

Agar Richard (CEX)

From: Johnson Michael (DEL-Planning)
Sent: 12 June 2020 11:05
To: dcscan@sheffield.gov.uk
Subject: FW: 17/04673/OUT - Land at Hollin Busk - ecology comments

Importance: High

Please scan as Ecology Officer comment to 17/04673/OUT (consultee).

Michael Johnson
Service Manager
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From: Smith Christopher
Sent: 05 June 2020 12:06 PM
To: Hope Dinah; Johnson Michael (DEL-Planning)
Cc: Westfold Julie; Nowacki Martin
Subject: 17/04673/OUT - Land at Hollin Busk - ecology comments

Hi Dinah and Michael,

Julie and I have reviewed the updated ecology documentation submitted in support of 17/04673/OUT and the queries raised in Michaels email dated 3rd June 2020.

Updated 2020 Ecology Survey – comments

The Updated Phase 1 Habitat Survey is somewhat limited in its usefulness, comprising two sections, the first of which is the updated field survey; the second is a review of previous ecological submissions. It brings virtually no new information to the table.

The updated field survey has been carried out at a sub-optimal time of year (January 2020). This is a poor month for carrying out any kind of ecological survey and many botanical species, as well as faunal species (invertebrates, birds and mammals) are likely to have been missed. An update to a phase 1 survey should ideally be carried out during the optimal survey months of April – September. Furthermore, the original surveys were carried out May – June 2016. We generally advise that surveys have a ‘shelf-life’ of three years; therefore the original survey is also out of date.

Whilst we still accept that the site is still predominantly low-value poor semi-improved grassland and is 'largely unchanged', our confidence in the January 2020 update is limited. If this application is still progressing in 12 months time we feel that it would be acceptable to request a further updated ecology report and that this should be carried out within the optimal survey period.

Our main concern at this point remains:

- Negative effects to the Fox Glen LWS. The development almost severs the link between the woodland and wider landscape and we still have reservations about connectivity and the proposed buffer and ecotone. Little assessment of any potential effects on the Local Wildlife Site have been carried out.

Points raised in Michael Johnson's email dated 03/06/2020.

- a) *P38 identifies an outstanding ecology objection which I assume was removed hence us trying to get the application to an earlier committee meeting for approval?*

The objection relating to bats no longer stands. In our Ecology Unit comments of 20/12/2018 our view was that survey methods were acceptable. With regard to the updated Phase 1 Habitat Survey (January 2020); the report states that the roost potential (for the single ash tree) has not increased or decreased. In the original Ecological Appraisal this tree was assessed as having 'medium' potential. As the updated survey states that this tree is to be retained and buffered and the potential roost will not be affected, no further bat surveys will be required.

- b) *P56 they ask what we are doing about biodiversity net gain, which I understand is not an actual requirement at the moment? Have we concluded what the overall biodiversity impact would be? Can net gain/or similar be conditioned?*

No, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is not a requirement. It is part of the NPPF and considered good practice and the direction of travel seems to be that Government will require BNG to be mandatory in the not too distant future. This would probably be set out in our emerging Local Plan. Many Local Authorities are now trialling 'biodiversity metrics' as a means of securing compensatory habitat to achieve 'net gain'. The Ecology Unit (working with other LAs) are just starting to use BNG metric calculators. With regard to this application, no quantified assessment of BNG has yet been carried out, we have been guided by the consultant ecologists assessment that the habitats present (poor semi-improved grassland, single hedgerow, areas of scrub, tree and tall ruderals) are of 'low ecological value'. Protected species comprise the 'potential' bat roost and the breeding bird assemblage has been identified as having 'local level value'. Whilst we are not currently in a position to condition net gain; we would continue to work with the applicant and their ecologists on the mitigation and compensatory habitats which would be secured by condition.

- c) *Page 59 also picks up the apparent outstanding ecology objection, but also that we do not have an ecology comment for the updated survey work done in 2020. I recall you asked for the walkover survey at that time.*

The outstanding objection from the original ecology representation related to bat survey methodology. Following further review from our bat licensed ecologist, we stated in our submission of 20/12/2018 that the survey methods were acceptable. Comment on the updated 2020 survey work is provided above.

- d) *The updated ecology survey has attracted comments from residents we need to make sure they are addressed and Dinah will look into this with you.*

Updated ecology survey comments, see above.

e) I assume our position is as it was earlier in the year that the updated walkover survey is sufficient to ensure all ecology work is up to date?

Yes, the ecology work is up to date, but the survey submitted has been carried out at a sub-optimal time of year (January 2020). This is a poor month for carrying out any kind of ecological survey and many botanical species, as well as faunal species (invertebrates, birds and mammals) are likely to have been missed. We have to be guided by the ecologists professional judgement that there have been no significant changes to the site since the earlier surveys. We would have preferred the update walkover survey to have been carried out during optimal survey months (April – September). However, as discussed above, we accept the assessment that the site is 'largely unchanged' and still predominantly low-value poor semi-improved grassland, with a small area of scrub/ tall ruderal and hedgerow.

I hope these comments are helpful,

Regards,

Chris

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I work part-time till 2:30, normally on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday