

Castelmer Fruit Farm

Landscape Ecology Management Plan

October 2023



T: 0118 989 10 86
E: info@derekfinnie.com
W: www.derekfinnie.com

20 Soames Place, Mulberry Grove
Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 5AT



COMMISSIONED BY
Greenplan Designer Homes
The Barn
Randolphs Farm
Bedlam Street
Hurstpierpoint
West Sussex

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Derek Finnie Associates Ltd
20 Soames Place
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 5AT

info@derekfinnie.com



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Derek Finnie Associates was commissioned by GreenPlan Designer Homes to provide ecological advice in relation to a development of ten dwellings after the demolition of the existing dwelling, and car workshop at Castelmer Fruit Farm, Ashcombe Lane, Kingston, Lewes BN7 3JZ. The Site was granted planning permission by South Downs National Park Authority (SDNA) in July 2023 (Ref: 22.05983/FUL) subject to certain conditions.

1.1.2 Condition 25 of the permission deals with ecological enhancements to the site and states:

Condition 25

Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a landscape and ecological management plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The LEMP shall include the following areas:

- i) On-site and off-site reptile receptor sites;*
- ii) On-site and off-site orchards; and*
- iii) Verges along the access road, to be planted/managed for habitat/wildlife in accordance with the Kingston Nature Recovery Plan 2023.*

The LEMP shall include details of ongoing management and monitoring including a five-year annual work plan, the body or organisation responsible for implementation, and details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured. The plans shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented. The approved LEMP will be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: Biological communities are constantly changing and require positive management to maintain their conservation value. The implementation of a LEMP will ensure the longterm management of receptor site for reptiles, in accordance with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and policy SD9 of the South Downs Local Plan. This is required to be a pre-commencement condition because it is necessary to have agreed such details prior to commencing any building works.

1.1.3 The following report, therefore, has been prepared to provide sufficient information to allow the discharge of Condition 25. Each point within the Condition is addressed in turn in the following sections, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Document Contents

Point	Location with Document
On-site and off-site reptile receptor sites	Section 2.
On-site and off-site orchards	Section 3.
Verges along the access road	Section 4.
Implementation	Section 5.
Monitoring	Section 6.
Ongoing management and monitoring including a five-year annual work plan,	Section 7.

2 REPTILE RECEPTOR SITES

2.1 Existing Population

2.1.1 A low population of slow worms was identified from within the Site as summarised in Table 5. The majority were associated with the southern boundary of the Site, although the occasional individual was also encountered towards the northeast of the Site.

Table 2. Summary of number of slow worms encountered.

Visit No.	Date	Slow worm		
		M	F	SA
2020				
1	3 rd May	-	2	-
2	12 th May	1	3	-
3	25 th May	2	1	2
4	28 th May	1	3	3
5	3 rd June	-	3	2
6	5 th June	-	4	4
7	16 th June	2	1	3
2022				
1	15 th May	1	2	
2	28 th May	3	3	1
3	27 th June	-	2	3

2.1.2 The slow worm population identified within the Site was relatively small and more or less restricted to the periphery of the Site. Overall, it would be assessed to be of Local value

2.2 Mitigation Strategy

2.2.1 To avoid any incidental harm or injury to reptiles during the construction period, a capture and exclusion exercise was deemed appropriate, with any reptile being caught being transferred to a predetermined receptor site. The retained area of orchard in the south east of the Site (on-site receptor area) and the new orchard area (off-site receptor area) were identified as the overall receptor areas and represent approximately 1120m², which exceeds the area of reptile habitat to be lost.

2.2.2 It should be noted that whilst the condition differentiates between the on-site and Off-site receptor site, these areas are contiguous within another with no physical barrier separating the two areas, hence the long term management will be the same for both areas.

2.3 Management Aims

2.3.1 The aim of the management within the receptor site will be to created extensive areas of habitat suitable for reptiles through the creation and retention of:



- Structurally diverse sward;
- Species diverse sward;
- Basking areas;
- Hibernating areas; and
- Connectivity to the wider countryside.

2.3.2 The aims will be achieved through the implementation of the following management prescriptions:

- Over sow existing grassland with species rich wildflower mix (Emorsgate EM2) after cutting and harrowing existing grassland in first available season;
- Develop differential mowing regime within grassland areas, with up to one quarter of the grassland left uncut on a four-year rotational basis to create a diverse sward structure as well as creating overwintering areas for invertebrates;
- Install up to three log piles within receptor area;
- Create two hibernacula within receptor areas; and
- Create and maintain green links to surrounding habitat.

2.3.3 During autumn/early winter 2023, the grassland below the existing orchard, as well as the adjacent area identified for the new orchard, will be cut and harrowed, then over sown with an approximate seed mix, such as Emorsgate EM2. The grass will be left until autumn 2024 before being cut, to allow the sward to establish. From Autumn 2025 onwards, the grass will be cut as a hay meadow with a single cut taken late summer, except of approximately one quarter of the area, which will be left uncut on a four-year rotational basis.

2.3.4 In autumn 2023, prior to the commencement of the reptile translocation scheme, three log piles and two hibernacula will be created along the southern boundary of the reptile receptor area.

2.3.5 The receptor sites currently benefit from direct connectivity to the areas of wider countryside along both the southern and eastern boundary. These will be maintained throughout.

2.3.6 The management prescriptions to achieve the aim are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Management Prescriptions for Reptile Receptor Site

Code	Prescription	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
MRS	Management of Receptor Site					
MRS1	Cut, harrow and oversown receptor sites	✓				
MRS2	Cut entire area as hay meadow late summer		✓			
MRS3	Identify suitable areas to be left uncut on rotational basis		✓			



Code	Prescription	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
MRS4	Cut receptor site as hay meadow leave ¼ uncut on rotational basis.			✓	✓	✓
MRS5	Install 3 log piles and 2 hibernacula	✓				
MRS6	Maintain connectivity to wider landscape	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



3 ON-SITE AND OFF-SITE ORCHARDS

3.1 Management Aims

3.1.1 The principal aim of the new orchard creation is to offset the loss of a small area of orchard that needs to be removed to facilitate the development. The creation of a new area of orchard contiguous with the existing retained orchard, combined with its long term sustainable management, will result in a long term improvement in the biodiversity value of the Site.

3.2 New Planting

3.2.1 Over 500m² of new orchard planting will be undertaken immediately to the east of the area of retained orchard. Here, several apple varieties, as well as pear tree, will be planted, the details of which are included within the Landscape Management Plan (Fabrik, Report Ref: D3303-FAB-00-XX-SP-L-0002 PL01). The new trees will be staked and protected with appropriate rabbit guards. They will be inspected by a suitably experienced landscape contractor until such times they have become established; any failed trees during this time will be replaced.

3.3 Long term management

3.3.1 Once established, management of the orchard trees should be restricted to the occasional pruning to ensure the health of the tree stock is maintained.

3.3.2 The management prescriptions required to achieve the management aims for the orchard are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Management Prescriptions for the Orchards

Code	Prescription	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
MOR	Management of Orchard					
MOR1	Plant 500m ² orchard with appropriate apple and pear varieties in first appropriate season	✓	✓			
MOR2	Monitor new tree; replace any failures		✓	✓	✓	✓
MOR3	Prune established and new trees as appropriate		✓	✓	✓	✓

4 ACCESS ROAD VERGES

4.1 Management Aims

4.1.1 One of the aims of the Kingston Nature Recovery Plan (2023) is to allow road verges to become more biodiverse through a low intervention approach, creating improved habitat connectivity through the village. To assist with this target, the verges either side of the main entrance road will be over sown with a species rich calcareous grassland mix and managed in an ecological sensitive manner.

4.2 Management Prescriptions

4.2.1 In the first appropriate season completion of construction of the scheme, the road verges either side of the main access road will be sown with an appropriate calcareous grassland mix, such as Emorsgate EM6 or similar. Once established, the grassland will be managed as a traditional hay meadow, with a single cut being undertaken in late summer and the arisings removed.

4.2.2 The management prescriptions of the access road verges are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Management Prescriptions for the Access Road Verges

Code	Prescription	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
MAR	Management of Access Road Verge					
MAR1	Sow road verges with appropriate seed mix, such as Emorsgate EM6.	✓	✓			
MAR2	Once established, manage as hay meadow with single cut in late autumn and remove arisings.		✓	✓	✓	✓

5 IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Responsibility

- 5.1.1 The long term management of the Site will be undertaken by a Management Company which will be funded through contributions made by the new residents.



6 MONITORING

6.1 Monitoring Objectives

6.1.1 Monitoring of the site will be undertaken in Years 1, 3 and 5 to ensure the objectives of the LEMP are being met. Where significant deviations for the expected results are noted, the management regime will be reviewed and amended where appropriate.

6.2 Reptile Monitoring

6.2.1 A reptile survey, following the methodology presented by Froglife (1999) will be undertaken in Years 1, 3 and 5 across the receptor site. It is expected that the numbers of slow worms encountered through this method should be broadly in agreement with those realised through previous surveys, i.e. between 3 and 8 individuals. If numbers are significantly below this, and this reduction can not be explained by external factors such as adverse weather, then the management regime will be reviewed and amended.

6.2.2 However, it should be noted that there is evidence to suggest the numbers of reptiles may reduce in the years immediately following a translocation due to a reduction in fecundity levels due to stress resulting from the translocation itself.

6.3 Orchard

6.3.1 Beyond checking for failed specimens, no monitoring is envisaged within the orchard itself.

6.4 Road Verges

6.4.1 The grassland species diversity and composition will be monitored by undertaking 4 random 2m x 2m quadrat samples in years 1, 3 and 5 after sowing, with year 1 being used as a baseline. If the species richness drops below 60% of the year 1 established baseline, consideration will be given to re-seeding the area.

7.1 Work Plan for 2023

7.1.1 The management prescriptions required to be undertaken within 2023 are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Work Plan for 2023

Code	Prescription	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MRS	Management of Receptor Site												
MRS1	Cut, harrow and oversown receptor sites										✓		
MRS5	Install 3 log piles and 2 hibernacula										✓		
MRS6	Maintain connectivity to wider landscape	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MOR	Management of Orchard												
MOR1	Plant 500m2 orchard with appropriate apple and pear varieties in first appropriate season											✓	
MAR	Management of Access Road Verge												
MAR1	Sow road verges with appropriate seed mix, such as Emorsgate EM6.										✓	✓	



7.2 Work Plan for 2024 - 2027

7.2.1 The management prescriptions required to be undertaken within 2023 are given in Table 7.

Table 7. Work Plan for 2024 - 2027

Code	Prescription	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MRS	Management of Receptor Site												
MRS2	Cut entire area as hay meadow late summer (2024 only)								✓				
MRS3	Identify suitable areas to be left uncut on rotational basis (2024 only)								✓				
MRS4	Cut receptor site as hay meadow leave ¼ uncut on rotational basis. (2025 onwards)								✓				
MRS6	Maintain connectivity to wider landscape	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MOR	Management of Orchard												
MOR2	Monitor new tree; replace any failures									✓			
MOR3	Prune established and new trees as appropriate										✓		
MAR	Management of Access Road Verge												
MAR2	Once established, manage as hay meadow with single cut in late autumn and remove arisings.								✓				



8 SUMMARY

- 8.1.1 The Landscape Ecology Management Plan presents the specific ecological prescriptions that will be undertaken within the, as required by Condition 25, to ensure that ecological benefits of the scheme are maximised and managed in a sustainable manner in the long term.

