



ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

TO: *Hannah Gunner*

FROM: *Hannah Simmons*

DATE: *28 March 2024*

SUBJECT: *MC/23/0187 / Land at East Hill, Chatham, ME5 7NN*

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 if sufficient/appropriate ecological information has been provided.

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.

We have reviewed the ecological information submitted in support of this outline application and advise that additional information is required prior to determination of the planning application.

Further Information required

We have compared the site plan submitted as this reserved matters application with the indicative site plan submitted as part of the original application and we are satisfied the plans have not changed significantly, and the proposed greenspaces and landscaping are very similar.

As part of the original application the ecological surveys confirmed that the following species and habitats were present/likely to be present on site.

- Chalk Grassland;
- Dormice;
- Designated Site;
- Skylarks
- Reptiles;
- Bats;
- Badgers;
- Farmland birds

A mixture of on and off-site mitigation was proposed for these species and habitats.

The detailed ecological mitigation strategy has not been submitted as part of this application. We note that the Ecological Response Note states that a site-wide ecological management strategy, Construction Environmental Management Plan for Biodiversity (CEMP: Biodiversity) and Ecological Mitigation Strategy (EMS) will be submitted as part of conditions 18, 24 and 25.

We advise that as part of this application an overview of the mitigation is provided to demonstrate that the species mitigation required can be implemented within the proposed layout.

Current site management

Other than an updated walkover/habitat survey in November 2022, the badger monitoring in December 2022 and the October 2023 dormice nest tube check, no additional surveys have been carried out since the original surveys conducted as part of the previous application MC/19/0765. The Ecological Response Note states that the site has been continued to be regularly managed as intensively managed arable fields. Providing that the condition of the site has not changed, we are satisfied that the bat activity survey, great crested newts survey, reptile survey and breeding bird survey (including skylark) do not need to be updated. We note that the update walkover does not appear to be submitted with this or any of the previous outline applications and we have not been able to review this. We recommend that the updated walkover and current pictures of the site are provided as part of this application.

Other Ecological Conditions

The Ecological Response Note states that issues pertaining to the impact of lighting to the adjacent sensitive habitats will be addressed as part of Condition 46. We will review these documents once they have been submitted for the discharge of the condition to ensure that appropriate measures to minimise impacts have been included. We are satisfied that they do not need to be submitted as part of this current application.

Also, a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment is yet to be submitted as part of condition 26. We are satisfied that the assessment does not need to be submitted as part of this current application but advise that consideration is given to how the design of the site, with particular interest in the green and open spaces, can achieve the required 20% net gain as part of the condition requirements. We advise that any BNG proposed must be achievable when considering how the site will be used by residents. The BNG Assessment must be in line with the landscaping plans, or the landscaping plans altered to agree with the findings of the BNG Assessment once completed.

The Ecological Response Note states that a Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Management Plan (LEMMP) is yet to be submitted as part of condition 45. We are satisfied that they do not need to be submitted as part of this current application but advise that the LEMMP must be informed by the detailed mitigation strategy (Conditions 24 & 25) to ensure that the management proposed is appropriate.

The species mixes to be used within the Species rich grass with 1m mown strip to Edges and Proposed damp tolerant wildflower grass have not been provided. We advise that a list of native species to be used in these areas is included in in the LEMMP. Also, we note

that establishment methods of the proposed vegetation have not been submitted. We advise that details of this are included in the LEMMP to ensure that the habitats establish successfully.

Ancient Woodland

The 15m buffer between the ancient woodland and proposed development has been clarified in the site plans and detailed planting plans. We are satisfied that the buffer mix is all native and suitable for the 15m buffer between the development and ancient woodland. The LEMMP must demonstrate it will be established and managed appropriately.

Landscaping

The planting schedule has been updated but other than the buffer, woodland, and marginal mix, it appears that the majority of the species are non-native. However, these non-natives are mostly located within the developed areas of the proposal, including as part of front lawns or landscaping along roadsides, plus the majority have a pollinator value that will benefit our native pollinators. Therefore, we are satisfied that the species suggested on the planting schedule are suitable for the site.

A Landscape Management Plan has been submitted. We are satisfied that the methods of managing the proposed vegetation and habitats are suitable for the site. We advise that the management requirements within the LEMMP and the Landscape Management plan must not conflict and there may be a need for the Landscape Management Plan to be updated following the submission of the ecological mitigation strategy.

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

Hannah Simmons
Biodiversity Officer

This response was submitted following consideration of the following documents:

Ecological Response. Ecology Partnership. 29 February 2024

Landscape Management Plan. Allen Pyke. 1 March 2024