



Gladman Developments Ltd

Pear Tree Lane, Euxton

**Response to Ms Susan Fox on matters in relation to ecology
prepared by Dr Suzanne Mansfield**

25th June 2020

FPCR Environment and Design Ltd

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This note has been prepared in response to an email (dated 18.06.20 sent by the Planning Inspectorate to Gladman) from Ms Susan Fox a resident of 33 Dale Avenue Longton PR4 5YJ who has registered to speak at this planning inquiry. I respond to matters that she has specifically raised (fourth points of her email) in relation to ecology and biodiversity.
- 1.2 Ms Fox attended by telephone on Tuesday morning (9.30am onwards- extended Ecology Questions and Answers Session). Her concerns echo her submitted representation. Questions raised by Ms Fox during the question and answer session also reflected earlier submitted concerns.
- 1.3 Matters raised by Ms Fox cover a number of topics some of which were dealt with on the first day of the inquiry (Monday 22nd June 2.00pm onwards Ecology Questions and Answer Session with Mrs Susan Shannon representing a local group. Matters in relation to Survey validity and Biodiversity Net Gain have been discussed and not included here in detail instead a summary note has been provided to the Inspector (Euxton Ecology Note for Inspector 25.06.20). The inspector also brought this to Ms Fox's attention.
- 1.4 The relevant extracts from Ms Fox's email are included below for ease of reference:

“the ecological report is comprehensive, however it is out of date with analyses of Great Crested Newts from 2013 and 2015 and Bats from 2014, so the applicant is legally required to repeat all ecological surveys in order to obtain up-to-date information. Hedgerows and trees have been identified for the actual presence of various types of Bat species and Birds. There was no mention of other Wildlife species such as Hedgehogs, numbers of which have declined dramatically in recent decades because of habitat loss as a result of developments on Greenfield sites, such as the one proposed.

There are no specific measures mentioned in the ecological report that would mitigate for the inevitable loss of existing species that would ensue during the development.

These include avenues of green corridors and trees through the built environment; Bat boxes and House Martin cups on houses; Amphibian friendly curbing; Swift boxes built into homes; Hedgehog highways Cut under fences; Fruit trees planted in gardens; Extensive native hedging; Cycle routes and footpaths through the green spaces; Wildflower verges and permeable paving. In a true nature friendly development, there would be 60% green space, excluding gardens.

I note that some of the original wildlife features such as Hedgerows and Ponds will be retained, And as far as the latter are concerned, it is illegal to fill in ponds without firstly ascertaining the number of wildlife species present within by ecological survey. I also note that Bat friendly lighting will be used as the way of illuminating parts of the proposed development.

Shallow channels or Swales are designed to hold rainwater and when planted with native vegetation, they are ideal for wildlife. This is the first Element in a Sustainable drainage system.

The National planning Policy framework's definition of sustainable development is a combination in equal measure of economic, environmental and social factors and there has to be 'net gain for nature' after the development is completed.

There is already great pressure on the UK's beleaguered Wildlife, thus the mitigating features as described above which could easily be incorporated into the proposed development, would ensure that existing wildlife species continue to thrive and be protected for the long term.

The quality of life for people is enhanced by close proximity to the natural environment. Action to increase housing supply can work in harmony with conservation efforts to protect natural habitats.

The over-intensive nature of the number of dwellings proposed would give the development the appearance of a 'concrete jungle' so to speak. Moreover it will not achieve 'net gain for Nature' according to the guidance set out in the NPPF”.

2.0 RESPONSE

Comments in Relation to Surveys of Other Fauna (relevant sections of Ms Fox’s email shown in bold italics for ease of reference for which a response has been given)

“the ecological report is comprehensive, however it is out of date with analyses of Great Crested Newts from 2013 and 2015 and Bats from 2014, so the applicant is legally required to repeat all ecological surveys in order to obtain up-to-date information. Hedgerows and trees have been identified for the actual presence of various types of Bat species and Birds. There was no mention of other Wildlife species such as Hedgehogs, numbers of which have declined dramatically in recent decades because of habitat loss as a result of developments on Greenfield sites, such as the one proposed”

2.1 For a response to the bat and GCN survey aspects of this question please refer to the submitted Euxton Ecology Note for Inspector. The site has been subject to a comprehensive ecological assessment (which included consideration of the potential for a wide range of local and nationally significant fauna) and an Ecological Appraisal Rev C (CD 1.10) supports this application. This assessment has been reviewed in detail by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) acting on behalf of CBC and commented on during the application process (Committee Report, CD5.1 Paragraphs 51-69).

2.2 In respect of the surveys of other faunal groups including hedgehogs. Under Field Survey-Fauna, Section 2.9 & 2.10 of the Ecological Appraisal Rev C (CD 1.10) sets out the approach for faunal surveys as follows:

Section 2.9 During the Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey, observations, identification, and signs of any species protected under the following list of Acts, Regulations or initiatives were noted:

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981;*
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992;*
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);*
- The NERC Act 2006 – S41 species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity;*
- Lancashire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Species.*

Section 2.10. Given the nature of habitats within and surrounding the study area, particular consideration was given to the potential presence of bats, badgers, and amphibians, for which further specific protected species surveys have previously been completed.

- 2.3 Based on records returned/obtained following a desk top review as part of the Ecology Assessment (including from Lancashire Environmental Records Network LERN see para 2.4 below) and our understanding of the site following earlier surveys particular attention was given to specific key groups of protected fauna as listed. Nevertheless, as Section 2.9 of the Ecological Appraisal indicates Species protected under various Acts. Regulations and initiatives (and as listed in 2.5 above) are considered as part of the Extended Phase 1 Survey that was conducted for the site. Hedgehogs as UKLBAP species (also highlighted by Chris Young QC to Ms Fox on the mornings Inquiry session on Tuesday 23 June, who agreed that they were recognised by certain initiatives as a result of national declines. It should be noted that these declines are not attributable to anyone single factor as suggested by Ms Fox).
- 2.4 Section 3.8 of the Ecology Appraisal Rev C CD 1.10 (Page.10) confirms that LERN identified records of protected, notable and local BAP species within 1 km (Figure 1 of Eco App Rev C CD 1.10 after Page 24 refers to records returned from LERN). As shown no records were returned for Hedgehog.
- 2.5 Even if not observed as part of site surveys through direct observations and from field signs (as we can confirm was the case) this species and others would be considered as part of recommendations for broader habitat creation as part of Green Infrastructure proposals and mitigation given that they are likely to occur locally (being a species often found in gardens, hedges and woodland edge, and field margins).
- 2.6 Section 4.2 of the Ecological appraisal Rev C states that through good design and appropriate landscaping and habitat creation it is considered that biodiversity could be easily enhanced in association with the proposals given the limited habitats present currently. GMEU agree that measures such as details of landscape proposals to mitigate and off-set any residual harm. And a comprehensive Landscape Creation and Management Plan (*considering the requirements of local fauna such as hedgehogs, reptiles and birds in addition to bats and great crested newts- my emphasis*) are capable of being conditioned.

Mitigation proposals and site-specific measures

“There are no specific measures mentioned in the ecological report that would mitigate for the inevitable loss of existing species that would ensue during the development.

These include avenues of green corridors and trees through the built environment; Bat boxes and House Martin cups on houses; Amphibian friendly curbing; Swift boxes built into homes; Hedgehog highways Cut under fences; Fruit trees planted in gardens; Extensive native hedging; Cycle routes and footpaths through the green spaces; Wildflower verges and permeable paving. In a true nature friendly development, there would be 60% green space, excluding gardens These include avenues of green corridors and trees through the built environment; Bat boxes and House Martin cups on houses; Amphibian friendly curbing; Swift boxes built into homes; Hedgehog highways Cut under fences; Fruit trees planted in gardens; Extensive native hedging; Cycle routes and footpaths through the green spaces; Wildflower verges and permeable paving. In a true nature friendly development, there would be 60% green space, excluding gardens.

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Shallow channels or Swales are designed to hold rainwater and when planted with native vegetation, they are ideal for wildlife. This is the first Element in a Sustainable drainage system.”

“There is already great pressure on the UK's beleaguered Wildlife, thus the mitigating features as described above which could easily be incorporated into the proposed development, would ensure that existing wildlife species continue to thrive and be protected for the long term.

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- 2.7 Recommendations in mitigation are set out in Section 4.0 of the Ecology Appraisal Rev C (CD 1.10). Sections 4.1-5.13 include recommendations on habitats, protected fauna including bats and GCN, breeding birds, habitat creation and management. It should also be noted that GMEU has agreed that the application site is dominated by relatively species-poor improved agricultural grassland that is not of substantive ecological value, and although there are habitats on the site and very close to the site that have local value for wildlife, including hedgerows, trees, woodland and wetlands (stream course) (SoCG Page 3 Para. 2.6), GMEU agreed that these habitats are capable of being retained and/or recreated as part of the scheme (SoCG Page 3, Para 2.7)
- 2.8 It is also agreed that undertakings have been given in the application documentation, including in the DAS and Framework Plans, that the important habitats found on the site will be retained and protected (SoCG Para.2.7). Furthermore, it is agreed that new landscape proposals would help to mitigate and off-set any residual harm. A comprehensive Landscape Creation and Management Plan for the site can be prepared and secured by condition of any approval that may be granted to this outline application (SoCG Page 3, Para 2.8).
- 2.9 The measures listed by Ms Fox would all be considered as part of routine detailed design at the reserve matter stage by agreement by the LPA and its ecological advisors (this would include siting of bat friendly lighting in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines), nevertheless recommendations are included in Section 4.0 of the Eco App Report Rev C (CD1.10 Page 18-23) We also agree (as Ms Fox also notes) that mitigation measures as listed can be readily incorporated into the scheme design, moreover these make up measures that would be a part of an agreed Landscape Creation and Management Plan. The Inspector also raised this with Ms Fox on Tuesday 22nd June. She confirmed that she had read the Ecology Appraisal Report Rev C (CD1.10) and following further discussion with the Inspector highlighting where in the document measures in mitigation were addressed appeared to acknowledge this.

Comments in relation to Quantum of Open space/GI provision and Net Gain

“The National planning Policy framework's definition of sustainable development is a combination in equal measure of economic, environmental and social factors and there has to be 'net gain for nature' after the development is completed.”

The over-intensive nature of the number of dwellings proposed would give the development the appearance of a 'concrete jungle' so to speak. Moreover it will not achieve 'net gain for Nature' according to the guidance set out in the NPPF”.

2.10 It should be noted that the scheme offers a significant area of open-space/green infrastructure the quantum of which has not been objected to by GMEU or CBC in consideration of the proposals and the potential for significant ecological enhancements including opportunities for Biodiversity Net-Gain have been agreed (Ecology SoCG page 3 Sections 2.7 & 2.8).

2.11 The aim of Biodiversity Net Gain has already been discussed and summarised in the Euxton Ecology Notes for the Inspector. The scheme is capable of being able to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain as explained. This has been achieved by retaining the more valuable habitats on site, through new habitat creation, improving connectivity (ecological networks) and long-term management with clear objectives for habitat improvement. As already indicated, this is outlined in the Ecological Appraisal Rev C (CD 1.10). GMEU agree that ecological enhancements can be achieved and secured by condition (Agreed Ecology SoCG Para 3.2).

3.0 FINAL COMMENT

3.1 Whilst concerns have been raised by consultees and third parties these have been considered at the application stage and in consultation with CBC and its ecological advisors. As a result, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit have raised no overall objections to the application on ecological grounds and agree that new landscape proposals (that include the retention of existing, new habitats and linkages and future management) would help to mitigate and offset the residual harm.