ECOLOGY PROOF OF EVIDENCE

LAND AT MODEL FARM, PORT ROAD, RHOOSE, VALE OF GLAMORGAN

Prepared on behalf of Legal and General (Strategic Land) Ltd by

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Summary

1.1.1 I am Tim Oliver and I hold a Bachelors degree in Biological Science (Ecology) from UEA, awarded in 1990 and a Masters degree in Landscape Ecology, Design and Management from Wye College, University of London 1995. I am a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

1.1.2 One of the two putative reasons for refusal presented in relation to the scheme related to biodiversity assets.

1.1.3 I have been involved in the project since spring 2019. In 2023/2024, the programme of surveys was undertaken which informed Chapter 9 (Ecology) of the Environmental Statement (ES), prepared in August 2024.

1.1.4 Five main issues are addressed in the ecology proof of evidence

- The adequacy of the environmental statement.
- The effect of the proposed development on nature conservation interests
- Consistency with the Development Plan and other relevant policies
- Whether planning obligations are necessary for the development to proceed.
- Whether any planning permission should be the subject of conditions.

1.1.5 The ES chapter is consistent with the most recent best practice guidance at the time of its preparation; Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland v1.2 (CIEEM, 2018). Relevant best practice survey guidance was followed during the surveys that informed the ES. Mitigation measures as set out in the ES chapter include the preparation of a Detailed Biodiversity Strategy, habitat creation specifications within the soft landscape scheme, a Construction Environment Management Plan.

1.1.2 The recorded European Protected Species (EPS) present in the proposed development were bats (various species) including low status bat roosts and hazel dormouse.

1.1.3 The loss of hedgerows, buildings and trees would impact on an EPS. EPS species mitigation licences would be obtained for bats and dormouse and all measures would be formally agreed with NRW. Mitigation would take the form of protection buffers, replacement hedgerows, hedgerow enhancement, woodland/scrub expansion, sensitive vegetation clearance, installation of bat/dormouse boxes and woodland management.

1.1.4 All the areas of ancient woodland and watercourses are to be protected and buffer zones created alongside these habitats. The loss of approximately 2000m of hedgerows would be mitigated through 3km of new native hedgerow planting.

1.1.5 Effects on priority species from the loss of habitat would be mitigated through targeted measures in the Porthkerry Country Park extension.

1.1.6 The proposed development and country park extension have evolved with reference to biodiversity planning policies.

1.1.7 Avoidance of residual adverse impacts on biodiversity features would be through species protection during construction and the establishment and future management of new habitats around Area A and across the country park extension.

1.1.8 The Proposed Development has been designed with ecological input as a key consideration in site design. The Indicative Concept Layout (JCD0064-003-T-210511) has avoided sensitive receptors as far as has been possible. As presented in the Green Infrastructure Statement appended to the Ecology ES Chapter.

1.1.9 The Green Infrastructure reduces the effects on connectivity through the sections of new green corridors and buffers. retained and replacement hedgerows, in combination with swales and grassland, would provide 'stepping stone' habitats through Area A. Advanced planting of replacement habitats (woodland, scrub and hedgerows) in Area B which would be created at the outset of the first phase of construction.

1.1.10 The management objectives and measures presented in the GI statement appended to the Ecology ES chapter would be refined and formalised in the Detailed Biodiversity Management Strategy, to be approved by the LPA.

1.1.11 Measures will include targeted low intervention management in SINC designated ancient woodland, improvements to the condition of Bullhouse Brook and Whitelands Brook and adoption of conservation management practices for woodland, hedgerows and grassland. With Area B transferring to VoGC there would be collaborative engagement with the VoGC countryside service on management specifications. The detailed strategy would be secured through planning condition and its implementation through a Section 106 agreement.

1.1.12 Residual effects on habitats and species would be beneficial. Management would be adaptive and informed by ongoing monitoring to ensure that management actions and specifications are always aligned to biodiversity value.

1.1.13 The expected biodiversity value of all the habitats being retained, created and enhanced would be higher than the existing biodiversity value of the application site with areas of loss primarily on agricultural fields of lower ecological value.

1.1.14 The proposals enhance ecological connectivity between key habitats supporting Resilient Ecological Networks, consistent with the DECCA framework.

1.1.15 The Section 106 agreement relating to the 48ha extension to Porthkerry Country Park is central to the provision of mitigation for anticipated effects on habitats and species and for achieving enhancement to meet the planning obligations relating to the development delivering a net benefit for biodiversity. The VoGC countryside service have calculated the financial contributions required for the different elements of management and maintenance relating to biodiversity.

1.1.16 Planning conditions of relevance to biodiversity would include the preparation of the Detailed Biodiversity Management Strategy, Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), and detailed external lighting scheme. Pre-commencement surveys would be conditioned for each phase of development. All development activities affecting dormouse habitat or bat roosts would be covered by EPS mitigation licence obtained prior to commencement of licensable activities.

1.1.17 In my opinion the proposed development can deliver a net benefit for biodiversity with proposals consistent with the DECCA framework and can promote ecosystem resilient networks within the application site.

1.1.18 From the submitted information in the ES Chapter including the Green Infrastructure statement, I conclude that the submitted development proposals would be in accordance with national and local planning policies relevant to biodiversity.