

File Note

Project title Botley Field - Biodiversity Enhancement Zone
Job number 251898-00
File reference
cc
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Date 16 July 2024
Subject Applicant response to consultee comments

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Introduction

Further to the statutory consultation process for reserved matters application (RMA) ref: RM/24/97106 for the delivery of the Biodiversity Enhancement Zone (BEZ) at Botley Fields, please find enclosed the Applicant's response (Table 1) addressing comments raised along with relevant revised plans (Table 2).

This File Note provides a response to comments raised by the Landscape Officer and Ecology Officer including references to revised plans submitted in support and should be reviewed alongside this Note. Table 2 includes a summary of plans which are to be superseded as a result of comments raised at the end of this letter.

Table 1: Applicant's Response

Consultee and Date of Comment	Consultee Comment	Applicant Response
Landscape		
Landscape Officer (15/04/2024)	General Comments across all plans 1) In order to assess how the proposals sit in the wider context, further detail is required of areas that run alongside the BEZ. To the north, please add the species of existing trees along the railway embankment. A broad indication where the areas of existing scrub along the railway occur would help identify gaps in the vegetation cover and allow on site planting to be located for best effect. The new bypass lies immediately to the south of the BEZ. At present, some notional planting is indicated alongside the bypass on the submitted plans. We require further detail on this planting to ensure the BEZ planting and bypass planting work well together. This	The proposed design has been informed by existing vegetation. Existing tree and scrub data was gathered from the Arboricultural survey and checked during field work. The existing vegetation adjacent to the site is shown on General Arrangement Plans, 251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0001, Rev: P02 and 251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0002, Rev: P02 and is indicated on the existing cross sections 251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0004. The proposed design of the BEZ is based on the attached Bypass landscaping planting plans provided by the HCC Landscape Architect. The attached plans represent the latest set of plans for the Bypass and formed the basis of the BEZ design to ensure that the proposals are well-integrated and that there is no conflict between the Bypass and BEZ proposals.

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	can be sourced from the bypass planting plans, which presumably have been submitted and approved?	The HCC Bypass Team are intending to submit a separate non-material amendment and discharge of conditions application (which will include an updated Environmental Statement) later this year to regularise these plans, where HCC would be the determining authority and EBC would be a statutory consultee. However, it is reiterated that the attached plans are not materially different from the approved Bypass landscape plans (ref: CS/17/81226 and 17/02023/HCS), which include the same number of trees.
	2) Please add the width of the easement along the Portsmouth Water utility pipe to the plans. This will help ensure any adjustments to the proposed tree positions are kept outside the easement.	The legend on the revised Landscape General Arrangement Plans (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0001, Rev: P02 and 251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0002, Rev: P02) have been updated to include details of the width of the easement. No adjustments to the proposed tree planting locations are proposed.
	3) I note one access gate for maintenance at the far NW end of the BEZ but could not locate an access to the SE end. Please indicate all maintenance access points on plan.	Both accesses are shown on the submitted revised plans (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0001, Rev: P02 and 251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0002, Rev: P02) with clear annotations labelled 'Proposed Field Gate'.
	4) Is the existing/proposed post & wire fencing sufficiently robust to enclose the BEZ, especially in areas where there is more likely to be activity? Is a stockproof fence required to prevent access by dogs?	The proposed fence is comprised of timber post and wire mesh stock proof fence. This is reinforced either side of the PRoW with a dense thorn hedge to further discourage public access. The legend on the revised Landscape General Arrangement Plans (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0001, Rev: P02 and 251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0002, Rev: P02) have been updated to capture these details.
	5) Please increase the number of log piles and add locations for grass cuttings piles on plan.	The proposed log piles will be created using material that arises from long-term management works and will not be installed as part of the initial implementation works. The number, locations and size of these features will evolve through time and depend on the quantum and nature of material being won from the site through management works. Therefore, no updates to the supporting plans and documents for planning at this stage are proposed.
	Landscape General Arrangement - sheet 1 of 2 0001 & Landscape General Arrangement - sheet 2 of 2 0002 a) I welcome the inclusion of scrapes and swales, although there is scope to ensure all scrapes have a natural, flowing form/shape (one or two are rather geometric for this informal, naturalistic space). Swales should link into the	The scrapes and swales are shown as broadly naturalistic shapes on the plans, through detailed design during construction, on site variation will be added in response to site conditions to give a more diverse condition. The locations of PM2 are clearly indicated on the plans using hatches referenced in the legend and annotations.

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	scrapes and the slopes of swales should have more variation to avoid an engineered effect. Marginal plug species PM2 - please indicate the locations of PM2 assuming they are not continuously introduced in the scrapes and swales.	
	b) The numbers of proposed trees along the BEZ is too low (28 no. in total). The notional tree symbols used indicate sizes after roughly 10-15 years. These should be replaced symbols more representative of 'as planted' sizes (max. 3m diameter) and sufficient numbers of trees should be included to allow for some failures.	The number and locations of trees have been designed through collaboration between ecologists and landscape architects. The intent is to provide a starting point for advancement of a diverse range of habitats including some small areas where canopy cover will occur. Grassland and wetland habitat is a key target habitat type that would be compromised by more tree planting. The number of trees will remain as shown. It is common practice to show trees at a design year when established. The proposed planting uses largely immature stock to reduce the cost and improve the success rate. It is not considered necessary or appropriate to show all planting at its precise size at the time of planting. – no change proposed.
	c) The 10m zone adjacent the proposed fence line to allow access - without knowing the detail of the landscape proposals along the bypass it is impossible to tell if the proposed strong grass mixture PM5 will be in keeping with the wider setting. Will this strong grass mixture be mown regularly? If it is going to be kept regularly cut/strimmed, will this look too formal for the BEZ which should have a more informal character? This strip seems to be very wide (typically 10m) for maintenance access. A narrower 3-4m strip would be sufficient for vehicular/machinery access. The edge of this strip is linear which seems out of keeping with the informal nature of this area. Perhaps a sinuous line is more appropriate with short stub posts marking the delineation to aid maintenance teams working out the different management regimes for each planting type.	It is agreed that the maintenance strip does not need seeding with a different or particularly robust mix. As such, the Landscape General Arrangement Plans (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0001, Rev: P02 and 251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0002, Rev: P02) and Planting Schedule (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0003, Rev: 2.0) have been revised to change this to PM3 Wildflower seeding. The 10m access strip is proposed to provide a construction corridor to deliver the Botley Bypass as part of a phased approach. Once the Bypass is constructed, this access strip will form part of the BEZ and the supporting plans and schedule have been amended to change the access strip to PM3 Wildflower seeding post construction.
	d) The areas of shrub mix SM1 do seem sporadic and limited in size. I would welcome the EBC Ecology team input as to whether larger areas of shrub mix planting would be desirable to provide increased wildlife cover. My own view would be that fewer but larger areas would be more practical in terms of establishment. If smaller 'island' areas are	These were designed through liaison between our ecologist and landscape architect and are considered proportionate to establish the desired mosaic of habitats across the site. No change is therefore proposed.

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	planted, how would these be protected/demarcated?	
	e) PM 3 & PM 4 over existing grassland - I am not convinced this is realistic given the difficulties of over seeding existing grassland. Further specification details of how this can be achieved would be appreciated.	Overseeding is a common and successful method for enhancing grassland. The specification for this, and as important its aftercare and management, will be provided post-consent and can be conditioned if necessary.
	f) The thorny mix of HR1 is acceptable. The existing PROW will be a sensitive section of the site, so I suggest at least a few native trees are included (where outside water easement) to frame the route of the path. These trees can either be within the hedge mix or just to the rear. I also suggest that the existing post and wire fence here will not be sufficient to keep dogs out of the BEZ, so please allow for a stockproof mesh fence to be attached to the repaired existing post and wire fence to control dogs.	In line with point 4) above, the fence is proposed to be a timber post and wire mesh stock proof fence. This is reinforced either side of the PRoW with a dense thorn hedge to further discourage public access. The wording for the legends on the submitted revised plans (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0001, Rev: P02 and 251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0002, Rev: P02) have been updated to reflect this.
	g) Field Gate - please add replacement native hedge planting either side of gate and provide details of gate.	The revised plans (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0001, Rev: P02 and 251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0002, Rev: P02) submitted have been updated to incorporate this change. The gate to the north now includes a hedgerow that connects back in with the railway bank vegetation, whilst the gate to the south it is considered that including a hedgerow would create an isolated section of hedge and therefore not included. Details relating to the gate are requested to be deferred to planning condition.
	h) Although the planting schedule provides some of the required specification information, the numbers per area of planting types should to be indicated by area on plan to help implementation, maintenance and enforcement.	This is considered to be detail beyond that required to determine the reserved matters application.
	Planting schedule 0003 j) The tree species indicated are generally acceptable, although overall the numbers of trees needs to be increased significantly. Salix caprea can be invasive and should be replaced with alternative native Salix species. Is there any reason why no native Oaks have been included? We would prefer to see at least some Oaks in the mix. Corylus avellana generally come as multi-stem specimens not feathered stock. Details of tree pits, staking etc required. A landscape specification should be provided detailing these elements. All trees in grass areas to have strimmer guards fitted.	Salix Caprea is a vigorous native shrub used commonly in habitat creation schemes because it is fast growing and robust. It flowers early and provides valuable food for bees, other pollinators and their prey, including bats. Its spreading nature will be kept in check by other vigorous plants and by management where necessary. The Planting Schedule has been updated to clarify Corylus avellana is multi-stem not feathered stock. Landscape specification and planting details will be available at the construction stage and can be conditioned if necessary. The species mix was designed through liaison with ecologists and

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		landscape architects. – no additional detail to be provided at this stage.
	k) HR1 native hedgerow mix - Ilex spp. generally specified as pot grown. The hedgerow should be planted as double staggered row at 6 plants per lin. m. Indicate numbers of plants by areas on plan.	The revised Planting Schedule ((251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0003, Rev: 2.0) has been updated to amend the ilex and clarify the hedgerow density.
	l) SM1 shrub mix - species mix could be enriched slightly for added habitat value. The density at 1 plant per sq. m is too low. Please increase to min. 2 plants per sq. m. to allow for failures. Specification details required of planting, protection, mulching etc. How will these areas be demarcated to help maintenance?	The Planting Schedule (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0003, Rev: 2.0) has been revised to include an additional two new species (Acer Campestre and Sambucus Nigra) along with the recommended increase in density to two plants per sqm. Additional specification detail is requested to be secured by planning condition.
	m) Marginal plug species PM2 - as mentioned earlier, please indicate on plan the locations of this planting as I assume PM2 will occur in a sporadic, natural 'clumps'.	PM2 planting is demarcated on the supporting plans with annotations showing the location of this.
	n) Planting mixes 1 - 5. These are specialised mixes (mainly wildflower) and I would appreciate the EBC Ecology team taking the lead on commenting on these.	Noted.
	Landscape sections 0004 It would be useful to indicate the kind of planting associated with the bypass on these sections to set the proposals in context.	Please refer to the relevant supporting Bypass plans submitted as information with this response. It should be noted that the visual is submitted for illustrative purposes only.
	Axonometric visual This birds eye view demonstrates the difficulty of assessing the scheme in context with a complete lack of detail of planting along the bypass. Ideally the bypass landscape and the BEZ planting should naturally merge. We would want to avoid an abrupt junction between the two areas because they have a different landscape character.	
	Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) This document is incomplete and consists mainly of management prescriptions in a tabular form. Detailed specification information is missing, and I will comment in more detail once we have received a complete document.	The Applicant is committed to ensuring the long-term management and maintenance of the BEZ. The post construction aftercare maintenance and rectification period will be 2 years from the completion of the works and will be the responsibility of the contractor. Following this, the ongoing maintenance and management will be undertaken in accordance with the submitted LEMP and will cover a period of year 3 to year 30 post construction. These post construction responsibilities will be undertaken by the relevant

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		landowner / and or management body. The specific details of the management body are currently unknown and if necessary, can be secured via condition.
	As regards monitoring wildflower grassland areas, I notice Mark has recently been suggesting that monitoring of species using quadrats is something that is required. A method statement of how the ongoing species richness of the wildflower areas is to be measured should be included in the LEMP. This should include frequency, number and distribution of quadrat surveys. This information would then need to be submitted to the council at 3 years after sowing. Please consult with the EBC Ecology team for more details on this.	The ecology response does not require this level of monitoring, as such, no changes are proposed.
Ecology		
Ecology Officer (23/04/2024)	Size of vehicular access strip My main query relates to the size of the vehicular access strip which is on average 10 metres wide and takes up a significant proportion (potentially over a third) of the 1.1Ha Biodiversity Enhancement Zone (BEZ) which was allocated for biodiversity enhancements at outline. The habitat of the access strip will be of limited biodiversity value and therefore the effective area of the BEZ will be significantly reduced in size, potentially to approximately 0.7Ha. It is not clear as to why this access strip is proposed to be so wide where usually vehicular access requires a 2-3m maximum width. If the access width was reduced in size, then a larger area of biodiverse habitats similar to those proposed in the northern part of the BEZ, could be created which would be more in accordance with the parameter plans approved at outline.	The 10m access strip is proposed to provide a construction corridor to deliver the Botley Bypass as part of a phased approach. Once the Bypass is constructed, this access strip will form part of the BEZ and the supporting plans and schedule have been amended to change the access strip to PM3 Wildflower seeding post construction.
	Omission of features from the landscape plans The eastern access point into the BEZ from the balancing pond is not shown. The western access point is shown. The four wood piles and one/ two grass piles have not been indicated on the plan. This may be a deliberate omission to allow flexibility to determine the optimal positioning of these features during delivery or it could be unintentional.	Both accesses are shown on the submitted revised plans (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0001, Rev: P02 and 251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L0002, Rev: P02) with clear annotations labelled 'Proposed Field Gate'. With regards to the wood and grass piles, the Officer's assumption is correct in line with the response provided to point 5) above.
	Ongoing maintenance	The Applicant is committed to ensuring the long-term management and maintenance of the BEZ. The post construction aftercare maintenance and rectification period will be 2 years from the

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	I presume HCC will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance, but I don't think this has been explicitly stated.	completion of the works and will be the responsibility of the Contractor. Following this, the ongoing maintenance and management will be undertaken in accordance with the submitted LEMP and will cover a period of year 3 to year 30 post construction. These post construction responsibilities will be undertaken by the relevant landowner / and or management body. The specific details of the management body are currently unknown and if necessary, can be secured via condition.

Table 2: Revised information

Existing plan to be superseded	Revised plan submitted for consideration
Landscape General Arrangement Sheet 1 of 2 (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0001)	Landscape General Arrangement Sheet 1 of 2 (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0001, Rev: P02)
Landscape General Arrangement Sheet 2 of 2 (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0002)	Landscape General Arrangement Sheet 2 of 2 (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0002, Rev: P02)
Planting Schedule (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0003)	Planting Schedule (251898-ARP-XX-XX-DR-L-0003, Rev: 2.0)

*For the avoidance of doubt, all other plans and information originally submitted with the application remain valid. Likewise, the plans listed below do **not** form part of the submission documents for this RMA and are only submitted as a point of reference at the request of Officer's from Eastleigh Borough Council.

- Planting Plan (CJ008882-WPE-ELS-44301694-DR-M-0001)
- Planting Plan (CJ008882-WPE-ELS-44301694-DR-M-0002)
- Planting Plan (CJ008882-WPE-ELS-44301694-DR-M-0003)
- Planting Plan (CJ008882-WPE-ELS-44301694-DR-M-0004)