the proposed development of the site would have any significant negative impact on local wildlife. The proposals have significant opportunities for ecological enhancements by the provision of the large area of wildflower meadow and are anticipated to provide a long term benefit for breeding birds, bats and common amphibians. In the instance great crested newts are found to be present within the site, sufficient space is available to appropriately mitigate for the species. It is my opinion that development could provide an ecologically sensitive scheme with genuine value for local wildlife. At the planning application stage, further information would be provided in the form of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Habitat Creation and Management Plan as well as a Biodiversity Net Gain calculation using the DEFRA 3.0 metric.

Yours sincerely



Director // Principal Ecologist

For and on behalf of Collington Winter Environmental Ltd

