giving nature a home

Our ref: EHB/CCV/2.1

04 September 2019

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir or Madam,

Proposed Forest Nursery – RSPB Coombes Valley

The RSPB is aware that [redacted] and Ms D Wood intend to apply for planning permission to situate an outdoor nursery basecamp at RSPB Coombes Valley Nature Reserve. The basecamp will be used by the applicant's forest nursery business.

We support the proposal and welcome the chance to introduce a younger audience to the natural environment. RSPB Coombes Valley has an annual target to connect at least 2275 children to nature. A "connection to nature" is a measurement tool that the RSPB use and is when a child spends at least 30 minutes immersed in an activity that connects them with nature. This includes activities such as pond dipping or bug hunting, activities such as drawing a picture of a bird would not be measured as a "connection to nature". The proposed forest school nursery would dramatically increase the number of connections to nature made on the reserve annually, through a high-quality nature-based preschool education. We also hope the nursery will attract more families to the reserve, bringing visitor numbers up and increasing our annual income from visitors. Finally, the rent we will charge for the use of the basecamp is much needed income to support the day to day management of habitats and visitor operations on the reserve.

The land subject of the application is of low value for biodiversity, being an area of bare ground and common early-colonising plants. The proposed use is entirely self-contained and will have no off-site impacts on the nearby Combes Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest. There are no features on site liable to hold specially protected species. No trees are proposed to be removed. We are also satisfied that car parking capacity on our site will not be exceeded.

The new forest nursery will occupy the application site under a formal lease. This lease is subject to RSPB Board and Council approval at this stage and is dependant on the approval of planning consent.

Yours faithfully

Elizabeth Bridge MRICS
Senior Rural Surveyor

UK Headquarters
The Lodge
Potton Road
Sandy
Bedfordshire
SG19 2DL

Tel: 01603 660066
Facebook: RSPBLoveNature
Twitter: @Natures_Voice
rspb.org.uk

Patron: Her Majesty the Queen Chairman of Council: Kevin Cox
President: Miranda Krestovnikoff Chief Executive: Dr Mike Clarke
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654

BirdLife INTERNATIONAL
The RSPB is part of BirdLife International, a partnership of conservation organisations working to give nature a home around the world.