

**CIRCULATED  
BEFORE THE  
MEETING**



**REPORT of  
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE**

---

to  
**NORTH WESTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE  
4 MARCH 2019**

**MEMBERS' UPDATE**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5**

<b>Application Number</b>	<b>FUL/MAL/18/01333</b>
<b>Location</b>	Land North West Of Fernbrook Hall Mope Lane Wickham Bishops
<b>Proposal</b>	Demolition of existing stables and construction of new 6 bedroom house with basement parking, cinema room and bar.
<b>Applicant</b>	Paula Vassallo Bechtel
<b>Agent</b>	Mr Neil McQuire - Domino Sky Building Design Limited
<b>Target Decision Date</b>	14.03.2019
<b>Case Officer</b>	Hannah Bowles
<b>Parish</b>	<b>Wickham Bishops</b>
<b>Reason for Referral to the Committee / Council</b>	Member call in by: Cllr. Henry Bass Reason: Public Interest

Please note during the course of the application the agent has updated the applicant to Paula Vassallo Bechtel who resides at Fernbrook Hall.

**6 CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED**

**6.3 Internal Consultees**

**Tree Consultant**

- 6.3.1 A tree protection plan and method statement is required to show what trees would be removed and how the remaining would be protected. This information has not been supplied by the agent. Should the application be approved a condition to ensure this information was provided prior to any works commencing above ground level.

**Ecology**

- 6.3.2 The Coast and Countryside Officer had the following comments to make:

‘There is insufficient detailed information supplied to comment on this application from an Ecological position at this time.

Agenda Item no. 5

Although December is an acceptable time of year for Desk Study and initial Phase one appraisals, it really isn't a good time of year for carrying out more detailed surveys which would assist in establishing Ecological impacts of this development. There is also a distinct lack of current ecological/species data which make it more difficult to determine this application.

The commissioned TSA Ecology does make reference to this in sections 5.2 – “sub-optimal time for flowering plants” - and 5.4 in reference to Fauna – “the time of year at which the survey is undertaken will affect the species or field signs directly recorded during the survey”.

Mope wood is identified as a Local Wildlife Site (Ma30) and forms part of a wider Ancient woodland mosaic which is not present in great quantity in the Maldon District. Mope Wood is also subject to an Essex TPO in general and this development falls within Woodland Tree Protection order (TPO/6/87), plot W1 of the order reflects this. As such it is both the woodland as an ecological unit in itself and its context in the wider landscape that are my concerns.

There are a number of species considerations that could be included as conditions prior to any approval. The best survey periods for these are fast approaching, so could well be carried out prior to any further consents and the proposed start of any works:

- Bat survey, primarily for foraging. I agree with the report that the current stable block has no suitable voids, but the on-site foraging aspect is not covered in sufficient detail. There is also no detail with regard to lighting mitigation (temporary or permanent) or habitat enhancement (i.e. bat refugia installation) in relation to the application only a passing reference to it.
- Breeding bird survey – this will give a greater indication of species present plus inform any mitigation or enhancements that could be made. May well inform any build/works period too as site clearance will need to give due consideration to any breeding birds present.
- Reptile/amphibian walkover survey & refuge survey – I recognise the limited survey data available, but feel that at the very least a proper walkover and refuge survey at the correct time of year should be carried out, if only to establish absence from site.
- Botanical survey (undertaken April-Sept) - perhaps a Phase 2 appraisal on and around TN03 and TN05 of the report as these are likely to be the most impacted.
- Interestingly the presence of Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) is identified from Sparkey wood, but not the population with Chantry woods less than 50m across the road.
- Invertebrates are not commented on in the preliminary appraisal. Both Sparkey Woods and the much closer Chantry Woods have populations of Wood ant (*Formica rufa*) which is an Essex Red Data Book species. It is not unreasonable to expect them to be present throughout Mope wood too. Given the ancient woodland mosaic, it is likely that other Red data species may be present in the local area. I'm not suggesting a full survey is required at this time but again, December is not the time that any of these would actually be evident.

Agenda Item no. 5

I would also echo Andy Day's (Tree Consultant) comments with regard to the Tree protection plan and add that it would be helpful to see any soft landscaping/planting programme, specifically for the north boundary and the transition zone between what (presumably) could become 'formal' garden and the existing woodland. The indicative site plan shows only the *structural* build/footprint.

Although minimal tree removal is suggested, it is also noted in the Ecological appraisal that there are several gaps in hedge lines and so opportunities are available to improve tree stock and hedge planting with suitable native species mixes (and ideally removing the rhododendron present entirely from the site and replacing it with something appropriate)