



Committee and date

South Planning Committee

25 September 2018

Development Management Report

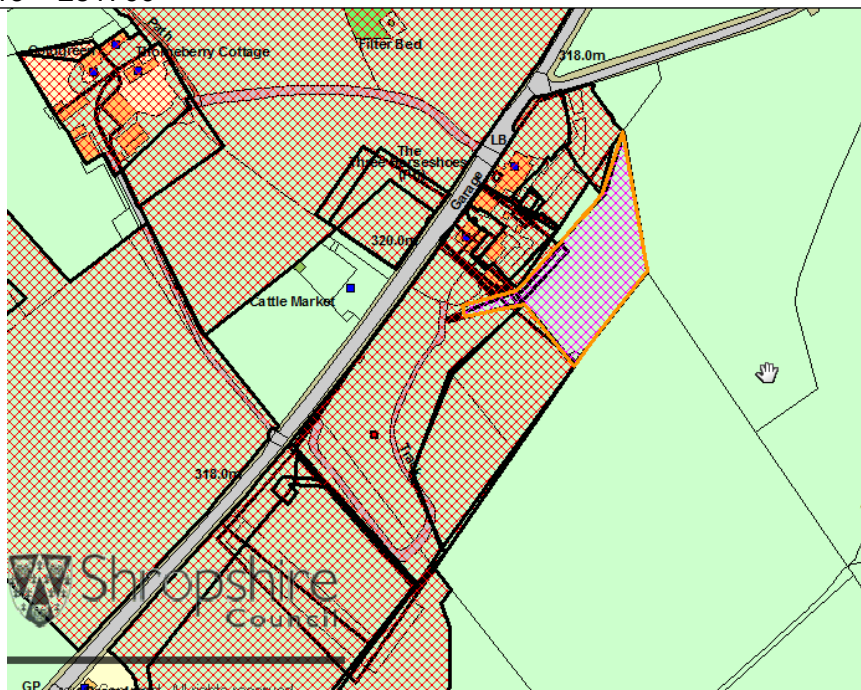
Responsible Officer: Tim Rogers

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Summary of Application

<u>Application Number:</u> 18/02109/FUL	<u>Parish:</u>	Wheathill
<u>Proposal:</u> Change of use of land for the storage of touring caravans (unoccupied) and associated ground works and landscaping.		
<u>Site Address:</u> Wheathill Touring Park Caravan Site Wheathill Shropshire WV16 6QT		
<u>Applicant:</u> Wheathill Touring Caravan Park		
<u>Case Officer:</u> Vincent Maher	<u>email:</u> planningdmsw@shropshire.gov.uk	

Grid Ref: 359913 – 281760



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Contact: Tim Rogers (01743) 258773

Recommendation:- Permit, subject to the conditions set out in Appendix 1.

REPORT

1.0 THE PROPOSAL

1.1 Planning permission is sought to provide a storage area for up to 34 vehicles associated with an existing pub/ caravan site complex. This will effectively increase the current storage capacity from 30 parking bays for overnight visitors to a total of 64. To achieve this storage area, the applicant proposes to excavate a substantial area (around 1,000 sqm). Some of the soil/ rock will be excavated and some will be used to create a “berm” that would be landscaped with a mix of gorse, broom, some hedgerow and wildflower. At its deepest point, the caravan storage park would be around 9m below the top of the berm. This work is proposed to minimise the proposal’s impact on the area both close by and in the context of the wider countryside. A concrete retaining wall would be built at the back of the excavated area.

1.2 The application is accompanied by a landscaping plan that show a mix of windflower, hedgerow and tree planting; a design and access statement; an ecology report (from 2015) and a topographical survey. The applicant has also provided a long distance photograph of the site to help show the site in its context. This helpfully shows the site in the context of its setting relative to the surrounding hills.

Figure 1 View of the site from Blackford



1.3 The applicant advises that the Wheathill Touring Park has the highest rating from the Automobile Association (the AA), its five pennant rating. This is given to parks that are “of an extremely high standard, set in attractive surroundings with mature landscaping, exceptional facilities, security and customer care”. The applicant states this facility has proved popular with visitors in recent years and storage of existing caravans makes a contribution to the financial viability of the business. Demand for the on-site storage exceeds the existing facility’s capacity. The applicant states that expansion would generate one additional job.

Planning history of the site

- 1.4 At its December 2015 meeting, the South Planning Committee approved an application for use of agricultural land to facilitate extension of existing touring park; 25 all-weather touring pitches; estate road and services; erection of toilet block; landscaping (reference 15/04281/FUL). The application was accompanied a unilateral undertaking (UU) by the applicant not to make any further planning applications for touring caravan pitches on land wholly within their control at Wheathill. This application does not deviate from that UU in that it is for storage. The site benefits from other permissions associated with its pub and tourist uses.
- 1.5 The applicant submitted a pre application query for the current proposal (PREAPP/17/00615) and officers indicated that they would not be likely to support this proposal because of its likely impact on the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB). The applicant has subsequently submitted a more accurate topographical survey and additional landscape drawings to address this matter and provided more information about the applicant's business.
- 1.6 The Council is obliged to take this new information into account as well as comments from consultees as well and other material considerations including the new NPPF released in July 2018.

2.0 SITE LOCATION/DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site is in open countryside located to the rear of the Three Horse Shoes pub and touring caravan complex on the B4364 Ludlow to Bridgnorth Road within the AONB. The site forms part of the Pasture Hills landscape. The key characteristics of this category are: prominent sloping topography creating a medium to large scale landscape with filtered views, hedged fields (many with ancient origins), pastoral land use and a dispersed settlement pattern.
- 2.2 The site forms part of an extended plateau within a valley setting. Land levels rise to the rear of the site away from the road. There are two rights of way that come close to the edge of the site where the proposed storage area would be located.

3.0 REASON FOR COMMITTEE DETERMINATION OF APPLICATION

- 3.1 The Parish Council opposes the application and this officer recommendation is contrary to the views of the parish. The Local Member (Cllr Shingleton) would like this application to be determined by the Committee. The Chairman of the South Planning Committee has agreed this case that the material planning considerations warrant this application being determined by the Committee.

4.0 COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 - Consultee Comments
- 4.1.1 **SC Ecology: No objection subject to a lighting plan condition and informatives.** An ecological assessment was carried out in 2015. This would normally be considered out of date but, given lack of ecological value on this site, in this case is considered acceptable.

4.1.2 **SC Trees: No objection.**

Number of trees and hedgerows might be affected by the proposal in particular a large oak to rear of pub and on eastern boundary of development. Need therefore for a tree protection plan and securing through conditions the very highest specification for design / delivery of landscape mitigation that including consideration of soil types/ compaction and water/ nutrient gradients that serve as constraints on a man made bund.

4.1.3 **Shropshire Hills AONB: Objection.**

- Agree with officer's recommendation at pre application stage not to support proposal.
- Degree of landscaping works to limit visual impact are a testament of impact site will have on landscape as a whole. Digging a big hole to hide stored caravans is a major development according to national policy.
- Storage of caravans could be easily accommodated at nearby enterprise parks outside the AONB. Remote storage offered by many other caravan site owners. Storage does not have to be on site for business to be profitable.
- AONB Partnership objected to previous application because of landscape impact.
- Concerns about gradual increase in footprint by sidestepping unilateral undertaking.
- Site already exceeds AONB Management Plan guidelines.

4.1.4 **SC Rights of Way/ Ramblers – No comments received.**

4.1.5 **SC SUDS - No objection**

Recommend sustainable drainage scheme through an informative.

4.1.6 **Wheathill Parish Council - Objection.**

- Long planning history – this is the twelfth application. Applicant signed a unilateral undertaking not to expand.
- Proposal would reshape caravan site. Resulting berm would look man made especially when viewed from Blackford on the Shropshire Way.
- Would harm AONB including through excavation of 1000 sqm area of site. Replacement planting would take years to become established.
- Unsuitable site – could have storage at enterprise park at Ludlow or elsewhere.
- Unviable investment proposal. Applicant charges £380 a caravan a year. Would an additional £13k return justify so much work? Application may be a foothold for more development.

The parish has submitted photographs of the site when viewed from Blackford and so has the applicant's agent.

4.2 **- Public Comments**

26 letters of support from residents and some business including Salop Leisure raising the following points:

- Local area has benefited from applicant's investment on site in recent years. Site was a rundown pub, now very well maintained and organised.
- People need to store caravans instead of towing them. More storage means visitors will not need to drive caravans on the road.
- Storage area will disappear when site is landscaped.
- Should not stop development just because it is in the AONB.
- Applicant has been in the business for 40 years. Well known, uses local electricians and tradespeople when possible. Has supported Ludlow Homecare.
- Extra storage will benefit other businesses (spend on pubs, shops).
- Need to allow all rural businesses to grow post-Brexit including the promotion of more tourism in Shropshire.

Five letters of opposition received raising the following points:

- Applicant has submitted lots of applications. Last scheme controversial. Has previously said no further expansion. Now acting by stealth.
- Massive excavation – 1000 sqm – will hit rock, how will applicant reconfigure this site/ remove rock?
- How will they plant on a clifftop?
- Planting will take 20 years to become established.
- Contrary to NPPF and AONB.
- Most people supporting do not live or work in Wheathill.
- Ecology assessment out of date. Site rich in flora and fauna. Wrong to see semi improved grassland destroyed and native species cut down.

5.0 THE MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of the development: a review of relevant national and local policy;
- Siting of the development, scale and design including its impact – impact on landscape;
- Other matters raised in comments received during the processing of this application

6.0 OFFICER APPRAISAL

6.1 Principle of the development: a review of relevant national and local policy

National Policy:

- 6.1.1 The new July 2018 National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") advises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to achieving sustainable development (para 7) and establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 10). This means "approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay" and supporting sustainable economic growth (para 11c). There are three dimensions to sustainable development: an economic role, a social role and an environmental role (para 8). Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system where it builds on the strength of a local area (para 80).

6.1.2 In the rural area, the NPPF advises that the planning system should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings; b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; and c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside. While the NPPF seeks to promote economic growth, it also states that the planning system should help achieve well-designed spaces (section 10) that contribute to and enhance the local environment (para 109).

6.1.3 The new NPPF continues to attach the highest level of protection to the AONB. Decision makers should give great weight to conserving and enhancing its landscape and scenic beauty (para 172). However, the new NPPF provides additional advice on development in AONBs. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Interestingly the NPPF leaves it to the decision maker to determine what a “major development” is and the decision maker must take into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined.

Development plan policy

6.1.4 CS Policy CS1 supports investment and new development. In rural areas outside of settlements this will primarily be for “economic diversification”. CS Policy CS13 supports rural enterprise schemes provided they accord with Policy CS5. Policy CS16 seeks to deliver high quality, sustainable tourism facilities that promote connections between visitors and Shropshire’s natural, cultural and historic environment. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that the development complies with CS17 (Environmental Networks) and SAMDev Plan Policies MD7b and MD12 (The Natural Environment).

AONB Management Plan

6.1.5 The management plan does not have development plan status but some weight should be applied to it as it helps interpret how SAMDev Plan Policy MD12 will be applied. It is therefore worth quoting its advice on tourism infrastructure in full:

Tourism and recreation development and infrastructure

The siting, design and specification of new developments for tourism and recreation should be to high standards of environmental sensitivity and sustainability. The following guidelines are recommended:

- *Single developments of more than around 10 accommodation units are less likely to be supported in small settlements and open countryside.*
- *Large parks of static caravans, cabins or chalets are likely to be intrusive.*
- *Smaller sites with good landscaping are preferable, as are facilities for touring caravans and camping which generally have a low impact by virtue of fewer permanent structures.*

Built facilities for recreation should only be allowed where their location and the activities they support are compatible with the special qualities of the AONB.

6.1.6 Arising from the foregoing detailed review of policy, two questions arise when considering if the principle of the development is acceptable. These are:

1. whether the proposal represents major development as defined by the new NPPF (para 172);
2. how a decision maker should resolve advice in the NPPF that requires great weight to be applied to proposals that generate economic growth and at the same time to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.

6.1.7 On the first question, officers submit that this is not a major development in that it is not seeking permission for substantial building work (for example, a new enclosed commercial storage building for the caravans or new units of tourism accommodation or indeed new caravan pitches). Rather, the works equate to a large park for vehicles and the extensive excavation works are needed to reduce the scheme's visual impact on the AONB. In this respect, the excavation works could not be equated to the size of a quarry. The site is visible from the road and two rights of way and an open storage area could affect its character significantly but the applicant's decision to sink the car park is an unusual way of mitigating its impact. Therefore the provisions of para 172 of the NPPF do not apply.

6.1.8 Turning to the second question, it is clear that there are conflicting economic and environmental matters to take account of in this application. The applicant has made reference to his own five pennant award from the AA and the economic benefits arising from the scheme both for the viability of the business and the pub and the additional rural employment it would generate. These are not significant in themselves on this site although the expansion might further enhance the reputation of the AONB for tourism. However, both national and local policy place great emphasis on protecting the landscape too. The relevant AONB Management Plan policy seeks to disperse tourism facilities into smaller sites but, critically, it does not rule out more intensive development that exceeds 10 pitches and, indeed, the South Planning Committee approved a development in excess of this threshold in 2015. Ultimately, the acceptability of the proposal will turn on the effectiveness of the landscaping and screening proposals. This is considered below.

6.2 **Siting of the development, scale and design: impact on landscape**

6.2.1 CS Policy CS6 and SAMDev Plan MD2 require development to be appropriate in scale and design taking account of local context and character. CS Policy CS17 further asserts, among other things, the importance of protecting and enhancing Shropshire's natural environment. SAMDev Plan Policy MD7b requires applications for agricultural development to be of a scale consistent with their required agricultural purpose and where possible sited close to existing farm buildings. SAMDev Plan Policy MD12 seeks to protect the natural environment. Proposals likely to have a significant adverse effect, directly, indirectly or cumulatively, on it will only be permitted if a) there is no satisfactory alternative means of avoiding such impacts through re-design or by re-locating on an alternative site and; b) the social or economic benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm to the asset. In all cases, a hierarchy of mitigation then compensation measures will be sought.

- 6.2.2 There are two critical viewpoints to take into account when assessing this proposal. The first is to consider it close up and, in particular, that run close to the edge of the site. The second is further afield from including from Blackford.
- 6.2.3 Close up, it will not be possible to see the caravans in storage from the footpath to the eastern side of the site both because of the depth of excavation and the mounding proposed. Much of the landscaping will be grass and wildflower which will become established quickly. There are likely to be limited and oblique views into the site from the public footpath that runs along the south eastern boundary of the site but the view into the storage area needs to be understood in the context of a wider camp and, moreover, with the planting of additional trees along the hedgerow, the impact will be very limited and localised. It would be necessary to impose tree protection and landscape maintenance conditions consistent with the advice of the SC Trees officer.
- 6.2.4 Further afield, when viewed from Blackford (refer Figure 1), it is clear that the expanded site will sit well and be contained within a valley setting especially if a lighting condition is imposed as recommended by the county ecologist. A low level lighting condition will both protect the area for bats but further serve to mitigate the proposal's impact on the wider area. Thus it is submitted that it shows a reasonable level of compliance with the foregoing policy considerations.
- 6.2.5 The development will involve a significant amount of excavation work. The applicant has agreed to a construction environmental management plan to mitigate the impact of the construction works on the locality.
- 6.10 **Other matters raised in the public consultation**
- 6.10.1 Officers have reviewed all comments made for and against this case. There may be other sites where caravans could be stored outside of the AONB but the applicant has carefully thought through a plan to reduce its visual impact when viewed from two critical receptors. It is also irrelevant where the supporters and opponents of the scheme come from. The county ecologist does not find any reason to withhold permission.
- 6.10.3 Some residents have referred to this proposal being a foothold for further expansion. The Committee must determine what is before it and any future development proposals would be the subject of a fresh assessment.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This is a finally balanced case where it is necessary to resolve potentially conflicting economic and environmental concerns. The proposal will support an existing business although its economic benefits do not appear to be substantial. On the other hand, national and local planning policy place great weight on protecting the AONB. Uniquely, this proposal has taken unusual measures to disguise its visual impact and for this reason it is recommended that permission is granted subject to appropriate conditions.
- 7.2 The report has already considered a range of conditions. The applicant has signed a UU restricting the expansion of the site for caravans for overnight visitors. A further condition in this recommendation reinforces that control.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES APPRAISAL

8.1 Risk Management

There are two principal risks associated with this recommendation as follows:

- As with any planning decision the applicant has a right of appeal if they disagree with the decision and/or the imposition of conditions. Costs can be awarded irrespective of the mechanism for hearing the appeal, i.e. written representations, hearing or inquiry.
- The decision may be challenged by way of a Judicial Review by a third party. The courts become involved when there is a misinterpretation or misapplication of policy or some breach of the rules of procedure or the principles of natural justice. However their role is to review the way the authorities reach decisions, rather than to make a decision on the planning issues themselves, although they will interfere where the decision is so unreasonable as to be irrational or perverse. Therefore they are concerned with the legality of the decision, not its planning merits. A challenge by way of Judicial Review must be made a) promptly and b) in any event not later than six weeks after the grounds to make the claim first arose.

Both of these risks need to be balanced against the risk of not proceeding to determine the application. In this scenario there is also a right of appeal against non-determination for application for which costs can also be awarded.

8.2 Human Rights

Article 8 gives the right to respect for private and family life and First Protocol Article 1 allows for the peaceful enjoyment of possessions. These have to be balanced against the rights and freedoms of others and the orderly development of the County in the interests of the Community.

First Protocol Article 1 requires that the desires of landowners must be balanced against the impact on residents.

This legislation has been taken into account in arriving at the above recommendation.

8.3 Equalities

The concern of planning law is to regulate the use of land in the interests of the public at large, rather than those of any particular group. Equality will be one of a number of 'relevant considerations' that need to be weighed in Planning Committee members' minds under section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are likely financial implications if the decision and / or imposition of conditions is challenged by a planning appeal or judicial review. The costs of defending any decision will be met by the authority and will vary dependent on the scale and nature of the proposal. Local financial considerations are capable of being taken into account

when determining this planning application – insofar as they are material to the application. The weight given to this issue is a matter for the decision maker.

10. BACKGROUND

Relevant Planning Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

Core Strategy:

CS1 - Strategic Approach

CS5 - Countryside and Greenbelt

CS6 - Sustainable Design and Development Principles

CS13 - Economic Development, Enterprise and Employment

CS16 - Tourism, Culture and Leisure

CS17 - Environmental Networks

CS18 – Sustainable Water Management

SAMDev Plan

MD2 - Sustainable Design

MD7B - General Management of Development in the Countryside

MD12 - Natural Environment

11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

View details online:

<https://pa.shropshire.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=details&keyVal=P8F8QLTDL700>

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Design and Access Statement

Ecology Report

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr R. Macey

Local Member

Cllr Gwilym Butler

Cllr Madge Shingleton

Appendices

APPENDIX 1 - Conditions

APPENDIX 1

Conditions

STANDARD CONDITION(S)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 (As amended).

2. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved plans and drawings

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.

CONDITION(S) THAT REQUIRE APPROVAL BEFORE THE DEVELOPMENT COMMENCES

3. No above ground works shall be commenced until full details of both hard and soft landscape works (in accordance with Shropshire Council Natural Environment Development Guidance Note 7 'Trees and Development') have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape works shall be carried out in full compliance with the approved plan, schedule and timescales. Any trees or plants that, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, seriously damaged or defective, shall upon written notification from the local planning authority be replaced with others of species, size and number as originally approved, by the end of the first available planting season.

Reason: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of a reasonable standard of landscape in accordance with the approved designs.

4. The details submitted in accordance with condition 3 above shall include:
 - a. a plan showing the position of every tree on the site and on land adjacent to the site that could influence or be affected by the development, indicating which trees are to be removed;
 - b. a schedule in relation to every tree identified listing:
 - c. information as specified in paragraph 4.4.2.5 of British Standard BS 5837: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations) (or in an equivalent British Standard if replaced); and, any proposed pruning, felling or other work;
 - d. in relation to every existing tree identified to be retained on the plan referred to in a) above, details of:
 - any proposed alterations to existing ground levels, and of the position of any proposed excavation, that might affect the root protection area; and,

- all appropriate tree protection measures required before and during the course of development (in accordance with paragraph 5.5 of British Standard BS 5837) (or in an equivalent British Standard if replaced);
- areas of existing landscaping to be protected from construction operations and the method of protection.

In this condition “retained tree” means an existing tree which is to be retained in accordance with the approved plans and particulars.

Reason: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of a reasonable standard of landscape in accordance with the approved designs.

5. No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP shall provide for:

- hours of excavation and construction activity on the site;
- the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
- loading and unloading of plant and materials;
- storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
- wheel washing facilities; and
- measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during excavation;

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to throughout the construction period for the development.

Reason: This detail is required to avoid congestion in the surrounding area and to protect the amenities of the area.

CONDITION(S) THAT REQUIRE APPROVAL DURING THE CONSTRUCTION/PRIOR TO THE OCCUPATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT

6. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved a lighting plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The lighting shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To minimise disturbance to bats, a European Protected Species and to preserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

CONDITION(S) THAT ARE RELEVANT FOR THE LIFETIME OF THE DEVELOPMENT

7. The site shall be used only for the storage of caravans only and not be used as holiday accommodation. No static caravans shall be stationed thereon.

Reason: To restrict caravan accommodation with the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty and to accord with the application as submitted and a unilateral

undertaking that formed part of planning application reference 15/04281/FUL which seeks to restrict further expansion of caravan accommodation for tourist use.

INFORMATIVES

Nesting birds informative

The active nests of all wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). An active nest is one being built, contains eggs or chicks, or on which fledged chicks are still dependent.

It is a criminal offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird; to take, damage or destroy an active nest; and to take or destroy an egg. There is an unlimited fine and/or up to six months imprisonment for such offences.

All vegetation clearance, tree removal and/or scrub removal should be carried out outside of the bird nesting season which runs from March to August inclusive.

If it is necessary for work to commence in the nesting season then a pre-commencement inspection of the vegetation for active bird nests should be carried out. If vegetation cannot be clearly seen to be clear of nests then an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist should be called in to carry out the check. No clearance works can take place within 5m of an active nest.

If during construction birds gain access to any of the buildings and begin nesting, work must cease until the young birds have fledged.

General site informative for wildlife protection

Widespread reptiles (adder, slow worm, common lizard and grass snake) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from killing, injury and trade. Widespread amphibians (common toad, common frog, smooth newt and palmate newt) are protected from trade. The European hedgehog is a Species of Principal Importance under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Reasonable precautions should be taken during works to ensure that these species are not harmed.

The following procedures should be adopted to reduce the chance of killing or injuring small animals, including reptiles, amphibians and hedgehogs.

If piles of rubble, logs, bricks, other loose materials or other potential refuges are to be disturbed, this should be done by hand and carried out during the active season (March to October) when the weather is warm.

Areas of long and overgrown vegetation should be removed in stages. Vegetation should first be strimmed to a height of approximately 15cm and then left for 24 hours to allow any animals to move away from the area. Arisings should then be removed from the site or placed in habitat piles in suitable locations around the site. The vegetation can then be strimmed down to a height of 5cm and then cut down further or removed as required. Vegetation removal should be done in one direction, towards remaining vegetated areas (hedgerows etc.) to avoid trapping wildlife.

The grassland should be kept short prior to and during construction to avoid creating attractive habitats for wildlife.

All building materials, rubble, bricks and soil must be stored off the ground, e.g. on pallets, in skips or in other suitable containers, to prevent their use as refuges by wildlife.

Where possible, trenches should be excavated and closed in the same day to prevent any wildlife becoming trapped. If it is necessary to leave a trench open overnight then it should be sealed with a close-fitting plywood cover or a means of escape should be provided in the form of a shallow sloping earth ramp, sloped board or plank. Any open pipework should be capped overnight. All open trenches and pipework should be inspected at the start of each working day to ensure no animal is trapped.

Any common reptiles or amphibians discovered should be allowed to naturally disperse. Advice should be sought from an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist if large numbers of common reptiles or amphibians are present.

If a great crested newt is discovered at any stage then all work must immediately halt and an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist and Natural England (0300 060 3900) should be contacted for advice. The Local Planning Authority should also be informed.

If a hibernating hedgehog is found on the site, it should be covered over with a cardboard box and advice sought from an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist or the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (01584 890 801).

Hedgerows are more valuable to wildlife than fencing. Where fences are to be used, these should contain gaps at their bases (e.g. hedgehog-friendly gravel boards) to allow wildlife to move freely.

Landscaping informative

Where it is intended to create semi-natural habitats (e.g. hedgerow/tree/shrub/wildflower planting), all species used in the planting proposal should be locally native species of local provenance (Shropshire or surrounding counties). This will conserve and enhance biodiversity by protecting the local floristic gene pool and preventing the spread of non-native species.