

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6 November 2013

AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

S/1249/13/FL – FOWLMERE

New offices, research and production facilities with associated car parking and landscaping for Ion Science

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Date for Determination: 15 August 2013

Update to the report

Agenda report paragraph number 26 – Consultations – Comments of the Ecology Officer

1. **The Ecology Officer** comments that there will be a biodiversity impact with the loss of mature trees on the northern boundary, however, he accepts the findings of the tree report that many are mature, diseased or defective. If left alone the trees could become richer for wildlife. At the time the site was visited there was no evidence of any significant extent of rot holes, so no objections are raised regarding roosting bats or hole nesting birds.
2. The loss of the mature trees will be compensated for in time by the new planting, but there is little space for new planting on the northern boundary. It is therefore important that the southern landscape buffer provides not just a dense area of planting that will enable to growth of broad mature trees, but also provides a realistic wildlife corridor. The Ecology Officer comments that he had previously requested a planting strip of 10m. The application as submitted provides a 5m strip, which in places is reduced down to 2m. Following discussion with the applicants' agent it has been agreed that off-site planting can be increased to 2m to give further planting space of up to 7m, which is encouraging and will need to be tied into a Section 106 Agreement.
3. The Ecology Officer states that Members may wish to consider the suitability and necessity of any further off-site planting, such as parkland type trees or habitat management in order to secure the positive management of the remainder of the green space.
4. The Ecology Officer states that previous concerns raised about nesting birds are removed. He is aware that there are barn owls in the sheds to the south of the site, but this is not part of this application, and the sheds are not shown to be removed. There is much scope to erect a range of nest boxes within retained trees on the site, and the provision of the tawny owl box is noted. It is believed that the applicant was prepared to erect a barn owl box and this should still be secured by condition.
5. The Ecology Officer states that he had previously objected with regard to the common lizard, and had asked for re-survey work to be undertaken during the summer period, or be secured by condition. This will now need to be secured

by condition, as reptiles are currently inactive. Should reptiles be present on site the retained habitat to the east of the building should be able to accommodate specific habitat creation measures, but only if a portion of those existing habitats on site remain untouched. Recent discussions with the applicants' ecologist have resulted in the approach to re-surveying the optimum lizard habitats, which would not necessarily prevent development commencing on parts of the site. A condition must be used to secure full protection of the areas identified as lizard habitats so that they can be re-surveyed in an undisturbed state in the spring. Should lizards be found then compensatory measures will need to be incorporated within the final landscape design in the north east area of the site.

6. The provision of two ponds is welcomed, and it is noted that one is formal whilst the other appears to be a wildlife pond. The wildlife pond is poorly located being near to the southern landscape belt, such that it will become shaded and susceptible to leaf fall. It is requested that the pond is located further north, by 10m, so that it becomes a focal point at the end of the semi-formal area.
7. The intention to retain some deadwood habitats in the form of log piles, to create areas of long grass and to introduce native ground flora, is noted, and this could bring ecological enhancements to a relatively small portion of the site.

Officers View

8. Officers can confirm that the applicants' agent has agreed to incorporate an additional 2m width into the landscaping strip on the southern boundary of the site, and a revised plan has been requested to show this.
9. Conditions can be included in any consent to cover the other matters raised by the Ecology Officer, the overall effect of which will help mitigate the impact of the loss of mature trees at the north end of the site.
10. The applicants' agent has also confirmed the willingness to provide Public Art in compliance with Policy SF/6, so far as is reasonable.

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