

ADDENDUM REPORT

Application Number:	AWDM/1680/22	Recommendation - REFUSE
Site:	Cissbury Chase (Former Worthing Sixth Form College)	
Proposal:	Application to vary conditions 2, 9 and 11 of planning permission AWDM/0363/11 to extend residential curtilage to allow the extension to rear gardens of residential dwellings at Cissbury Chase [Planning permission AWDM/0363/11: Demolition of existing college buildings and construction of 265 dwellings together with floor space for commercial nursery units with associated access, parking and landscaping. Amendments - commercial nursery units replacing doctors' surgery in corner block, amendments to central square and surrounding buildings, minor elevational changes to other buildings, minor modifications to layout of streets.]	
Applicant:	Cissbury Chase (Worthing) Management Company Ltd	Ward: Castle
Agent:	ECE Planning Limited	
Case Officer:	Jo Morin	

Additional Supporting Information

“Following ecological assessment work for the development at Cissbury Chase ‘No Mans Land’, Adur and Worthing have provided Ecological Comments on the proposals, which this addendum seeks to address.

Habitat Classification of the Proposal Areas

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal classified the habitats within the buffer as ‘ruderal/ephemeral’. A Site Habitat Plan is attached showing these areas and where they were accessed from. These strips were proposed to be woodland strips according to the Soft Landscape Plan. As the photos show there is woodland planting in some of these areas, although it does not appear to be of sufficient density to form a wooded area and more resembles the beginnings of a hedge/treeline.

Woody species noted include:

Blackthorn Prunus spinosa

Field Maple Acer campestre

Rowan Sorbus aucuparia

Silver Birch Betula pendula
Hazel Corylus avellana
Dogwood Cornus sanguinea
Hawthorn Crataegus monogyna
Beech Fagus sylvatica
Holly Ilex aquifolium
Dog Rose Rosa canina

The groundcover is currently a ruderal species mix including the following species:

Cocks-foot Dactylis glomerata
Cleavers Galium aperine
Nettle Urtica dioica
Dandelion Taraxacum officinalis
Forget-me-not Myosotis arvensis
Ivy Hedera helix
Bramble Rubus fruticosus
Ordinary Moss Brachythecium rutabulum
Lords and Ladies Arum maculatum
Wood Avens Geum urbanum

The areas still appear to contain many areas of bare earth.

As the photos below demonstrate the woodland planting displays varying levels of success, with the northern area appearing denser/more developed, probably because there is more room for plants to grow here. The narrowness of the other habitat strips has resulted in a shaded habitat where habitat development is slow.

Habitat Connectivity

The comments request further assessment of the habitat connectivity provided by the habitat strips. A mammal push-under was noted to the acoustic fence to south and a mammal track was noted in the strip to north. As such it is determined that the strips are forming a connective habitat, although it cannot yet be determined whether this is being used by native mammals or cats, although is likely to be a mixture of the two.

The northern strip is the largest, but ends in the west in further fenced gardens, and as such is not providing a significant connective corridor to other habitat areas. Its loss would slightly remove the habitat available to wildlife but would have no significant impact upon connectivity, providing that access through gardens is possible, e.g. by hedgehog highways. Residents should be required to sign an agreement to retain and maintain such access points in perpetuity.

The eastern strip connects to the railway to south and ends between Quicksilver Street and Bolsover Road. The strip might allow wildlife from the railway to access the rears of gardens and to access the allotments to the east of site. The allotments are chainlink-fenced, which would prevent mammals from using the strip to access the allotments. Smaller mammals, amphibians and reptiles would be able to use the strip as a habitat extension and connective feature. Should the strip be lost, such species would still be able to access the allotments from the railway line.

The southern strip is adjacent to the railway embankment and is likely used by a variety of wildlife; however, given the presence of the railway embankment, the impact of the loss of the strip here would be minimal, with animals still able to commute along the embankment habitats. The acoustic fence further limits access into the strip, essentially dividing it in two in places. Presuming that the acoustic fence will remain, an area behind this would remain as a corridor.

Loss of Habitat

The proposals would result in land which is currently in communal ownership and professional management being reverted to private ownership and management. With the loss of management control the habitats currently present and proposed to establish cannot be guaranteed. It is considered likely that some of the scrubby plants such as blackthorn would be considered undesirable and removed from gardens, but that trees such as beech and wild cherry might be seen as desirable screening and retained. The ground below would be less likely to develop into a woodland ground flora and is more likely to become lawn or flowerbed. There would therefore be a slight change in the habitats likely to mature, with this forming more of a treeline than a woodland strip, with gaps possible where residents remove all the trees. In some areas the vegetation may also form more of a native hedge. The strips are too narrow and shaded by fences to form a good-quality ground flora in any case, and providing that trees can mature and their canopies spread, a similar effect for birds and invertebrates would be created. There would be less opportunity for foraging mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation

Lizard would be happy to provide such a calculation; however the result of this would be entirely dependent on the categorisation of the habitats post-proposals. If the strip returns to garden areas this would then be classified as 'vegetated garden' which would represent a loss compared to even low value habitats such as derelict land or ruderal/ephemeral in poor condition. Areas for enhancement to the south-east and north-east have been set aside but would not be large enough to offset these areas. As such there would be little benefit in completing this at this time. Other non-metric enhancements such as reptile hibernacula have been proposed in areas to remain out of private ownership.

Impacts Upon Badgers

No evidence of badgers such as latrines were noted and whilst not all of the area was accessible, it is likely that badger setts would have been observed given the lack of ground flora. The proposals would be unlikely to impact directly on a sett. Loss of foraging habitat would be limited given the ample habitat present along the railway, and all three corridors end on the site boundaries meaning they provide little additional connectivity for badgers.

Reptiles and Amphibians

The proposals would result in a loss of potential 'overspill' habitat from the allotments and the railway line embankment, but given the large scale of both of these the impacts of this loss would not be significant. The habitats are relatively sparse and could not in themselves support a self-sustaining population. The strips would provide very limited connectivity for reptiles and amphibians with them ending in gardens at all ends.

Nesting Birds

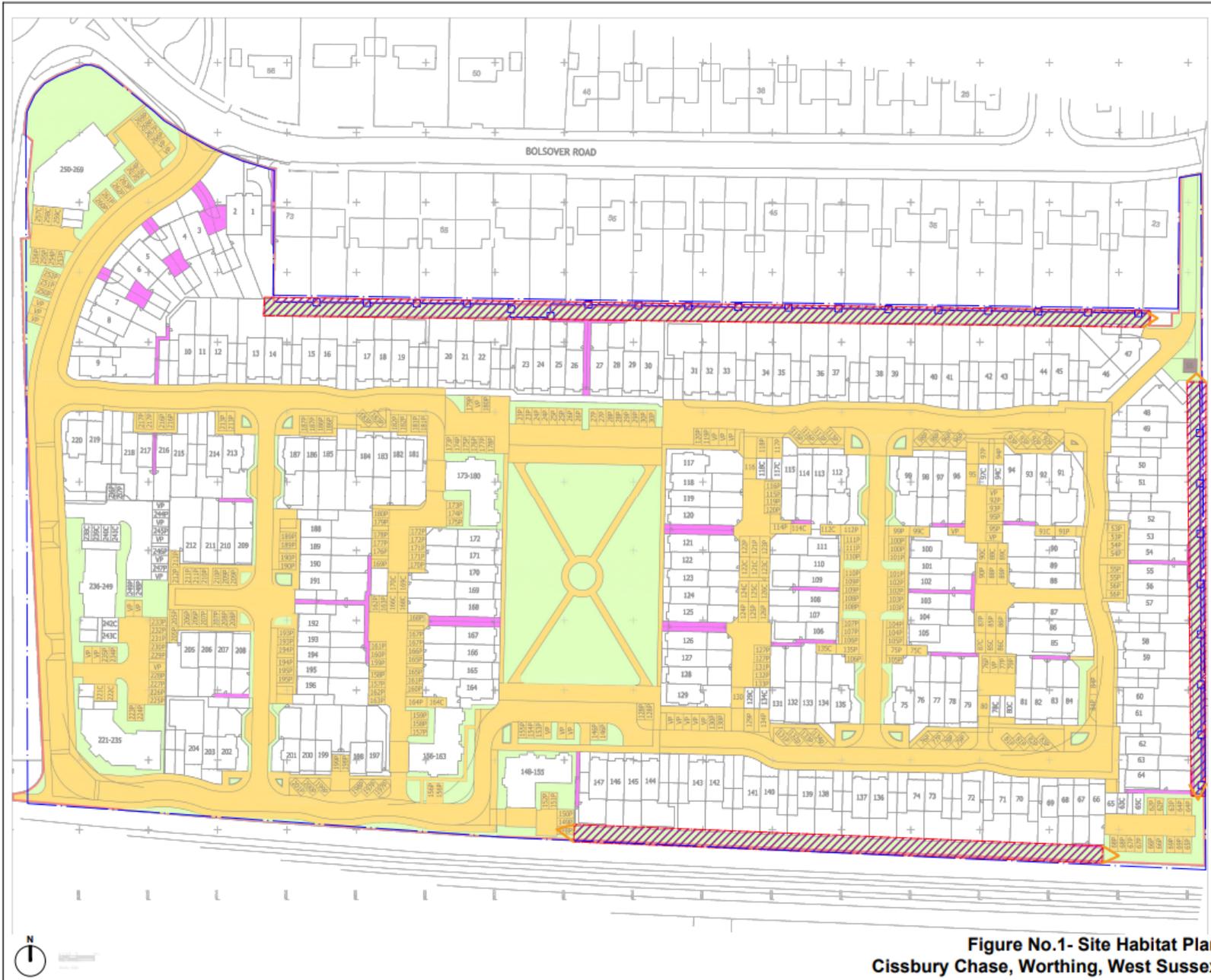
The habitats are currently immature and only provide nesting habitat in small discrete areas, e.g. along the north and adjacent to existing trees and shrubs. Should any vegetation need to be removed to remove the fence this must be carried out outside of bird nesting season (generally March-August inclusive) or following sufficient checks by an ecologist to ensure no bird nests would be disturbed. The removal of the strips might result in a loss of bird nesting habitat in the long-term, whereby trees are removed by residents instead of maturing. Further nestbox planting could be undertaken to mitigate this, with boxes installed to houses and fences. The areas in the south-east and north-east could be planted with trees and shrubs to re-provide nesting habitat.

Revised Planning Assessment

Whilst, the additional information submitted by the applicant's Ecologist is useful and addresses some of the concerns identified, it also reinforces concerns that the proposal would have a negative impact on biodiversity and would not show a net gain as required by emerging Local Plan policies. In addition the further comments illustrate the difficulties posed by the incremental extension of residents gardens. The lack of universal support for the application is a key concern even if the ecology concerns could be addressed.

Recommendation

As per agenda.



- Legend**
- Site Boundary
 - Parcel boundaries
 - Hard Landscaping
Managed by managing company
 - Soft Landscaping
Managed by managing company
 - Closed board fencing.
 - Protective fencing
 - Access / Inspection Point
 - Ruderal / Ephemeral
With Scattered
Immature Trees

Planning Issue

Rev. Description	Date	Author



Client
ECE Planning
Project Name and location
Cissbury Chase
Working West Sussex

Drawing title
Figure No.2 - Site Habitat Plan

Scale	Drawn	Approved	Date
1:5000GA1	CS		20.02.23
Drawing No. LLD2567-ECO-FIG-002			Revision 00

**Figure No.1- Site Habitat Plan
Cissbury Chase, Worthing, West Sussex**

