

**From:** SM-NE-Consultations (NE) [mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk]

**Sent:** 02 October 2019 16:03

**To:** Planapps <Planapps@westberks.gov.uk>

**Subject:** 18/02485/OUTMAJ Outline application for residential development of up to 100 dwellings with new cycle pedestrian access onto Coltsfoot Way and two vehicular accesses onto Clayhill Road. Matters to be considered: Access. Land North Of Dauntless Roa

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FAO Michael Butler

Dear Mr Butler

**18/02485/OUTMAJ Outline application for residential development of up to 100 dwellings with new cycle pedestrian access onto Coltsfoot Way and two vehicular accesses onto Clayhill Road. Matters to be considered: Access. Land North Of Dauntless Road and South Of Pondhouse Farm Clayhill Road Burghfield Common Reading Berkshire**

Natural England has been contacted by a member of the public who has raised concerns in relation to the above-mentioned application. They are concerned that the buffer zone proposed to mitigate for any impacts to the ancient woodland may not exceed 15ms (i.e. only the minimum will be applied).

Here is a link to Natural England's Standing Advice <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications>. Standing Advice is used in place of bespoke advice for consultations by local planning authorities on applications that potentially affect Protected Species, ancient woodland and veteran trees. It provides advice to planners to help them decide if there is a 'reasonable likelihood' of Protected Species being present or whether development will result in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland or veteran trees. For protected species, it also provides advice on survey and mitigation requirements; whilst for ancient woodland, it includes protection and mitigation requirements. Standing Advice is a material consideration in the determination of applications in the same way as bespoke advice provided by Natural England.

The ancient woodland and veteran tree standing advice states that mitigation measures could include '*leaving an appropriate buffer zone of semi-natural habitat between the development and the ancient woodland or tree*'. This buffer zone **should vary depending upon the size and nature of the development**. Although the minimum size of a buffer zone should be at least 15 metres, Natural England's standing advice would expect this to be larger for a development of this nature and size. The proposed design of the development in surrounding the ancient woodland, would also make a larger buffer suitable. Use of the ancient woodland should be taken into account when designing the buffer zone. Buffer zones should comprise semi-natural habitat only and not any element of the development, such as SUDS. Management of the ancient woodland, including monitoring for potential damage, should be included in the proposals. We would also advise that this application provides the opportunity for additional protection and potentially enhancement of woodland habitat. For example, creation of a suitable width of native woodland corridor to the north and/or south of the site to link existing ancient woodland areas would be beneficial and could be incorporated within any mitigation plans.

Buffer zones should be calculated from the edge of the original Ancient Woodland Site (rather than the canopy or root protection area), to the edge of the development. Developments such as gardens must not be included within the buffer zones as there is limited control over how they may be used, or developed in the future; for example, they might be paved or decked without the need for planning permission or they may include inappropriate species which could escape into the woodland.

In determining a planning application, it is the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority to ensure that protected species and ancient woodland issues are fully considered and that ecological surveys have been carried out where appropriate.

You may therefore wish to seek advice from your in-house or County Ecologist in relation to this matter.

Kind regards

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<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/>

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