

Comments for Planning Application W/22/1877

Application Summary

Application Number: W/22/1877

Address: Land at Warwickshire Police HQ, Woodcote Lane, Leek Wootton CV35 7QA

Proposal: Application for Outline Planning Permission for up to 83 dwellings (including affordable housing), access, internal roads and footpaths, car parking, public openspace, landscaping, drainage and other associated works and infrastructure(all matters of details reserved except for the vehicular access to the site).

Case Officer: Dan Charles

Customer Details

Name: Dr David Morley

Address: Ivy Cottage Woodcote Lane Leek Wootton

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Commentor

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment:30th December 2022

Objection to Planning Application W/22/1877

Dear Warwick District Planning Committee,

I am writing to you to share my objections to Planning Application

W/22/1877 - Land at Warwickshire Police Headquarters, Woodcote Lane, Leek Wootton, Warwickshire, CV35 7QA

Environmental Impact: Ecology, Habitat, and Species Diversity of Woodcote Lane Development

Professor David Morley, PhD, FRSL

Summary

I read the Ecology Appraisal Report by Aspect Ecology submitted November 2022. I have found its surveys to be incomplete compared to observed recordings; to be reliant on a limited number of surveys with concomitantly reduced data collection; producing distorted conclusions extrapolated from insubstantial surveying.

The results are skewed by methodology, making the conclusions suspect. The potential environmental benefits outlined in the conclusion to the Aspect Ecology Report are entirely based

on supposition and wishful thinking. I offer in balance a longitudinal survey over 6 years as evidence of greater species diversity, and a robust conclusion that exceptional environmental damage will result from the Woodcote Lane Development.

1. Ecological Survey 2016-2022

As a trained ecologist, I have also surveyed these areas over the period 2016-2022 at all times of the year for birds, mammals, amphibians, and butterflies. It will be valuable to read my longitudinal species report alongside the report from Aspect Ecology, commissioned by the building firm, to observe considerable significant differences in species records and biological diversity.

I draw specific attention to the disparity between my 6-year bird survey and that of the Ecology Aspect bird survey section 5.1.10 which records only 37 species, and which concludes, 'The proposals will result in the loss of some scrub and species poor semi-improved grassland, however; valuable priority habitats on site for nesting birds such as hedgerows and treelines will sought to be retained under the proposals'. The real picture of bird populations over a longer time offers a far more diverse profile for species (54 spp.) and habitats, and therefore a quite different outlook for species diversity during and after development.

I can report as follows for the designated site adjacent to Woodcote Lane. The annotation "(n)" indicates species observed building nests, being viewed on nests, and/or departing nests in trees and hedgerows on the site in question. The records cover years 2016-2022.

Birds:

1. Black-headed Gull,
2. Starling,
3. House Sparrow (n),
4. Tawny Owl,
5. Collared Dove,
6. Song Thrush (n),
7. Mistle Thrush (n),
8. Blackbird (n),
9. Robin (n),
10. Wren (n),
11. Great Tit (n),
12. Blue Tit (n),
13. Greenfinch,
14. Chaffinch,
15. Goldfinch,
16. Pheasant,
17. Cuckoo,

18. Woodpigeon (n),
 19. Rook,
 20. Carrion Crow,
 21. Magpie (n),
 22. Jackdaw (n),
 23. Redwing,
 24. Fieldfare,
 25. Swallow,
 26. House Martin,
 27. Skylark,
 28. Yellowhammer,
 29. Kestrel,
 30. Whitethroat,
 31. Raven,
 32. Red Kite,
 33. Buzzard,
 34. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (rare),
 35. Green Woodpecker (n),
 36. Sparrowhawk,
 37. Great spotted Woodpecker,
 38. Blackcap (n),
 39. Chiffchaff,
 40. Linnet,
 41. Starling,
 42. Swift,
 43. Willow Warbler (n),
 44. Long-tailed Tit,
 45. Treecreeper (n),
 46. Nuthatch (n),
 47. Jay (n),
 48. Coal Tit,
 49. Goldcrest,
 50. Heron,
 51. Barn Owl,
 52. Pied Wagtail.
 53. Woodcock
 54. Common Snipe
- 54 species.

Mammals and Amphibians:

1. Daubenton's Bat (protected),
2. Common Pipistrelle (protected),

3. Barbastelle bat (protected),
 4. Noctule bat (protected),
 5. Brown Long-eared bat (protected),
 6. Whiskered Bat (protected),
 7. Hedgehog,
 8. Muntjac Deer,
 9. Fallow Deer,
 10. Mole,
 11. Field Vole,
 12. Grey Squirrel,
 13. Wood Mouse,
 14. Rabbit,
 15. Weasel,
 16. Hare,
 17. Fox,
 18. Badger,
 19. Otter,
 20. Common Frog,
 21. Grass Snake.
- 21 species.

Butterflies:

1. Purple Hairstreak,
 2. Comma,
 3. Ringlet,
 4. Common Blue,
 5. Orange Tip,
 6. Green Veined White,
 7. Meadow Brown,
 8. Small Copper,
 9. Gatekeeper,
 10. Small Skipper,
 11. Large Skipper,
 12. Painted Lady,
 13. Peacock,
 14. Small White,
 15. Large White,
 16. Red Admiral,
 17. Small Tortoiseshell,
 18. Speckled Wood,
 19. Brimstone.
- 19 species.

2. Aspect Ecology Report 2022

There is considerable diversity of species that will be lost given the current plans for building and development, and these losses will not be made up elsewhere, despite claims in the Aspect Ecology report that species diversity could be enhanced by deploying bird and bat boxes on whatever trees are left undamaged: 'the opportunity exists to provide net gains in biodiversity under the proposals' (7.6). This summary is based on wishful thinking: 'the opportunity exists'.

An opportunity is not an action plan with strategic, costed, long-term environmental aims. The proposal does not offer any concrete plans for such conservation measures, nor for their continued maintenance. The utility time of a nest- or bat-box is at best 5 years, and they require annual maintenance to clean them of parasites and debris during this period after which they need replacing (the considerable hazard of bird flu is not mentioned).

Conclusions need to be tested by a control. 'The opportunity exists' for the site to be enhanced by not building 83 houses and deploying nest boxes that are regularly maintained and replaced in this way; for the hedgerows, bushes, scrub, and trees, not to be destroyed. The local community has voiced its wish to preserve and enhance environmental diversity. Cala has no such plan. The conclusions of the ecology report are almost entirely false.

3. Diversity and Habitat Destruction

The presence of such diversity of birds, mammals, and lepidoptera defaults from a highly diverse and abundant insect and spider populations in trees, bushes, and pastureland much of which will be built upon; and a new longitudinal survey should be made with urgency. The populations of all species will be reduced and/or destroyed by the removal of 60+ trees and 7 hedgerows and will not recover.

The proposals are therefore at odds with the claim in their Planning Statement that Cala will be maximising the retention of existing trees, hedges, and no account is taken of the impact of these tree and hedge removals on the ecology of the Woodcote site although it follows from my surveying that the impact will be severe and/or terminal for those populations. This matter is being drawn to the attention of the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust whose cooperation and fieldwork skills should be sought.

Objection

Overall, given the serious ecological issues outlined above, none of which are acknowledged or addressed in the planning application, I object strongly to the current planning application and

recommend that it is rejected. The methodology of the official ecology survey is insufficiently thorough. Survey results are skewed by methodology, making the conclusions suspect. The potential environmental benefits outlined in the conclusion to the Aspect Ecology Report are entirely based on supposition and wishful thinking.

I advise a thorough scientific survey undertaken in consultation with The Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, and with closer attention paid to the established plans for development in the village, as outlined in the Leek Wootton Neighbourhood plan and the Warwick District Local Plan.

Professor David Morley