

BOW17.1303 Soccer Village, Milnrow: Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) 1022/00830/VRCON

Background

Planning permission has been granted for the development of land at Soccer Village, Milnrow (central NGR: SD 92875 13725). As part of the planning application the following condition in relation to ecology was included:

Condition 13 [1022/00830/VRCON]: No dwelling shall be occupied until a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, which shall include: the long-term management activities to maintain the woodland, hedgerow, ponds and wildflower grassland in good biodiversity condition; management responsibilities; long term design objectives; maintenance schedules; and a timetable for its implementation. The Management Plan shall be retained as such thereafter and implemented in accordance with the approved details and timetable contained therein.

Reason: In order to ensure adequate protection of existing landscape features of ecological value and to achieve appropriate landscape and biodiversity enhancements as part of the development in accordance with policy G7 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

This submission provides details of the above in relation to the development in order to discharge the condition. The overall objective of this report is to promote an approach to landscaping that will enhance the environment around the development for the benefit of wildlife, species diversity, local landscape character and visual amenity. This management plan will aim to ensure that the landscaping is implemented, established and maintained as the design intended and will provide 5-year maintenance objectives for all landscaped elements within the scheme as a whole.

Implementation

The Management Company will be responsible for appointing and managing landscape maintenance contractors to maintain the landscape. It will also be responsible for carrying out a review of the landscape management plan after a 5-year period, to ascertain any changes on site and to provide updated maintenance regimes as the landscape matures.

After this time, it would be appropriate to review this plan every 3-5 years to ensure that the management objectives and maintenance regimes responds to any changes on site and within the environment. This would also be the responsibility of the Management Company.

Long Term Management Activities

Woodland and Hedgerow Maintenance

Woodland and hedgerows provide a foraging resource (flowers, berries, fruits and seeds) for birds, bats, small mammals and insects that may use the site. Trees and hedgerows also provide a flight/commuting corridor/roosting opportunities for bats and nesting habitat for birds.

Prescriptions for woodland include:

- The existing woodland/hedgerows will be inspected annually by a suitably qualified arboriculturist to ensure that they do not pose a health and safety risk. Further inspections may also be required following severe winds/storms or following a report by the public.
- Routine pruning will only be carried out on tree areas which are close to publicly accessible areas (i.e., could fall or drop branches on surrounding paths, roads or properties) or impede the maintenance of fencing, buildings or street lighting. These will include;
 - The removal of dead, diseased, damaged or dying branches only where they pose a risk to the safety of the users of the site. Dead wood is an important habitat for wildlife within a healthy ecosystem and will not be removed unnecessarily. Deadwood will be left in-situ either where it falls or within the woodland (provides suitable refugia/hibernacula habitat for many species such as amphibians, small mammals and invertebrates);
 - Remove young natural colonisation, poorly formed or young low value trees where they are impeding the growth of the more desirable individual trees;
 - Pruning/surgery to existing trees/hedgerow must maintain the natural shape of the tree, if trees are to be felled this operation will be done in a safe manner by suitably qualified arboriculturist. They must consider all safety implications and works will be in accordance with BS 5837:2012, Root Protection Areas (RPA) and wildlife legislation for the protection of bats/nesting birds. A qualified ecologist will be contacted if necessary;
 - Report and or treat any incidence of pests and diseases; and
 - Once a month carry out a litter pick or remove any fly tipping. Leaf litter underneath trees and hedgerows will be retained as this will provide valuable habitat for wildlife.

Further prescriptions for hedgerow include:

- Existing hedgerows will be maintained 1.5m high and bushy growth encouraged without any gaps. Hedges to be cut on a rotational basis once every 2-3 years (unless more frequent trimming is required where hedgerows overgrow footpaths) for the benefit of wildlife and cut in early spring before 1st March to avoid the bird nesting season (preferably Jan to Feb when most of the berries have been eaten). Trimming of hedgerows will aim to maintain an A-shape or topped A-shape or free-growth;
- Many invertebrates are associated with herbaceous plants which characteristically occur at the bases of hedgerows. 1-2m wide verges will therefore be established and at most only cut once a year in autumn to allow such plants to flourish; and
- If existing hedgerow needs to be replaced, specimen trees will comprise locally native species such as hornbeam (*Carpinus Betula*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), hawthorn (*Crataegus Monogyna*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and oak (*Quercus* sp.) as well as ornamental berry bearing species such as *Sorbus aucuparia cardinal roya* (a rowan species) and *Malus tschonoskii* (a crab apple species). Weed control around young trees (preferably by hand-weeding) and herbivore protection (if necessary) will be provided until the young trees are established and growing strongly (usually at least for the first 3 years). Hedgerow and trees will be planted between November and March when the ground is not waterlogged or frozen.

Wildflower Meadow/Tall Grassland Maintenance

An Emorsgate wildflower/grass seed mix (EM3 Special General Purpose Meadow Mix) will be sown according to the manufacturer's recommendations. The meadow will provide a food source for insects, bats and birds and will also provide seasonal interest across the site. Meadows will be inspected annually in the summer to determine the success of establishment and record species to determine future management to ensure species rich diversity is maintained. The areas of grassland planting will be maintained free of any self-seeded undesirable/tall ruderal species (such as thistle (*Cirsium sp.*), dock (*Rumex sp.*), common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) or bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) which are likely to colonise and establish quickly, and if left uncontrolled could dominate the sward) as well as trees/woody vegetation. Weed clearance will be undertaken by hand, hoe or fork, as appropriate and herbicides must not be used. Consult a qualified ecologist if necessary.

Maintenance Operations – Year One

The requirements in the first year is to control weeds and reduce competition from the more prolific grass species to allow the less competitive species to become established.

- Carry out a litter pick and remove any debris before each cut;
- Cut the sward to a height of 50mm (following a check for amphibians and small mammals within the grassland) every 2-3 months or when the sward reaches 150mm during the first full growing season. Final cut will be carried out in September-October; and
- Vegetation will be left in situ for 1-2 days to allow for dispersal of invertebrates, after which arisings will be collected and disposed of off site (outside of areas to be managed for wildlife).

Maintenance Operations – Year Two and Subsequent Years

Do not cut from May through to late July/August to give the sown species an opportunity to flower. Once the flowers have set seed in August/ September cut back with a scythe (hand tools) to 75mm (following a check for amphibians and small mammals). Other operations include;

- Carry out a litter pick and remove any debris before each cut;
- Leave the arisings to dry and shed seed for 1-7 days then remove from the site to prevent nutrient enrichment;
- Mow the re-growth through to late autumn/winter to 75mm and again in April to reduce competition from the more prolific grass species. Repeat as above for the subsequent years; and
- **Structural diversity:** A graded sward height will be maintained towards the edges of the grassland area, with the sward becoming progressively taller closer to wildflower planting. This promotes diversity in sward height which is beneficial for invertebrates and in turn for birds and bats.

Areas of failed wildflower will be prepared and re-sown with the specified seed mix either in April or September. Where planting continually fails, investigations will be undertaken to ascertain any underlying cause. No fertilisers will be used within the grassland area as they can reduce the diversity of the sward by increasing nutrients and may pollute adjacent ponds/scrapes.

Pond and Scrape Maintenance

The following information has been adapted from Soccer Village, Milnrow; Great Crested Newt Mitigation Strategy (Bowland Ecology, 2020) and Soccer Village Milnrow: Planning Conditions 8 & 9 (Bowland Ecology, 2022). Construction of two hibernacula, three refugia and two wetland scrapes/ponds will be undertaken.

Retained ponds (Ponds 1, 3 and 4) will be managed specifically for GCN. This will include the regrading of the banks, thereby creating varying depths, including shallower areas which may be used during courtship and breeding. Any regrading works will be undertaken in autumn/winter. No more than 1/2 to 1/3 of the bank will be regraded and no more than 1/3 of the vegetation/silt will be removed, to ensure that sufficient breeding habitat is maintained. The maximum gradient for the scrape slopes will be 1:3/1:5, for safe egress of amphibians and other animals. Any supplementary planting required to the ponds will use established large plug plants of species such as; yellow-flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and water plantain (*Alisma plantagoaquatica*), to allow for rapid establishment and provide suitable cover and egg laying substrate. Any silt/vegetation removed from the ponds during regrading works as part of habitat enhancement works will be left in an undisturbed location beside the pond for 24 hours to allow any amphibians or other animals to re-enter the pond. Regrading works will be undertaken during autumn or winter, when amphibians are less likely to be present.

The removal of silt and existing vegetation from Pond 4 will be undertaken with the aim of improving water retention. If the removal of silt and vegetation is not successful, further work to improve water retention will be undertaken, such as lining the pond.

The retained on-site ponds and the newly created wetland scrapes will be subject to long term habitat management and maintenance activities. In summary:

- Approximately 25% of aquatic vegetation will be cleared out every 5 years (to include common bulrush (*Typha latifolia*)) to ensure sufficient breeding habitat is maintained. To be undertaken in the autumn/winter;
- An annual check and removal of litter and debris will be undertaken in the autumn (to include excess floating and submerged vegetation);
- Where required, surrounding trees will be cut back every 2 years to reduce shading. To be undertaken in the autumn/winter by suitably qualified arboriculturist;
- An annual check and removal of non-native invasive species (in particular Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) will be undertaken. Himalayan balsam will be removed by hand pulling any individuals in advance of the flowering period (June); and
- An annual check of water levels in Pond 4 will be undertaken (in the summer). If the removal of silt and vegetation is not successful, further work to improve water retention will be undertaken (in the winter), such as lining the pond.

Work to ponds will normally be carried out between early November and late January. Any silt removed during management operations will be left beside the pond for 24 hours to allow any organisms to re-enter the pond, before being removed off-site.

Ensure Pollution Prevention

Pollution control measures must be implemented during construction to avoid pollution of waterbodies particularly during construction works. This requires Pollution Prevention Guidelines to be implemented throughout the works. Pollution control measures will include the following.

- Maintaining high standards of housekeeping;
- Dampening down working areas in dry periods to prevent dust;
- Using covered wagons and skips;
- Keeping roads clean with the use of road sweepers;
- Spill kits to be kept on site at all times. Containment of any pollution due to the use of spill kits;
- Coverage of any soil and materials storage when not in use;
- Storage of fuel, oils and chemicals on an impervious base within a bund able to contain at least 110% of the volume stored;
- Site compound to include a dedicated refuelling area for plant, surrounded with an impermeable bund to prevent any spillages from reaching waterbodies;
- Use of biodegradable oil in plant and machinery wherever possible;
- All plant to be situated within the development site at a safe distance from waterbodies; and
- The mixing of any concrete/mortar shall be undertaken wholly within a bunded area within the development site, at a safe distance from any waterbodies.

References

Bowland Ecology (2022). *Soccer Village, Milnrow: Soccer Village, Milnrow: Conditions 8 and 9*. Bowland Ecology, Clitheroe.

Bowland Ecology (2020). *Soccer Village, Milnrow: Great Crested Newt Mitigation Strategy*. Bowland Ecology, Clitheroe.

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English Nature (2001). Great crested newt mitigation guidelines. English Nature.

Langton, T.E.S., Beckett, C.L., and Foster, J.P. (2001), *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*, Froglife, Halesworth.

Natural England (2012). *Lowland Grassland Management Handbook (Second Edition)*.

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Appendix A: Maintenance Schedules

Existing Woodland and Hedgerow Maintenance																
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total	Years (1-5)	Responsibility	
Annual arboricultural inspection of trees		*											1	1-5	Arborist	
Schedule a health and safety arboricultural inspection after strong winds or storms														1-5	Arborist (as required)	
Treatment of pests and diseases and/or removal of diseased trees														1-5	Arborist	
Removal of saplings and suckers, poorly formed or young low value trees.		*											1	1-5	Arborist	
Cutting hedge		*											1	5	Contractor	
Litter pick	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	12	1-5	Appointed contractor	

Wildflower Meadow/Tall Grassland Maintenance																
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total	Years (1-5)	Responsibility	
Litter pick	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	12	1-5	Appointed contractor	
Establishment- Cutting					*			*		*			3	1	Appointed contractor	
EM3 Wildflower Mix - Cutting				*					*				2	2-5	Appointed contractor	
Remove arisings from site				*					*				2	1-5	Appointed contractor	
Re-instatement of meadow mixes														1-5	Appointed contractor (as required)	
Litter pick														1-5	Appointed contractor (as required)	
Watering														1-5	Appointed contractor (as required)	

Pond and Scrape Maintenance																
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total	Years (1-5)	Responsibility	
Regrading banks of retained ponds with supplementary planting	*										*	*	1 (between Nov-Jan)	1	Appointed contractor	
The removal of silt and existing vegetation from Pond 4	*										*	*	1 (between Nov-Jan)	1	Appointed contractor	
Approximately 25% of aquatic vegetation will be cleared out	*										*	*	1 (between Nov-Jan)	5	Appointed contractor	
Removal of encroaching scrub and trees will be undertaken	*										*	*	1 (between Nov-Jan)	2	Arborist	
Removal of litter and debris (to include excess floating and submerged vegetation)	*										*	*	1 (between Nov-Jan)	1-5	Appointed contractor	
Check and removal of non-native invasive species (in particular Himalayan balsam.						*							1	1-5	Appointed contractor	
Check of water levels in Pond 4							*	*					1 (in summer)	1-5	Appointed contractor	
Pollution control measures must be implemented during construction and beyond to avoid pollution of the watercourse.													At all times	1 - 5	Appointed contractor	

Review of Management Plan																
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total	Years (1-5)	Responsibility	
Monitoring: Assessment of the efficacy of the management aims, objectives and prescriptions														5	Ecologist/Landscape Architect and Management Company	

Appendix B : Landscape and Environmental Management Plan

