

HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

Environmental Resource Planning
Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Hertford, SG13 8DN
ecology@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01992 555220

David Elmore
Planning Department,
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council,
The Campus, Welwyn Garden City,
Herts AL8 6AE

Ask for: Simon Richards
Tel: 01992 588483

Date: 18/04/2020

Dear David

Application Engineering works comprising ground works and shaping of land to create a golf course (used only in conjunction with the Nyn Park Estate dwellinghouse) and erection of an associated single storey maintenance building

Address: Nyn Park, Well Road, Northaw, Potters Bar, EN6 4BS

Reference:6/2020/0311/MAJ

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology on the above, for which I have the following comments:

I am pleased to see the presence of a small traditional orchard (a priority habitat) of about 10 trees has been acknowledged and its restoration and the creation of a new area of orchard is now a consideration. I also support the extension in the monitoring of the grasslands from 7 to 10 years.

The Biodiversity net gain has been recalculated in line with best practice to exclude those areas that are already covered by existing obligations relating to their SSSI status. The new calculation achieves a biodiversity net gain of 13.07% in habitat units and 21.4% in hedgerow units and so still exceeds the recommended 10% net gain.

I note the intention not to graze the North Parkland area due to the owner's lack of enthusiasm for this. Given that:

- this area is identified as contributing towards biodiversity gain (Appendix A, Biodiversity Metric Gain Plan);
- grazing is proposed for the adjacent compartment;
- grazing represents the best and most practical means of helping to restore and maintain this habitat (although this doesn't have to mean continuous grazing);
- areas of originally proposed benefits of landscape restoration have been detrimentally affected by unauthorised golf course development;

this approach is unhelpful and disappointing.

The area is separated from the new house by a belt of trees so is not immediately adjacent to the residence, and historic maps in the management plan itself confirm this area was historically rough pasture - which means it was grazed by some form of livestock, the management invariably associated with almost all wood pasture / parkland.

There appear to be *no* plans to graze any of this parkland area; presumably the reference to grazing North Parkland on the other side of forest road by Agellus Projects Ltd in their note to WHDC of 15 March 2021 is to the heathland restoration area. However, I acknowledge that BNG is being achieved by other proposals at Nyn Park and that future monitoring and a review of the plan is proposed, against which its success can be judged and amended accordingly as necessary.

In relation to the ecological value of the North Parkland it **is** described as having species-rich grassland (section 3.2.2 of the Landscape Management Plan 2020-2030) with 7 or 8 Local Wildlife Site indicator species. Nevertheless, given it is presently dominated by coarse grasses, I accept the requirement for an initial limited selective use of herbicides as suggested to prevent the further decline of this grassland.

I note that the thinning methodology proposed for the management Vineyard Wood in the Agellus response to the ancient woodland area has been endorsed on similar sites by Natural England and has benefits for biodiversity. However, none of Vineyard Wood lies within the SSSI. Our comments in respect of coppicing principles still remain, given the relative lack of deer browsing and benefits of traditional coppicing for biodiversity which are unlikely to be achieved with limited 'thinning' to achieve 'clumpiness'. Whilst this may serve to thin an area of woodland, it will also probably lead to a continuation of closed canopy woodland, wholly defeating the ecological aim of structural diversity associated with coppice woodland. The real benefit of such management is achieved by the mix of age classes of sizeable coppice areas which would have been present historically. However, I have not seen the site and cannot provide any further detailed comments on this matter. However, the proposals should not be harmful to the woodland as a whole unless insufficient light is introduced by thinning which will lead to poor coppice regeneration, both from stools or within a stool. This is another matter which should be monitored and addressed accordingly in future.

Overall, whilst I consider that some concerns raised have been adequately addressed, I remain concerned about some of the proposed benefits of management as outlined above, particularly given the context of unauthorised land use changes on this site thus far. Therefore, it is important that in determining this application, LPA ensures that the proposed monitoring and review of the Plan does take place when proposed, to enable the management to be properly assessed and amended if necessary, in ten years. If this can be

secured, and as BNG is likely to be achieved on the Estate in general, I am satisfied that the application can be determined accordingly.

I trust these comments are of assistance,

Yours sincerely

Simon Richards
Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire Ecology