



Communities

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ADDRESS: LAND EAST OF KENILWORTH DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

Until we are able to view the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and/or the baseline ecological data of habitats and species from sufficient survey work, we can only provide general comments on the potential impacts of the proposed development and layout at this stage.

Biodiversity Impact

At this early stage, I can recommend that a Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) should be carried out to assess the biodiversity loss on site. This can only be completed once the baseline habitat data has been gathered. Should a significant loss be calculated on site, being contrary to NPPF and ODPM Circular 06/2005, it is recommended to secure assurance through a draft habitat mitigation plan or biodiversity offsetting agreement that would be taken forward through a Section 106.

The most recent BIA version can be provided on request, along with updated guidance on completing the form.

Habitats

It is vitally important habitats of high conservation value, such as, Thickthorn Wood (ancient woodland) and Glasshouse Spinney & Glasshouse Wood Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are retained and protected by sufficient buffer zones. Full consideration should be given to maximising opportunities to enhance and strengthen these areas providing connectivity through Green Infrastructure across the site.

We consider it is important to consider the cumulative impacts from each scheme with regards to the green infrastructure, enhancements / species mitigation measures / habitat creation on sites ensuring the sites link appropriately.

From the Indicative Masterplan I do note that the wooded areas are proposed to be retained. However, I have concerns over the proximity of some of the sites to these areas. A sufficient buffer

should be provided that extends sufficiently past the Root Protection Areas to protect these important habitats. It is also important that these habitats are not subject to public pressure. I would recommend that these areas are fenced off or incorporate a natural buffer that deters the public this to area and the woodland edge.

Natural England are reviewing the standard advice for protection of Ancient woodland and Veteran trees, although in 2017 the recommendation was a minimum 50 metre buffer. Therefore, we generally recommend a 30 metre buffer from works for construction near woodland with tall mature trees, predominantly for health and safety reasons. This would:

- allow the mature trees to increase their canopy and root zone, without endangering the building's stability;
- avoid the risk of damage to any existing hedge and tree roots during construction that could lead to crown die-back;
- minimise the effects of the foundations on the soil drainage that could affect the health of the trees;
- avoid branches falling on to the building during storms.

It should be ensured that natural buffer is retained between development and the woodland edge.

I would strongly recommend that full consideration is given to maximising opportunities for retention & restoration / enhancement or creation of habitats of high conservation value, such as species rich grasslands, woodland (Thickthorn Wood LWS, Glasshouse Spinney and Glasshouse Wood LWS), water bodies, etc.. across the site. It should be noted that the management of these habitats should be considered in order to provide good quality habitat. If this can be achieved it would assist in minimising biodiversity impact. Although it should be noted that good quality habitat would be one not subject to public pressure. Areas proposed for Public Open Space (P.O.S) would not be able to support valuable habitat, such as a fully functioning semi-improved grassland habitat, due to the impact from public pressure.

Species

Protected species surveys should be carried out at the appropriate time of year prior to approval of plans and the results of the surveys should assist in producing the layout plans. For example, the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre hold records of species that, if present, would require appropriate mitigation measures, such as a 30m buffer zone. So it is important that such information is taken into consideration prior to finalising the layout plans. It is strongly recommended that developers and applicants establish all of this information as property/building insurance may be problematic if the foundations of a plot are unstable.

Additionally, schemes such as this can easily include measures/features for notable species such as ground nesting birds, amphibians, reptiles, and hedgehogs, so this is recommended to be considered at this stage with regards to the layout. I would advise that some consideration is given towards

designating an area for wildlife that is essentially fenced off from public pressure and associated pets such as dogs and cats.

Ground nesting birds, such as Skylark, should be taken into consideration if they are recorded on site. A sufficiently sized area would be required to mitigate for loss of ground nesting bird habitat. The area could also be managed in such a way that would make an enhancement for biodiversity. If this is not possible it will be recommended that any such loss is compensated for by a one-off agreed contribution made by the developer to support a scheme to mitigate for skylarks. An existing scheme already in existence within the District could implement this (such as Higher Level Stewardship or known skylark management areas as a strategic approach). Alternatively we are open to other suggestions. The one-off contribution would support the scheme to allow establishment and maintenance of such plots for a period of time. I recommend that such a scheme would be taken forward through a Section 106 or a suitably worded condition should this be deemed more appropriate by the LPA.

In terms of amphibians in general, I recommend the designs of kerbs and gully pots are considered. In general, standard gully pots are not recommended in schemes, although we appreciate this is likely to be unavoidable. We therefore recommend full consideration is given to avoiding these in more sensitive areas where amphibians may be present. Amphibian-friendly wildlife kerbs are recommended to be incorporated along all new roads. Currently these features cause deaths of many amphibians, including Great Crested Newts, every year as they disperse. There are a number of ways in which the impact on amphibians could be reduced on new sites. The installation of amphibian-friendly measures could be easily implemented and the use of ladders to assist amphibians escaping should they become trapped as a last resort.

The hedgehog, a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Species is in great decline. For the species to be successful it is extremely important that the fences used throughout the development incorporate hedgehog friendly fences to facilitate movement. This is one of the main causes of their decline. Further information can be provided if necessary. This is a recommendation that can easily be incorporated into the scheme and will help ensure success of this species and contribute to the national project that is running to help address the decline. This could also be promoted in the developer's / applicants publicity.

Should an EIA be proposed, I am also providing our scoping opinion for the detail we recommend to be included within such a document.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to discuss our comments further.

Kind regards,

Michelle