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Client:	Foreman Homes
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INTRODUCTION

Tetra Tech were commissioned by Foreman Homes to prepare a Winter Bird Mitigation Technical Note, covering the proposed creation of a Bird Mitigation Reserve at Romsey Avenue, Portchester. The purpose of the Bird Mitigation Reserve is to provide compensation for the partial loss of a Primary Support Site within the Solent Wader and Brent Goose strategy which has been used historically by a maximum of 300 brent geese *Branta bernicla bernicla*.

The purpose of this Technical Note is to summarise the proposed Bird Mitigation Reserve, and present estimated costings for management and maintenance activities to enable a suitable commuted sum to be calculated. At this time, it is not intended that a commuted sum is secured within a legal agreement as the Bird Mitigation Reserve will be secured by planning condition. However, estimated costings are provided to demonstrate the viability of the proposed development.

The ownership and long-term management and monitoring of the Winter Bird Mitigation Area as shown in Figure 1, will be secured via legal agreement in perpetuity (defined as 125 years) or the lifetime of the associated developments (whichever is longer).

1.1 SITE LOCATION

The site is located off Romsey Avenue, Portchester, Hampshire, PO16 9TA (OS Grid Ref: SU 600 055). It comprises a single arable field south of Romsey Avenue, with further fields to the south and west, and residential areas to the north and east. The site is approximately 350m north of Portsmouth Harbour.

1.2 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The proposed development comprises 225 dwellings with associated access, infrastructure, drainage and open space.

BASELINE

The site comprises the norther parcel of F21, designated as a Primary Support Site under the Solent Wader and Brent Goose strategy. F21 is primarily designated due to a maximum historic count of 300 geese recorded on the site in 2012 and 2013 over two visits.

MITIGATION DESIGN

The proposed Bird Mitigation Reserve has been designed by Lindsay Carrington Ecological Services Ltd¹ following consultation with Natural England through their Discretionary Advice Service. This consultation included a series of design criteria (detailed in Lindsay Carrington Ecological Services Ltd, 2020).

The proposed Bird Mitigation Reserve will cover an area of 4.2 ha, with 3.7 ha of this comprising dedicated brent goose habitat.

The Reserve will be bounded by a 2m high perimeter fence to prevent access. A ditch will also be created along the length of the fence on the Reserve side. A single point of access will be provided for maintenance, along with a viewing screen and interpretation board along the northern boundary.

The 3.7 ha area of the site intended to be used by wintering birds will be established using a white clover (80%) and perennial rye grass (20%) mix to create a nutrient-rich foraging habitat whilst avoiding the need for artificial fertilisers.

The narrow area to the west will include the SuDS for the residential development and the creation of a nesting bank for sand martin *Riparia riparia* and kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. The surrounding habitat will form damp grassland with a screen of wet woodland along the northern boundary with the development.

MANAGEMENT

The following management measures are set out within the Bird Mitigation Reserve Proposals. Establishment is not discussed in detail as this comprises capital works and would not be included in the calculation of a commuted sum.

Grassland

Grassland will be managed through cutting, with bi-monthly cuts in April, June and August. A further cut will take place in September if necessary to maintain a maximum sward height of 70mm. Arisings will be left on site. An alternative option is provided for sheep grazing, however this would be at the discretion of the future habitat management contractor.

Scrape

The central scrape will be managed through mechanical cutting (using hand tools) to remove vegetation on an annual basis.

Fencing

Fencing will be checked for damage or breaches during management visits, with immediate repairs undertaken.

¹ Lindsay Carrington Ecological Services Ltd, (2020). BIRD MITIGATION RESERVE PROPOSALS FOR, LAND OFF ROMSEY AVENUE, PORTCHESTER.

Ditch

The ditch will be managed through periodic clearance in spring when it becomes too densely vegetated. This is estimated to be every five years. Arisings will be left on site.

SuDS Area

Sand martin and kingfisher nest tubes require clearance and refilling with sand on an annual basis.

SuDS waterbodies will require occasional vegetation clearance to maintain suitable conditions. This is estimated to be every 2-5 years for the open feature, and every 5-10 years for the densely vegetated features.

Wet woodland to the north will be managed only to prevent encroachment into the SuDS area by cutting back as required.

Monitoring

Annual monitoring is proposed for a 10-year period following establishment. This will comprise:

- Three Breeding Bird Surveys (BBS) from April until June;
- Six Winter Bird Surveys (WBS) from October to March;
- During the breeding bird surveys, habitats will be monitored for successful establishment; and
- A phase one habitat survey annually in June from year 3-10.

COSTING

Grassland

This is based on costs provided by RSPB for the management of the Winter Bird Refuge at Sinah Lane, Hayling Island. This was based on their experience of managing small sites for wintering birds with input from East Anglia, Kent, Sussex and Dorset. This covers establishment for 10 years followed by two cuts per year with baling and worked out at £230/ha/yr. Although this proposal is for three cuts (possibly four depending on length), baling is not required, reducing the cost for each cut. The first five years of establishment will also be the responsibility of the developer. This is 32% higher than the costs in the SWBGS which assumes only £157/ha/yr. This approach to costing was accepted as part of the appeal allowed at Land East of Newgate Lane, Fareham (APP/J1725/W/20/3265860).

Scrape

This again is the same as agreed costs with RSPB for Sinah Lane. This allowed £300/visit every three years to trim scrape edges and occasionally remove sediment if necessary (although this is unlikely to be required as the reversion to grassland will significantly reduce any sediment within surface water runoff). For the Sinah Lane scheme, six wader scrapes were specified, with only one required for this project. However, a ditch is included, along with three SuDS features. Therefore, the cost has been maintained at £300/visit, with the frequency increased to every year to account for the annual scrape management proposed.

Fencing

For the project at Sinah Lane, fencing repairs were based on a cost of £150 per visit (including time and materials). Frequency was estimated at four visits per year for the first five years, with two per year thereafter.

Ditch

Vegetation management of the ditch is included within the costs for scrape management.

SuDS Area

Sand martin and kingfisher nest tubes maintenance is estimated at £100 per visit including time and materials, and will be undertaken alongside scrape management.

Vegetation management of SuDS waterbodies and wet woodland is included within the costs for scrape management.

Monitoring

Annual monitoring costs are based on consultancy rates for the required breeding birds, winter birds and Phase 1 habitat surveys to be undertaken, with an annual summary report of findings.

Although not specified within the Bird Mitigation Reserve Proposals, additional costs are provided for additional monitoring to be undertaken every 10 years for the in-perpetuity period, following the initial 10-year programme. This is included should the future habitat management contractor determine that additional monitoring is needed, and would comprise winter bird and Phase 1 habitat surveys only.

Table 1 below sets out the estimated costs and total sum for these activities. Costings are given for two in-perpetuity scenarios – 80 or 125 years.

Management activities	Estimate per yr.	Total over 80 years.	Total over 125 years.	Notes
Grassland agricultural management	£851	£68,080	£106,375	
Scrape management (Brushcutting)	£300	£24,000	£37,500	
Fencing repair	n/a	£25,500	£39,000	Estimate per year depends on total duration.
Ditch management	£-	£-	£-	Included with scrape management.
Sand martin and kingfisher nest maintenance	£100	£8,000	£12,500	
SuDS vegetation management	£-	£-	£-	Included with scrape management.
Monitoring & report (Years 1-10)	£3,755	£37,550	£37,550	
Monitoring & report (Year 20 +)	£2,835	£19,845	£31,185	
Total cost		£182,975	£264,110	

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