

**6<sup>th</sup> March 2014****Agenda Item: 4e****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR POLICY, PLANNING AND  
CORPORATE SERVICES****STRATEGIC PLANNING OBSERVATIONS ON AN OUTLINE PLANNING  
APPLICATION FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT – PARK HALL FARM,  
PARK HALL ROAD, MANSFIELD WOODHOUSE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Committee of the formal response which was agreed by the Chairman of Environment and Sustainability Committee and sent to Mansfield District Council on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2014 in response to the request for comments on the above outline planning application for residential development at Park Hall Farm, Park Hall Road, Mansfield Woodhouse.

**Information and Advice**

2. Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) has been asked for strategic planning observations on the above outline planning application for residential development and this report compiles responses from Departments involved in providing comments and observations on such matters. A site plan is provided at Appendix 1.
3. The planning application is outline only with all matters reserved but it is accompanied by a Planning Statement, a Design and Access Statement and a range of other supporting documents. This report is based on the information submitted with the application in the context of national and local policy.
4. The application site lies within open countryside adjoining the northern edge of Mansfield Woodhouse.

***Description of the Proposal***

5. The proposal is for residential development of up to 150 dwellings, including affordable homes, together with site access, open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure. The site area is approximately 5.4 hectares with 2 distinct areas separated by a farmhouse and farm buildings which remain in separate ownership. The site is accessed from Park Hall Road which runs south into the centre of Mansfield Woodhouse. Access to the existing buildings would be incorporated into any modified vehicular access from Park Hall Road.

6. The site is currently agricultural land, with the western site boundary defined by a stone wall and trees beyond which is further agricultural land. Residential areas are located to the south and east of the site, whilst the curtilage of a residential property adjoins the northern boundary.

## ***Planning Policy Context***

### ***National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)***

7. One of the core principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to support and deliver economic growth to ensure that the housing, business and other development needs of an area are met. The NPPF looks to boost significantly the supply of housing. The principles and policies contained in the NPPF also recognise the value of, and the need to protect and enhance, the natural, built and historic environment and biodiversity, together with the need to adapt to climate change.
8. A key aspect of the NPPF is that it includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development which means that, for decision-taking, local planning authorities should approve development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay or where a development plan is absent, silent or out of date, grant permission unless any adverse impacts of the proposal outweigh the benefits, or specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.
9. The NPPF also discusses the weight that can be given in planning determinations to policies emerging as the local authority's development plan is being brought forward. The weight given to these policies will be very dependent on their stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections and the degree of consistency with the NPPF.
10. The Government is committed to securing economic growth, including housing, with the planning system encouraging sustainable growth, as set out in paragraphs 18 and 19 of the NPPF.
11. Paragraphs 47 and 49 of the NPPF state that local planning authorities should identify sufficient deliverable housing sites to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement with an additional buffer of either 5% (to ensure choice and competition) or 20% (where there has been a record of persistent under delivery) and that *"...relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites"*.
12. Paragraphs 29-41 of the NPPF address the issue of sustainable transport. The NPPF requires all major planning applications to be supported by an appropriate Transport Assessment (TA) and concludes that new development proposals should only be refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts would be severe.

### ***Local Planning Context***

13. The Mansfield District Local Plan (adopted in 1998) remains in place with many of the policies having been 'saved' pending replacement by a new development plan for the

District. The application site lies outside the defined urban boundary shown on the Proposals Map and saved Policy H3 states:

*‘Planning permission will not be granted for the development of permanent housing outside the urban boundary, as defined on the Proposals Map, except where it is essential for agricultural or forestry workers to live at their place of work for the proper functioning of an established farm or forestry business.’*

14. Mansfield District Council is in the early stages of the process of preparing a new plan for the District, having published a Core Strategy Issues and Options Report in 2010 and a consultation document ‘Setting a Long-term Dwelling Requirement’ in 2012. The next stage will be the Preferred Options document.
15. Mansfield District Council’s Housing Monitoring Report 2013 sets out a ‘Locally Agreed Figure’ for its 5 year dwelling requirement of 7820 dwellings (391 dwellings per annum) which produces a housing land supply of 7.37 years.
16. The application site has been assessed in Mansfield District Council’s Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (September 2013) (SHLAA) which concluded that the site is not required because due to *‘its location outside the Urban Boundary, and the greenfield nature of the site, it is not considered to be as suitable/sustainable as alternative sites to meet the locally agreed housing requirements.’*

## **Strategic Planning Issues**

### Planning Policy

17. The proposal is consistent with the NPPF in terms of boosting the supply of housing and ensuring that the housing needs of the area are met. The NPPF carries significant weight as a material consideration, particularly as the Mansfield District Local Plan was adopted in 1998 and intended to guide development in the area up to 2006. Nevertheless, the saved policies of the adopted Local Plan still form part of the District’s development plan and as the site lies outside the defined urban boundary of Mansfield Woodhouse, the proposal is contrary to saved policy H3. In the District Council’s recent SHLAA it was concluded that the application site is not needed to meet the locally agreed housing requirement given that more suitable /sustainable sites are available.
18. The applicant contends that Mansfield District Council’s locally agreed 5 year dwelling requirement/supply figures are flawed as they do not account for previous under delivery of dwellings against the provisions of the former regional development plan (the East Midlands Regional Plan, revoked April 2013), however it is a matter for Mansfield District Council to justify its figures.

### Transport

#### *Strategic Transport*

19. Mansfield District Council has commissioned a district-wide transport study to assess the Council’s preferred growth scenario and potential cumulative impact on the District’s transportation networks and services. This study will identify any potential

transport infrastructure improvements required to facilitate the cumulative impact of the preferred growth scenario, along with a preliminary assessment of any associated infrastructure costs and comments on their deliverability, priority and likely funding sources. In this way it would be possible to identify a funding mechanism for all developments to share the cost of the necessary supporting transport infrastructure. This study has not, however, been concluded.

20. Whilst the proposal for 150 dwellings at Park Hall Farm may not give rise to any significant direct impacts on the strategic highway network, the cumulative impact of this application together with other future development in the District is not considered in the supporting Transport Assessment (TA). The traffic modelling in the TA does not (nor should it necessarily do so) consider the cumulative impact of other proposed Local Plan developments. This TA considers Park Hall Farm in isolation in accordance with the DfT Guidelines on TAs. In this sense the application could be considered premature i.e. until such time as the District Council's LP traffic modelling has been completed and the package of supporting transport infrastructure has been established. If the District Council is minded to approve this application before the district-wide transport study and Local Plan Preferred Options is published then the opportunity to secure a proportion of the cost of providing all necessary supporting transport infrastructure from the applicant could be lost. The District Council might wish to consider whether it would be capable of securing a contribution towards future transport infrastructure from the applicant.

#### *Public Transport*

21. Currently there are no regular public transport services within 400 metres of the site and negotiations would be required with the major operator in the area to enhance local routes and services. In order to ensure access to public transport for the proposed development developer contributions would be required to develop services nearby.

#### *Landscape and Visual Impact*

22. Part of the application site is designated as the Mature Landscape Area (MLA) Nettleworth Manor. It is accepted that although policy NE8 restricting development in an MLA is a saved policy of the adopted Mansfield District Local Plan, this policy will be superseded by the landscape character approach when a new plan for the District is adopted. The MLA designation was taken into account in the preparation of the Mansfield Landscape Character Assessment.
23. It is not possible to comment fully on the landscape and visual impact implications of the proposal until further information and clarification has been provided by the applicant on the following matters:
- Greater reference should be made to Policy sheet ML25 Sookholme Limestone Farmlands, the policy sheets should be included in the appendices and used in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) to develop the landscape strategy for the site;
  - The physical landscape impacts of the proposal need to be detailed more fully, the vegetation to be removed should be quantified;

- The visual impacts need to be separated for operational day 1 of the site and then for the longer term, i.e. the residual impacts. This section of the LVIA document needs clarification;
- The landscape proposals for the site should not be left as a reserved matter as they are a fundamental part of the development;
- An initial discussion about maintenance and provision of a commuted sum needs to take place between the applicant and Mansfield District Council;
- A management plan for the landscape proposals is required;
- A clearer tree constraints plan needs to be provided and should be used to inform the landscape proposals.

24. Detailed landscape and visual impact comments are contained in Appendix 2.

### Nature Conservation

25. The proposal will not directly affect any designated nature conservation sites, however there is potential for indirect impacts on a Local Wildlife Site, Park Hall Lake, which is connected to the application site by a watercourse.
26. The application site lies within the 5km buffer zone around the 'prospective' Sherwood SPA, with the nearest part of the 'Indicative Core Area' approximately 2km to the east. No consideration has been given to this in the planning application and Mansfield District Council may wish to ask for further information on this matter in order to satisfy themselves that they have taken a 'risk-based approach' as advocated by Natural England.
27. Planning conditions are recommended, as detailed in Appendix 3, to ensure that mitigation and enhancement are secured and the biodiversity value of the proposed development is maximised.
28. Detailed nature conservation comments are contained in Appendix 3.

### Developer Contributions

29. Should the application proceed Nottinghamshire County Council will seek developer contributions relating to the County Council's responsibilities in line with the Council's adopted Planning Contributions Strategy and the Developer Contributions Team will work with the applicant and Mansfield District Council to ensure all requirements are met.
30. Appropriate contributions towards public transport will be sought and consideration should be given to whether a contribution towards future transport infrastructure could be secured.
31. In terms of education provision, a proposed development of 150 dwellings would yield an additional 32 primary places and 24 secondary places, however based on current pupil projections, the additional primary and secondary places can be accommodated in existing schools. A contribution towards education provision will not, therefore, be sought at this stage.

## Overall Conclusions

32. There are no strategic planning policy objections to the proposal in principle in the light of national planning policy on the supply of housing, but it is recognised that the proposal is contrary to local planning policy and that the District Council's recent SHLAA concluded that the application site is not needed to meet the locally agreed housing requirement given that there are more suitable/sustainable alternative sites.
33. Insufficient information has been provided with the application to enable adequate assessment of its acceptability in landscape and visual impact terms.
34. Provided that any planning permission granted is subject to the recommended planning conditions set out in Appendix 3 there are no objections in respect of nature conservation.
35. Developer contributions relating to the County Council's responsibilities in line with the Council's adopted Planning Contributions Strategy will be required towards public transport provision and consideration should be given to whether a contribution towards future transport infrastructure could be secured.

## **Other Options Considered**

36. This report considers all of the relevant issues in relation to the above planning application which have led to the recommendation, as set out below. Alternative options considered could have been to express no, or full, support for the application.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

37. It is recommended that the formal response approved by the Chairman of Environment and Sustainability Committee is noted in accordance with the protocol for dealing with strategic planning comments on planning applications approved by the Committee in November 2013.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

38. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

39. There are no direct financial implications.

## **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

40. There are no direct implications for Sustainability and the Environment.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

1) That Committee note that a formal response approved by the Chairman, in line with the information and advice set out in this report, was sent to Mansfield District Council on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

**Jayne Francis-Ward**  
**Corporate Director - Policy, Planning and Corporate Services**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact: Kathryn Haley, Principal Planning Officer, Planning Policy Team 0115 9774255**

#### **Constitutional Comments (SHB 21/01/14)**

41. This report is for noting only so no constitutional comments are required.

#### **Financial Comments (SEM 21/01/14)**

42. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

#### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

#### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

North Mansfield – Councillors Joyce Bosnjak and Parry Tsimbiridis

## Appendix 1: Site Location Plan



Outline planning application with all matters reserved for up to 150 no. dwellings including affordable homes, together with site access, open space, landscaping and associated site infrastructure.  
Park Hall Farm, Park Hall Road, Mansfield Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire.  
Planning Application No. 2013/0593/NT

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## **Appendix 2: Landscape and Visual Impact Comments**

The following documents were referred to in order to make comments:-

- Landscape, and Visual Impact Assessment – Influence CLA - November 2013 including associated appendices and drawings
- Site Appraisal and Indicative Development Principles - Influence CLA - November 2013
- Landscape Strategy Plan - INCLA N0094 PL08 – Influence CLA November 2013
- Design and Access Statement – AAA Ltd – December 2013
- Planning Statement - AAA Ltd – December 2013
- Arboricultural Report – Adam Winson – March 2013
- Red Line/ Site Location Plan - December 2013

The following were referred to for information purposes only:-

- Ecological Appraisal - BSG Ecology – Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey – Feb 13 and update November 2013
- Statement of Community Consultation - AAA Ltd - December 2013

### **Landscape, and Visual Impact Assessment – Influence CLA - November 2013 including associated appendices and Drawings**

#### **Section 2 Planning context**

##### **Paragraph 2.22 Policy NE8 Mansfield District Local Plan 1998**

Part of the proposed site is designated as the Mature Landscape Area 84 Nettleworth Manor. It is accepted that although policy NE08 restricting development in an MLA is saved on the 1998 plan, this policy will be superseded when the Local Development Framework is adopted. The MLA designation was taken into account in the preparation of the Mansfield Landscape Character Assessment.

#### **Section 3 Methodology**

The above LVIA follows the standard procedure set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Third Edition published in 2013. The methodology of the assessment is clearly defined in the appendix and includes definitions for the landscape and visual impacts described in the text.

#### **Section 4 Landscape Baseline Conditions**

The document makes reference to the relevant National and County level landscape character assessments for the area, including the Mansfield District Council Landscape Character Assessment.

The site is located in the Magnesian Limestone 25 - Sookholme Limestone Farmlands Policy Zone and is adjacent to ML 24 - Market Warsop River Meadowlands and Pasture, ML 26 - Warsop Vale Wooded Farmland, and ML 27 - Pleasley Hill Upland Plateau Farmland.

Although the above character areas are referred to the appendices, the characteristic features have been selected from a more complete list of features. The landscape analysis of condition and strength, and landscape actions contained in the policy sheets are also not referred to in the appendices. It would be better to include the complete Policy sheets for the above in the appendices and then to more fully refer to them in the LVIA text, particularly the landscape actions. For ML 25, in which the site is located, these actions would form a useful set of objectives to guide the landscape proposals for the site.

The sensitivity of the Policy Zone determined by the applicant as medium which is agreed

**Section 5 - Visual Assessment Baseline** – The sensitivity of the individual receptors determined is agreed.

**Section 6 - Potential Landscape and Visual Impacts** –

**Paragraph 6.4** – the lighting of the development site during the winter months, for up to 3 years, should be added to the list of construction activities that could potentially cause landscape and visual impacts.

**Section 7 - Proposed Development and Mitigation**

The landscape vision for the site is illustrated on the landscape strategy plan INCLA N0094 PL08

**Planting strategy**

**Hedgerows** – it is not clear from the information presented, where the hedgerows to be retained are to be located. These should be shown clearly on the detailed landscape plans for the site and cross referenced to in the Arboricultural Method Statement

*‘All other hedgerows that form the development boundaries should be retained where possible and enhanced’.*

This statement is a too vague, as above they should be identified and protected to BS 5837:2012. As a minimum, the hedgerow identified within the ecological survey as species rich, to the north east boundary of the site, should be retained.

**Screening trees and scrubland** –

*‘The existing trees provide a screen to the north and north eastern boundaries of the application site, which should be retained and enhance where possible’*

Again this statement is a too vague, as above the trees should be identified and protected to BS 5837:2012. In particular this applies to the mature trees to the north western boundary of the site.

Paragraph 7.10 .*'The tree planting should include a suitable palette of native species that are found elsewhere on the application site, such as Oak'*

The Nottinghamshire Landscape Character Assessment, of which the Mansfield LCA is a part, contains a species list for the Magnesian Limestone LCA (copy attached). This should be used in the preparation of the detailed planting design. This requirement should be included as a Condition.

## **Future Landscape Character**

Paragraphs 7.17-7.20 – as mentioned above, the applicant should refer to the LCA policy sheets to develop these paragraphs further.

## **Section 8. Landscape impact assessment**

### **Effects on Landscape character**

This section may be summarised as follows:-

NCA30 Southern Magnesian Limestone – impact on character - negligible adverse on completion and therefore not significant. We are in agreement with this conclusion.

ML 25 - Sookholme Limestone Farmlands – impact on character – minor beneficial on completion and therefore not significant. We are in agreement with this conclusion, the development of the site has the potential to accentuate the Magnesian Limestone character providing the policy actions are referred to.

### **Physical landscape impacts – effects on landscape element and features**

The LVIA concludes in summary that landscape impacts during the construction stage of the project are limited to **medium adverse** within the site area only, which we agree with.

It is not clear from paragraphs 8.9 and 8.10 what the longer term effects are. We have taken paragraph 8.9 to mean that physical impacts on the landscape are **moderate adverse** on the first day of the site completion, ie: when mitigation planting is in place but has not had time to mature. We have taken paragraph 8.10 to mean that in the longer term the planting will mature and the impact will reduce to a residual impact of **minor beneficial** which is not significant. We would agree with this conclusion but these paragraphs need to be clarified.

Subject to the above confirmation whilst we agree with the conclusions, the physical landscape impacts could be more carefully detailed. A tree survey has been commissioned and therefore it would be straightforward to itemise the number of mature trees and amount of hedgerow likely to be removed as part of the scheme. This is important so that it can be clearly demonstrated that mitigation planting will replace what has been removed as result of the development. The applicant should add more information about physical impacts in this section.

## **Section 9 – Assessment of Visual Effects**

12 viewpoints have been selected but these do not appear to have been agreed in advance with Mansfield District Council, which would be best practice.

Table 1 summarises the visual impacts during the construction stage of the project

Visual impacts are significant (moderate or above) for 7 of these viewpoints (some impacts are grouped together), that is for:-

Residents along Park Hall road  
Users of the PROW along Park Hall road  
Residents off Sandringham Drive  
Users of Littlewood Lane bridleway

Table 2 summarises the residual visual impacts during the operational stage – residual impacts are described as during operation (of the site) and when mitigation in place. They remain significant for 6 viewpoints, that is for:-

Residents along Park Hall road  
Users of the PROW along Park Hall road  
Residents off Sandringham Drive

The impact on users of Littlewood Lane Bridleway will reduce due to the maturing of vegetation along the north western boundary of the site.

It would be useful to have a more clear explanation of how the effects would decrease with time as the mitigation planting begins to mature. It is presumed that the above impacts apply to operational day 1 and that they will reduce with time but this needs to be stated more clearly and an additional table of residual visual effects provided.

It is accepted that although most of the impacts are on residents, which are the most sensitive type of receptor, a relatively small number of residents are affected, (ie:only those on the outer fringes of the existing estate and situated directly adjacent to the development).

In general the Landscape and Reclamation Team agrees that the visual assessment has been carried out clearly and systematically and NCC agrees with the conclusions of the visual assessment.

### **Site Appraisal and Indicative Development Principles - Influence CLA -November 2013**

No comments

### **Landscape Strategy Plan 0094 PL08 – Influence CLA – November 2013**

No comments

### **Design and Access Statement – AAA Ltd – December 2013**

The proposed site has been identified by Mansfield District Council in their SHLAA (Site no 22). The Park Hall Farm buildings in the centre of the existing site have been approved for residential conversion in advance of this proposal.

The DAS shows that the Scheme has evolved as a result of consultation with MDC and that the area around the existing farm buildings has been opened up to deliver a better setting for farm buildings and this is to be welcomed. However this means that the housing plot opposite a number of individual residential properties on Park Hall Drive will now be developed rather than remaining open, which increases the visual impact to these receptors.

**Page 11 Landscaping** - *'It is considered that landscape matters can be addressed through a condition requiring a full landscaping scheme to accompany a reserved matter application'*

NCC are not in agreement with this – the landscape proposals are a fundamental part of the design of the development and a detailed planting plan should be provided with the full application and should not remain as a reserved matter.

## **Planning Statement – AAA Ltd – Ltd – December 2013**

### **Section 3.2 Section 106**

**Paragraph 3.2.4 Commuted sums for POS maintenance-** this is the only mention of any type of maintenance of the external landscape of the scheme and this only refers to a sum being paid by the developer to the district to maintain the Public Open Space within the area. There is no mention of how the landscape treatment and existing features such as hedgerows, mature trees and the pond will be maintained and if a commuted sum will be set aside to finance the maintenance of the landscaped areas. The long term landscape and visual impacts are entirely dependent on the implementation and continued maintenance of the green infrastructure that is proposed. There is very limited information about the responsibility for and funding of this treatment and existing features to be retained

There is also no mention either here or in the LVIA, except in passing in paragraph 8.4, of any Landscape Management Plan for all of the Landscape Framework proposals, this would ensure that these successfully establish and thrive in the longer term, this should be included as a Condition of the application.

## **Arboricultural Study – Adam Winson – March 2013**

The distribution of trees on the site is summarised in this document as follows – *'Field boundary trees as to north east boundary mainly Ash, planted groups of mature Poplar trees adjacent to farm buildings, with a central area no tree cover, the majority of the boundary trees can be retained provided they are protected to BS5837 2012.'*

Paragraph 3.5.2 - an Arboricultural Method Statement should be requested by MDC as suggested here as a planning condition

The Appendix 5 tree constraints plan is very difficult to read, due to its poor reproduction – the colours distinguishing the 4 tree categories are not clear, This would be a useful document for

refining the landscape proposals for the site and incorporating existing features into the detailed plans, the applicant should provide a clearer representation of the plan.

## **Summary**

**In summary the following amendments and clarifications are required by the applicant, to the documents as detailed:-**

- **Greater reference should be made to Policy sheet ML 25 Sookholme Limestone Farmlands, the policy sheets should be included in the appendices and used in the LVIA to develop the landscape strategy for the site in section 7.**
- **The physical landscape impacts of the proposal need to be detailed more fully , the vegetation to be removed should be quantified.**
- **The visual impacts need to be separated for operational day 1 of the site and then for the longer term, ie: the residual impacts. This section of the document is a little confused at the moment and needs clarification.**
- **The Landscape proposals for the site should not be left as a reserved matter**
- **An initial discussion about maintenance and provision of a commuted sum needs to take place between the applicant and Mansfield District Council**
- **A management plan for the landscape proposals is also required**
- **A clearer tree constraints plan needs to be provided by the applicant, and should be used to inform the landscape proposals.**

**In summary the Landscape Team are not able to comment fully on the proposal until the above information is provided by the applicant, once this is provided we will consider the application again.**

Please contact Helen Jones should you wish to discuss any of the above in more detail.

Helen Jones  
Landscape Architect  
Landscape and Reclamation Team

### Appendix 3: Nature Conservation Comments

Thank you for consulting the Nature Conservation Unit of the Conservation Team on the above matter. We have the following comments regarding nature conservation issues:

#### Designated sites

The proposals will not directly affect any designated nature conservation sites. The nearest SSSI, Hills and Holes and Sookholme Brook, is located approximately 1.4km to the north, whilst the nearest Local Wildlife Site (SINC), Hind Car Wood 2/88, is approximately 260m to the north-west. Another Local Wildlife Site - Park Hall Lake, Nettleworth 2/96 – is connected to the site by virtue of a watercourse, and potential indirect impacts on this site are considered further below.

In addition, the site lies within the 5km buffer zone around the 'prospective' Sherwood SPA, with the nearest part of the 'Indicative Core Area' approximately 2km to the east. No consideration has been given to this in the planning application, and Mansfield District Council may wish to ask for further information on this matter in order to satisfy themselves that they have taken a 'risk-based approach' as advocated by natural England, paying regard to their most recent advice note on the subject, dated 22 July 2011.

#### Surveys

A range of ecological surveys have been carried out at the site in support of the application, including an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, and surveys for bats, breeding birds and great crested newts. The surveys are up-to-date and their methodologies followed relevant best practice guidelines.

The surveys confirmed that the site comprises primarily of three arable fields, with small areas of species-poor semi-improved grassland, bounded by hedgerows and trees, with a pond also present. No great crested newts were found in the pond, and a fairly typical range of birds were found to be using the site. Most notably, the surveys suspected the presence of maternity roosts for both common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats in the derelict Park Hall Farm site adjacent to the development site (and to which specific access for surveys was not permitted), and foraging and commuting activity was recorded particularly along the north-west and northern site boundaries and along the access road to Park Hall Farm. Several trees on the site boundary were also identified as having the potential to hold roosting bats.

The proposals involve the retention of existing boundary features, and the existing pond. The incorporation of the pond into the landscaping scheme is particularly welcomed, and provides an opportunity to enhance this feature. It appears to be the case that the pond is not being used as a water attenuation feature, and therefore there will be no down-stream issues in terms of water quality, but confirmation of this should be sought.

#### Landscaping

A **condition** should be used to require the submission of a detailed landscaping scheme. This should cover the following:

- Details of species mixes, establishment methods and maintenance regimes
- The use native species appropriate to the local area and of native genetic origin on peripheral parts of the site and in areas of public open space (especially where these are informal), and for gapping up existing hedgerows
- The use of ornamental species with high value for wildlife in more formal planting areas
- Amendments to the current landscaping scheme to provide additional hedge planting along the interface between the development site and Park Hall Farm
- The open space around the pond should be designed as a wildlife area, with species-rich grassland and native trees and shrubs
- Details of enhancement works to be carried out on the retained pond (to ensure that it holds water more permanently and to a greater depth than it currently does), including marginal planting
- Compliance with the requirements of the bat mitigation strategy (see below)

## **Mitigation and enhancement**

The following mitigation and enhancement measures should be sought, and secured through a **condition** where appropriate:

- The production of a bat mitigation strategy, to cover the matters outlined in section 4.10 of the Further Ecological Survey Report dated November 2013 (i.e. sensitive lighting, retention of an unlit buffer around the site boundary, the inclusion of green corridors across the development site, and the re-survey of any trees requiring works/removal on the north-western site boundary).
- The removal of vegetation outside the bird nesting season (which runs from March to August inclusive), unless otherwise approved.
- The incorporation of bird and bat boxes into the fabric of a proportion of the buildings proposed at the site, to include boxes suitable for house sparrow, starling and swift.
- The incorporation of features to allow the use of gardens by hedgehogs, as outlined in section 4.21 of the Further Ecological Survey Report dated November 2013
- A pre-commencement survey for badgers.
- The production of a plan showing all retained trees and hedgerows, along with measures to protect their root systems.

We trust you will find the above comments of use, but if you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Nick Crouch  
Senior Practitioner Nature Conservation  
0115 9696520