

HERTFORDSHIRE BIOLOGICAL RECORDS CENTRE

Environment, County Hall, Hertford, Herts, SG13 8DN

Mr P. Jefcoate
Planning Officer
Welwyn Hatfield Council
Welwyn Garden City
Hertford

Plask for :- G Goodall
Our Ref :- WS79/002
Your Ref :-
Tel :- 01992 556155

Date :- 12/01/2012

Dear Mr Jefcoate

**Planning Application: S6/2011/2825/MA; Coopers Field stables, Coopers Lane Road, Northaw, Potters Bar.
Demolition of dilapidated shed and erection of 2 loose boxes (stables) and hay store.**

1. HBRC database.

Coopers Field (1.26ha) forms part of a complex of fields called Northaw Brook Pastures. The complex of fields, including Coopers Field, are identified as a county Wildlife Site (WS79/002). The fields are described as species-rich, marshy, neutral/acidic grassland. A stream and mature hedgerows add diversity.

2. Pre-application site visit.

HBRC (G. R. Goodall) made a site visit on 11th July 2011 and met with Mr and Mrs Wheeler. We discussed the proposed development of two stables and a hay barn and the location of the stables was studied.

It was very evident that the eastern end (0.14ha) of the WS has been subject to disturbance and in-filling with hardcore and rubble; it was impossible to push a garden fork into the ground.

The botanical survey conducted by Jones and Sons Environmental Sciences Ltd has confirmed the identification of Coopers Field as a county Wildlife Site. Mrs S. Wheeler gave HBRC written (signature) permission to enter and use the survey data in the county biological database.

The following planning considerations were discussed:

- The protection of the Wildlife Site (WS) is paramount.
- The boundary of the WS will be retained, as defined by the original field hedgerows.
- The LPA have a duty to protect WS, and it is the norm for development on WS to be refused.
- If the LPA choose to grant permission, HBRC would recommend that conditions are attached.

Planning application.

A planning application has been submitted. Its content does not vary from the proposals discussed during the site visit.

HBRC comments and recommendations.

It was very evident that the eastern end (0.14ha) of the WS has been subject to disturbance and in-filling with hardcore and rubble. It was impossible to push a garden fork into the ground when the site was visited on 11th July 2011.

Our concerns relate to the future grazing of the Wildlife Site and the restoration of its floral diversity on the 1.12 hectares of grassland, beyond the 0.14 hectares of existing hardcore.

Therefore, we recommend that if the LPA choose to grant planning permission, the following conditions are applied.

1. No more than two horses will be kept on the Wildlife Site (WS) at any one time, unless exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise. In an 'exceptional event', horses will not be kept on the WS for more than 3 months.
2. All horses will be removed from the WS during the winter months; November-February inclusive.
3. The docks in the WS will be spot-treated with a suitable, approved herbicide.
4. English Nature horse grazing guidelines '*Horses, grassland & nature conservation*' will be adhered to. Grazing should be controlled so that the grass sward does not become shorter than 5cm (2 inches) at any given time of the year.
5. There will be no exterior floodlighting of the proposed stables and hay barn.
6. Future access to the WS will be granted in order for the flora to be surveyed and monitored. All records to be submitted to the county Biological Records Centre with permission for the data to be entered and used.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Goodall CEnv. MIEEM
Senior Ecologist