

Meeting Title: **LA Ecologists – Discharge of Ecological Planning Conditions**

Project: **A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road** Job No/Ref: **60312856**

Location: **Bramhall Meeting Room, Altrincham** Date held: **26 August 2014**

Duration: Time: **10:30am**

Attendees:	Emma Marston - SMBC David Dutton - GMEU Jamie Bardot - Carillion Morgan Sindall (CMS) Kath Thorp - AECOM / Grontmij Alan Houghton - URS Nicola Lewis - AECOM, Grontmij	Apologies: James Baggailey - Cheshire East Neil Rogers - CMS Rosie Simon - CMS Bill Edwards - SMBC Martin Houghton – AECOM/Grontmij Bryn Jones – AECOM/Grontmij Lorraine King – AECOM/Grontmij Sam Rossillo - URS
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No.	Item	Action By
1.	<p>Jamie Bardot (JB) explained the purpose of the meeting which was to ascertain what information and level of detail the local authority ecologists would be satisfied with in order to discharge or partially discharge the planning conditions which are relevant to ecology. The relevant planning conditions were included in the agenda and are as follows:</p> <p><u>Relevant Planning Conditions:</u></p> <p><i>SMBC 15) No development shall take place until detailed mitigation/compensation strategies for the following species have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great crested newts (each meta-population) - Badgers - Bats - Breeding birds - Brown Hare - Otter - Barn Owl <p><i>The strategies shall be based on up-to date survey data and where appropriate the strategies shall include details such as: measures to avoid direct impact on individual species; timings of works; location and design of compensatory habitats; measures to avoid/reduce disturbance of individual species or destruction of terrestrial habitat, measures to reduce road mortality, and a monitoring program to assess the outcomes of these strategies. The approved strategies shall be subsequently implemented in full within a timescale previously approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.</i></p> <p><i>MCC 14) No development shall take place until detailed mitigation/compensation strategies for the following species have been submitted to and approved by the City Council as Local Planning Authority:</i></p>	

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	<p><i>Great crested newts (each meta-population)</i> <i>Bats</i> <i>Breeding birds</i></p> <p><i>The strategies shall be based on up-to date survey data and where appropriate the strategies shall include details such as: measures to avoid direct impact on individual species; timings of works; location and design of compensatory habitats; measures to avoid/reduce disturbance of individual species or destruction of terrestrial habitat, measures to reduce road mortality, and a monitoring program to assess the outcomes of these strategies. The approved strategies shall be subsequently implemented in full within a timescale previously approved in writing by the City Council as local planning authority.</i></p> <p>David Dutton (DD) asked if the scheme had been called in for Public Inquiry (PI). JB advised it hadn't been called in but a PI will take place for the Compulsory Purchase Orders.</p> <p>It was decided to discuss matters relating to each species mentioned in the planning conditions in turn.</p>	
2.	<p><u>Great crested Newts (GCN)</u></p> <p>Surveys have been carried out during 2014, and 10 distinct meta-populations have been identified. Using Hazel Grove Meta-population as an example, JB explained the approach to avoiding double handling and using receptors in existing home range of the GCNs i.e. <250m away. DD and Emma Marston (EM) confirmed that they were happy with that approach. JB then went through each meta population in line with the recent application to Natural England for the GCN licence. Kath Thorp provided DD and EM with copies of the licence application on CD.</p> <p>JB explained that the strategy would be refined over the coming weeks in line with the outcomes of landowner discussions in relation to the possible agreements for receptor locations outside the CPO. EM and DD confirmed that they are content with the overall approach and would be content with a submission to partially discharge the planning condition in relation to GCNs in or before October 2014.</p>	
3.	<p><u>Badger</u></p> <p>Nicola Lewis (NL) explained that the site has been resurveyed and more setts have been found than during the original surveys – there are likely to be more setts lost than original (only 1 main sett to be lost originally).</p> <p>JB explained the reasons behind the alternative site for the replacement badger sett which was previously (Environmental Statement mitigation proposals) shown to be located on top of the existing oil pipeline. DD and EM confirmed that they are happy with the alternative site for the main sett at Bramhall.</p> <p>NL explained that the team are looking at the viability of providing mammal underpasses and also looking at options to use existing underpasses or other crossings of the new highway such as pedestrian or access underpasses and/or bridges suitable for equestrian users and pedestrians. DD and EM happy with the general principles for alternatives to the mammal underpasses and noted that the most important issue was that the rationale for the mitigation scheme</p>	

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	<p>was clear and was supported by the outcomes of the surveys. This point was applicable to all species.</p> <p>NL explained that by October the surveys would be complete. EM and DD confirmed that they are content with the overall approach and would be content with a submission to partially discharge the planning condition in relation to badgers in October 2014 with the detail to follow.</p>	
4.	<p>Bats</p> <p>Originally 61 trees and one building were surveyed. AGDJV have found more trees requiring surveys and as we are now into September we would like to agree the survey approach. For 1*s we would normally spread 3 activity surveys across the season, however time is limited and may not lead to meaningful results. The alternative would be do two surveys in 2014 and then one in spring 2015 prior to removal. For category 1 trees, this could comprise one survey in September 2014 and on in spring 2015 prior to removal; however this would also need to be acceptable to Natural England in order gain a licence with sufficient survey data and two may be required this year. It was stated that individual trees to be lost were assessed separately, whereas some areas of woodland to be lost contained too many trees to assess individually, and therefore they were categorised as a whole, with any specific trees noted to have more features, picked out to be surveyed on their own. For example, woodland comprising predominantly category 2 trees would not be surveyed, but any trees identified within as being 1 or 1* would be surveyed. Areas of woodland comprising predominantly category 1 trees would be subject to a transect survey, but any trees identified within as being category 1* would be surveyed separately.</p> <p>DD and EM agreed to that approach therefore carry out third survey next year.</p> <p>NL advised that a licence will be required as at a small number of bat roosts have been found, (likely to be single bat roosts and nothing larger).</p> <p>A discussion relating to bat hops took place and it was concluded that bat hops are less effective on wide roads and there is very little evidence of success. EM and DD agreed that we would need to consider each location and look at alternatives and possibility of using planting to encourage them to other foraging areas rather than provide a crossing. At locations where crossings are necessary they would be designed to try and maximise their effectiveness e.g. perhaps using a combination of wires and planting.</p> <p>EM and DD confirmed that they are content with the overall approach and would be content with a submission to partially discharge the planning condition in relation to bats in October 2014 with the detail to follow.</p>	
5.	<p>Breeding Birds and Kingfisher</p> <p>Surveys have noted nothing unexpected in terms of habitat and species present. CMS explained that it would be unlikely to be able to do any pre-Spring clearance because CPO process not complete until mid-Feb.</p> <p>Kingfisher – no nesting activity observed – likely to be using the reaches for foraging – no observations were made during the Kingfisher surveys but they</p>	

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	<p>have been observed during other surveys.</p> <p>Mitigation would be pre-construction checks and drawings for provision of replacement nest site (perhaps in new rivers in channel). EM and DD confirmed that they are content with the overall approach and would be content with a submission to partially discharge the planning condition in relation to birds including Kingfisher in October 2014 with the detail to follow.</p>	
6.	<p>Brown Hare</p> <p>EM and DD agreed that this would be a displacement issue rather than anything else. Unlikely to need fencing but if needs be fencing proposals would be provided.</p> <p>Although surveys would have been started by October the mitigation strategy would be based on records and updated following the outcome of the completed surveys. EM / DD happy with the approach and partial discharge of the planning conditions but need to check with planners to confirm that they agree.</p>	EM/DD to check with planners that this would be acceptable
7.	<p>Otter</p> <p>There is a discrepancy in the location shown in the ES but nevertheless activity is apparent throughout the brooks. Potential resting places, but with no evidence of current activity by otter have been found, however these could also be used by a number of other species present.</p> <p>Strategy will be available by October 2014 and will be based on reasonable avoidance measures. EM and DD confirmed that they are content with the overall approach and would be content with a submission to partially discharge the planning condition in relation to otter in October 2014 with the detail to follow.</p>	
8.	<p>Barn Owl</p> <p>No previous surveys. 2km wide study area for surveys originally planned although following the outcomes of the initial landowner questionnaire surveys our methods have been modified, as these combined with walkovers have identified numerous suitable trees and buildings - far more than realistic and feasible to check. A spot check has been undertaken, and combined with a walkover in some areas at dusk where barn owl sightings were made.. The latest data for use of the Barn owl boxes from the Barn Owl Trust has been obtained as well as data from other sources. Closest box not in use this year. No suitable buildings are being lost. Trees which are suitable and are to be removed have been identified during bat tree inspections but are not noted to be currently in use. NL confirmed that we will seek to provide mitigation based on the knowledge that they are present in low numbers along the scheme. We will look at the proposed cross section for example cuttings are beneficial to keeping the owls high in flight. Acoustic fencing will also be beneficial. We will identify the gaps in the information and identify locations where fencing or amended landscaping may be required. This will be included in the mitigation strategy. Suitable trees that will be lost will be re checked prior to removal. EM and DD confirmed that they are content with the overall approach and would be content with a submission to partially discharge the planning condition in relation to barn owls in October 2014 with the detail to follow.</p>	

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	During our surveys we have noted that many landowners away from the CPO are keen to receive nest boxes and the Ladybrook Valley Interest Trail group may be amenable to receiving barn owl boxes to place in areas away from the scheme.	

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