

From: Melanie Dodd
Sent: 21 February 2019 15:41
To: Deborah Smith
Cc: Katie Smith
Subject: Upper Rissington - allotment access track

Hi Deb,

I have looked into the issue about the allotment access track at Upper Rissington further in preparation for the SIB, which you have asked me to attend with regard to the biodiversity implications, and I have to conclude that the existing grassland has lower biodiversity value than I previously thought.

When asked to comment on the issue, I looked at the landscape strategy document produced by Aspect Landscape Planning, in particular drawing 5109/SK02 Rev A and the associated 5109/SK02.1 northeastern field section of the document, which refers to the retention of calcareous grassland of botanical interest and an ecology zone with high value grassland to the west and the provision of allotments to the east; I therefore assumed that the grassland identified as an “ecological area” was the calcareous grassland, which is a priority habitat.

However, in preparation for the SIB, I investigated the original outline application documents. I eventually found the ecological impact assessment part of the Environmental Statement, which includes a Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map of the site, produced by EDP (2014/15). This map identifies the grassland area adjacent to the allotments as agriculturally ‘improved’ grassland, which has limited biodiversity value (low botanical diversity with grasses dominating over flowering plants). It also identifies the hedgerow between the open grassland and the allotments as a “newly planted low hedge”.

Therefore, my recommendations have altered as the biodiversity value of the grassland has now been correctly established.

I have discussed the proposed allotment access track with the Landscape Officer and we have the following recommendations for the design of the track:

- Hoggin surfaced access track would be acceptable in appearance;
- Minimise the width of the track as narrow as possible for 1 vehicle to use;
- Reduce the number of passing bays, potentially only one is required at the western end, as visibility is good and it is for a short length only
- Cut and fill should be minimised as much as possible, hence the above recommendations for minimising the width and number of passing bays – and the gradient to the cut and fill should be as shallow as possible to minimise visual impact;
- Follow the line of the existing footpath route, as shown in option 1 (follow the existing contour lines) to minimise the amount of cut and fill required and the visual prominence of the track within the landscape;
- Car park within the allotments could be moved northwards if necessary with a new gap in the existing hedgerow (due to its status as a recently planted hedge, approx. 4-5 years old) with planting-up of existing gap;
- A restoration scheme for the track should be submitted for approval (**as a condition of consent**) to ensure that the cut and fill slopes are re-seeded appropriately (e.g. a

calcareous grassland seed mix as an opportunity to enhance the existing grassland); and

- A gated access could be provided if necessary either at the roadside by the tennis courts or at the allotment access through the hedgerow to prevent access by anyone other than the allotment holders.

Suggested condition wording for restoration scheme

Before construction of the vehicle access track to the allotments, a specific landscape scheme for the access track shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, including full details of cut and fill (with cross sections), a restoration scheme for the grassland (e.g. seeding with an appropriate wildflower meadow on existing subsoil) and a 5-year maintenance plan. The scheme must show details of all plant species, numbers and planting sizes, and hard surface materials.

The approved access track landscaping scheme shall be completed by the end of the planting season immediately following the completion of its construction.

REASON: To enhance the site for biodiversity and landscape in accordance with policies EN1, EN2 and EN8 of the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031, the NPPF and in order for the Council to comply with Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Kind regards,

Melanie Dodd (Mrs) MCIEEM
Biodiversity Officer
Cotswold District Council (Weds-Fri)
Tel: 01285 623000
Address: Trinity Road, Cirencester, GL7 1PX