

04/03/2020

WSCC Ecological Response to...

Application Number	WSCC/004/20
Location	Evergreen Farm West Hoathly Road East Grinstead RH19 4NE
Proposal	Restoration of the former Standen Landfill site with a woodland and pasture landfill cap system
Grid Reference	539059 136298

Summary conclusion:

No ecological objection subject to the imposition of suitably worded conditions.

My previous response applies equally to this application and is copied below for convenience.

Concluding remarks

Through the consultation process for this application the potential need for a Habitats Regulations Assessment has been raised. Natural England has responded to both this application and the previous withdrawn application (WSCC/061/19). In each cases NE are satisfied that the proposed development will not have likely significant effects on statutorily protected sites.

Accordingly, within the relevant decision documents the LPA should record that a likely significant effect can be ruled out.

Summary conclusion:

No ecological objection subject to the imposition of suitably worded conditions.

Comment

The GI (Geo-Environmental 2018) report highlights the need for capping with gas and leachate management over the former landfill having found elevated concentrations of Benzo(a)pyrene across the site elevated levels of CO₂ and CH₄ within areas tested for ground gas including the ancient woodland.

An ecological study has been undertaken (Ecology Co-op 2019) and all recommended phase 2 surveys have been completed to support the application. The studies included Phase 1 Habitat survey and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal with Phase surveys for bats, great crested newts, reptiles, and dormice

Using a mixture of eDNA analysis, torch and bottle surveys a low population of great crested newts (GCN) at pond 7 (NE of the site) were recorded >250m from the site have been recorded. The report concludes that the development is low risk to GCN and that they are very unlikely to disperse outside of the high quality habitat surrounding the identified breeding pond in significant numbers and reach the former landfill site.

Transect surveys supplemented by static bat detectors for bats showed the site to be used by low numbers of common bat species most often commuting at high altitude. Trees within the site are largely unsuitable for bat roosts however mature oaks along the ancient woodland edge have more potential and whilst no specific roosting features were observed the trees were not individually checked in detail. However, the scheme will result in the loss of some semi-mature oak trees on the north-western boundary. Should the removal of any trees with bat roosting potential become necessary, further surveys (ground based visual inspections, followed by either tree climbing inspections using an endoscope, or bat emergence surveys), are proposed to fully assess their potential to support roosting bats in advance of construction, to ensure that targeted and effective mitigation can be put in place. Outline mitigation has been proposed in the event that an unplanned tree removal is required.

Dormice were confirmed absent following a nest tube survey over 6 months in suitable habitat.

Only one species of reptile (Low numbers of grass snake) was recorded from the heat trap survey. Maintaining the current sward down to a low level will ensure that the snakes avoid the working area.

An active badger 'main sett' was discovered. Impacts on badgers are expected to be indirect and low. The badger sett will be monitored and remedial action is proposed and will be implemented as required.

Whilst no direct impacts on the ancient woodland are expected some unavoidable indirect impacts will result from the deposition of spoil and installation of the ancillary infrastructure. However, there is evidence of historical damage of the woodland edge by the previous operations. Containing the leachate overrides the potential impacts on the already degraded woodland edge. Part of the site will be replanted by way of compensation for the predicted indirect impacts.

Conclusion

The ecological study has been undertaken to the correct standard and the mitigation proposed is reasonable. On the basis of the evidence provided there is no ecological reason to submit an objection to the proposed scheme.

Proposed Conditions

Bats

Prior to the commencement of the felling of any tree along the ancient woodland edge or any other tree deemed to have bat potential an Ecological Clerk of Works will be commissioned to undertake a final check for bats and oversee the 'soft-felling' of affected trees. Note: Should protected bat species be present work must stop and Natural England informed. A license may be required from Natural England before works can re-commence, Natural England will advise.

Reason

To safeguard bat species and in accordance with NPPF 8c, 170, 175

Badgers

Prior to the commencement of any aspect of the proposed development within 30m of the existing or any new badger sett an Ecological Clerk of Works will be commissioned to monitor and advise on the precautionary approach required to secure the welfare of this species. All recommended action shall be undertaken promptly and reported to the County Planning Authority.

Reason

To safeguard the welfare of badgers and in accordance with NPPF 8c, 170, 175

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