

Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for Protected and Priority Species

Site Description

The site of this planning application/consent includes a 200m tree lined access road opening out to a parking courtyard and extending over private garden, and a sand / rubber surfaced riding ménage. The northern and easterly boundaries are designated by ditches and mature trees. However the entire site forms part of Whitehouse Farm, which covers 2.25 Ha of a mix of residential gardens, scrub grassland, a c500sq m pond, hedgerow and bounded by mature trees/hedging. As such ecological and biodiversity measure can/should be considered across the site as a whole.

Enhancement Measures

The Biodiversity Survey, and the Ecological Update Reports submitted with the planning application recommended the following enhancements for the site.

- i. at least two bat roosts created at the eaves of the buildings, one each on a south and west pitch
- ii. a weatherboard bat roost should be created in the east weatherboard gable of building B
- iii. External lighting will be energy efficient and downward directional – not illuminating any bat roosts or potential foraging habitat (e.g. the pond)
- iv. erection of six bird boxes, four with 32 mm entrance holes and two with 25 mm entrance holes
- v. inclusion of six swallow ledges on the underside of the roof of the open-fronted building
- vi. To mitigate for the loss of an occasional barn owl roost, it is recommended that a barn owl nest box be erected in a suitable mature tree within the site, with the box opening directed towards an area of grassland or alternative foraging area.
- vii. As birds' nests were recorded within the barns, and as breeding birds and their nests are protected while in use, to avoid impacts on breeding birds, the demolition/renovation of any buildings (or other bird nesting habitat) should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March – July inclusive). Should this not be possible then all areas identified for works must be checked for nests by an ecologist prior to clearance. If any nests are identified, then this area should be clearly delineated, and no works allowed until after chicks have fledged and the nest has been abandoned
- viii. any hedgerow planting should be native species
- ix. external lighting must be energy efficient and directional not illuminating bat roosts or the pond.

Purpose & Objectives

The enhancement strategy is designed to protect and maximise the ecological value of the retained and created habitats within, and adjacent to, the site boundary. These habitats then provide foraging and breeding habitats for a wide range of protected and notable species including bats, birds and reptiles. The built realm is also to be enhanced with breeding sites for bats and birds.

Habitats

Although the development of the cart lodge under this planning consent does not involve the loss of habitat for any notable species, there is an opportunity to create and enhance biodiversity and habitat across the entire Whitehouse Farm site.

Since the granting of this application in 2020, the following habitat creation works have already been undertaken (see photos appended hereto):-

1. Bat roost (item i)
In 2021 a bat roost box was constructed and installed in between the roof rafters on the West facing roof slope of the stables/barn.
2. Barn owl box (item vi)
In 2021 a box was constructed and installed in a mature Oak tree.
3. Pond regeneration
In 2022 the silt was removed, reeds drastically reduced, shore line vegetation cut back and managed. Within weeks there were sightings of tadpoles, toads, smooth newts, and grass snake.
4. Log piles
In 2022 approximately 15 linear metres of log piles were created along the tree line from the pond westwards, and southwards into the original farm orchard/broadleaf woodland area.
5. Insect hotel
In spring of 2023 an insect hotel was constructed and installed in the original farm orchard/broadleaf woodland area.
6. Bird nesting boxes
In 2020/21, to add to the numerous small nesting boxes already installed, a Tawny Owl box was constructed and installed, and ten swift nest boxes were incorporated into the rear (southern) elevation of Whitehouse farm during recladding/renovation works. Currently 22 nesting boxes have been installed across the entire site.
7. Tree planting
Approximately 8 fruit trees were planted in 2020, '21 & '22 to augment those previously planted or already mature on site. A new orchard area has been established and allowed to grow wild to encourage bees and other insects. Approximately 1,000 native hedging tree/plants have also been planted since 2018, with a further c. 500 planned.

8. Re-wilding

Non-essential residential amenity areas have been allowed to grow wild since 2021 in order to create habitat for bees, insects and amphibians.

Future Works

As well as ongoing management of the existing habitats on an annual basis (where relevant), further nesting boxes will be installed. Species specific boxes for kestrel, robin, and various smaller song birds will be installed during 2023 in preparation for the 2024 nesting season.

Once construction of the proposed cart lodge is sufficiently progressed, another bat hibernacula will be constructed into the Southern roof rafters, in line with the recommendations provided in the Biodiversity Survey Report. The East facing weatherboard bat roost recommended will only be provided once the 1st floor extension of the existing outbuildings has been applied for, approved, and constructed (currently there is no gable boarding to accommodate such a roost).

A swallow ledge will also be provided, once construction of the cart lodge is complete.

Further native hedging (approx 100 linear metres) is to be planted in various locations around the overall site.

Management Plan

All existing wild grassland areas and hedgerow margins are to be cut to 150mm biannually in March and late summer, allowing the plants to flower and seed.

Existing woodland belts are to be inspected annually and any remedial action taken as required (eg formative pruning) ensuring successful establishment and growth.

Bat boxes are to be installed in accordance with the Ecologist's recommendations, and as they are self-maintaining will require no further maintenance thereafter.

Bird boxes are to be installed in accordance with the Ecologist's recommendations, and as they are self maintaining will require no further maintenance thereafter.

Hibernacula / log piles are to be inspected annually, and added to from prunings as required.

Personnel

The site is predominantly residential in nature and does not require the regular input of a qualified ecologist. The owner/applicant will act as a "biodiversity champion" as has been the case for the previous few years.

It is the responsibility of the biodiversity champion to ensure that the recommendations are enacted and followed.

Photos

Barn Owl Box



Bat Roost Boxes



Pond Regeneration

Before



After



Log Piles



Insect Hotel



Nesting boxes

Tawny Owl box



Swift nesting boxes



Tree Planting & Re-wilding





