GRAY'S
ECOLOGY

Symphony – Actions taken following Barnsley Ecologist comments (dated 14/01/2021) which include endorsement of Wildscapes comments (dated 13/01/2021)

To:
Paul Whitehouse
Kim Eastwood

Date	Prepared by	
17/01/2021	Graham Megson, MSc Ecology	
Barnsley MBC Planning application: 2020/1032		

Wildscapes are unhappy that I have chosen to assess the habitat in 400m^2 units rather than 25m^2 units. The UK Habitat Classification User Manual recommends that the 400m^2 scale is used for landscape-scale surveying or where habitat data is only being collected at broader scale. However, this is only a recommendation and the whole survey area was covered on foot and small areas of habitat were identified. While some finer detail may not have been recorded, this is more likely to be due to the survey being undertaken during the winter. Given the time pressure to have the report ready for a Friday 8th January meeting, the two sites needed to be assessed in one day (6th January) so the report could be prepared the following day. Therefore, using a 25m^2 unit was not an option.

Trevor Mayne agreed to the Land Trust sites being surveyed out of season to obtain a Biodiversity Metric score while acknowledging this was not ideal. Wildscapes are not confident with the result because of this. They have used photographs of the site taken last summer (provided only to Wildscapes and not the applicant) combined with the winter survey species list, to question the categorisation of New Park Springs grassland as 'neutral grassland' rather than 'lowland acid grassland'. TM supports this. However, the species lists and winter site photographs are not reliable enough to classify UK BAP grassland habitats such as 'lowland acid grassland'. The survey was undertaken in good faith that the result would be accepted.

Wildscapes suggest four options:

1. Re-survey in greater detail (not really appropriate in the winter).
2. Apply the precautionary principle and re-code all of the grassland to the higher value lowland acid grassland.
3. Code all the grasslands as neutral grassland - this aligns with a survey undertaken in 2012.
4. Code half of the grasslands as neutral grassland and half as lowland acid grassland.

TM has asked for the biodiversity Metric to be re-run to option 2. The planning case officer Hannah Andrew has requested it be re-run to options 2 and 4. Paul has instructed that it is re-run to option 3.

Justification for option 3 can be argued, as neutral grassland is the habitat type recorded following a habitat survey in 2012 (done for the emerging Local Plan). It is worth noting that when I was categorising the habitats within the red line boundary, both TM and Wildscapes strongly felt that the habitats were the same as found in the 2012 survey, only later changing their view after requesting further evidence.

I have taken on board most of Wildscapes technical comments as follows:

- Some of the habitat management moved from the 'enhancement' tab to the 'creation' tab.
- Altering two small areas of grassland on Cudworth Common to a higher value grassland.
- Altering six areas of grassland on New Park Springs from modified grassland to the higher value neutral grassland.

However, it is not possible to reduce the figures given to three decimal places in the Biodiversity Metric as these are protected cells, with the figures generated by the formulas (likely caused by a spreadsheet error).

Regarding TM's query on land ownership, yesterday I sent Kim a Land Trust plan showing their ownership of compartment 3 on Cudworth Common.

Regarding the query about full drawings, these refer to the plans for the new pond – location and profile, which Kim has.

TM has made several other comments in his response which I have not addressed, e.g., he asked for the monitoring plan for breeding birds on the Symphony Nature Reserve to be expanded to include 'what further action would be taken if monitoring indicates the project is failing and for the survey data to be provided to the LPA within the same calendar year'. I have not addressed this.

After further checking and adjustments I have got the Biodiversity Metric v10 biodiversity change down from -15.81 to -7.64 habitat units (a saving of 8 units from Friday).

On-site baseline	*Habitat units*	68.13
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation, enhancement & succession)	*Habitat units*	1.35
	Hedgerow units	0.72
	River units	0.00
Off-site baseline	*Habitat units*	59.23
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation, enhancement & succession)	*Habitat units*	118.37
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Total net unit change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention/creation)	*Habitat units*	**-7.64**
	Hedgerow units	0.72
	River units	0.00
Total net % change (including all on-site & off-site habitat creation + retained habitats)	*Habitat units*	**-11.21%**
	Hedgerow units	Check Data
	River units	0.00%

Grass snakes
Adjustments have been made to accommodate grass snakes which have been recorded in the Cudworth Common compartment 3 as noted in the Garganey Trust planning objection.

No Net Loss/ Biodiversity Net Gain

- The Biodiversity Metric v10 demonstrates -7.64 overall biodiversity change as measured in habitat units. The Council may request a financial contribution per unit. In an earlier email Hannah Andrew flagged up £15,000/ habitat unit for another application. However, a Defra position statement date15/10/2019 recommends £11,000 per habitat unit.
- A position of No Net Loss can be achieved with the Land Trust project and a financial contribution acceptable to all parties. These will cover habitats and ground-nesting breeding birds.

End