

# LAND NORTH OF CAMBRIDGE NORTH STATION, CAMBRIDGE

Proof of Evidence of Mike Barker Bsc Msc FCIEEM CEnv on Ecology  
Matters

Appeal Reference: APP/W0530/W/23/3315611

ECO00253  
Final  
09 May 2023

# 1 PROOF OF EVIDENCE – ECOLOGY

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## A. Introduction

1. My name is Mike Barker, and I am the Operational Director of Ecology at RPS Environment Division. I hold a BSc Honours Degree in Environmental Sciences and an MSc in Environmental Management. I am a founding member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). I was previously the Company Secretary of CIEEM and a Board member, and I am now a Fellow. I am Vice-Chair of the Overseas Territories Special Interest Group. I have been a professional ecologist for more than 30 years working in the field of ecological and environmental management.
2. My evidence will consider the ecological issues arising in respect of the planning appeal lodged in respect of the failure of the LPA to determine a hybrid planning application for planning permission reference 22/02771/OUT at Land to the north of Cambridge North Station [“the Site”].

## Statement of Truth

3. I confirm that the evidence which I have prepared and provided in this proof of evidence is true and I confirm that the opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions.



Signed Mike Barker BSc MSc FCIEEM CEnv Dated 09/05/23

## Site Context

4. Large areas of open mosaic habitat (OMH) were identified across the Site. These are located to the northeast of the Site and west of the Site within disturbed areas of ground. This habitat is botanically rich and also supports a rich invertebrate assemblage. In my opinion these are the two key ecological receptors on-site.

## B. Consultee Responses

5. Statutory consultee responses received to date are summarised in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Statutory consultee responses received to date**

CONSULTEE	DATE	CONSULTEE RESPONSE	APPLICANT RESPONSE
LPA Ecology Officer	02.08.22	objection due to insufficient information to determine the application	further information was provided in the re-submission pack consulted upon on 09.11.22
	07.12.22	amendments needed to determine application	applicant to respond in evidence
Natural England	28.10.22	request for further information	further information was provided in the re-submission pack consulted upon on 09.11.22

**C. Scoping**

6. I note that in the Statement of Common Ground (CD6.05) the LPA agrees that the Environmental Statement [“ES”] was prepared in accordance with Scoping Opinion 21/05178/SCOP. The Environmental Statement considers the likely significant effects of the proposed development during its construction and once it is complete and operational. There was no objection to the scoping position on ecology grounds from Natural England.
7. In accordance with part (4d) of Policy SS/4 of the SCLP, a full suite of ecological surveys has been completed to inform the development proposals for the Site and help to identify appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures. The scope of the ecological surveys was subject to consultation in 2021 and February 2022. Subsequent to this, it was agreed in May 2022 to extend the scope to include an updated breeding bird survey, to update the survey baseline and particularly survey for black redstart which had been recently noted on the Site.
8. Further consultation with SCDC in July and August 2022 did not reach agreement on the required ecological scope needed pre-determination of the application, but the discussions focussed on the need for update surveys for reptiles and bats. Therefore, in August 2022 RPS agreed with Brookgate that further reptile and bat surveys should be undertaken in the 2022 season on a precautionary basis with an update report provided.

**D. Ecology Surveys**

9. The Ecology Survey Report Update (CD2.08) was submitted in October 2022 and included survey results and an update on the ecological assessment, mitigation and conclusions for:

- Reptiles;
- Breeding Birds;
- Bat roost assessment; and
- Bat activity and static monitoring.

**a. Reptiles**

10. For reptiles no additional records were noted in the surveys, so there are no changes to the assessment or conclusions and no further mitigation measures are required for reptiles.

**b. Birds**

11. The Ecology Survey Update Report (RPS Oct 2022) reported the presence of a single black redstart breeding pair outside of the Site to the east. Overall, there was no change to the likely significant effects in relation to birds and therefore no change to the conclusions.
12. The ES sets out that a range of nest box types will be included in the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) to support a wide range of species (sparrows, starlings, swifts and other hole-nesting species). Consideration will also be given to providing other more specialist boxes where appropriate, including for the black redstart. The number and location of bat and bird boxes will be set out in the LEMP with the locations in line with Greater Cambridgeshire Biodiversity SPD (2022) requirements and subject to agreement with the LPA post-determination, as part of the discharge of the LEMP condition.

**c. Bats**

13. For bats the survey results are in line with the baseline assessment within the ES chapter. The results suggest that the Site is not used by large numbers of foraging or commuting bats. Overall the Site is considered to be of local value for foraging bats.
14. The bat roost assessment survey in August 2022 identified Building B1 has moderate bat roost potential due to these features and its location within good bat habitat. The northern rooms have moderate potential to be used as a hibernation roost and required internal inspections and static monitoring between December and February. These requirements have now been undertaken between December 2022 and February 2023 and no bat activity was recorded (see RPS Bat Hibernation Report March 2023 – Appendix A.2).
15. However, the bat survey in August 2022 also concluded that this building (B1) will require 2 emergence surveys to determine presence/absence of bat day roosts which need to be undertaken between May and August on a precautionary basis. Given the timing it was not possible to complete these surveys in the 2022 season. These remaining surveys are being undertaken in May 2023 which in line with the latest best practice guidelines and recommendations published by the Bat Conservation Trust in Bat Survey: Good Practice Guidelines (BCT, 2019) is the earliest opportunity to undertake them.

16. The first survey has been undertaken and the results shared with the LPA (see Appendix A.5). No emergence from Building B1 was recorded.
17. A Technical Note was prepared (see Appendix A) to respond to the LPA's reason for refusal 7. In response to this note, the LPA has confirmed in writing that it is withdrawing reason for refusal 7.
18. Given the location of the Site within Cambridge, and the consistently low number of bats recorded, it is considered that the loss of the scrub and trees on-site will not have a significant adverse impact on the local bat population. Suitable habitat is being enhanced or re-created on site for foraging and commuting bats to mitigate for any possible habitat loss impact and overall will provide sufficient ecological rich alternative natural green space.
19. The Wild Park habitats will include an attenuation pond, grassland and OMH which will provide suitable habitat for invertebrates, providing a food source for foraging bats. The lighting within the Wild Park is not yet specified in detail but the principle is to have low-level bollard lighting only along the footpath and log trial and the associated seating. The remainder of the Wild Park will be unlit to allow future foraging of bats. The detail of the lighting design is subject to further approval post-determination. Lighting along the guided busway will be screened by the tree belt and the strengthen underplanting to re-enforce a dark corridor beyond the site boundary. Along the eastern boundary the continuation of the ivy screen and other planting will also reduce light spill beyond the Site boundary. Both boundaries therefore continue to provide corridors suitable for commuting bats and other wildlife.
20. This assessment as now updated is in line with the baseline assessment within the ES chapter. Therefore this additional information has no implications for the predicted effects or proposed mitigation as reported in the ES

### **E. OMH and BNG**

21. The appeal proposal includes on-site the Wild Park area of enhanced and retained OMH, and other habitats. This area is designed to be a high quality and botanically rich, alternative natural green space.
22. More widely the habitats and green spaces on site are designed to align with the wider Green Infrastructure strategy within the AAP and the city. These ecological connections and design strategy are effective with or without the relocation of the wastewater treatment works.
23. Additional, direct access through Bramblefields Local Nature Reserve has been avoided in the scheme design to reduce pressure on this adjacent site.
24. A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment of the Site has been undertaken using the Defra biodiversity metric version 3.1 (see Appendix A.4). The Defra calculation tool indicates that the baseline value of the site is 48.86 units, 41.16 of which are lost. Proposed habitat creation on site will provide +75.48 units. Habitat enhancement on site provides +12.60 units. Post development units on site are therefore 88.08

units, an increase in biodiversity based on the provision of new ground level and rooftop habitat mimicking the existing OMH character of the site and other landscaping of 80.27%.

25. Appendix A.3 sets out the future strategy to retain OMH interest on the wider Cambridge North site. Any future relocation of the Wild Park OMH habitat would be subject to a fresh planning application and be determined on its own merits. The advantage of OMH is that it has to be actively managed to mimic intermittent disturbance. It can, as a seedbank, therefore be translocated to other suitable areas and quickly recover its intrinsic value.
26. As part of the discussions on the wider masterplanning to the north of Cowley Road, alternative locations have been reviewed and are feasible but do not form part of this application, but an indicative OMH Phasing Plan has been updated (see Appendix A.3).

### **F. Conclusion**

27. In my opinion, based on the available information, the Project will result in no significant residual adverse effects on the OMH. There will be no significant adverse effects on any statutory or non-statutory designation.
28. The loss of the invertebrate habitat within the Project will be offset by the creation and management of new areas of open mosaic habitat within the created habitats. No significant residual effects on other ecology features have been identified.
29. Indeed, the assessment concludes that the enhancement of the retained existing habitats and the delivery of the new habitats and landscaping will result in an extensive increase in biodiversity across the Site with an uplift of +39.22 units or an 80.27% increase.
30. Following the preparation of the Ecology Technical Note at Appendix A, the LPA has confirmed in writing it is withdrawing reason for refusal 7.

**Appendix A**  
**Ecology Technical Note**