

HAWKESWOOD ECOLOGY

Specialists in Ecological Survey and Assessment

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(Proprietors: Niki and Eric Hawkeswood)



Mr C Quick
Design Director
Iplan Architecture

19/02/2020

Our Ref: HE/56/2019

Dear Carl,

LPA Biodiversity Unit Response to Proposed Lingfield Avenue Development

Introduction:

Neath Port Talbot Biodiversity Unit has required that prior to determination the above proposals are subjected to an assessment of Ecosystem Resilience in accordance with the requirements of the Environment Act (Wales) 2016.

Under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) and other public bodies must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems. LPA's are directed to consider the resilience of ecosystems early in the planning process to aid assessment of the impacts of any proposed development upon biodiversity.

The premise for Ecosystem Resilience is laid out in Section 4 of The State of Natural Resources Report, a 2018 document produced by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on behalf of the Welsh Government. It lays out a framework for assessing ecosystem resilience. However, despite the duty placed on LPA's, there is no currently agreed format for this assessment.

The elements that need to be scrutinised in relation to Ecosystem resilience are:

- Diversity
- Extent
- Condition
- Connectivity
- Adaptability

These factors are considered below, although none of them are considered 'stand alone' and all interrelate to some extent. It is also important to note that it is the responsibility of the LPA to assess Ecosystem Resilience and that any Site based report is not able to make judgements on a wider scale. It should also be acknowledged that there is as yet no agreed format to undertake such an assessment.

In relation to Adaptability, NRW comment that:

‘Adaptability differs from the other attributes because it is part of the definition of resilience rather than an attribute that supports it. However, its inclusion in the Environment (Wales) Act is important because it emphasises one of the most important features of resilience: dynamism and the ability to adapt to change.’

NRW also comments that *‘Adaptability cannot yet be quantified in an equivalent way to the other attributes and so we have not used it in the assessment of resilience in this State of Natural Resources Review’*. As such Adaptability cannot be considered in this report.

The Authority is also requiring evidence of Biodiversity Enhancements that will be gained as part of the proposed development. This duty on LPA’s is confirmed in a letter from the Welsh Government Chief Planning Officer to Local Planning Authorities (dated 23rd October 2019) providing clarification on the Welsh Governments approach to Paragraph 6.4.5 of Planning Policy Wales 10 which sets out that *“planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means that development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity”*.

The purpose of this letter was to clarify that in light of the legislation and Welsh Government policy outlined above, where biodiversity enhancement is not proposed as part of an application, significant weight will be given to its absence, and unless other significant material considerations indicate otherwise it will be necessary to refuse permission. Biodiversity enhancement therefore will need to be included in any future planning application.

As such, Neath-Port Talbot require an indication of measures to be undertaken as part of the proposed development at Lingfield Avenue that will result in biodiversity gains to comply with the Welsh Government requirement.

The development proposals are for the construction of five bungalows to be accessed from Lingfield Avenue, Sandfields, Port Talbot. The works are confined to an area of amenity grassland which is formally managed by the LPA currently. The works will not result in the loss of any important or noted habitat; the Site is adjacent to the main dual carriageway spine road, Afan Way.

Ecosystem Resilience

Diversity

The Site consists wholly of formally mown grassland with three recently planted trees. It is considered overall that habitat diversity on Site is low with a low diversity of species. The Site does not include habitats that would support any populations of protected species in its current condition.

Extent

The Site is approximately 0.15Ha, and is wholly laid down to formally mown grass with a small number of planted trees. Its small size is further impacted upon by the lack of connectivity to other habitats.

Condition

The Site is not in good condition for supporting biodiversity. The grassland is managed by mowing and is typical of many urban formally grassed areas. The three tree saplings are young with no suitable opportunities for either breeding birds or roosting bats.

Connectivity

The Site is relatively isolated in the urban environment and does not lie on any specific wildlife corridor. It forms part of a larger 'verge' which is formally mown with occasionally trees, to the Afan Way. To the south, the adjacent area consists of housing (built within the last fifty years or so) which supports small gardens, some of which do support shrubs and hedgerows but not significant areas for breeding birds or foraging bats.

On the northern side of Afan Way is Neath Port Talbot Hospital. This hospital is relatively recent opening in 2003 and the grounds support planted woodland and water features. Its separation from the proposed development Site by the main Afan Way dual carriageway limits any significant movement of wildlife in that direction. Its well lit nature will also discriminate against some species of bat crossing the road but may encourage some species of bat, such as pipistrelle species, to forage in this area.

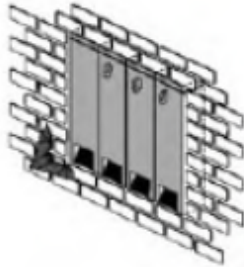
Adaptability

Not assessed, see above comments on Page 2.

Biodiversity Enhancements:

It is proposed at this stage to provide integral bat bricks and bird boxes on the new build. Final details are to be drawn up in terms of locations and aspect of the boxes; however, the recommended styles are shown below.

Bat tubes: typical Integral Bat tubes that are built in to the wall.



2FR - Bat tube

This is a slightly updated version of the 1FR and several can be installed next to each other to create a larger roost. The tubes include an internal panel to increase the roost space and also an optional passage at the rear allowing access into existing cavities.

Size: 470x200x125mm

Weight: 9.5kg



1FE - Bat Access Panel

This maintenance-free access panel can be installed in the outer skin of most cavity wall constructions due to its slim 80mm depth. The open rear also allows access into the building cavity so that bats can continue to use an existing roost space.

Size: 300x300x80mm

Weight: 7.8kg



1FR Bat Tube

The bat tube meets the characteristic behavioral requirements of the types of bats that inhabit buildings. The durable wooden rear panel maintains excellent climatic conditions and provides a surface which they can cling on to. The tube system requires no cleaning or maintenance.

Bat boxes with bespoke finish are also available:



Habibat 001 - Bespoke Facing

Dimensions: 215 mm Wide x 440 mm High x 102 mm deep

Materials: Concrete plus facing product

Weight: approximately 7 kg

The Habibat Bat Box is a large, solid box made of insulating concrete which provides an internal roost space and can be seamlessly integrated into the fabric of a building as it is built or renovated. Suitable for most species commonly found in the UK, this single chambered unit features an integrated V system to increase the surface for bats to roost against, whilst allowing them to move around.

The Habibat Bat Box can be faced with a number of products to suit the design build. This includes, brick, block, stone, wood or a rendered finish, ensuring the box is unobtrusive and aesthetically pleasing. There are a choice of plinth colours available: smooth blue, smooth red, or buff.

This box is made to order with a choice of finishes.

BIM

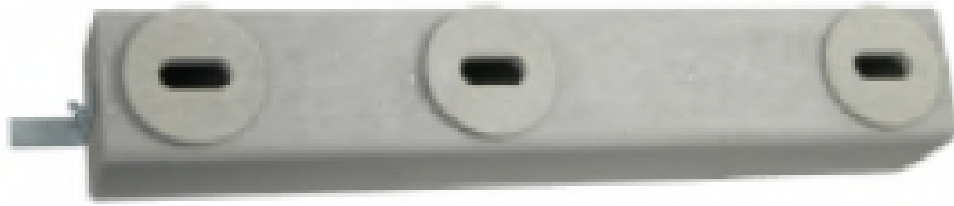
BIM versions of the Habibat 001 Bat Box are available for download, to request these please contact us.

Recommended bird boxes are house sparrow terraces which fit under eaves, but perhaps more appropriate in a bungalow is a swift brick which can be built into the wall. Examples are shown below:

House sparrow terrace



Triple cavity swift box, to be fitted into the wall, various styles are available.



I hope you find this useful and helpful at this stage. If you have any further queries now please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Eric Hawkeswood'.

Eric Hawkeswood
Principal Ecologist
07957 154794

References:

Natural Resources Wales. 2016. *State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR): Assessment of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources. Technical Report.* Natural Resources Wales.