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Technical Note: Ecology **on** **Land South of Turnpike Lane, Ickleford: Scheme amendments – provision of cycle routes**

Following the design workshop held on the 11th of February with Hawridge Strategic Land and North Herts District Council, minor amendments have been made to the scheme to incorporate a green spine and active travel route through the development.

This Technical Note provides an ecological review of the potential additional impacts arising from the inclusion of the active travel route and identifies appropriate ecological avoidance and mitigation measures.

This assessment has been informed both by:

- the extensive baseline information held by Clarkson & Woods regarding the site; and
- by additional information provided on the access points by the arboricultural consultant following their recent site inspection (Additional Notes dated 17/02/2026).

At this outline application stage, the precise alignment of the cycle route and associated access points remain subject to detailed design. The eastern and western connection points have therefore not been subject to detailed ecological survey. Given this uncertainty, it is considered appropriate that any necessary targeted survey work is secured by the permission via a planning condition and undertaken at the reserved matters stage, once final alignments are confirmed.

Western Connection – Bedford Road

The proposed western connection will pass through an area comprising smaller trees and scrub, including hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and elm *Ulmus procera*.

There appears to be sufficient flexibility along this boundary to accommodate a route whilst avoiding significant tree loss. Based upon the indicative layout, the only potentially affected tree, as confirmed in the arboricultural note submitted alongside, of any particular significance or potential to support roosting bats would be the semi-mature ash tree, currently heavily covered in ivy (photograph provided right).

Ivy covered trees can, albeit rarely, obscure features but this can be difficult to determine without further assessment. The presence of ivy covering the stem would mean that this tree would be considered a tree of FRI-I potential¹.

The arboricultural note suggests a no-dig approach to the creation of the active travel route might be considered which would avoid the need to fell



Ash Tree with Mature Ivy Covering Principal Limbs

¹ Table 6.2 (pg. 79) - Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London

trees. However, should felling of this tree prove unavoidable at the detailed design stage, further bat roost assessment, likely including emergence survey work (as climbing inspections of ash trees are not considered safe to complete), would be undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance. At this outline stage such surveys are not considered essential to inform determination of the application.

Given the potential for design refinement to avoid impacts on trees with roost potential a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) for bats is considered appropriate². The preparation of a suitable PWMS can be secured by condition.

No other significant constraints are present within the western connection area:

- Reptiles and amphibians including great crested newts and these species area considered likely absent;
- No badger setts are present.

Vegetation clearance may affect nesting birds. Clearance of these habitats will need to be managed carefully to avoid impacts to nesting birds, ideally taking place during the winter period when nesting birds will be absent. Where this cannot be avoided clearance would need to be preceded by a careful inspection of habitats by an appropriate experienced ecologist to confirm the presence/absence of nesting birds. Where nests are confirmed vegetation clearance will need to be postponed until eggs have hatched and chicks have fledged.

Eastern Connection

To the east of the site, it is understood that ambition would be to locate the active travel route without requiring clearance of trees. The trees present at this location are immature and do not support features suitable for roosting bats, or at least none are visible from the ground. As these trees will be preserved, it is not anticipated that the presence or absence of roosting bats is material. Nevertheless further assessment of the trees can be secured through the PWMS.

Lighting Considerations

The active travel route may require lighting to ensure the safety of users. However, the introduction of lighting has potential to adversely affect foraging and commuting bats, including light-adverse species recorded on site such as barbastelle *Barbastellus barbastellus*. The boundary features and blocks of woodland in particular are likely to be of elevated importance for foraging and commuting bats and therefore such areas would need to be protected from artificial lighting.

Potential impacts can be effectively managed through preparation of an ecologically sensitive lighting strategy which should include:

- Identification of and maintenance of dark corridors on and around the site;
- Justification of lighting necessity and extent;
- Use of warm colour temperature luminaires (3000K or lower)
- Direction lighting and shielding fittings to minimise light spill into non-target areas;
- Control of illuminance levels along key bat commuting features;
- Consideration of part-night lighting (or dimming) where appropriate.

Low-level lighting (e.g. bollards or recessed stud lighting) or the adoption of novel lighting approaches, such as red-shifted lighting which has been shown in some studies to reduce impacts upon certain communities of commuting bats.

The lighting strategy should be informed by the bat activity survey data collected on site and should reflect the presence of key linear features around the site which may be used by foraging and commuting bats. The preparation of an ecologically sensitive lighting strategy for the site can be secured by a condition of the planning permission.

² Figure 6.1 (pg. 78) - Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The presence of a paved route through this area will result in a small additional loss of biodiversity units. For the purposes of this addendum this has not been modelled or calculated.

However, given that the scheme requires the purchase of off-site units to satisfy requirements to deliver a 10% net gain in biodiversity the consequence of this additional loss will be to marginally increase the number of units required. As such an update to the BNG is not considered essential at this stage.

The areas affected by the proposed cycle route have all been included within the baseline units calculation and the only effect of the active travel route will be a small increase in the number and percentage loss of habitat units resulting from the scheme.

The active travel route and the impact that this has upon the BNG calculations would be fully considered during BNG calculations completed at the Reserve Matters stage.