

Lordship Farm, Holwell

Landscape and Ecology Management Plan



Client:

Netherdown Ltd.

Report Reference:

RSE_8709_R1_V3_LEMP

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PROJECT

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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Purpose and Scope of this Report

- i RammSanderson Ecology Ltd (RS) was commissioned by Netherdown Ltd (the Client) to produce a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) to address Conditions 21, 22 and 24 of planning permission (22/01842/FP) relating to the conversion of a Grade II listed building and associated curtilage listed building into two semi-detached residential dwellings. The works also include erection of four detached and semi-detached dwellings; a four bay cart shed for covered parking; associated parking and gardens; and minor alteration to existing vehicular access and partial widening of access road following demolition of existing structures (all works herein referred to as the 'Scheme').
- ii The Scheme is located on land at Lordship Farm, north of Waterloo Lane, Holwell, North Hertfordshire, SG5 3SU (herein referred to as the 'Site').
- iii This LEMP is intended to provide sufficient information to discharge Conditions 21, 22 and 24 and is based upon the client's site proposals plan (Appendix 1, Figure 3).

Condition 21

'No development shall take place until details of the design, location and maintenance of temporary barn owl boxes is submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details will be implemented during the course of the development.

Reason: To ensure the potential for barn owl roosting on the farm during the construction phase is maintained.'

Condition 22

'Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, details of the design, location and maintenance of permanent barn owl boxes must be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details will be implemented as approved.

Reason: To ensure the potential for barn owl roosting on the farm post development is maintained.'

Condition 24

'No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The LEMP shall include the following:

- a. A Description and evaluation of the features to be managed.
- b. Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management.
- c. Aims and objectives of management.
- d. Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives (for example but not limited to enhancements such as bat and bird boxes (including for barn owls) and other features for fauna, native species planting and hedgerows, wildflower meadow and mixes, species of benefit for biodiversity, e.g. pollinators).
- e. Prescriptions for management options.
- f. Preparation of a works schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a minimum five year period).
- g. Management responsibilities; and
- h. Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures.

These works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the ecological impacts of the biodiversity present are properly addressed on this site and to demonstrate net gain can be achieved from the development.'

1.2 Background Information

- i RS was previously instructed by Bidwells LLP to produce a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for the Site (RSE_837_02_V1, 2017). As part of the appraisal undertaken, a Bat Building Assessment (BBA) was included, during which two of the buildings (B1 and B2) within the Site were assessed as having 'Low' Potential to support roosting bats. Evidence pertaining to barn owl occupation was also noted within the buildings leading to further surveys to assess for nesting behaviour alongside dusk emergence surveys for roosting bats (RSE_837_03_V1, 2017).
- ii The results of the barn owl surveys undertaken indicated that the Site was used as a regular roost location with occupation noted in each building (B1 – B6), however no nesting was identified. No bats were noted emerging from any building within the Site.
- iii Subsequent to the above, RS was instructed by Roebuck Land and Planning Ltd to produce a Construction and Ecological Management Plan (CEMP) to inform the discharging of planning conditions 21, 22 and 23 of the planning application (22/01842/FP). This was produced and provided to Roebuck Land and Planning Ltd in March 2021, with subsequent updates and revisions made in April 2023 (RSE_6908_V1_CEMP, 2023).

1.3 Site Context and Location

- i The Site is located at Lordship Farm (Appendix 1, Figure 4), north of Waterloo Lane, Holwell, Hertfordshire, SG5 3SU (Central Grid Reference TL 16335 32923). The immediate surrounding landscape comprises pasture and arable farmland, with woodland to the west of the Site and Waterloo Lane to the south. The wider landscape comprises of predominantly arable fields intersected with hedgerow, with the rural village of Holwell to the immediate northeast and semi-rural town of Hitchin approximately 2.5km southeast.

1.4 Management Objectives and Targets

- i In compiling the management plan for this Site the following relevant articles of legislation are considered with regard to maximise the local and national benefits in accordance with their targets;
 - The National Planning Policy Framework (2023)
 - ODPM Circular 06/2005 (retained as Technical Guidance on NPPF 2023)
 - The Conservation of Habitats & Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (as amended);
 - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
 - EC Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds 79/409/EEC;
 - The Hedgerow Regulations 1997;
 - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006; and
 - Hertfordshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (HLBAP).

1.4.2 Native Planting

- i The housing development includes newly created habitats Including:
 - Individual trees;
 - Native shrub; and
 - New hedgerow planting;
- ii To maximise the ecological benefits of these habitats, native species are recommended as detailed within the relevant sections below.

1.4.3 Barn Owl

- i During the initial survey (2017), barn owl activity was recorded within the buildings on Site. Evidence included whitewash splashing, pellets and a barn owl was observed within the Site curtilage. As a result, it was recommended that a further inspection was conducted by a licenced barn owl surveyor to determine the extent of the activity and whether any nesting was taking place. On-site mitigation measures were also recommended to be included within the final Site designs. As such, objectives are to provide long-term roosting and nesting habitat for barn owl post-development.

1.4.4 Nesting Birds

- i The second objective is to provide adequate replacement nesting in order to ensure the development does not impact upon breeding success of the local bird population.

1.5 Comparison to Policy

- i In reviewing the local policy objectives against the proposed scheme the table below identifies where it is considered that the proposals meet these targets and under what criteria.

Table 1: Targets and Objectives Criteria, Compared to Policy

Targets	Objective Criteria			Rationale
Native Hedgerow	Planting:	HLBAP/ 2006	NERC Act	A short section of hedgerow is proposed, which will improve habitat connectivity as an ecological corridor across the Site boundaries.
Barn Owl / Nesting Birds	NPPF	2023, EC Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds 79/409/EEC		The inclusion of bird boxes on Site will enhance Site biodiversity by allowing species to become resident to the Site and not transitory.

1.6 Management Responsibility

- i The responsibility for implementing this management plan will be the Site contractor (nominated by the Client) and any associated sub-contractors/management team during the construction time. A copy of this document should be kept on Site and referred to where necessary.
- ii Following completion of construction works, the responsibility for upkeep and management of the prescriptions outlined within the following report will be provided via the management agent for the land with fees outlined to prospective buyers of the proposed properties within ongoing responsibility remaining with the existing land agent. Upon completion of sales, handover packs shall be provided to homeowners outlining management prescriptions.

1.7 Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW)

- i All supervisory works pertaining to protected species outlined are to be carried out by an experienced ecologist (nominated by RammSanderson Ecology Ltd.).

2 MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

2.1 Native Hedgerow Planting

2.1.1 Hedgerows

- i Native hedgerow planting along the boundaries of the Site consisting of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) scrub will provide further foraging opportunities for bats, birds and hedgehogs along with nesting opportunities for some breeding bird species. The layout of the hedgerow planting is shown in Appendix 1. Additional hedgerows consisting of native and non-native species will be planted between and alongside the plots, again this is shown in Appendix 1. Suggested species include box (*Buxus sp.*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and yew (*Taxus baccata*). are recommended due to their value to wildlife.
- ii Planting should be undertaken during the winter period in single rows. Early management of the hedgerow will be limited. This will also include replacement of dead saplings and removal of protective sheaths. After the first five years, management could potentially include laying, gapping up and cutting. Management of the hedgerow will be minimal, with traditional management practices such as hand trimming and coppicing undertaken where possible. There will be no hedgerow management over the period March to August inclusive, to safeguard nesting birds. Initially, to encourage dense and bushy growth, the newly planted hedge should be pruned during winter for the first couple of years.

2.2 Tree and Native Scrub Planting

- i New trees and scrub planted during the winter period within the Site will utilise a range of native species (including whitebeam (*Sorbus sp.*), birch (*Betula pendula*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*)) that provide a broad variety of microclimates suited to different invertebrate species.
- ii Trees must be planted and monitored for failure and will require regular watering within the first 4-6 weeks whilst establishing. Any failures must be replaced on a like for like basis, unless it is clear a certain species is not surviving on this site at which point the species will be substituted.
- iii Tree aftercare will comprise of formative pruning with woodchip/bark mulch applied where appropriate to a depth of 75mm. A maintenance plan comprising watering where necessary, weed control, mulching and checking of the support systems must be carried out until successful establishment.

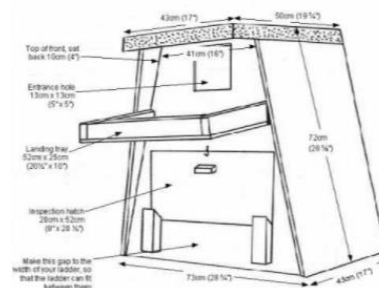
2.3 Barn Owl

2.3.1 Temporary Barn Owl Nest Box Provision

- i A temporary barn owl nest box is to be erected within 200m of Site and in sight of the development. The box will be positioned so that it is away from Site works and sources of artificial lighting but with the entrance hole visible. A mature oak tree was noted c. 60m west of the buildings and is included within the land ownership. The box could be erected on the tree and retained post development to form further enhancement and opportunities within the Site. An alternative would be the use of a barn owl box erected on a pole however, this would be considered a less favourable option as pole mounted boxes are exposed to the weather and difficult to erect.
- ii Nest box considerations and design:
 - Entrance hole to the box should ideally be 130mm x 130mm with 100mm x 100mm as a minimum,
 - The box should be totally enclosed, except for the entrance hole and dry inside,

- The depth from the bottom of the entrance hole to the box floor must be at least 450mm,
- Have an exercise/landing platform below the entrance hole,
- Be positioned at least 3m above ground level.

Figure 1: Barn Owl Tree Box Example and Specifications



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2.3.2 Permanent Barn Owl Nest Box Provision

- Permanent provision of nesting sites will be positioned within three units as outlined in Figure 5. These will be formed by sectioning an area of loft space which is accessed from an entrance hole within the building wall or roof. The area can be constructed using stone, brick, or timber. It is recommended that sound insulation is included to reduce the noise disturbance to the residents from the owls moving or calling. The external entrance hole should be located at least 3m above ground level with the entrance hole 130mm wide and 250mm high. The floor area of the chamber will measure 1m² (e.g. 400mm x 2000mm). The depth from the bottom of the entrance hole to the floor of the chamber will be a minimum of 460mm. An inspection hatch will be incorporated to allow debris to be removed every 3- 4 years to maintain internal depth and prolong barn owl use.
- Clearance of debris and inspection of boxes are to be undertaken by appropriately licenced person/s. This shall be arranged by the Client on behalf of future tenants and where possible in liaison with local barn owl groups. The results of the barn owl checks should be reported by the licenced person to the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre.
- The entrance hole to the chamber will be positioned in such a way as to maximise the chance of it being noticed by a passing bird and should not face a tree or other building.

Figure 2: Loft Entrance Examples



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2.4 Timescales and Compliance Monitoring

- i Details of the timescales of the implementation of all proposed works are provided in the table below.
- ii Monitoring reports will be required to confirm that the proposed mitigation and enhancements have been enacted, and to confirm the establishment of the habitat creation and if any additional intervention is required.
- iii An initial, post-construction compliance check will be undertaken to confirm that the barn owl mitigation proposed has been installed, including photos.
- iv Further reports will be required in years 1, 2 and 5 detailing any planting failures, replacement planting required, and overall condition of the establishing habitats. This will be evidenced via photographs.
- v Reports will be submitted as either letter reports or email.
- vi Where trees and other planting are establishing successfully, a 5th year review of this LEMP is deemed unnecessary. However, where issues, such as planting failure, have not been resolved identified within years 1, 2 and 5, a review of the LEMP would be required in year 5.

Table 2: Management Timetable

Ecological Feature	Prescription	Timing	Pre-construction	During construction	Annual	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Hedgerows	Planting of stock	Winter				x				
	Replacement of failed stock	September - February				x	x	x	x	x
	Removal of guards	As required						x	x	x
	Watering in times of drought	During periods of prolonged drought				x	x	x		
	Hand trimming and/or pruning	September - February				x	x			
	On Site vegetation removal	September - February				x	x			
Barn Owl Boxes	Installation on trees		x			x				
	Installation of integrated boxes			x		x				
New Trees and Native Scrub	Planting of stock	Winter				x				
	Replacement of failed stock	September - February				x	x	x	x	x
	Removal of guards	As required						x	x	x
	Watering in times of drought	During periods of prolonged drought				x	x	x		

Ecological Feature	Prescription	Timing	Pre-construction	During construction	Annual	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	On site vegetation removal	October - February				x				

3 REFERENCES

- i BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development 2013: The British Standards Institution.
- ii Department of Communities & Local Government, 2019. National Planning Policy Framework, London: DCLG.
- iii Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2017. Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. 2nd ed. Winchester: CIEEM.
- iv Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 06/2005. Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and their impact within the planning system. London: ODPM.
- v RammSanderson Ecology Ltd. (2017). Lordship Farm, Protected Species Report. Ref: RSE_837_01_V1.
- vi RammSanderson Ecology Ltd. (2023). Lordship Farm, Construction and Ecological Management Plan. Ref: RSE_6908_V1_CEMP.

APPENDIX 1: FIGURES

Figure 3: Client Site Proposals Plan

Figure 4: Site Context and Location Plan

Figure 5: Barn Owl Box Plan

