

Daniela Ripa  
Planning  
Ribble Valley Borough Council

Email: [ecology@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:ecology@lancashire.gov.uk)  
Your ref: CONEH/3/2014/0764  
Our ref: 03/14/0764/ASM/ASP/RS  
Date: 7<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Dear Daniela,

### **Ecological comments**

Planning Application No: **3/2014/0764**

Proposals: **Development of up to 520 homes including affordable housing and housing for the elderly, relocation of Longridge cricket club to provide a new cricket ground, pavilion, car park and associated facilities, new primary school, vehicular and pedestrian access landscaping and public open space, with all matters reserved except for access.**

Location: **Land East of Chipping Road**  
District: **Ribble Valley Borough Council**

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

The following comments are provided under the terms of the Service Level Agreement (ecology). Please note Lancashire County Council does not support or object to planning applications when providing advice on ecological matters. The comments are intended solely to inform your decision-making, having regard to the requirements of relevant biodiversity legislation, planning policy and guidance.

I am satisfied that sufficient survey work has been carried out to inform determination of this application and that the ecological value of the site and the likely ecological impacts of the proposed development have been accurately identified.

It appears that the proposed development could take place without significant ecological impacts and on the whole the submitted information demonstrates that ecological impacts will be avoided / minimised and that there is the intention and space within the site boundary for unavoidable losses/impacts to be adequately compensated for.

The development also provides an opportunity for the biodiversity value of the site to be enhanced through habitat creation and appropriate management of retained and replaced habitats.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

If Ribble Valley Borough Council is minded to approve the above application or any amended proposals, **the following matters will need to be addressed at the reserved matters/full application stage and/or by planning conditions (or Section 106 agreements):**

- The application will need to first demonstrate avoidance of losses/impacts on existing hedgerows, trees, ditches and ponds and, where unavoidable, impacts/losses will need to be minimised.
  - On the whole, based on the submitted information including the Illustrative Masterplan, this appears to be the intention. However, the submitted information indicates that hedgerow 2 (H2) will be lost, and it appears that retention of this hedgerow (at least in part) is feasible within the proposed development.
  - Breaks/severance of existing hedgerows should be minimised.
  - Impacts/losses of trees with bat roost potential shall be avoided (as appears to be feasible and as appears to be shown on the submitted Materplan).
- The proposals would result in some direct losses of habitats (such as sections of hedgerows (a Habitat of Principal Importance)). In addition the incorporation of existing and replacement habitats into a residential development will likely result in indirect impacts and reduced functionality / value of retained habitats (for example reduced use and suitability of the site for birds due to introduction of people, pets and cars onto the site and risk of impacts on ponds resulting from dogs entering the ponds, feeding of waterfowl, introduction of fish etc.).

The application will need to demonstrate there would be adequate compensation for proposed losses of habitat to ensure the extent and quality of the habitats currently present are maintained at the very minimum.

The applicant will also need to demonstrate that any indirect impacts resulting from the development would be adequately compensated for through increased habitat creation elsewhere on site and improved management of habitats for biodiversity.

Habitat creation/compensation schemes and planting along site boundaries should comprise native species and habitats appropriate to the locality. Appropriate guidance is given on the Lancashire County Council's Ecology webpages:

Woodland: <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/ecology/advice/nnw.asp> (table 2)

Grassland: <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/ecology/advice/wfg.asp>

It may be appropriate to coppice and translocate sections of hedgerow that are to be lost rather than to simply plant new hedgerows.

- In addition the applicant will need to demonstrate that retained and replacement habitats shall be protected from the development and managed to maintain and enhance the biodiversity value, for example:
  - Existing habitat should not be incorporated into residential plots/plot boundaries where future retention and management cannot be guaranteed.
  - The layout should also be designed so that existing habitats, such as hedgerows, have space to grow naturally and to maximise their potential biodiversity value (for example have space to grow as tall, wide bushy hedgerows).

- Sensitive design of the layout such that housing faces onto areas of existing habitats, such as hedgerows, will help ensure future impacts on habitats will be avoided.
  - The Design & Access Statement states that existing ponds will be de-silted and banks re-profiled (para 4.62). It is not clear to me that existing ponds would benefit from such management and such activity may be damaging to some species currently present. Existing ponds should be retained as they are and new ponds created elsewhere. Any proposed management of ponds should be informed by full assessment of their current ecological value and should be shown to be for biodiversity benefit. For advice on management of ponds see:
    - o <http://www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/habitats/pond/pond-clinic/>
    - o *The Pond Book: A Guide to the Management and Creation of Ponds* (Pond Conservation Trust) available on: <http://www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/habitats/pond/pond-book/>
  - It appears that existing ponds are proposed for use as SUDS. Use of existing waterbodies for SUDS is not appropriate. I recommend that additional waterbodies are created for such purposes.
  - The Illustrative Masterplan shows additional planting in proximity to pond 2. This may be detrimental to the biodiversity value of the pond causing additional shading and leaf litter build up. I recommend that any new planting is designed to ensure it does not damage/cause deterioration of existing ponds, e.g. by leaving appropriate buffers around ponds.
  - There is scope to improve the management of existing hedgerows. Retained and replacement hedgerows should be managed to maximise their biodiversity value, for example they should be managed to grow as tall, wide, dense hedgerows and allowed to flower and fruit.
- The scheme layout should be designed to ensure that habitat connectivity to/from existing and newly created habitats through the site and to the wider area is maintained for any species using the site.
    - On the whole the submitted Masterplan appears to show this is achievable. The layout, however, shows a new isolated pond in the centre of a roundabout. This would pose a risk to species attempting to use this waterbody, such as amphibians, and should be removed / moved to somewhere with habitat connectivity to the wider area.
    - Continuous planting along site boundaries should be maximised to compensate for severance of habitat connectivity caused by severance of existing internal hedgerows.
    - In order to retain habitat connectivity for Species of Principal Importance, such as hedgehogs, boundary treatments should be raised from ground level by 0.15 to 0.2 metre or suitably sized gaps should be left at strategic points.
  - The NPPF encourages biodiversity enhancement. Natural England recommends (NE standing advice FAQs section 3.11) that Planning Authorities maximise the opportunities for enhancements associated with all developments. There is scope for the site to be enhanced through appropriate habitat creation to maximise benefit to biodiversity, for example:
    - Providing dense shrub planting and rough grassland in the north area of the site, rather than "lollipop" trees over mown grassland.
    - SUDS should be designed and managed to maximise value for biodiversity. Please see *Sustainable drainage systems-maximising the potential for people and wildlife: A guide for local authorities and developers*, RSPB & WWT. A copy can be found at: [http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/SuDS\\_report\\_final\\_tcm9-338064.pdf](http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/SuDS_report_final_tcm9-338064.pdf)
    - For advice on management of ponds see:

- <http://www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/habitats/pond/pond-clinic/>
  - *The Pond Book: A Guide to the Management and Creation of Ponds* (Pond Conservation Trust) available on:  
<http://www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/habitats/pond/pond-book/>
  - There is also potential to create amphibian hibernacula in suitable places, such as close to ponds and within dense planting in the north of the site.
  - There are opportunities to enhance the re-developed site for declining species of nesting birds through installation of nest boxes in new buildings for House Sparrow, Swift and Startling.
  - Installation of additional bat roosting opportunities within the new buildings and on appropriate mature trees.
- No tree felling, vegetation clearance works, site preparation works, development works or other works that may affect nesting birds shall take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless surveys by a competent ecologist show that nesting birds would not be affected.
  - No external lighting associated with the development shall be installed without the prior approval, in writing, from Ribble Valley Borough Council. The lighting scheme shall be designed to keep lighting to a minimum, shall be directional and designed to avoid excessive light spill. The lighting scheme shall ensure that dark unlit corridors for bats are maintained through site and to wider area, including to/from trees with bat roosting potential and to/from existing ponds. Lighting/light spill onto trees with bat roost potential and existing ponds shall be avoided. 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*).
  - Immediately prior to commencement of works a further precautionary bat survey/inspection of the building (pavilion) and trees to be affected shall be carried out by suitably qualified and experienced individuals. Trees with potential to support roosting bats shall be "soft felled". If the presence of bats/bat roosts is suspected or detected at any point then all works shall cease/works shall not commence until advice has been sought including regarding the need for a Natural England licence.
  - No works shall commence until details of a range of bird boxes to be installed within the re-developed site (to compensate for losses whilst replacement planting matures and to compensate for increased disturbance levels) have been submitted for approval in writing by Ribble Valley Borough Council. The approved details shall be implemented in full.
  - All trees, hedgerows, ponds and ditches 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*).
  - Environment Agency's Pollution Prevention Guidelines (PP5 and PPG6) shall be followed to ensure waterbodies and ditches on site are adequately protected.
  - No site clearance, site preparation or development work shall take place until a fully detailed habitat creation/enhancement and management plan has been submitted and approved in writing by Ribble Valley Borough Council. The scheme will demonstrate adequate compensation for unavoidable losses along with protection, enhancement and appropriate management of retained and replacement habitats. The scheme should

demonstrate that the biodiversity value of the site will be maintained and enhanced. Details shall include ground preparation methods, habitat creation/translocation methods, species mixes, aftercare and long term management. The approved scheme shall be implemented in full.

- Prior to the commencement of works there shall be a repeat survey for the presence of badgers. The report of the survey (together with proposals for mitigation/compensation, if required) shall be submitted to Ribble Valley Borough Council for approval in consultation with specialist advisors. Any necessary and approved measures for the protection of badgers will be implemented in full.

## **LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY**

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

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
  
- 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).
  
- Lancashire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Policies.
- Lancashire County Council Supplementary Planning Guidance on Landscape and Heritage (LCC applications)
- Environmental Protection / Nature Conservation policies of the Local Plan.

The above comments are made without the benefit of a site visit and are based on a review of documents submitted with the planning application and Great Crested Newt surveys submitted with a nearby application (ref: 06/2014/0248), as well as a review of ecological records, maps, aerial photographs and images accessible to Lancashire County Council.

The County Council provides comments with regard to relevant wildlife legislation. The comments do not constitute professional legal advice. There may be circumstances where you may wish to seek professional legal interpretation of any of the relevant wildlife legislation cited.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Stevens  
Ecologist  
Lancashire County Council