



Horsham
District
Council

HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Land To The West of Shoreham Road Small Dole West Sussex
DESCRIPTION:	Outline planning application for up to 45 dwellings (including affordable homes) with all matters reserved apart from access.
REFERENCE:	DC/25/1019
RECOMMENDATION:	More Information / Modification No objection

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

Any outstanding comments can be addressed when submitting the Biodiversity Gain Plan. Comments still to be fully resolved include modified grassland areas for recreation, the watercourse module of the metric, and minor HMMP points.

Many of the comments have been addressed, which is positive. There are still outstanding comments pertaining to provision for protected species (and habitats) through habitat protection measures and enhancements, allocating areas of habitat for informal recreational use as modified grassland, ~~confirmation on loss of Category U trees~~, accounting for installation of a headwall in the metric, and minor points regarding the draft HMMP. ~~It is requested that the points relating to species/habitat protections and category U trees is resolved prior to grant of planning permission. Whilst the other points can be addressed at the discharge of condition stage, it is recommended to resolve all points prior to grant of planning permission to reduce the risk of refusal of the Biodiversity Gain Plan.~~

As it stands, the metric calculation demonstrates that the development will have a ~~18.36%~~ **24.89%** net gain (~~+4.52~~ **+6.22** units) in area habitats and a ~~10.62%~~ **10.12%** net gain (+0.31 units) in watercourses. ~~Further information and modifications are requested with regards to the baseline assessment, post development habitats and design, and the draft HMMP. Some of the requested modifications are likely to alter the above figures.~~

MAIN COMMENTS:

The comments in this response relate solely to the BNG proposal as part of the above application. Note that the concerns highlighted below are not exhaustive. All other ecology matters will be reviewed by Place Services and NatureSpace, where appropriate.

As it stands, the metric calculation demonstrates that the development will have a 18.36% net gain (+4.52 units) in area habitats and a 10.62% net gain (+0.31 units) in watercourses. As the overall net gain is greater than 0.5 units, as per HDC's definition this is considered significant on-site BNG and will therefore require a S106 legal agreement to secure. Monitoring reports will be expected to be submitted to HDC typically in years 1,2,5,10,15,20,25 and 30.

The biodiversity gain condition is only applicable to the outline permission, not the subsequent reserved matters, and as such much of the post-development habitat creation and enhancement will need to be finalised to discharge the condition. As such, my comments below concern both baseline and post-development habitats.

Baseline

Section 2.1 of the BNG report mentions hedgerows, however these are marked as scrub in the metric and there are no entries within the hedgerow module. Please can further clarification be sought on this.

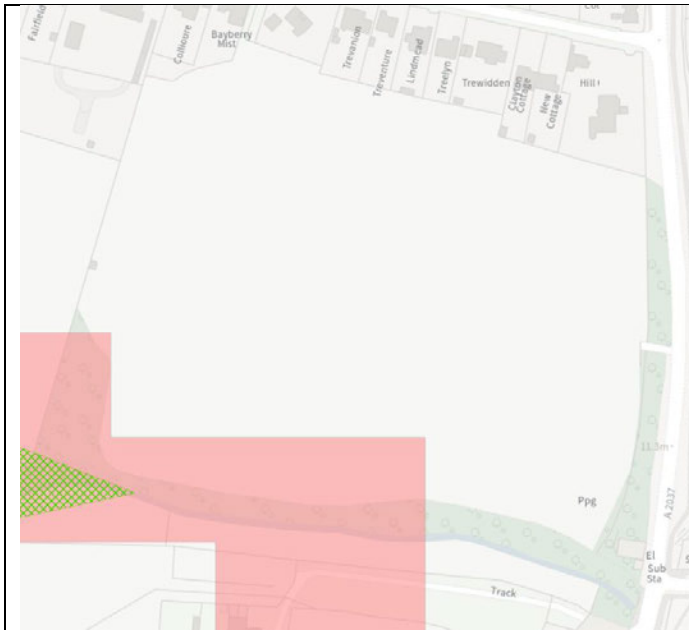
The description of the site has changed, with removal of the word hedgerow. Having visited the site (albeit with restrictions), it is agreed that the classification for much of the boundary vegetation (excluding woodland to the south) better fits scrub, as the vegetation is generally wider than 5m in width and has lost its uniformly managed structure.

The condition assessments for the baseline habitats do not appear to detail the passed/failed criteria. This is required to evidence the concluded condition.

These have been provided. Concern resolved, with thanks.

All habitats within the metric have been inputted as having a low strategic significance (area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy). However, please note that the south of the site comprising the priority woodland and watercourse fall within a very high potential site of the Wilder Horsham District Nature Recovery Network, and therefore as per HDC guidance, all habitats with a biodiversity value greater than zero within the metric should be assigned as having a medium strategic significance (location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy). It is therefore requested that the strategic significance for habitats in this area is amended.

This has been amended. Concern resolved, with thanks.



^Red and green shading above indicate areas that fall within the WHD NRN route.

RCA certification for the RCA assessor does not appear to be visible on Cartographer's public register for qualified surveyors. Please can evidence of certification be requested.

The user has since been added to the Cartographer public register. Concern resolved, with thanks.

Post-development

The large grassland area to the north of the site will also be used as mitigation for on-site receptor for translocated reptiles. It is advised that an increase in scrub pockets or log piles are placed throughout this open area to provide increased shelter for reptiles to reduce predation from introduced cats, and any such details incorporated into the HMMP. Furthermore, low-level post and rail fencing and/or signage could be installed to inform residents of the reptiles in the area.

Does not appear to be addressed.

The priority woodland to the south of the site is currently undisturbed [REDACTED]. As such, it is advised that further measures such as planting of thick thorny scrub species within the buffer area to prevent residential access.

Does not appear to be addressed.

This has been incorporated into the HMMP. Concern resolved, with thanks.

Within the metric, other neutral grassland is proposed to be created and enhanced to poor, moderate and good conditions. It is noted in the user comments, that the other neutral grassland in poor condition will be where the swale route is proposed, however it is not clear of the locations of the moderate and good condition other neutral grassland areas. Please can this be clearly marked on the post-development habitat map and included in the HMMP.

These areas have been mapped, with thanks.

It is also recommended to include an area of modified grassland for recreational activities which is subject to more disturbance, to alleviate any recreational pressure from the other neutral grassland / reptile receptor areas.

Does not appear to be addressed.

The ecologist states that the ONG retention in the north-east of the site is robust enough to withstand increased levels of recreational disturbance. Whilst this is agreed with regards to lighter activities such as dog-walkers across the site, my comments were more in line with thoughts of creating a space for informal kick-about areas, where physical damage would be more evident and generally grassland is proposed managed by a regular mowing regime to clearly delineate these areas. If this method is not pursued, then any informal kick-about areas that arise and result in significant areas of ONG not meeting the criteria, remedial actions will need to be taken in line with the HMMP to rectify this. It is noted that a 200sqm of LAP is located to the west of the site which is already recorded as modified grassland, and this LAP will partially contain play equipment. Therefore, it is possible that any extension of this area to include a larger 'whole' area of modified grassland would satisfy this.

It is noted that a ditch is proposed along the swale that leads to the SuDS/pond, and another ditch (which appears to be isolated) is proposed to the south of the site. Please can further information be provided on the transition between ditch and swale for monitoring purposes, and feasibility of water retention.

Please see below on cross-sections for ditches.

70 trees are proposed to be planted within the metric; however, the indicative site plan illustrates that more are proposed (excluding those within vegetated gardens). Therefore, please can the correct number be confirmed.

The updated BNG report states that 108 new trees will be planted across the site.

In Appendix 2 detailing the positive and negative indicator scores, it appears that there is a change of +3 (resulting in a score of 0) for the eastern module and a change of +4 (score 0) for the western module in indicator E10 Channel bed artificial features severity. There is also a change of +1 (total score 0) for indicator C8 bank face reinforcement extent. Please can further information be provided on the post-development works that result in these changes to indicator scores. It is acknowledged that the change in these scores do not amount to a change in overall condition.

The changes have been amended, whereby there are now no changes apart from a negative (-2) change in bank face reinforcement extent. This is understood to be the installation of a headwall. Concern resolved, with thanks.

As part of the drainage strategy, installation of a headwall in the stream is proposed to link the SuDS/pond to the watercourse. As such, this needs accounting for in the metric as per the metric user guide.

This has not been actioned.

The ecologist confirms that the RCA of the river has accounted for the installation of a headwall, and this does not reduce the overall condition class of the watercourse. This is already agreed – see above. However, the comment is with reference to watercourse encroachment as entered within the metric, which has its own multiplier. Generally, such changes require loss and creation of habitat within the metric. It is noted that page 51 of the user guide mentions that such encroachment '*should be represented through a recorded decrease in baseline condition, length or distinctiveness of natural river, or recorded increase in encroachment*' followed by actions to be taken to reflect this change in the metric. Further external advice is being sought on this point and will be confirmed prior to submission of the Biodiversity Gain Plan.

Given the potential for increased use of fertilizer, herbicide and pesticide in the proposed allotment on site, it is recommended that this is located further north (as demonstrated below with the yellow circles) but with appropriate distance from the scrub boundary.

Other proposed locations of the allotment would also be welcome where deemed suitable. Relocation further north will reduce pollutant run-off into the nearby ditch/swale (both of which are entered as biodiversity serving habitats) which flow into a proposed multifunctional SuDS/ pond for biodiversity. Note the potential addition of nutrients to the soil in other neutral grassland (including from the orchard over time) may also increase the soil fertility and consequently increase the abundance undesirable species, thus affecting condition.



The allotments have been relocated towards the north of the site as suggested. Concern resolved, with thanks. However, it should be noted that Landscape Officer comments request incorporation of the allotments within the main development layout.

There are several category U trees highlighted within tree survey plan. If any of the highlighted trees with a DBH of and above 30cm are to be felled due to a danger to the public as a result of the development, these should be counted within the baseline and recorded as lost. (specifically, trees 3, 16, 41, 52 and 61).

Does not appear to be addressed.

The ecologist has confirmed that all Category U trees on-site are considered safe and do not require felling. Concern resolved, with thanks.

HMMP

It is noted in Section 2.3 that it states '*a monitoring report will be submitted to the council during years 5, 10 and 30.*' This is not appropriate, and as per our guidance on significant on-site BNG, monitoring reports will typically be required in years 1,2,5,10,15,20,25 and 30.

This has been amended, with thanks.

Deer culling is suggested as a management technique to protect whips from browsing. This seems excessive for a residential site and is advised that this should be listed under potential remedial measures as a last resort and only if approved by HDC.

This has been removed, with thanks.

Note that Table 3 states spot treating or hand pulling undesirable weed species, however the preceding section 4.9 states that no herbicides will be used within the grassland areas. Please can the Table 3 wording be amended to reflect the wording in section 4.9.

Amended, with thanks.

The stated nesting bird season period is inconsistent throughout. Section 3.7 states March – September inclusive, however section 5.3 states March – August inclusive. Please can corrections be made to reflect the former nesting bird season period throughout the document.

Note sections 8.3 and 9.2 still states the latter period. This has been changed, concern resolved with thanks.

Species compositions and proportions (where appropriate) should be added for each habitat type. It is recommended that the planting of night flowering and scented plant species as listed under section 4.15 of the Bat Activity Surveys report (The Ecology Partnership, 2023) should be incorporated where appropriate. Likewise for the species listed under Section 4.13 for hedgerow and tree links, and fruit bearing tree suggestions as listed under Section 4.14.

The indicative planting mixes have been provided in the Appendix of the HMMP – with thanks. It is requested that more species from section 4.15 of the Bat Activity Surveys report is included (now section 5.32 in superseded 2025 report). It is noted that many more species are listed in the updated report, which are also not present in the indicative planting mix.

With reference to section 9.2, only dead trees that pose a safety risk to areas of public access (i.e, outside of the woodland area or for the purposes of access for management) should be felled. Standing dead trees are vital for healthy woodlands and therefore should not be removed unless necessary. This is further supported in section 9.4.

Avoid unnecessarily taking existing deadwood from this habitat to achieve condition criteria for other proposed habitats.

Amended, with thanks.

It is noted that a drainage pipe is to be installed in the pond, connecting to the watercourse in the woodland. As such, as per criterion E of the condition assessment, this cannot be passed as the water fluctuation level is controlled by draining to a particular height. As such, without passing criterion E, this pond will not reach moderate condition.

Does not appear to be addressed.

Cross sections of the proposed pond and ditch should be provided and appended to the HMMP.

Cross sections for the attenuation basin, swale and headwall detail has been provided. Further information is expected on the proposed ditches.

Note that the bottom of Table 13 is incorrect, and 6 or 7 criteria passed are required to reach a moderate condition.

Amended, with thanks.

[REDACTED]

ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

If minded to approve:

Informative

Scenario 1 – BNG required.

NAME:

Linsey King
Ecology Officer (Planning)

DEPARTMENT:

Strategic Planning - Specialists

DATE:

17/09/2025

03/12/2025

07/01/2025