

June 2014

LAND NORTH OF TAMWORTH ROAD, KERESLEY, NORTH
WEST COVENTRY (ECO1825)

**BRIEFING NOTE: CONSIDERATION IN REGARD TO
BIODIVERSITY OFFSETTING AND ASSOCIATED METRIC**

1.1. DEFRA Biodiversity Offsetting Pilot

- 1.1.1. The site is located within the administrative boundary of Coventry City Council, within the sub-region of Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull. As such, the site is located within one of the six trial areas within DEFRA's Biodiversity Offsetting Pilot scheme, which was in place between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2014. This trial period has now ended and resulting consideration and conclusions yet to be published by DEFRA, albeit it is understood that the sub-region is continuing to implement requirements for Biodiversity Offsetting consideration as part of new planning applications. In addition, it is understood that Biodiversity Offsetting within Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull is being implemented through the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sub Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy (currently in preparation), albeit to date this does not appear to form any formally adopted planning policy within Coventry specifically referencing the offsetting scheme and associated metric.
- 1.1.2. Biodiversity offsetting is an ecological compensation mechanism whereby measured ecological losses are calculated and compensation provided in the form of perceived equivalent ecological benefits (e.g. habitat creation, restoration or enhancement) provided elsewhere (the Offsets), the 'values' of which are quantified in a prescribed way, such that the perceived losses and compensation values are stated to be comparable.
- 1.1.3. Information and guidance documents are available from DEFRA associated with the Biodiversity Offsetting Pilot, including in particular Guidance for developers¹ and metric information², whilst local information relevant to the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull pilot area is also available^{3,4}. The available information clearly sets out that *"Developers in pilot areas required to provide compensation for biodiversity loss under planning policy can*

¹ Biodiversity Offsetting Pilots - Guidance for Developers (DEFRA & Natural England), March 2012.

² Biodiversity Offsetting Pilots - Technical Paper: the metric for the biodiversity offsetting pilot in England (DEFRA & Natural England), March 2012.

³ www.warwickshire.gov.uk/biodiversityoffsetting

⁴ Guide to Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Biodiversity Offsetting Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculator v17 (The Environment Bank and Warwickshire County Council) most.

choose to do so through offsetting” and/or.. “will be given the option of delivering that compensation by using the offsetting mechanism”.

1.1.4. Offsets in order to compensate for losses associated with development schemes can be provided directly by developers, or purchased by the developer from specified ‘offset providers’, with the measured offset provision (in terms of “biodiversity units”) representing the purchased item rather than any additional land or other tangible asset being acquired by the developer.

1.1.5. Accordingly, in order to allow comparison between ecological losses and associated level of offset required, a standard metric (calculation method) is utilised to provide an approximation of the ecological value (in terms of “Biodiversity Units”) for comparative use⁵.

1.2. **DEFRA Metric for biodiversity offsetting**

1.2.1. Information in regard to the calculation procedure required in relation to the DEFRA offsetting metric is provided within the Technical Paper⁵, published in March 2012. The metric and calculation procedure has been adapted for use locally within the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull pilot area⁷, and an associated Biodiversity Impact Assessment calculator tool (in MS Excel spreadsheet format) is in use by Warwickshire County Council in association with The Environment Bank.

1.2.2. The metric used is based on quantification of different (prescribed) habitat types present within a site (in terms of area), utilising pre-assigned lists to categorise the habitats and apportion relative value (termed distinctiveness), which is further determined by the perceived habitat quality (condition – approximated under the scheme using information set out within the Higher Level agri-environment Scheme (HLS) documentation where this provides a condition assessment) in order to provide a ‘value’ in terms of “biodiversity units”.

1.2.3. Once calculated, the resultant ‘value’ allows the ‘appropriate’ compensation measure (in terms of offset provision) to be quantified in equivalent terms (provision of habitats equating to a specific increase in the number of ‘biodiversity units’ required to balance any calculated loss).

1.2.4. Within the supporting documentation, the metric is specifically stated to be designed to allow direct comparison of the perceived losses and compensation measures in equal terms, rather than providing a stand alone meaningful assessment of ecological value *per se*. Accordingly, consideration of the habitats present in terms of the offsetting metric in order to assess the ecological value of the site or effects of development proposals in isolation may be somewhat spurious.

1.2.5. Nonetheless in order to attempt to address the standard requirements of Warwickshire Biodiversity Unit and provide information in regard to the offsetting pilot, this note and associated information sets out consideration of the Application Site in relation to the offsetting metric tool and consideration of the resultant change in ecological ‘value’ as measured under the metric.

1.3. Calculation Procedure

- 1.3.1. The calculation procedure with regard to the habitats present within the Application Site has been undertaken in line with the information set out within the guidance documents using the most up to date spreadsheet tool available provided by Warwickshire Biodiversity Unit/The Environment Bank (version 18).
- 1.3.2. A copy of the completed spreadsheet is attached, along with associated specific target notes. This shows that using the current indicative masterplan and associated information, the proposals would likely result in a perceived loss (as calculated) in 'biodiversity value' of 29.6 units.
- 1.3.3. As such, on the basis of the calculation set out in relation to general habitats, it is considered that the proposals will result in a net loss in biodiversity value (*as calculated using the biodiversity offsetting metric*) amounting to less than one third of the existing value in respect of non-linear habitats (the vast majority of which is provided by habitats of low or negligible ecological value, the loss of which *per se* would be unlikely to be of ecological significance outside of offsetting consideration), whilst the proposals incorporate the retention and enhancement of the majority of habitats of greater intrinsic ecological value (hedgerows, ponds and boundary watercourse) and provision of considerable new, potentially more valuable habitat types within the proposed green infrastructure. Further, given the current outline stage of the proposals, any final determination of the precise metric result of the proposals clearly remains indicative and would need to be refined at the detailed design stage.
- 1.3.4. Nonetheless, should it be necessary for the overall resultant calculated 'biodiversity value' score associated with the proposals to achieve at least 0, on the basis of the current scheme it appears likely that some level of offsetting provision would be required in the form of offsite habitat provision or purchase of formal offsetting credits.

Linear Features

- 1.3.5. As set out within the offsetting pilot guidance documents, linear habitats (e.g. hedgerows) are considered separately to allow for direct, like-for-like replacement/compensation, and are measured in linear metres, rather than areas for calculation of biodiversity units.
- 1.3.6. As set out within the Baseline Ecological Assessment of the Application Site (Aspect Ecology document ref: 'ECO1825 Baseline EcoAss v1'), a total of 45 hedgerows (H1 to H45) are present within the Application Site, forming the field margins, whilst a further linear feature is present along the northern boundary to the Application Site in the form of a single watercourse (Hall Brook).
- 1.3.7. The hedgerows vary in their condition, as summarised within the Ecological Baseline Assessment, whilst the watercourse section along the Application Site Boundary, lies immediately adjacent to hedgerows H7, H21 and H30, which overshadow the narrow channel.
- 1.3.8. The section of watercourse located along the site boundary measures approximately 640m in length. The watercourse section, including the

associated hedgerows will be retained, unaffected under the proposals, whilst a considerable buffer of new habitats in the form of drainage attenuation areas (excepting breaks to incorporate the retention of existing hedgerows situated transversely to the boundary), measuring a minimum of approximately 15-20m in width will be provided along the entire length of the watercourse. Accordingly, there will be no loss to the extent of linear watercourse corridor, whilst (subject to suitable measures to maximise the habitat value of the drainage attenuation areas and suitable protective measures installed to the existing channel and associated hedgerows during construction works) the proposals provide the opportunity to significantly enhance the existing corridor, creating new habitats and widening the effective corridor of the watercourse into the existing arable areas.

- 1.3.9. In terms of hedgerows, the total length of habitat present is calculated at approximately 6095m.
- 1.3.10. As indicated at the indicative masterplan, hedgerows H1, H4, H6, H7, H8, H10, H12, H17, H19, H21, H22, H29, H30, H31, H33, H34, H36, H38, H39, H42, H44 and H45 (comprising linear habitat of approximately 2330m) will be retained in their entirety, along with the vast majority of hedgerows H2, H3, H5, H15, H16, H18, H20, H28, H32, H35, H37, H40, H41 and H43 (approximately 2065m retained) with considerable areas of open space alongside a good number of these with the potential to expand and enhance these corridors.
- 1.3.11. Much of hedgerows H9, H11, H23, H24 and H27, along with the entirety of the short hedgerows H13, H14, H25 and H26 will be lost (amounting to a total of approximately 1700m) to provide access to provide access and facilitate functional development areas.
- 1.3.12. Accordingly, overall a loss of approximately 1700m linear hedgerow would be anticipated, albeit key hedgerows across the site will be maintained in order that the network of linear movement corridors remain available for wildlife (e.g. in particular, H8, H10, H11, H17 and H18 within the proposed central greenway: H28, H32 and H45, within the proposed Eastern Greenway along with associated site boundary hedgerows H31, H34, H44 and H29 and the majority of H20, H37, H42 and boundary hedgerows (in particular H7, H21 and H30) forming east-west connections through the site. The proposals are currently at the outline stage and accordingly, precise details of new hedgerow routes or other native planting would not be anticipated to be available (whilst indeed the above figures for losses and retention remain indicative, to be determined once the reserved matters/detailed internal layout has been worked up). However the proposals incorporate considerable new areas of open space, with potential to incorporate considerable new hedgerow planting. Accordingly, it is anticipated that more than equivalent and greater lengths of new native hedgerow planting would be incorporated within the detailed design in order to fully compensate the final losses in line with offsetting guidance (and not taking into account improved management of existing hedgerows) as required under this calculation would be anticipated, (and could suitably be ensured, for instance through the use of a suitably worded planning condition if required).

1.4. Summary of calculated offsetting metric position

- 1.4.1. Overall, on the basis of the above consideration in relation to the habitat offsetting metric, including local guidance, the proposals would appear to result in an indicative negative 'score' of approximately 29.6 biodiversity units (less than a third of the existing value attributed to non-linear habitats, which itself is provided almost entirely by habitats of low to negligible ecological value), whilst the opportunity is present within the proposals to incorporate adequate new hedgerow planting to fully compensate for any losses in regard to these linear habitats (which are considered separately). Clearly the final value of any calculated loss will depend on the final habitat provision as part of detailed design associated with reserved matters of any approved scheme, however the above calculations provide an approximation based on the current parameters plans and indicative layout.

Warwickshire Coventry and Solihull - Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculator

v. 18.0 07/02/2014
Please fill in both tables

KEY	
No action required	
Enter value	
Drop-down menu	
Calculation	
Automatic lookup	
Result	

Local Planning Authority:	Warwick DC
Site name:	Land North of Tamworth Road, Keresley
Planning application reference number:	
Assessor:	Aspect Ecology (Colin Lee)
Date:	18/06/2014

Please do not edit the formulae or structure
To condense the form for display hide vacant rows, do not delete them
If additional rows are required, or to provide feedback on the calculator please contact WCC Ecological Services

T. Note	code	Existing habitats on site		Habitat distinctiveness		Habitat condition		Habitats to be retained with no change within development		Habitats to be retained and enhanced within development		Habitats to be lost within development		Comment
		Please enter all habitats within the site boundary		Distinctiveness	Score	Condition	Score	Area (ha)	Existing value	Area (ha)	Existing value	Area (ha)	Existing value	
		Phase 1 habitat description	Habitat area (ha)											
Direct Impacts and retained habitats														
F3	J11	Other: Arable	2.50	Low	2	Poor	1					2.50	5.00	
F2	J11	Other: Arable	3.40	Low	2	Poor	1					3.40	6.80	
F1	J11	Other: Arable	1.70	Low	2	Poor	1					1.70	3.40	
F7	J11	Other: Arable	3.60	Low	2	Poor	1					3.60	7.20	
F5	J11	Other: Arable	1.90	Low	2	Poor	1					1.90	3.80	
F4	J11	Other: Arable	3.10	Low	2	Poor	1					3.10	6.20	
F15	B6	Grassland: Poor semi-improved grassland	3.60	Medium-Low	3	Poor	1					3.60	10.80	
F6	J11	Other: Arable	4.60	Low	2	Poor	1					4.60	9.20	
F13	B6	Grassland: Poor semi-improved grassland	3.60	Medium-Low	3	Poor	1					3.60	10.80	
F12	B6	Grassland: Poor semi-improved grassland	2.30	Medium-Low	3	Poor	1					2.30	6.90	
F14	B6	Grassland: Poor semi-improved grassland	3.45	Medium-Low	3	Poor	1					3.45	10.35	
F9	B6	Grassland: Poor semi-improved grassland	3.30	Medium-Low	3	Poor	1					3.30	9.90	
F10	B6	Grassland: Poor semi-improved grassland	2.10	Medium-Low	3	Poor	1					2.10	6.30	
F11	A21	Woodland: Dense continuous scrub	0.25	Medium-Low	3	Poor	1			0.25	0.75			
F8	B6	Grassland: Poor semi-improved grassland	2.15	Medium-Low	3	Poor	1			0.40	1.20	1.75	5.25	
P2	G1	Wetland: Standing water	0.15	High	6	Poor	1			0.15	0.90			
P3	G1	Wetland: Standing water	0.05	High	6	Poor	1			0.05	0.30			
P1	G1	Wetland: Standing water	0.10	High	6	Moderate	2	0.10	1.20					
J12		Grassland: Amenity grassland	0.35	Low	2	Poor	1					0.35	0.70	
Total			42.20					0.10	1.20	0.85	3.15	41.25	102.60	
										Site habitat biodiversity value		106.95		
										XD + YF + YH		106.95		
Indirect Impacts														
Before/after impact Including off site habitats														
			K					Value of loss from indirect impacts						
								K x A x B = L1, L2		L1 - L2				
Before														
After														
Before														
After														
Before														
After														
Before														
After														
Total			0.00					M	0.00			HIS = J + M		
												Habitat Impact Score (HIS)		102.60

