WHARTON
Natural
Infrastructure
Consultants

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OUR REFERENCE

240116 1532 Protected Sites Letter V1 ECO

Dear Emma Gallagher

Re: Consultee comments on the potential for the Proposed Development at Premier Foods Bakery, Carlton, South Yorkshire to impact Protected Sites

This letter has been produced firstly to address concerns from Natural England regarding the potential for the Proposed Development to impact upon the interest features of the nearby Dearne Valley Wetlands Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and secondly to rectify an issue with the original data search for the Site, which led to two Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Reserves being omitted from consideration of impacts within the original Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA).

This letter should be read in connection with the submitted PEA.

Overview

The Proposed Development

The Proposed Development involves the construction of solar panels within the existing field to power the adjacent Premier Foods industrial bakery.

The proposals detailed above will be referred to throughout this report as the 'Proposed Development'.

Description of Site and Local Area

The Site is located to the east of Fish Dam Lane in Carlton. It is centred approximately at National Grid reference SE 37227 09987.

The Site comprised an area of grassland with areas of scrub and hedgerow on the borders. The Site is bordered to the north by a main road with agricultural land beyond. The Site is bordered to the west by residential buildings, a small area of scrub, and the Premier Foods industrial bakery building. The Site is bordered to the south by grassland and agricultural land. The Site is bordered to the east by a small road with an area of scrubland beyond which appears to have previously been the site of a quarry.

The Site is relatively well connected from an ecological perspective due to grassland and scrub to the south and east of the Site. However, the railway c.0.44km east of the Site could act as a dispersal barrier for wildlife beyond this point.

Wildlife corridors are present in the local area, such as the Barnsley Canal c.0.2km north of the Site, however the Site is not well ecologically connected to any significant wildlife corridors and does not contribute to their functionality.

Protected Sites

Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI

As outlined within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, the Proposed Development, from what is understood from a purely habitat loss and alteration standpoint, is not expected to have a significant impact on the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The bird species listed of importance in relation to the SSSI rely largely on wetland habitat, which is notably absent from the Site. Natural England and the Ecology Consultee both queried whether the Site may provide potential habitat for willow tit (*Poecile montanus*), however, while areas of scrub are present on Site, these areas are small and were not found to be damp/wet in nature, and they do not contain the standing, rotting deadwood required by willow tits for nesting. The Site is therefore considered highly unlikely to provide any significant habitat for willow tit which favour wetland and sites with a high water table. Further surveys for willow tit would therefore be disproportionate.

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust has also requested that the proposed planting on Site should focus on scrub planting suitable for willow tit rather than tree planting. Although the existing habitat on Site is considered to be of low suitability for willow tit, therefore reducing the significance of this request, the majority of planting currently proposed (see landscaping plan 277101 -TOR-SK001 dated 08/2023) consists of mixed native scrub with some tussocky grassland seeding. Some native tree planting is proposed within the scrub and grassland edges of the Site, particularly along the eastern edge of the Site, however is should be noted that of the 24 'trees' proposed for planting, more than half (13) are actually hawthorn, which is a scrub forming species. It was therefore considered that a large proportion of the proposed planting on Site will be scrub planting and suitable for a range of species which utilise scrub habitats, including willow tit, although the wetland features which also favour willow tit will still be absent as they are in the existing Site.

Furthermore, the majority of the scrub on site will be retained and enhanced with additional scrub planting in a mix of native species. It is therefore considered that the Site will continue to provide scrub habitats suitable for non-wetland, scrub nesting species such as yellowhammer (*Emberiza citronella*), garden warbler (*Sylvia borin*), lesser whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*), and linnet (*Linaria cannabina*), all mentioned in the citation for the SSSI. Given the small area of existing scrub on Site, the Site is highly unlikely to form a significant habitat for scrub dependent species, particularly given the extensive presence of larger, more favourable nesting areas in the local area. It should be noted that the existing scrub to be retained, as well as the additional proposed scrub planting, is around the edges of the Site, meaning that any role the Site may currently play in connecting trees and scrub around the SSSI will be maintained. The area of grassland on Site is not considered an important nesting habitat for lapwing due to the tall nature of the sward and the extensive presence of more favourable nesting and foraging areas, both within the SSSI and in its surrounding agricultural land. It is therefore not expected that the Proposed Development will have an impact on bird populations associated with the SSSI.

As far as can be reasonably ascertained, no significant effects to statutory wildlife sites are likely to arise as a result of the Proposed Development.

While the habitats on Site are not considered to be locally important to the bird species associated with the SSSI, the Proposed Development may still have an impact on individual birds nesting on Site. Recommendations to take any impact on nesting birds to a negligible level are included in the PEA.

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Reserves

There are two Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) Reserves within 1km of the Proposed Development Site which were not originally considered with regards to potential impacts from the Proposed Works, these being Wharncliffe Woodmoor reserve c.0.23km south of the Site and Carlton Marsh Reserve c.0.33km to the east. Wharncliffe Woodmoor reserve consists of 42ha of grassland and broadleaved plantation woodland on a former colliery site. The site is noted for insect and butterfly interest, as well as breeding skylark and meadow pipit. Carlton Marsh Reserve is an 18ha site overlapping with the

nearest section of the Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI. This reserve is a mix of open wetland, woodland, scrub and grassland with particular ornithological interest.

The nature of the proposed works consisting of a solar farm are not expected to generate any additional visitor pressure, nor would they be expected to produce pollution or additional runoff which could impact on nearby habitats, particularly wetlands. Whilst the Proposed Development Site does share some of the broad habitats present within the two reserves, namely grassland and scrub, the grassland will be retained (albeit with an increase in shading) as will the majority of the scrub, with new native mixed scrub planting to be undertaken on the Site boundaries and appropriate grassland seeding as noted in the accompanying Biodiversity Assessment for shade tolerant species. Given the proposed retention and enhancement of the boundary features on Site, it considered that there will be no loss of connectivity between the surrounding habitats (including nearby nature reserves) as a result of the Proposed Development.

Given the proposed retention of the existing habitats on site, including boundary features, and the lack of increased visitor pressure from the Proposed Development, it is considered that the Proposed Development will have a negligible risk of impact upon non-statutory designated wildlife sites.

Summary

Based on the information provided within the received data searches and available background information, the Proposed Development is considered likely to have a negligible risk of impact upon both statutory and non-statutory designated sites. This is further supported by the proposed retention of the existing habitats on Site, including the boundary features, with supplementary planting and consistently limited recreational use of the Site pre- and post-development.

The above should satisfy the requirement from both Natural England and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust in ensuring the protected sites mentioned in the consultee comments have been carefully considered for their ecological contribution to the wider area and concerning the Proposed Development. Based on the above, the Site in question does not contribute to their functionality and the Proposed Development is unlikely to have an ecological impact to the surrounding protected wildlife sites.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

Katrina Wells BSc (Hons) MSc ACIEEM



WILDFLOWER AND GRASSLAND MIXES	
TYPE	**SEED MIX**
Wildflower grassland	Emorsgate Seeds - EH1 Hedgerow Mixture or equally approved
Tussocky grassland	Emorsgate Seeds - EM10 Tussock Mixture or equally approved

SCRUB PLANTING INCLUDING INFILL AREAS

% MIX	SPECIES	COMMON NAME	SIZE	POT SIZE	NOTES
	SCRUB PLANTING AREAS planted on a staggered 1.5m grid				
7.5%	CARPINUS betulus	Hornbeam	40-60cm	Bare root	1u1 seedling undercut
15%	CORYLUS avellana	Hazel	40-60cm	Bare root	1+1 or 1/1 transplant, 2 breaks
27.5%	CRATAEGUS monogyna	Hawthorn	40-60cm	Bare root	1+1 or 1/1 transplant
5%	EUONYMUS europaeus	Spindle	40-60cm	Bareroot	1+1 or 1/1 transplant, min 3 breaks/branches
5%	ILEX aquifolium	Holly	40-60cm	3L container	leaders and laterals even canopy
5%	LIGUSTRUM ovalifolium	Privet	40-60cm	2L container	Branched, 5 breaks
2.5%	LONICERA periclymenum	Honeysuckle	40-60cm	3L container	1+1, min 2 breaks
7.5%	PRUNUS avium	Wild cherry	40-60cm	Bareroot	1+1 or 1/1 transplant
15%	PRUNUS spinosa	Blackthorn	40-60cm	Bare root	1+1 or 1/1 Branched, 2 breaks
2.5%	ROSA canina	Dog Rose	40-60cm	Bare root	1+0 Branched
5%	SAMBUCUS nigra	Elder	40-60cm	Bare root	1+0 or 1/0 transplant 2 breaks
2.5%	ULMUS glabra	Wych elm	40-60cm	Bare root	1+1 or 1/1 transplant

SPECIES	COMMON NAME	SIZE	POT SIZE	NOTES
TREES - planted in locations as shown in plan				
BETULA pendula	Silver birch	10-12cm	Bare root	2x transplanted, 3-3.5m high, min 1.75-2m clear stem, min 4 breaks/branches
CRATAEGUS monogyna	Hawthorn	10-12cm	Bare root	2x transplanted, 3-3.5m high, min 1.75-2m clear stem, min 4 breaks/branches
PRUNUS avium	Wild cherry	10-12cm	Bare root	2x transplanted, 3-3.5m high, min 1.75-2m clear stem, min 4 breaks/branches

Premier Foods Bakery, Fish Dam Lane, Carlton

Premier Foods plc

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Scale to be used for planning purposes only
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Figure 14 - Planting Plan

277101 -TOR-SK001 - A

Scale @ A3: 1:1000 For Planning

08/2023

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