

03rd March 2018
Our reference: 2014/09/01

Land North of Old Ashford Road, Lenham / 17/500357/HYBRID
Reply to comments by Nathan Coughlan, Biodiversity Officer at Kent County Council

In the paragraphs below, I aim to answer the comments relating to ecology made by Mr Coughlan.

Mr Coughlan states:

Reptiles

Reptiles have been recorded on site, however it is unclear how this population will be retained on site. Reptiles are protected through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). We advise that clear provisions are made within the site plan that demonstrates that the reptiles can be retained on site. If this is not possible, then further information in regards to any off-site receptor will need to be provided.

A reptile mitigation strategy has now been submitted, including the requested details.

Mr Coughlan also states:

Great Crested Newts

We note that a breeding population has not been confirmed in the nearby pond 17 metres south of the site in the previous surveys carried out in 2014. As this data is over 4 years old, we have concerns that the survey data is outdated and therefore it is possible that a breeding population is now present. If it is likely that a breeding population within this pond would require additional mitigation on site, we would advise that updated surveys and appropriate mitigation is provided prior to determination of any planning application. We advise that clarity is provided in regards to why updated surveys have not been undertaken due to the possibility of additional mitigation required if breeding populations are now present.

The KB Ecology report dates from April 2015 and the data was thus recent. At the date of writing this reply to Mr Coughlan, the survey results are over 3 years old (the surveys have been undertaken in April and May 2014).

Having revisited the area in the last three months, I can testify that the condition of Pond 1 has actually declined since, with a lot more shading due to lack of tree management, thus I do not expect that it is now used for breeding (fish is present and the pond is the village duck pond where people go feed the ducks) and I do not foresee the need for additional mitigation measures.

As a precaution, it is now proposed to undertake a destructive search for the removal of the defunct species-poor hedge present along the Old Ashford Road: trees and scrub

will be cut to a minimum of a foot off the ground outside the bird nesting season, i.e. cut back in September to February; then, during the active season (March to October), the root balls will be lifted with a digger with a toothed bucket under supervision by an ecologist to retrieve any animal present. Should one great crested newt be found, it will be released near Pond 2. Should more than one great crested newt be found, the works will stop and a licence will be sought.

I would like to point out the fact that planning permission has been granted for another housing development present directly adjacent to pond 1 (and pond 2 where breeding GCNs were recorded in 2014) without any queries about GCN surveys nor mitigation measures (17/502396/FUL) and therefore wonder why such updated surveys are requested when the proposed '17/500357/HYBRID' project will entail loss of cultivated arable land, which is very low quality potential terrestrial habitat.

Should Mr Coughlan insist on an updated survey of Pond 1, this can of course be carried out.

I remain at disposal for any further information concerning these matters.

Written by Katia Bresso CEnv MCIEEM
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