

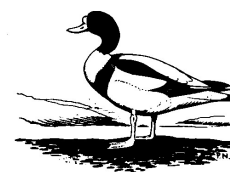
WYNYARD BUSINESS PARK

COMMENTS BY TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB ON RESERVED MATTERS AND ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT BY WYNYARD PARK LIMITED



GREY PARTRIDGE

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TBC/RPT033/ECP

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 Teesmouth Bird Club (TBC) previously provided ornithological data to Arup in October 2006 and Faber Maunsell April 2008. The data included:
- Breeding birds information, derived from the completed survey sheets for TBC's Breeding Birds Survey (1999-2006). This Cleveland-wide project culminated in the publication of the first breeding birds tetrad atlas for the region, '*The Breeding Birds of Cleveland*' (Teesmouth Bird Club, November 2008).
 - Anecdotal records concerning the importance of the area for potential breeding raptors.
 - Comments concerning the use of the area between Wynyard Park Lake and Crookfoot Reservoir as a flyway for wildfowl between the two water bodies and as an occasional winter feeding area for Greylag Geese.
- 1.2 Contrary to the reference in paragraph 10.6.40 of the Environmental Statement (ES), we did not provide wintering birds survey information, as we have never undertaken such a survey in the Newton Hanzard area.
- 1.3 At the time of preparing and submitting our report, we were not informed of the nature of the development and on no occasion since has TBC been consulted on the initial Scoping Report nor during the subsequent preparation of the ES. We were not consulted on the previous Applications (H/VAR/0006/00 and H/OUT/0583/96) for which Planning Permission has already been granted.
- 1.4 Our review of the Reserved Matters and accompanying ES contained in the current Application (H/2009/0494) is the first opportunity we have had to comment on this development.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to present the TBC's response to the Reserved Matters and ES contained in Planning Application H/2009/0494.
- 2.2 Our comments mainly focus on:
- The ecological elements of the ES (contained in Chapter 10).
 - The likely ornithological impacts of the development.
 - Our views on the proposed landscape masterplan, particularly in mitigating adverse impacts.
 - The proposed mitigation and enhancement.

3.0 BASIS OF THIS REPORT

- 3.1 Our report is based on an appraisal of the Planning Application documents forwarded to TBC by Hartlepool Borough Council 27th October 2009. These were circulated to members of the TBC's Conservation Sub-Committee, which includes two ecologists, a chartered landscape

architect and several scientists (one of whom is the BTO Regional Organiser for the current National Breeding and Wintering Birds Atlases). The comments contained in this report represent their collective views.

- 3.2 We have largely confined our comments solely to ornithological aspects of the ES, which is our area of expertise, and assume that others will comment on specialist aspects, such as hydrology, transport, archaeology, noise and visual impact.

4.0 ECOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE ES

The Development

- 4.1 Wynyard Business Park will occupy a total area of 143 hectares and include hard standing for nearly 8,000 vehicles.
- 4.2 The development will destroy large areas of existing 'green land', comprising mainly of agricultural land (arable and semi-improved/species-rich grassland) and swathes of mature coniferous and mixed woodland (including the Newton Hanzard SNCI). The loss of agricultural land will include areas of winter stubble, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, on which such farmland birds as Skylark, Tree Sparrow, Grey Partridge and Yellowhammer depend. These, along with other farmland species, are in a state of dramatic National decline.
- 4.3 The development is to be phased over the next 30 years or so and mitigation will be completed for each phase.

Ecological Aspects

- 4.4 This development will involve a fundamental change in habitat from agricultural land, with its associated field patterns, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, to a largely 'built, industrial environment'. Trees will be felled and hedgerows grubbed out. The ES states that the latter are fragmented and over-maintained but, with proper, sensitive management, these could become important habitat again. The latter will include significant areas of buildings, roads, car parks, hard standing, footpaths, amenity grassland, ornamental planting and semi-ornamental water features. There will also be the loss of swathes of existing woodland, including part of the Newton Hanzard SNCI, when development areas X and Y are constructed. Even with the proposed level of mitigation, this change will be profound and irreversible and, consequently, will have a dramatic impact on the type and distribution of breeding and wintering bird species.
- 4.5 We agree that the site is probably of limited interest for wintering birds but, in the absence of a winter survey, it is not clear how many birds use the agricultural land at present, particularly areas of retained winter stubble. The latter habitat has diminished alarmingly in the UK as a result of changing farming practices and so it is reasonable to assume that residual areas will assume a much greater local or even regional importance. We would, therefore, recommend that a winter bird survey is carried out to determine the true importance of this site and TBC would be pleased to advise further on this, if requested.

Breeding Birds Survey

- 4.6 The consultants have carried out a breeding bird survey (BBS) using the BTO's transect method and have mapped their results in the ES. The survey located 26 breeding species. The TBC's BBS of Cleveland between 1999-2006 involved the surveyors covering all parts of

their tetrads, rather than single transects through them and the resulting ¹Atlas is therefore, one of the most accurate ever produced in the UK. TBC's BBS of the tetrad within which the development site is located took place during the 2004 season and found 63 breeding species, 47 of which were within the business park area (Tetrad 42I) totalling 459 pairs/territories. Of these, 23 species are indicative of farmland, hedgerow and hedgerow tree habitat, including Kestrel, Grey Partridge, Pheasant, Lapwing, Curlew, Stock Dove, Skylark, Whitethroat, Tree Sparrow, Linnet and Yellowhammer. Eight species are 'Red List', 12 'Amber List' and 6 UK/Local BAP.

- 4.7 The differences between the survey in the ES and that undertaken by TBC are significant. It is surprising, for example, that the consultants found no evidence of relatively common breeding species such as Mallard, Pheasant, Stock Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Swallow, Pied Wagtail, Mistle Thrush, Marsh Tit, Treecreeper, Jay, Starling, House Sparrow, Greenfinch or Goldfinch (none is shown on the survey drawings contained in the ES). Most of these were generally well represented during the TBC's BBS in 2004. Common Buzzard has also not been listed (probably the only pair in Cleveland at present) and certainly of County significance.
- 4.8 Similarly, the TBC's survey revealed scarce breeding species of County importance not recorded in the ES, i.e. Shelduck (1 pair present out of only 64 pairs in the whole of Cleveland) and Wood Warbler (1 singing bird out of only 4 pairs County-wide and now probably extinct as a breeding species).
- 4.9 It is apparent that no evening visits were carried out by the consultants to detect the presence of crepuscular and nocturnal species, hence the complete lack of Little and Tawny Owl and Woodcock records in their results, creating an incomplete picture.
- 4.10 In summary, we consider that breeding bird survey in the ES does not reflect the complete picture of the actual number and distribution of species within the development area, on which the consultants have based their ornithological impact assessment.

5.0 ORNITHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

General Comments

- 5.1 Had we been aware of the earlier Planning Applications referred to in paragraph 1.3, it is highly likely that TBC would have lodged an objection on the basis of the ornithological impact on farmland birds.
- 5.2 The fact that the Applications have been approved renders any comments we make at this stage somewhat superfluous but consider that we should still set down our key concerns so that future mitigation measures may address some of these.

Loss of Farmland Birds

- 5.3 One of the most significant trends in recent decades has been the dramatic decline in farmland birds across the UK. For example:

Grey Partridge	78% decline (25-year trend)
Skylark	47% decline (25-year trend)
Tree Sparrow	87% decline (25-year trend)
Linnet	37% decline (25-year trend)
Yellowhammer	53% decline (25-year trend)

¹ 'The Breeding Birds of Cleveland' (published by Teesmouth Bird Club, November 2008)

Curlew 31% decline (25-year trend).

- 5.4 The causes of these trends are due to a combination of factors, including changing farming practices and loss of habitat. A decline in winter stubble, increased use of herbicides and insecticides, and the removal of hedgerows and hedgerow trees have all played their part.
- 5.5 In addition, the loss of green field sites to large-scale commercial developments has had an adverse ornithological impact. As mentioned in paragraph 4.4, this development involves a fundamental change in habitat and whilst the proposed masterplan, with its 12 hectares of tree and shrub planting and 9.2 hectares of wildflower meadows, will be of benefit to some woodland and woodland edge species, such as Blackbird, Song Thrush, Dunnock, Wren and titmice, it will all but eradicate breeding farmland birds, such as Grey Partridge, Skylark, Tree Sparrow and Yellowhammer, which, as outlined in paragraph 5.3, are in serious decline. The loss of winter stubble as a food source for Grey Partridge, larks, buntings, finches and sparrows may also have a long-term adverse impact, though the full extent of this remains unknown in the absence of a winter bird survey in the ES.
- 5.6 We are also extremely concerned about the in-combination effect of this development with the adjacent North Tees Hospital, with the total loss of habitat being as follows:

SITE	LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND	LOSS OF SEMI-IMPROVED/SPECIES-RICH GRASSLAND	LOSS OF WOODLAND
WYNYARD BUSINESS PARK	84 ha.	20.5 ha	5.3 ha.
NORTH TEES HOSPITAL, WYNYARD	² 19 ha.	?	?
TOTALS	103 ha.	20.5 ha.	5.3 ha.

- 5.7 It is significant that the ESs for both developments state that farmland birds displaced by the destruction of habitat will merely move to adjacent sites. Bearing in mind the pending development of other areas within the Wynyard Estate and the unsuitable nature of the much of the adjacent habitat, this is unlikely. It is also likely that any suitable local habitat will already be populated by farmland species.

Loss of Woodland Habitat

- 5.8 Sites X and Y will result in the loss of 5.3 hectares of woodland from the Newton Hanzard SNCI, which brings into the question the actual value of such local designations if they cannot be adequately protected from development. At a time when the Government, through the Forestry Commission, is actively promoting more forest planting to overcome the effects of climate change, it is unfortunate that the development of green field sites mitigates against this. We appreciate that the landscape masterplan proposes 12 hectares of new tree and shrub planting, resulting in a net gain of 7 hectares. The new tree planting, however, will take 30-40 years to achieve the same level of maturity and environmental benefit as those being felled. Had the development been designed to retain all the existing woodland then the environmental gain would have been much greater.
- 5.9 The removal of 5 hectares of mixed woodland will adversely impact on woodland and woodland edge species, such as Woodcock, Tawny Owl, Sparrowhawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. As the new planting matures, however, the

² This figure is for arable and grassland combined.

negative effects will decline as birds colonise the new habitat, though clearly this will take many years.

Impacts on Wintering Birds

- 5.10 In the absence of a winter birds survey it is not clear from the ES what the impact will be on wintering birds, particularly the loss of winter stubble. We consider that the impact on wintering goose populations, however, will be negligible.

6.0 THE LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN

Planting

- 6.1 The landscape masterplan is a comprehensive strategy and is commendable in that it includes 12 hectares of structure, screen and supplementary woodland planting, 9 hectares of wildflower meadow and 5 hectares of water features. As this develops, the landscape will be enhanced for certain bird species.
- 6.2 The business park, however, will be a 'busy' environment on completion, with large areas of buildings, spaces for over 8,000 vehicles, and significant areas of roads and footpaths. The quieter areas will be confined to the eastern, northern and western perimeters, which adjoin existing woodland.

Water Features

- 6.3 The water features, whilst sound in principle, will suffer significant disturbance and appear to be geared more towards a landscape setting for the business park rather than ecological habitat. Most are fringed by footpaths and roads, and even where islands have been created, (these could have provided loafing and breeding sites for aquatic species) they are linked to the banks by boardwalks and bridges, which will drastically reduce their wildlife value.

Wildflower Meadows

- 6.4 The wildflower meadows, again whilst sound in principle, are generally fragmented and will not have the same impact as large, homogenous areas in an agricultural landscape. Consequently, there will inevitably be a permanent loss of farmland species such as Grey Partridge and Skylark.

Maintenance and Management

- 6.5 Future maintenance and management of such a large landscaped area will be vital if the landscape objectives stated in the ES are to be achieved. The ES also states that existing woodland in the ownership of Wynyard Park Limited is to be managed to increase deciduous cover. This will need to follow forestry principles to achieve an uneven-aged canopy with an extensive 'ecotone', which holds the densest bird populations. A strategy will need to be put in place involving:
- A detailed maintenance and management plan, not just for a 5-year post construction period but also in perpetuity, outlining timescales, practical works and objectives. For example, the new woodland planting will require periodic thinning and restocking to achieve an uneven-aged canopy. Similarly, the wildflower meadows will require a specific mowing regime to maintain their integrity.

- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities: who is going to manage/oversee/fund the management plan and how is it to be implemented over time.
 - An appropriate annual budget to implement the plan.
- 6.6 Without a strategy in place, the landscape will decline and the objectives will not be achieved.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Our main conclusions and comments regarding this development are as follows:

- For major developments to be truly sustainable, we believe they should be sited on brownfield sites close to centres of population with easy access by public transport. Wynyard Business Park has spaces for nearly 8,000 vehicles! The use of remote green field sites like this undermines the socio-economic issues of unemployment in Hartlepool by siting development as far as possible away from the sources of labour. This negates many of the policies and plans quoted in the ES, particularly PPS1, PPS9, Policies 8, 33 and 36 of the '*Regional Spatial Strategy*' and many of the policies in the '*Hartlepool Local Plan*' relating to the environment.
- The near-complete loss of certain farmland birds, both breeders and wintering species, most of which are 'Red' or 'Amber' listed, or UK/Local BAP species. Key losses will be Grey Partridge, Stock Dove, Skylark, Tree Sparrow and Yellowhammer. We cannot, therefore, concur with the ES, which states *that "all residual impacts are deemed not be significant at national, regional and local levels based on the presumption that all mitigation measures are fully implemented."* The proposed mitigation will be of no benefit to farmland species.
- The loss of over 5 hectares of mature woodland within an SSSI, which will take many years to replace like with like, and the consequent effects on woodland species. There is also concern over human pressure and disturbance on the residual woodlands and recommend that these be adequately protected by appropriate fencing, particularly if breeding raptors such as Common Buzzard are to be retained. Before any woodland is cleared, a thorough check should be made for the presence of breeding raptors.
- The fragmented nature of the proposed new wildflower meadows, which will not create suitable habitat for some of the most adversely affected farmland species.
- The 'urban park' nature of the water features; these will suffer significant disturbance and this will reduce their attractiveness to aquatic species. We would recommend that some of these are re-designed to provide more secluded, natural features, without boardwalks, bridges and peripheral footpaths. There should be more areas of reed and less sharp edges between mown grass and water.
- How the maintenance and management of the development are to be strategically managed, funded and carried out in perpetuity to prevent the landscape from declining and to maintain its intended wildlife value. The main thrust should be to maintain the site as an ecological resource, which will mean less emphasis on clinical 'tidiness', the retention of dead timber and areas of irregularly mown grass, rather than urban parks-type maintenance. Consequently, an appropriate team skilled in nature conservation-type management should be dedicated to the management of the site and this could be tied in to training programmes for new staff that will manage the site in the future.
- We do not consider that there will be any adverse impacts on the flyway between Crookfoot Reservoir and Wynyard Park Lake.

- The removal of any existing vegetation during the breeding season should be avoided. It should be noted that some species, such as raptors, Tawny Owl, Mistle Thrush and Long-tailed Tit, are early breeders and many of these react adversely to disturbance.
- We would recommend less amenity grassland and manage some areas as hay fields to encourage BAP ground nesting species.
- Swift nest boxes should be provided to attract a new colony to establish here. This species has declined in England by about 35% between 1994-2006, partly due to the demolition of older, favoured buildings and new, standardised styles of house design. Consequently, there are opportunities within new developments to provide artificial breeding sites for Swifts: this will not only benefit the species but bring positive publicity to any company carrying out this type of work.
- As many existing mature trees as possible should be retained within the development, particularly mature specimens. Some old timber should be kept for woodpeckers. Nest boxes for passerines and owls should be erected throughout the site in appropriate locations.
- With so much roof space, we recommend the developer considers roof garden design to attract ground-nesting species such as Skylark, as is done in other parts of Europe. One of the main hides at RSPB Saltholme, Teesmouth, has a Sedum roof, as this is a good example of what we would like to see.
- We recommend the planting aspens and alders, as the catkins these produce are very attractive to Redpolls, and there should be less dependence on hornbeam.