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Nicola Pettifer
Horsham District Council
Parkside,
Chart Way,
Horsham,
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

Aspect Ecology Ltd
West Court
Hardwick Business Park
Noral Way
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX16 2AF

T: 01295 279721
E: info@aspect-ecology.com
W: www.aspect-ecology.com

Sent By E-Mail Only

Dear Nicola,

Land To The West of Ashington– Planning application DC/23/0406– Ecology Consultation

Aspect Ecology is advising the applicant with respect to the above application at Ashington, West Sussex. In this regard we have been passed comments raised by Place Services (dated 16 July 2024), which sets out a small number of further ecological considerations that need to be addressed as part of this application. In summary, Place Service has identified that the following further ecological considerations are needed to inform planning;

- Further information required with respect to Dormouse, specifically a consideration of additional impacts; and
- Further information required with respect to roosting bats, specifically a consideration of additional trees proposed for removal.

I am pleased to provide additional information with respect to these queries below;

Consideration of additional impacts with respect to Dormouse

Under the amended proposals, additional vegetation removals are proposed for removal, centred on an area of scrub within the north west of the site, along with a small number of mature trees. These additional vegetation removals have been necessary in order to accommodate a request from the Parish Council for two sports pitches within the proposed development.

In terms of potential impacts on Dormice, any future planning permission will take place under licence from Natural England, which will require and ensure that all safeguards (including timing of works, tools to be used, and ecological supervision to be implemented) are in place. With such safeguards in place, individual Dormice and their nests (if present) will be fully safeguarded, such that impacts of the clearance works on Dormice and their nests will be minimal. In terms of long-term impacts, whilst an area of scrub will be removed under the revised proposals, such removals will not affect the entire area of existing scrub within the north western corner of the site, such that corridor of scrub measuring a minimum width of 20m, will be retained along the north western site boundary, ensuring that connectivity for Dormice (and other species) will be retained throughout this area of the site. As such, the design of the site has ensured that the scrub removal will not have a detrimental effect of the ability of Dormice to move throughout the wider landscape, and as such impacts on Dormouse will be minimal.

Finally, as set out in Aspect Ecology's technical note (dated 06/06/2024), the revised scheme will provide sufficient habitat creation to compensate for the habitat losses on site (with approximately 4,550m² of scrub removed in the north west of the site compensated by approximately 4,780m² of new scrub and tree planting in the south eastern field). Such new habitat provision will be predominantly connected to existing hedgerows or tree lines, such that Dormice can be expected to make use of these new habitats in the future.

As such, impacts on Dormice have been considered and kept to a minimum, with a full compensation planting scheme included within the amended scheme. Therefore, there is confidence that an EPS licence can be acquired post planning, and the long term conservation status of Dormice will be maintained.

Further information required with respect to roosting bats

A small number of additional tree removals are proposed under the revised application. As such, these trees have been subject to a Ground Level Tree Assessment. Trees were assessed for their suitability based on the presence of features such as holes, cracks, splits or loose bark. Suitability for roosting bats was rated based on relevant guidance³ as:

- None;
- Further Assessment Required (FAR);
- Potential Roost Feature present to support individual bats (PRF-I);
- Potential Roost Feature present to support multiple bats, including potential maternity roosts (PRF-M).

Any potential roost features identified were also inspected for any signs indicating possible use by bats, e.g. staining, scratch marks, bat droppings, etc.

Two individual trees were recorded to support potential for roosting bats (as set out below in Table 1).

Table 1: additional trees proposed for removal recorded to support potential for roosting bats

Tree no.	Species	Age (Y/SM /M)	Types of Potential Roosting Features (PRF's) present	No. of PRF-I's ¹	No. of PRF-M's ²
66	Oak	M	Broken limb; dead limbx2; knot hole; ivy cover	3	2
65	Oak	M	Broken limb; limb scar; lifted bark; dead limb.	4	2

As can be seen from the above table, two trees proposed for removal have been recorded to support PRF-Ms. The applicant is aware that further survey work of the above trees is required post-planning. Specially, prior to any tree felling, climbed inspections of the trees will be required across the summer months, and then any trees that are confirmed to support roosting bats will require mitigation to be in place at the time of felling, including licensing.

The above GLTA is sufficient to inform planning, and indeed it is appropriate to proceed with climbed inspections in the immediately prior to felling taking place. This is largely due to the fact that the potential of trees to support roosting bats can rapidly change, for example high winds or a storm can readily create new potential roost features that were not present before, or conversely remove features suitable for bats. Therefore, although update surveys could have been undertaken at the time of the application, it is more appropriate to time such update surveys to be completed nearer the time



of felling, with ideally climbed inspections completed across the summer months leading up to felling. It is understood that Bellway will be instructing Aspect Ecology to complete update survey work next summer such that, pending grant of planning, felling works can commence autumn/winter 2025.

I trust that the above is clear and helpfully addresses the clarifications that have been raised, but any queries at all please do contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Holyoak
Associate
(andrew.holyoak@aspect-ecology.com)