

Consultee Comments for Planning Application APP/23/00665

Application Summary

Application Number: APP/23/00665

Address: Land on the east side of Helmsley House, Bartons Road, and west of Normandy Way, Havant

Proposal: Erection of a 78 bed older persons care home (Use class C2) together with construction of new access road, car/cycle parking, drainage works, hard/soft landscaping and other associated infrastructure.

Case Officer: David Eaves

Consultee Details

Name: Consultee Principal Ecologist

Address: Public Service Plaza, Civic Centre Road, Havant PO9 2AX

Email: Not Available

On Behalf Of: Ecologist

Comments

Dear David,

APP/23/00665 | Erection of a 78 bed older persons care home (Use class C2) together with construction of new access road, car/cycle parking, drainage works, hard/soft landscaping and other associated infrastructure. | Land on the east side of Helmsley House, Bartons Road, and west of Normandy Way, Havant

Thank you for consulting me on this application.

The application is accompanied by an Ecological Appraisal (FPCR, July 2023). This document includes details of ecological surveys carried out at the site in 2023, as well as reference to previous surveys from 2020. The site comprises primarily agriculturally derived species-poor grassland and taller herbage with boundary hedging, trees and areas of woodland.

The ecological appraisal includes details of a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment. The BNG assessment does not include a submitted BNG Metric spreadsheet but only a PDF version of it. Given that BNG is not yet mandatory there is no legal obligation to demonstrate a specific percentage of gain and therefore the absence of a completed Metric spreadsheet in Excel format is not a reason for refusal. Once BNG becomes mandatory, all submissions must include a completed spreadsheet in Excel format. In addition, due to the loss of a medium distinctiveness habitat (in this case Other Neutral Grassland) the Metric trading rules are not met (in essence, the loss is not compensated). This would, once BNG becomes mandatory, be a reason for invalidation unless a bespoke solution was subject to prior agreement with the LPA. In this instance, I cannot

object to the submitted BNG assessment. I am broadly content that efforts have been made to offset this loss with a range of different habitats embedded across the development site.

In terms of protected species, the surveys have concluded that the site supports a range of foraging/commuting bat species typical of a semi-rural site in southern Hampshire. As well as common and widespread species, the surveys highlight the regular presence of Western Barbastelle and mouse-eared (*Myotis*) bat species. Bechsteins bat has been recorded within close proximity to this site and has been shown to use a wide range of habitats within the landscape, including open grassland, hedgerows and coniferous plantations. Whilst there is no indication that Bechsteins bats are constraint at this site in particular, there is sufficient justification for assuming that the species is likely to occur on occasion and that the site forms part of a much larger fabric of suitable sites across the wider area. The key potential impacts on bats will occur through general habitat loss and the presence of new lighting. Existing tree lines are to be retained and new tree and scrub plantings are included in proposed landscaping alongside a range of native and ornamental planting areas. The submitted lighting plan (Kingfisher, June 2023) is in broad accordance with the previously acceptable lighting plan and is therefore satisfactory. The site has been shown to support Slow-worms and it is proposed to retain sufficient habitat within the site for this population.

Overall, I am content with the level of information submitted in respect to habitats and species and consider that the stated mitigation measures are acceptable. In terms of compensation and enhancement, the proposed landscaping includes a sizeable green roof comprising both Sedum and native vegetation sections. This is most welcome. In addition, the layout includes areas of wildflower grassland, native hedging, native tree/shrub species and more formal areas of ornamental plantings. Given the nature of the proposed development these measures are acceptable. The ecological appraisal also includes recommendations for other ecological enhancements such as bat and bird boxes, and bug hotels. I welcome the inclusion of these measures and would therefore request that firm details of such are provided prior to commencement.

If you are minded to grant permission, can I suggest that all ecological avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures are included within a single, comprehensive Ecological Mitigation, Compensation and Enhancement Strategy.

Prior to the commencement of any development activities, an Ecological Mitigation, Compensation and Enhancement Strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Strategy shall be in accordance with the outline ecological measures detailed within the Ecological Appraisal (FPCR, July 2023) and shall include (but not necessarily be restricted to): full details of all ecological avoidance and mitigation measures; full details of all ecological compensation and enhancement measures, including location, composition, establishment and ongoing management and responsibilities. Reason: to protect and enhance biodiversity in accordance with the Environment Act 2021, Conservation Regulations 2017, Wildlife &

Countryside Act 1981, NPPF, NERC Act 2006 and Policy CS 11 of the Havant Borough Core Strategy March 2011.

If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Tristan

Tristan Norton

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