

Arleta Miszewska
Planning Department
Public Service Plaza
Civic Centre Road
Havant
Hampshire PO9 2AX



By email only: planning.development@havant.gov.uk

16 August 2023

Dear Arleta Miszewska,

Location: Land East Of, College Road, Purbrook, Waterlooville

Proposal: Application for mixed use residential development comprising 628 dwellings, community centre, allotments, public open space including play areas, new junction to College Road, related internal access road, footways and cycleways, pumping station and drainage basins.

Application No: APP/23/00488

Many thanks for giving the RSPB opportunity to comment on the proposed development at Land East of College Road, Waterlooville. The RSPB objects to these proposals due to the lack of information currently available to inform a Habitats Regulation Assessment, the loss of functionally linked land to a Special Protection Area, and the lack of sufficient mitigation to this loss. Further details of our objection are outlined below.

RSPB England – Brighton Office
2nd Floor
London Gate
72 Dyke Road Drive
Brighton, BN1 6AJ

Tel: 07719 079 000
Facebook: @RSPBEngland
Twitter: @RSPBEngland
rspb.org.uk



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

1. Designations and the Application Site

The application site lies 1.3km to the north of Langstone Harbour, designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and forming part of the Chichester and Langstone Harbours Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site in recognition of its national and international importance for wildlife, including wintering waterfowl and breeding seabirds. A large part of Langstone Harbour is owned and managed by the RSPB.

The proposed application site is used by wintering Brent Geese (*Branta bernicla bernicla*) and wader assemblages including Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), interest features of the designated sites. The preservation of these feeding sites is essential to the protection of the wintering population of Brent Geese and waders in the harbours and in turn to ensuring that the designated sites are not damaged. Under Defra Guidance on the use of Habitats Regulations Assessment¹, it states:

'an appropriate assessment must identify and examine the implications of the proposed plan or project for the designated features present on that site, including for the typical species of designated habitats as well as the implications for habitat types and species present outside the boundaries of that site and functionally linked; insofar as those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site'

We are increasingly concerned by the incremental loss of SPA supporting sites around Langstone Harbour and across the Solent as a whole. We urge the Council to apply a high standard of protection to these sites, as required under the Birds and Habitats Directives and guidance from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The application site also lies within the Eastern Solent and Arun Valley, a Focus Area of work for the RSPB. This is one of our highest priority places in the UK for the promotion of conservation at a landscape-scale, adopting the principles

¹ Guidance on the use of Habitats Regulations Assessment. Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 65-003-20190722 (2019) Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appropriate-assessment>

advocated by the Lawton report Making Space for Nature (2010)², which recommended (in simple terms) more, bigger, better, and more joined up protected areas.

2. Insufficient information and package of mitigation for loss of functionally linked habitat

Within the Application Site are four fields listed under the Solent Wader and Brent Goose Strategy (SWBGS)³ as Primary Support Areas (H02A) and Secondary Support Areas (H106, H113, and H125).

By nature, Primary and Secondary Support Sites identified in the SWBGS are important to support the function of the wider network, allowing for a geographical spread of sites across this wider ecological network, and thereby meeting the needs of each discrete subpopulation. It is likely that subpopulations using H02A will also use the wider network of sites including H106, H113, and H125, and this may not necessarily be simultaneously. It is essential that the total area to be lost and impacted, including the function of these sites, is considered and any mitigation would need to demonstrate how it will deliver this same function. The total area of land lost within the network of SWBGS sites is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Area lost from the Solent Wader and Brent Goose Strategy network of sites from the proposed development.

SWBGS Site	Classification	Area lost (ha)
H02A	Primary Support Area	c. 5.2
H106	Primary Support Area	c. 7.4
H113	Secondary Support Area	c. 7.2
H125	Secondary Support Area	c. 3.5
Total area lost (ha)		23.3

² Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H., Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborne, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M., Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.J., Tew, T.E., Varley, J., & Wynne, G.R. (2010) *Making Space for Nature: a review of England’s wildlife sites and ecological network*. Report to Defra.

³ Whitfield, D. (2020) *Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy Hampshire and Isle of Wight WildlifeTrust*. Curdridge.

Considering the size of all four SWBGS sites, Table 1 shows that c.23.3 ha of suitable wintering ground for brent geese and waders will be lost. Although the Applicant has identified a potential mitigation site at Northney Farm (Environmental Statement Volume 1, para 9.4.9, p.8), no further detailed information has been provided in regard to the size of the mitigation site and its management beyond the bullet points outlining key objectives within para 9.4.9.

The RSPB therefore objects to the proposed development at Land East of College Road, Waterloo as we consider that with the current information available from the Applicant the mitigation proposed is inappropriate to address the impacts from the development proposals resulting from the loss of c.23.3 ha of SPA functionally linked land. This needs to be considered via a robust Appropriate Assessment, but based on the information currently available, we do not deem it possible to determine no adverse effects on integrity.

The RSPB would also like to clarify that within the Ecological Appraisal (Appendix 9.1) H03A is inaccurately used instead of H02A as a Primary Support Area (p.13). It is important that this is corrected as H03 is a Candidate site to the south of H02A and the B2177 road.

3. Updated wintering bird surveys

The Applicant refers in its Planning Statement (paras 9.2.35 and 9.3.13) to an '*Independent report on surveys in winter 2022/23 for Eurasian Curlew, Brent Goose, and other wetland bird species at Campdown, Hampshire*' by Wild New Forest (2023). In particular, para 9.2.35 (p.3) refers to the provision of *Appendix 9.5 – Wintering Bird Report (Wild New Forest, 2023)*. However, the Applicant has not made the report available within the documents provided for the application at Land East of College Road (APP/23/00488). Without this information and the full report made available during the current consultation stage the RSPB, other interested parties, and the Responsible Authority (Havant Borough Council) are unable to assess the methodology of the report and therefore its validity as evidence on the use of the site by Eurasian Curlew, Brent Geese, and other wetland birds at Campdown.

Until the independent report is made available as part of the suite of documents for this application, and the appropriate consultation opportunity made available to interested parties to review and comment on the report, the RSPB does not consider that any of the information provided and referenced from the report can be used as part of the evidence base for this application.

Section 1.2 of Appendix 9.1: Ecology (p.1) states that '*the site was formerly grazed but, following the removal of livestock from the site, is now largely overgrown with a long sward and some scrub encroachment.*'

The SWBGS Mitigation Guidance (2018)⁴ outlines requirements for consideration of reclassification (para 9, p.4):

'If site classification, and the associated level of mitigation or off-setting requirements, is disputed, reclassification of a site will be considered if confirmed by 3 consecutive years of survey to the agreed survey methodology under appropriate habitat management conditions for waders and / or brent goose usage throughout the survey period.'

Although the Applicant does not indicate in its Ecological Appraisal the intention to query SWBGS sites within the site boundary for reclassification, the RSPB does not consider the survey results obtained provide sufficient evidence should this be sought at a point in the future. As stated above in the requirements for consideration of reclassification, the Application Site would need to be brought back into appropriate habitat management condition before surveys could be conducted.

The RSPB welcomes the applicant's acknowledgement of contributions towards the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy (SRMS).

We hope you have found these comments useful. Please do not hesitate to get in touch should you wish to discuss any of our comments further.

⁴ SWBGS Steering Group (2018) *Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy (SWBGS): Guidance on Mitigation and Off-setting Requirements*.
<https://solentwbgs.files.wordpress.com/2021/03/swbgs-mitigation-guidance-oct-2018.pdf>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a horizontal line.

Jack Thompson

Conservation Officer

Email: jack.thompson@rspb.org.uk

Phone: 07719 079 000