

APPEAL Ref: APP/D0121/W/24/3343144

Land at Rectory Farm (North), Yatton

4th December 2024

Our ref: 7942/RF

Note on BNG and Open Space

The use of open spaces as areas for delivering biodiversity net gain are not incompatible but the habitat type within the accessible areas of public open space needs to reflect the recreational activity and the likely consequences that this may have upon habitat condition.

Where open space has been incorporated into the scheme which is accessible by residents, hoggin paths have been created through these areas. These paths are separately recorded within the BNG calculations and so they are appropriately considered.

As set out in the Ecological Impact Assessment (3.6.8), selective mowing is proposed on the fringes of the hoggin paths to create a variety of sward heights within the fields and the ditch margins, where paths exist.

Within the fields (along the western boundary) the intention is to manage the habitats here to achieve an 'other neutral grassland habitat'. Access to these areas, whilst provided via hoggin paths is relatively limited and the management of these fields as tall grasslands (both for BNG and Bat Mitigation) will likely preclude wide access across these fields for recreational purposes. Access is nonetheless available into the areas and the fields can be enjoyed as part of public open space. The stated target condition for these areas is Other Neutral Grassland in Poor Condition, a relatively low target condition, adjusted to reflect the anticipated recreational pressure within these areas. With correct management it remains distinctly possible that a better condition for these grasslands may be achieved but the lower target condition has been used to reflect the uncertainty associated with the recreational pressure impacts within these areas.

Along the ditch margins the ambition is to manage these as tall, tussocky grasslands. The intended diversity within these areas is kept deliberately modest, as grasslands with under 9 species per m².

Whilst paths will pass through these areas the grassland within them will not be accessible or available as an amenity space unless specifically managed as such e.g. trim trail features. The grasslands will principally be managed as tall grassland habitats, to deliver bat mitigation. The mowing of margins of the hoggin paths will maintain a formal presentation to these areas, rather than them appearing wild and unmanaged.

Periodic cutting of all grassland areas will occur, during the late summer and potentially again in the autumn or early spring depending upon regrowth. Tall grasses over the spring and summer, necessary to provide habitats for invertebrate and therefore prey for foraging bats, will likely prevent games of football or the like but these habitats will remain accessible open space, used for walking and enjoying the tranquillity and wildlife within these areas.

It may be necessary where paths run parallel to the ditch network to provide additional protection to these areas for health and safety reasons. The ditches will be deep and steeply sided and therefore adequate

protections to avoid residents falling into them will be necessary. As such fences or hedgerows may need to be incorporated for health and safety purposes in certain areas. These fences may also be important at protecting the 5m margin adjacent to the ditches which is essential to maintain the ditch habitat condition and protect the potential importance of these features for wildlife.

Clearly the recreational areas within the centre of the site, proposed as modified grasslands with patches of wildflower and scrub will be principally maintained for amenity purposes with the wildflower patches provided a visually appealing and locally appropriate feature. The recreational use of the areas has been reflected in the target conditions proposed.

Other areas such as the allotments would also form publicly accessible space but the habitat conditions within these areas reflect the likely use of them by people.

Note on Biddle Street Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI)– existing shadowing.

Currently the ditch along the northern/eastern edge of the strawberry line, which forms part of the SSSI network is subject to fairly substantial overshadowing from trees and other vegetation along the strawberry line. Some efforts to manage this overshadowing appears to have been completed in certain sections of the strawberry line in recent years although at present this work has not extended to the section parallel with the appeal site.

No management of vegetation within the strawberry line land, and therefore beyond the control of the appellant is proposed within the application, although clearly such management would be beneficial for the aquatic plants and invertebrates which area associated with the SSSI.

As noted by NE in their recent consultation response an off-set of a minimum of 5m will be maintained between the new woodland planting on the appeal site and the site boundary which comprises first a fence and hedgerow and then the ditch of the SSSI. This 5m boundary will provide adequate access to enable easy ongoing management of the hedgerow to ensure that excessive shading by this feature does not occur. This the new woodland planting will create a high quality habitat of value to a wide range of species and the introduction of the buffer zone will ensure that this habitat will not cause overshadowing or degradation of the adjacent ditch.

I trust that the above information is clear. Please do not hesitate to contact me if any additional information or clarification on any of the above matters is required.

Kind regards,



Tom Clarkson BSc MSc DIC MCIEEM
Managing Director, Clarkson & Woods Ltd.