

LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

**LAND AT BRYN LANE,
WREXHAM INDUSTRIAL ESTATE**

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Appendix 1: Indicative Landscape Plan (Drawing 1253_C)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document provides an Ecological and Landscape Management Plan Framework for a development on land at Bryn Lane, Wrexham Industrial Estate, including indicative management prescriptions. It is anticipated that the commitments set out in this framework would be further developed through discussions with the County Borough Ecologist, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and any other interested parties prior to its finalisation.
- 1.2 The background to the site is given in the Supporting Planning Statement which also describes the project in detail. As part of the site development a wide range of technical surveys have been undertaken which have identified key constraints on site. The results of the surveys have informed the design process to ensure that any potential negative effects of the development are reduced.

2. WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The aim of the framework is to increase the biodiversity of the site by maintaining a range of habitats in a favourable condition and to enhance existing habitats on site to increase the site's overall biodiversity interest.

National, Regional and Local Policy

- 2.2 Additional wildlife considerations are offered through *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5: Nature Conservation and Planning*, and through the Wrexham BAP and development plans.
- 2.3 It should also be noted that WCBC's *Local Planning Guidance (LPG) Note 29: Employment Development and Nature Conservation* has been adopted (August 2009).
- 2.4 LPG 29 relates to nature conservation within the Wrexham Industrial Estate within which the site lies.
- 2.5 LPG 29 states that '*careful thought must be given to the design, implementation, operation and maintenance of employment development sites to ensure that protected species are safeguarded. In this way employment development can occur and valued habitats and linkages between them can be protected and enhanced*'. As part of the application submission package for the site, a wide range of technical surveys have been undertaken which have identified key constraints on site. The results of the surveys have therefore informed the design process to ensure that any potential negative effects of each development are reduced. As such, a robust and iterative process was undertaken to ensure a sensitive development with comprehensive and strategic mitigation.
- 2.6 In addition, in accordance with LPG 29 (specifically paragraph 6.8) '*an equivalent area of land must be provided unless it can be demonstrated that a smaller area of better quality would enhance the ecology of the site or the wider area.*' As stated, the proposed landscape strategy of the site has taken into account the need to provide on-site mitigation as shown on the Indicative Landscape Plan (Drawing 1253) contained in Appendix 1. This is discussed in more detail below.

Statutory and Non-Statutory Nature Conservation Designations

- 2.7 The River Dee is located due east of the application site, parts of which are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and forms part of River Dee and Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation. However, both of which are located at a significant distance from the site to have any material impact.
- 2.8 There is one Adopted Wildlife site within 1km, located to the south west of the application area and on the opposite side of Bryn Lane. A further two sites are located between 1km and 2km from the site, both to the south-west of the site, in or on the edge of Wrexham Industrial Estate.

3. EFFECT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 As stated above, a number of technical surveys have identified a number of key constraints on site. Their significance in terms of landscape and ecological value has been assessed and where these have been identified as important, every effort has been made to retain them in all but impractical situations. The key constraints identified include:

- Tree Groups and hedgerows;
- A field pond (supporting Great Crested Newts (GCN) (*Triturus cristatus*));
- Habitats with the potential to support protected species, for example terrestrial habitat used by GCNs;
- Adjacent dense block of woodland located to the south of the site. This woodland and a number of other trees generally focussed on the boundary of the site are protected by TPOs; and
- A vegetated ditch.

3.2 An Ecological Survey (TEP, October 2011) supported the planning application for the site and details the results of the specific species surveys that were undertaken to assess the impact of the project. This was further updated in 2012 to support a Draft Licence Application in respect of GCNs. On the basis of the findings as contained within these reports, a variety of phase 1 habitat types have been identified as being present on site, including:

- Continuous Scrub;
- Scattered Broadleaved Trees;
- Semi-improved Neutral Grassland;
- Marsh/ damp Grassland;
- Standing Water;
- Water-filled Ditch;
- Hedgerows;
- Bare Ground; and
- Hardstanding and Roadways.

- 3.3 As detailed in the Ecological Survey the site is described as consisting of improved grassland, semi-improved grassland, continuous scrub, tall ruderal herbs and hedgerows with trees. The site also contains a pond situated within the centre of Plot 3A, within 10m of a hedgerow. The pond is known to support Great Crested Newts.
- 3.4 The heavily grazed pastures are all bordered by species poor hedgerows, with the addition of an area of broad leaved plantation to the western boundary with semi natural grassland and sections of continuous scrub. Along the southern boundary semi natural woodland borders the site, consisting of mainly English Oak.
- 3.5 A heavily vegetated ditch was found to lie in a southern direction from the south eastern corner of the site. This area of land is associated with the access road linking the proposed development site to the NDL warehousing complex. Scattered scrub was observed alongside the water filled ditch. To the east of the ditch is a wide belt of hawthorn, blackthorn, willow and bramble scrub. Unimproved grasslands occur as a narrow strip of grassland to the east of the site. The channel supports an abundance of emergent plants including bulrush, hard rush, soft rush, lesser water parsnip and some water cress.
- 3.6 The proposals will result in the permanent loss of 9.1 ha (approx) of principally improved grassland, hedgerow lengths and a field pond. The pond has known presence of Great Crested Newts. Some scattered mature trees associated with the lane hedgerows, would also be lost which provide good foraging habitat for Bats and Birds.
- 3.7 The proposed access road linking the site with the existing distribution complex to the south of the site will cross over the existing ditch by way of a bridge and therefore adequate care must be taken to ensure adequate pollution presentation measures are taken.
- 3.8 In view of the above habitat loss, indicative mitigation and management prescriptions have been outlined for all habitats found on site (see drawing 1253_C at Appendix 1).

4. HABITAT CREATION AND ENHANCEMENT

- 4.1 The technical surveys and impact assessments have all been undertaken in the early stages of design evolution. Therefore, site constraints as discussed above have informed the overall site layout to guide the scheme. As a result, a number of changes to the scheme have been incorporated through the design evolution stages resulting in the proposed site layout, which is considered to be the optimal solution for both operational requirements and from an ecological and landscape perspective.
- 4.2 It is acknowledged that the development footprint will have some slight effects on existing ecological and landscape features identified on site, due to its predominately greenfield characteristic. However, in developing the site, which is allocated for a major employment development within the UDP, it would be extremely difficult to retain all of the existing features whilst providing a viable development and therefore some impact must be accepted. It is important to stress that the proposed scheme has aimed to reduce impacts on all important features. Where impacts have been identified, which could not have been avoided, mitigation measures have been identified to ensure replacement and enhancement of existing features. This has also ensured continuity with features, such as linkages with adjoining hedgerows and trees to encourage the movement of wildlife on site. As such it is considered that the principles outlined below are in accordance with WCBC's LPG: 29.

5. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED HABITAT CREATION AND ENHANCEMENT

5.1 In summary over 10.5 ha hectares (approx) of habitat creation will be provided covering approximately 51% of the site area. These features will include:

- A series of natural and man-made ponds, all of which will be designed or enhanced to maximise benefits for protected species;
- Creation of areas suitable for wildlife shelter and hibernating, particularly for GCN. These will include log piles using material felled on site and rock / rubble mounds. These mounds will be covered and be suitable to promote establishment of areas of new grassland.
- New native trees and woodland blocks. Predominately oak, other species will be introduced for their specific attributes.
- Open ditches. Incorporated into the drainage strategy for the site to increase this type of habitat and to allow escape routes for animals.
- Corridors of rough grassland to promote wildlife movement. Management regime will incorporate a low maintenance approach to encourage species diversity and to establish grassland corridors between habitats favoured by particular species such as butterflies.

5.2 The resultant mitigation area ensures the continuity of habitat to the open agricultural fields further to the east and north of the development site. The triangular retained habitat which fronts Bryn Lane, also ensures that a corridor is maintained, encouraging the movement of wildlife around the site and the wider industrial estate area. This limits the fragmentation of habitat whilst providing functionality in operational terms.

5.3 It is considered that the creation of a dedicated mitigation area which provides opportunities for a range of landscaping and ecological features will ensure no net loss of biodiversity resulting in a significant long term benefit for the site and surrounding area. This mitigation area has evolved through a process of design evolution to ensure that constraints have been identified, avoided wherever

possible and subsequent mitigation measures outlined. This has ensured that various opportunities for the site have evolved carefully and which have been sensitive to the local landscape and site ecology. This will ensure the long term conservation objectives for the site, which will encourage biodiversity to increase over time.

6. PROPOSED MONITORING AND WORK SCHEDULE

- 6.1 It is anticipated that the site will be managed during the construction period and for a period after construction to ensure the long term integrity of the site's biodiversity. It is anticipated that regular monitoring of the site will be undertaken and the management regime adjusted to maintain conservation objectives.
- 6.2 The schematic representation of the proposed mitigation shown in the Indicative Landscape Plan (Appendix 1) should not be regarded as an exhaustive list. It is anticipated that this document would be developed and agreed through discussions with the County Ecologist, NRW and a Local Wildlife Trust. This is to ensure that the proposed mitigation measures and the proposed future management of the site are developed in the best possible manner in the early stages of the design process.
- 6.3 Both NRW and the County Ecologist have highlighted the need to secure the long term management of the site. Subject to agreement by them, this is proposed to be in conjunction with either North Wales Wildlife Trust or North West Wales Wildlife Trust, or a combination of both bodies. Discussions with these bodies is in the early stages, however it is proposed that discussion and negotiation continues with the principle objective of conserving the nature conservation interest of the site in the long term assuming planning permission is forthcoming. It is anticipated that the long term management of the site will be successfully transferred over to either or both Local Wildlife Trusts.
- 6.4 It is proposed that the Management activities described will be undertaken for a minimum period of 25 years following which a review will be undertaken in conjunction with the Local Authority and a revised Framework submitted to the Council at that time.
- 6.5 It is anticipated that the long term management of the site includes some of the following management practices and regimes;
- A mowing regime would be appropriate for grassland management; however it would need to be restricted in areas identified for the areas where butterflies may be present.

- Retention of some unmanaged areas close to amphibian populations.
- Grassland areas included within the landscaping of the development should be a grass mix suitable for low-fertility open sward. A 'low fertility' mix would require less maintenance.
- Appropriate management of hedgerows and scrub adjacent to the central woodland belt and the central stream.
- Landscaping within the development area should use high proportion of locally-native trees and scrub.
- Periodic management of ponds and ditches guided by the habitat requirements for protected species.
- Where existing vegetation is to be retained, care should be taken not to damage existing vegetation.
- Monitoring regime for protected species.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This document provides a landscape and ecological management framework, which has been developed with the principal aim of increasing the biodiversity on site by creating, maintaining and enhancing the range of habitats in a favourable condition. It should be emphasised that this Framework will be finalised in discussions with NRW, the County Ecologist and a Local Wildlife Trust if planning approval is forthcoming.
- 7.2 It is considered that both the landscaping and ecological mitigation proposals are sympathetic to the local landscape. All key landscape and ecological features have been maintained wherever possible. This includes key ecological habitats and green corridors to ensure linkages with the surrounding areas are maintained. Opportunities have also been sought to create new habitats for wildlife and enhance those to be retained wherever possible. This includes the creation of new ponds suitable for protected species and appropriate landscaping proposals which are sympathetic to both the surrounding landscape and beneficial for wildlife.
- 7.3 It is strongly considered that the proposed habitat enhancement and creation will provide significant benefit to the site's overall biodiversity to ensure no net loss. The proposed on-site mitigation and proposed management seeks to ensure long term conservation objectives are met.

HOW Planning LLP

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APPENDIX 1:
INDICATIVE LANDSCAPE PLAN (DRAWING 1253_C)

