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7723: LAND AT HORNDEAN ROAD, EMSWORTH

BRIEFING NOTE: SUMMARY OF COMPENSATION APPROACH AGREED WITH HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ECOLOGY TEAM

Introduction

1. This briefing note serves to summarise the approach to ecological compensation which has been agreed in principle between Ecology Solutions and Hampshire County Council Ecology Team (HCCET) in relation to the development proposals for land at Horndean Road, Emsworth (planning ref: APP/19/00768) (the Proposed Development).
2. It is agreed that the implementation of the strategy summarised below would sufficiently compensate for impacts to the existing SINC and moreover enable biodiversity net gain to be achieved as part of the Proposed Development. As such, it is considered that the scheme may come forward in full compliance with existing and emerging planning policy (not least Policy E14 of the Emerging Local Plan).

Background

3. Ecology Solutions have engaged extensively with the HCCET, as well as Havant Borough Council (HBC) Officers in relation to the Proposed Development. This engagement has included for detailed discussions on the appropriateness of on-site ecological mitigation to off-set impacts of development.
4. Following previous discussions, it remained the view of HCCET that on-site measures alone would not be sufficient to off-set the potential ecological impacts of the Proposed Development. Therefore, it was the view of HCCET that the scheme would not be compliant with Policy E14 of the emerging Local Plan in its current form. Nonetheless, it was acknowledged that the proposals to retain and enhance an area of SINC grassland within the site would go some way to off-setting potential harm.
5. However, HBC Officers confirmed that, subject to securing appropriate off-site compensation land, the emerging proposals would be able to sufficiently compensate for potential harm and therefore could come forward in accordance with emerging policy. HBC Officers confirmed that they owned land adjacent to

the application site which could be utilised for this purpose, subject to Metis Homes providing suitable funding for long-term management.

6. HBC Officers recommended that Ecology Solutions (as the applicants' ecological advisors) and HCCET discuss and agree an appropriate compensation strategy for off-site land. The agreed strategy is set out in the following section of this note.

Principles of Agreed Compensation Strategy

7. HCCET have confirmed their view that the proposal to compensate for on-site habitat loss through the delivery of meadow grassland in adjoining, council owned land would be acceptable in principle.
8. HCCET and Ecology Solutions discussed costings for habitat creation and management in the longer-term. It was reasonable and appropriate to use the cost estimates provided within the Warwickshire Calculator. These are as follows:
 - Average meadow creation cost per hectare - £1,686
 - Average meadow management cost per hectare - £227
9. Ecology Solutions and HCCET discussed the the area (quantum) of habitat which would be required to compensate for the loss of SINC. Ecology Solutions stated their view that a maximum area of 0.5ha would be appropriate given that the scheme would result in the loss of only slightly more semi-natural habitat than this (a 0.59ha reduction in semi-natural habitat) and would moreover be securing an uplift in the quality of retained habitats.
10. Whilst HCCET acknowledged this uplift, they maintained the view that a 'like for like' quantum of habitat would be appropriate – i.e. the full 0.59ha. The compensation strategy was therefore agreed on this basis.
11. It was agreed appropriate that management of the off-site grassland should be comparable (in duration and type) to that proposed for on-site grassland. The duration of on-site grassland management is proposed as 80 years (in perpetuity).
12. On the assumption that 0.59ha of off-site meadow grassland is to created and managed in-perpetuity, this would accrue a total sum of £11,709.14 (£10,714.40 for 80 years of management and £994.74 in upfront habitat creation) when based on the above figures.
13. HCCET noted that this sum would need to be amended to reflect inflation over the 80 year period. This was agreed. HCCET also recommended that a precautionary sum be set aside to account for unexpected works (i.e. a 'buffer figure'). Ecology Solutions consider that a buffer figure of 10% would be more than appropriate. This would raise the overall sum to £12,880.05 (prior to inflation).
14. Ecology Solutions and HCCET also discussed the benefits of both the off-site land and the on-site (i.e. the retained SINC area) land being managed as a single ecological unit and by a single management body. It was agreed that it would be ecologically beneficial for this to be the case. HCCET confirmed that they would be happy from a biodiversity perspective for the retained area of the SINC to be bequeathed to the LPA, if accompanied by an upfront financial contribution proportional to that proposed for the off-site land. The LPA will of course have experience in managing a range of habitats, not least meadow grassland, and will

be able to draw on their expertise from management of council owned SINC's elsewhere in the Borough. They would therefore be well suited to adopt and manage this land.

15. This proportional cost of this on-site management (based on 0.27ha of grassland being bequeathed to and managed by the LPA) would amount to £5,894.26 (inclusive of 10% buffer but not accounting for inflation)

Conclusion

16. This note serves to summarise the compensation strategy that has been agreed in principle between HCCET and Ecology Solutions.
17. It is agreed that the implementation of the strategy summarised below would sufficiently compensate for impacts to the existing SINC and moreover enable biodiversity net gain to be achieved as part of the Proposed Development. As such, it is considered that the scheme may come forward in full compliance with existing and emerging planning policy (not least Policy E14 of the Emerging Local Plan).