

Colin Sharpe
Planning
Ribble Valley Borough Council

Email: ecology@lancashire.gov.uk
Your ref: CONECO/3/2013/0161
Our ref: 03/13/0161/ASM/ASP/RS
Date: 5th March 2013

Dear Colin,

Ecological comments

Planning Application No: **3/2013/0161**

Proposals: **Outline application for the erection of 5no. open market dwellings and 6no. social housing dwellings**

Location: **Strawberry Fields**

District: **Ribble Valley**

Thank you for your consultation in respect of the above planning application.

It seems reasonably unlikely that the proposed development would have any significant ecological impacts provided **the following matters are addressed at the reserved matters stage or subject to planning conditions:**

- Vegetation clearance works, development work or other works that may affect nesting birds shall not take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless the absence of nesting birds has been confirmed by further surveys or inspections.
- No works shall commence until a habitat creation/landscaping and management plan has been submitted and approved by Ribble Valley Borough Council in consultation with specialist advisors. The approved plan shall be implemented in full.
- All trees and hedgerows being retained in or adjacent to the application area will be adequately protected during construction, in accordance with existing guidelines (e.g. *BS5837: 2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction-Recommendations*).
- External lighting associated with the development should be directional and designed to avoid excessive light spill and shall not illuminate bat roosting opportunities within the site, the roof or eaves of the nearby buildings or trees and hedgerows in the area. The principles of relevant guidance should be followed (e.g. the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Engineers guidance *Bats and Lighting in the UK, 2009*).

Advisory notes:

- In order to retain habitat connectivity for Species of Principal Importance, such as amphibians and hedgehogs, boundary treatments should not be flush to the ground, or suitably sized gaps should be left at strategic points.

Biodiversity Enhancements:

The NPPF states that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged (Para 118) and that the planning system should enhance the natural and local environment by providing net gain in biodiversity where possible (Para 109).

- The proposed development provides opportunities to create provision for declining species of bird within the buildings and site, including House Sparrow, Swift, and House Martin. Swift and House Martin are species listed as amber on the RSPB/BTO Birds of Conservation Concern and House Sparrow is a Species of Principal Importance. For advice see:
http://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/helpingbirds/roofs/internal_boxes.aspx
<http://actionforswifts.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/nestbox%20design>
<http://swift-conservation.org/>
- The proposed development also provides opportunities to create provision for roosting bats within the buildings and/or by installing bat boxes on suitable trees.

JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY

In determining this application, the requirements of the following legislation, planning policies and guidance should be addressed:

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- The National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 (NPPF)
- Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within The Planning System (DEFRA 01/2005, ODPM 06/2005).
- North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021, Policies EM1 and DP7.
- Environmental Protection / Nature Conservation policies of the Local Plan.

Planning conditions are necessary to ensure compliance with the above legislation, policies and guidance.

2. HABITAT PROTECTION, MANAGEMENT, CREATION AND LANDSCAPING

A hedgerow and an area of woodland are present along the east and west boundaries of the site. Hedgerows consisting predominantly (80% or more) of UK native species are a UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat. DEFRA Circular 01/2005 states that UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats (Habitats of Principal Importance, NERC Act 2006) are capable of being a material consideration in the making of planning decisions. This hedgerow may have some value for nesting birds (Para 2.4.1 & 3.1.3; *Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey &*

Ecological Evaluation, Pennine Ecology, April 2012) and may be of value to other wildlife, such as foraging bats.

Although the submitted plans show the hedgerow along the eastern boundary of the site will be retained, gardens back onto this hedgerow (and the area of woodland) and the development proposals may result in a reduction of their biodiversity value (for example through garden escapes, green waste tipping, gardening of the hedgerow by residents, increased disturbance by people and their pets resulting in reduced functionality (for example reducing value for breeding birds)).

In order to avoid inappropriate management of the hedgerow by residents, the proposed development should be designed with an adequate buffer/barrier between the gardens and hedgerow and enough space to allow the hedgerow to grow naturally.

In addition, to compensate for any impacts it would be appropriate to ensure that the hedgerow is managed as a tall bushy hedgerow for wildlife and for there to be additional planting elsewhere. The submitted plans show new woodland planting to the north of the site. This planting has the potential to compensate for any impacts and indeed has the potential to enhance the biodiversity value of the site. This woodland planting should comprise native species appropriate to the locality. Guidance is given in Lancashire County Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Landscape and Heritage
<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/view.asp?siteid=3654&pageid=11650&e=e>.

Full details of habitat creation/landscaping and management can be subject to planning condition.

3. LIGHTING

Planning decisions should limit the impact of pollution from artificial light on nature conservation (NPPF Para 125). Bats may forage/commute in the area and they may be disturbed and/or discouraged from using their roosts, established flyways or foraging areas if these are subject to the introduction of artificial light. A planning condition is therefore recommended above to minimise the potential impacts of lighting on bats.

The above comments are based on a review of documents submitted with the planning application as well as a review of ecological records, maps and aerial photographs accessible to Lancashire County Council.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Stevens
Ecologist
Lancashire County Council

