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Mr Steven Rennie
The Vale of Glamorgan Council
Development Control
Docks Office
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9 November 2015

Dear Mr Rennie

**OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR UP TO 50 DWELLINGS,
TOGETHER WITH ALIGNMENT OF INITIAL SECTION OF HIGHWAY LINKING CARDIFF ROAD
AND CROSS COMMON ROAD AT LAND AT CARDIFF ROAD/CROSS COMMON ROAD, DINAS
POWYS**

Your ref: SE/2015/119266/01
Our ref: 2015/00392/OUT

Further to your letter of 28 July 2015 please find the response below. (Please note that no information about the proposed new road was available when the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was issued).

Vegetation / hedges / roadside scrub

There will be no requirement to remove any mature trees along the junction of the new road and Cardiff Road; however, approximately 45 - 50m of hedgerow and scrub will be removed, equating to an area of between 350m² - 380m² of vegetation being removed. No bat potential roost features (PRFs) will be lost as part of this removal.

There will be a requirement to remove approximately 45m of hedgerow along the southern side of Cross Common Road to facilitate the junction of the new road onto Cross Common Road. This equates to the loss of approximately 229m² of vegetation loss. No trees providing bat PRFs will be lost as part of this removal.

Bats

A full bat survey was not undertaken of the site as the boundaries were to be maintained intact with all external boundary trees retained. The only species likely to forage over the open areas are pipistrelles and noctules, both of which are light tolerant and unlikely to be adversely impacted by the proposed development; indeed pipistrelles in particular may

benefit from the potential biodiversity gains from the gardens of the domestic dwellings created by the development.

The only trees to be removed were those on internal boundaries and infield trees; of those, only the trees identified as TN 5 and TN 6 displayed any potential to be used by bats. The trees on the internal boundary between Fields 1 and 3 do not provide any bat PRFs. There are no trees with bat PRFs in the boundary between Fields 2 and 3.

All trees will be resurveyed once planning has been given or a commencement date is known (whichever is earlier) using climb and inspect techniques and dawn re-entry surveys as necessary. This is because conditions relating to trees and especially use by bats, which is ephemeral, can change very quickly (including loss of existing roosts and creation of new roosts), potentially negating any survey results.

It is considered that the impact assessment included in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal will not change following activity surveys of the site: Cardiff Road is subject to street lighting and the open foraging habitat is likely to be used by a limited number of species, most of which will be light tolerant. Boundary vegetation will be retained and maintained as dark corridors (with the exception of the road access points) for those species which are not (or less) light tolerant.

Therefore, as there are no bat roosts (buildings) within the site boundaries, it is considered that there is no ecological advantage to undertaking surveys (other than those which may be required of trees).

Dormice

No further dormice surveys were recommended following consultation with the planning authority's ecology team as no records were found within 2.5kms of the site; details of the amount of clearance required were not available. In the light of the confirmed new road layout proposals it is likely that it is not possible to maintain habitat connectivity for this species. However, given the lack of records of this species in the area it is still considered appropriate to say that no further surveys are required.

To alleviate any loss of connectivity, it is proposed that a new hedge will be planted on both sides of the proposed new road to link the hedges on Cardiff Road and Cross Common Road.

The vegetation within internal boundaries will be cut back and reduced in area to facilitate the development; however, the indicative layout plan for the site shows the a significant proportion either being retained or allowed to regrow. Overall, connectivity around the site will be maintained despite some links within the site being lost.

A pre commencement check of all the hedges and vegetation to be affected will be made to look for evidence of dormice (characteristically chewed nuts and nests). All clearance of hedges will be undertaken in accordance with a method statement (based on coppicing the

hedges and vegetation by hand in the winter months and removal (excavation) in spring all to be supervised by an ecologist).

Great crested newt

There are no breeding sites for this species within the development site boundaries. There are current and historic records of this species in a pond in the playing field area to the west of Cardiff Road. Records of great crested newts in garden ponds of houses along Cross Common Road to the east of the development site were made to the planning authority's ecologist shortly after the development proposals were made public.

It is considered that:

- a) surveys of the pond to the west will not provide any up to date information relevant to the site given that not all the newts using this breeding site will utilise the proposed development site during their terrestrial life cycle phase. Therefore surveys could provide a skewed population figure, especially as the majority of great crested newts are likely to remain within 50m of the breeding pond.
- b) in addition Cardiff Road and the Cadoxton River are likely to present impediments to successful dispersal.
- c) access to the ponds in gardens along Cross Common Road is not possible meaning that confirmation of presence of great crested newts in these ponds is not possible (by any means). Therefore, an accurate population assessment (for the purposes of licensing) is not possible. Again, as great crested newts remain within 50m of the breeding site, this means that any assessment of the site in relation to any great crested newt presence in these ponds (and therefore also mitigation) may be incorrect.
- d) it may be possible to identify the presence of great crested newts on the development site through the use of refugia. However, the accuracy of this methodology other than determining presence, is debateable.

In the light of these considerations, it is thought that it would be more efficient and cost effective to clear the site in accordance with a method statement and under ecological supervision which allows for the early identification of any relevant amphibian (or reptile) species and the implementation of any relevant actions e.g. EPS development licence applications.

Otter

The bankside habitat is suitable for lying up but is unlikely to be suitable for holts as it is a narrow corridor. This, in combination with the management currently applied to the river banks next to the existing bridges (close cutting back of vegetation), the proximity of housing and Cardiff Road means that a survey of the Cadoxton River is unlikely to identify any positive signs of otters. Use of other areas of the site by otters is very unlikely to turn up positive evidence.

It is therefore recommended that a pre-commencement check by an ecologist and clearance of vegetation under ecological supervision is the better and more cost effective way forward. If at any time otters or evidence for them is observed during the project, all works will cease, NRW will be consulted and a licence sought as necessary before works can resume.

Other species

The planning authority accepted the findings and recommendations relating to European Protected Species and other species.

Ecological Impact Assessment

A full impact assessment was not possible as final confirmed layouts had not been issued. However, as stated above it is believed that the evaluations, impact characterisations, impact assessments and mitigation proposals provided in the Preliminary Ecological Assessment are robust enough to suit the proposed development.

Summary

Since the Preliminary Ecological Assessment was issued, further details of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's proposals for the new access road between Cross Common Road and Cardiff Road have been made available.

It is considered that further ecological surveys in respect of European Protected Species are not necessary and that the measures and mitigation given in the Preliminary Ecological Assessment are satisfactory.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to call.

Yours sincerely,



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C.c. Melinda Barratt, Natural Resources Wales