ECOLOGY & BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT:

Erection of 20 pre-fabricated glamping pods and associated footpaths, retrospective alterations to previously consented raised timber decking adjacent to driving range with addition of pergola and associated alterations, and erection of pergolas over clubhouse rear patio

Blacknest Golf & Country Club, Frith End Road, Blacknest, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 4QL

Applicant : 360 Beech Limited

Ref: 23-2675/FULPP/CF/EB-A/V2
Date: November 2022—revision A dated 15/02/2024

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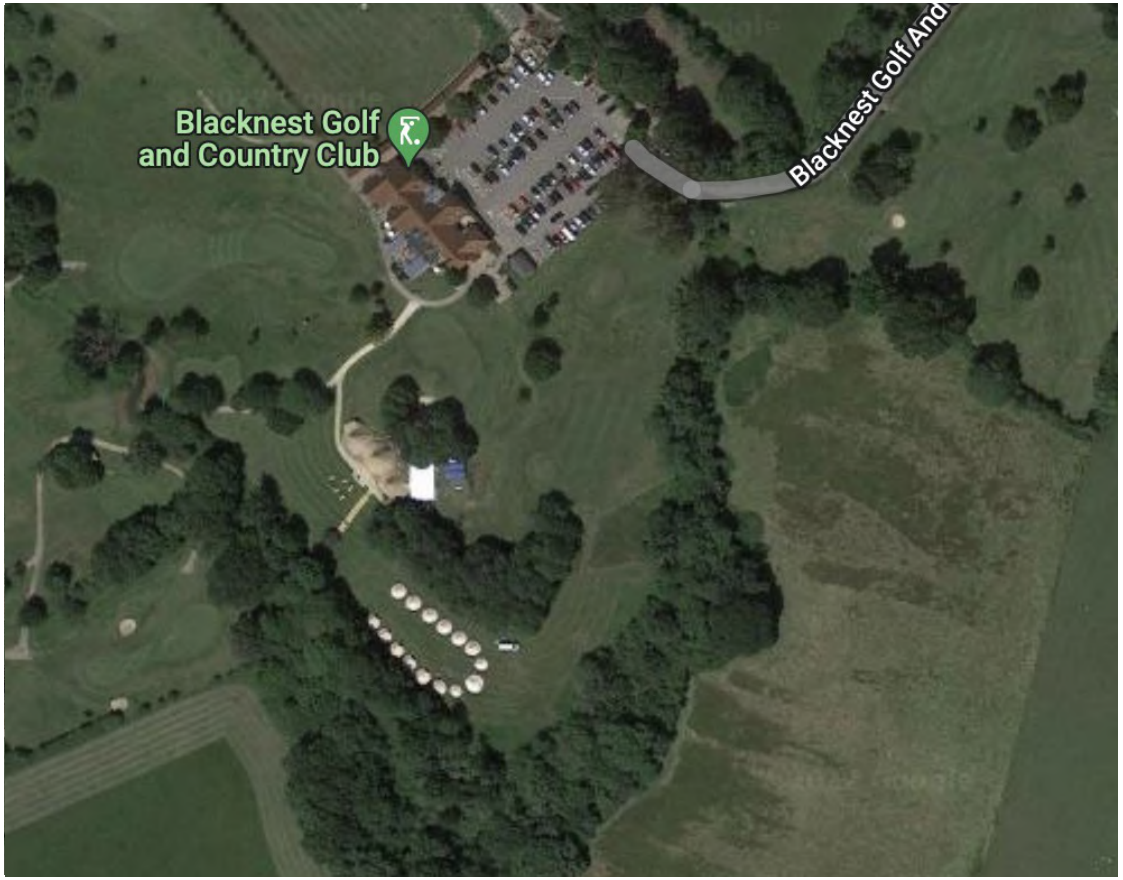

Figure 1: Aerial map showing areas of proposals, showing tipis erected and also temporary glamping pods erected for overnight accommodation for a previous tipi event —copyright Google Maps 2022

ECOLOGY & BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT:

Previous planning application SDNP/18/03009/FUL consented at appeal, superseded by MMA SDNP/21/00335/CND, included a 'Preliminary Ecological Appraisal' by Bright Green Environmental.

This report included consideration of the driving range raised decking proposals, and the tipis and associated outbuilding which includes the areas altered by these current proposals.

Whilst this report is dated April 2018, it is considered to remain relevant as the driving range proposals are similar to the original proposals and in the same location (and now retrospective), and the pods are located in a similar area of the site as the tipis and outbuilding proposals, which are not areas of particular ecological or biodiversity interest.

A new ecological report has been prepared by GS Ecology Ltd to reflect the changes in layout of the glamping pod proposals that significantly increases the amount of new trees and planting proposed.

<u>Driving range raised decking and pergola:</u>

These works are retrospective. The previous Ecological Appraisal by Bright Green Environmental, table 3.1 target note 13 stated:

'the driving range structure is open fronted…. clad in close fitting timber weatherboard, the pantile roof is unfelted sitting directly upon battens offering negligible opportunity for bats. A bird nest was identified inside on the trusses, which appeared to be unoccupied.'

Section 3.4.2.1 of the report states '*there are no trees within or immediately adjacent to the application area that are considered to offer suitable roosting potential for bats'.*

Section 3.4.2.2 states *'the driving range building is externally clad in close fitting timber weatherboard offering no opportunity for bats, the pantile roof is unfelted sitting directly upon battens offering negligible roost suitability for bats. No further surveys necessary'.*

The driving range works only impacted the existing weatherboarding which is opened sided, therefore, very unlikely to be suitable for bats or other species. Whilst there may be scope for birds to nest in the higher trusses, these trusses were not altered by the works.

The proposed works have been completed within the winter season of 2021-2022 prior to the nesting season, negating the need for a watching brief as this was outside the bird nesting season (1st March to 31st August).

Cabins and paths:

A new Ecological report was been prepared by GS Ecological Ltd to address the changes in the proposed cabin scheme, in particular the additional planting and trees proposed and the biodiversity improves the proposals bring to the site.

The changes proposed by this s73 are predominately to change the type of cabin, and are similar in proposals to the original consent. Due to there being no change to impact on ecology or provision of biodiversity net gain features, it is considered the Biodiversity Net Gain and Ecology reports do not need to be updated.

The proposals are sited over mown, well-tended grass which received herbicides and fertiliser to maintain it in optimal condition, and the majority of the site of the golf course consists of well maintained and managed grass which has little diversity due to the heavy mowing requirements and specialist grass for a golf course.

The proposed 20 cabins, apart from 2, are all located over areas of previous golf course grass. Two cabins are located within the existing tree copse, and are sited above ground with minimal intervention bar a 75-100mm soil scrape to allow installation of small concrete pads to set the EasyPads footing supports on, and localised trenching for electrical and foul drainage supplies.

No demolition of buildings are required nor is any habitat required to be altered to facilitate the proposals.

The only works required to trees includes minor pruning of some lower branches adjacent to 5 cabins, and the removal of 2 category C trees to allow two cabins to be sited in the copse without disrupting the RPAs of the remaining better quality trees.

GS Ecology has checked the 2 trees to be removed, and deemed them to hold no value for bats or ecology purposes. The 2 trees are replaced within the new planting scheme.

It is recommended that any tree and grass clearance is undertaken outside of the bird breeding season (1st March to 31st August), and if not possible a pre-works inspection for any nesting activity should be carried out, and if nests found the works in this area must wait until the nesting season is over and the birds have fledged.

Any trenching is to have boards installed between top and bottom of trenches to allow reptiles and mammals to escape if left open overnight, and all trenches and excavations to be checked prior to being backfilled.

Refer to GS Ecology's Ecological Report for further details.

LANDSCAPE & PLANTING PROPOSALS:

The existing copses and woodland to the South of the proposals consists of:

Copse—Common Oak (Quercus robur), Silver Birch (Betula pendula), Field Maple (Acer campestre) with ground flora of perennial ryegrass, cocksfoot, timothy, cow parsley, cleavers, dandelion, rough chervil, bramble, ivy and nettle.

Woodland to the South in addition includes trees of—Alder (Alnus glutinosa), Ash (Fraxinus excelsior), Hazel (Corylus avellana), Common Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna), Common Holly (Ilex aquifolium), with ground flora of cleavers, ivy, dock, nettle, bramble, blue bell, dogs mercury.

The proposals introduce various zones and heights of planting that link the woodland to the copse with use of 'structural' trees with a mixture of understorey planting and low level planting in between groups of trees.

Structural trees—planted at a spacing of approximately 5-10m around the edge of the woodland and between pod groupings:

- Approximately 35 trees which include 2 to replace the 2 Category C trees to be removed to facilitate the proposals—of varying native species and maturity on planting. To be a mixture of transplanted trees from elsewhere on site (self seeded trees that are in the way of the course that were due for removal), and new nursery stock of 14-16cm size.
- Proposed additional trees to be the same as those listed above which are native and already exist on site, and any additional species to include: Common Whitebeam (Sorbus aria), Hornbeam (Carpinus betulus), Rowan (Sorbus aucuparia), and Aspen (Populus tremula).

New understorey planting and bushes within new tree areas and within the areas of lower level planting to be planted between trees at variable spacing of 3-8m include a **mixture of some** of the following: *Reference drawing 20-2487-PX-06—Key = Understorey planting [green cross-hatch], Low level planting Type 1 [purple hatch] & Low level planting Type 2 [red hatch]*

- Burnet rose (Rosa pimpinellifolia)
- Butchers Broom (Ruscus aculeatus)
- Dog Rose (Rosa canina)
- Dogwood (Cornus sanguinea)
- Field Rose (Rosa arvensis)
- Guelder-rose (Viburnum opulus)
- Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna)
- Hazel (Corylus avellana)
- Holly (Ilex aquifolium)
- Osier (Salix viminalis)
- Spindle (Euonymus europaeus)

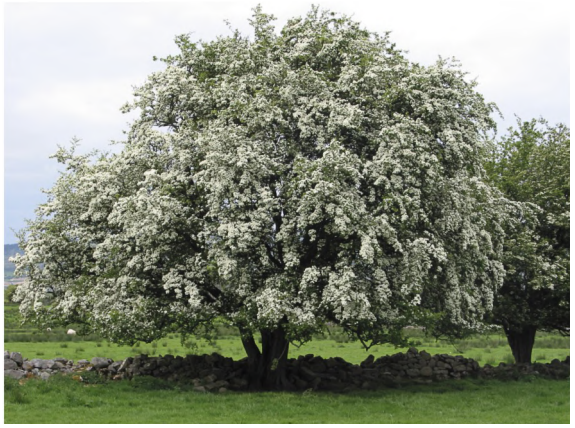

Figure 2: Hawthorn Tree

Figure 3: Alder

Figure 4: Butcher's Broom

Figure 5: Rowan

- Sweet briar (Rosa rubiginosa)
- Wayfaring Tree (Viburnum lantana)
- Wild Privet (Ligustrum vulgare)

Perennials to be planted below and between trees and shrubs in the existing copse, to include a **mixture of some** the following: *Reference drawing 20-2487-PX-06—Key = Understorey planting [green cross-hatch] & Low level planting Type 2 [red hatch]*

- Agrimony (Agrimonia eupatoria)
- Betony (Betonica officinalis)

- Cowslip (Primula veris)
- Devil's-bit Scabious (Succisa pratensis)
- Foxglove (Digitalis purpurea)
- Greater Stitchwort (Stellaria holostea)
- Hairy St John's-wort (Hypericum hirsutum)
- Herb Robert (Geranium robertanianum)
- Meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria)
- Nettle-leaved Bellflower (Campanula trachelium)
- Primrose (Primula vulgaris)
- Red Campion (Silene dioica)
- Selfheal (Prunella vulgaris)
- Soapwort (Saponaria officinalis)

Wildflowers for shadier areas to include a **mixture of some of the following**—Reference drawing 20-2487-PX-06—Key = 'Wild/Long Grass [yellow hatch] & *Low level planting Type 2 [red hatch]*:

These can be purchased as seeds or can come available pre-grown on turf. Seeds are preferred to allow for a wider area to be covered, including existing grassed areas to be improved.

Grasses:

- Crested Dog's-tail (Cynosurus cristatus)
- Sheeps's Fescue (Festuca ovina)
- Yellow Oatgrass (Trisetum flavescens)

Wild flowers:

- Autumn Hawkbit (Scorzoneroides autumnalis)
- Betony (Betonica officinalis)
- Bird's-foot trefoil (Lotus corniculatus)
- Cat's-ear (Hypochaeris radicata)
- Common Knapweed (Centaurea nigra)
- Common Sorrel (Rumex acetosa)
- Common Toadflax (linaria vulgaris0
- Common Vetch (Vicia sativa ssp. segetalis)
- Cowslip (Primula veris)
- Early Purple Orchid (Orchis mascula)
- Field Scabious (Knautia arvensis)
- Kidney Vetch (Anthyllis vulneraria)
- Lady's Bedstraw (Galium vernum)
- Meadow Buttercup (Ranunculus acris)
- Meadow Cranesbill (Geranium pratense)
- Meadow Vetchling (Lathyrus pratensis)
- Meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria)
- Musk Mallow (Malva moschata)
- Oxeye Daisy (Leucanthemum vulgare)
- Perforate St John's Wort (Hypericum perforatum)
- Pepper Saxifrage (Silaum silaus)
- Ragged Robin (Silene flos-cuculi)
- Red Campion (Silene dioica)
- Ribwort Plantain (Plantago lanceolata)
- Rough Hawkbit (Leontodon hispidus)
- Salad Burnet (Poterium sanguisorba)
- Selfheal (Prunella vulgaris)
- Spiny Restharrow (Ononis spinosa)

- Tufted Vetch (Vicia cracca)
- White Campion (Silene latifolia)
- Wild Carrot (Daucus carota)
- Wild Mignonette (Reseda lutea)
- Wild Red Clover (Trifoium pratense)
- Wood Sage (Teucrium scorodonia)
- Yarrow (Achillea millefolium)
- Yellow Rattle (Rhinanthus minor)

Bulbs to be scatter planted between trees, new woodland edge and woodland trees/ shrubs between pods and in existing copse, to include a **mixture of some** of the following:

- Snake's Head Fritillary (Fritillaria meleagris)
- Snowdrop (Galanthus nivalis)
- Wild Tulip (Tulipa Sylvestris)
- Crocus (Crocus)
- English Bluebell (Hyacinthoides non-scripta)
- Lesser Cellandine
- Wild Garlic (Ramsons)

Further lower level blanket planting to create the informal planting zones should replicate planting found in the existing copse and also the surrounding woodland, and native grasses on site.

The focus should also to allow for natural colonisation to take place and to not over plant the areas to allow the creation of a more natural woodland setting.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

These revised proposals to replace the type of cabin are assessed to not have any direct or indirect negative impact on ecology or biodiversity on site, subject to the avoidance and precautionary methods being followed as above and in GS Ecology's Ecological report.

The new planting brings a significant benefit of the proposals to the site, and increases the ecological quality and diversity of this area of the site.

It is recommended whilst new planting should be included, the allowance of natural colonisation is also important to not over plant the area. Allowance of natural colonisation and regeneration will result in a more natural woodland setting.

All new landscaping and planting are proposed to be native species and/or wildlife attracting plants, along with native trees and wildflowers.

Refer to GS Ecology's Ecological report and drawing 20-2487-PX-06 for further details on tree and planting species proposals.

END