

Reply to Ecology Comments for APP/22/00439 The South Downs College, College Road, Purbrook, Waterlooville, PO7 8AA

Our ref: 7707 Havant College

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Following consultee comments in relation to the planning application at South Downs College (**APP/22/00439**) amendments have been made to the design to address the concerns raised. This technical note outlines the changes made and also provides further information to address comments raised by the county ecologist during the application.

Development Design

The changes to the design include altering the access for the development on the western boundary and moving units away from the eastern boundary, this will result in a reduction in the loss of woodland on the site. All built structures within the development will now be constructed within the curtilage of the car park currently present on the site. The area of woodland lost along the eastern boundary has been reduced and will only be required to facilitate the construction of gardens for the residential units. The design has aimed to minimise the impact on the woodland boundaries as much as possible. However, the western edge of the site is constrained due to the presence of utility services which has prevented any units being accommodated in the hardstanding in this area. This also prevents compensatory woodland planting in this area. The southern and western boundaries will largely be retained within the design, with a small loss for access. The retained areas of woodland (0.45 hectares) will be bought under management to enhance the quality to compensate for the loss of 0.12 hectares of woodland across the site.

The eastern boundary will have a width of 5-6 metres with gardens present to the east and an open field to the west, maintaining a wider green corridor. The retained trees along this boundary have an average height of seven metres and will therefore still provide a substantial green corridor for wildlife including the local bat populations. Lighting along this boundary will be minimal with no lighting directed onto retained woodland habitat to maintain a dark corridor around the periphery of the site. This will be an enhancement from the current site conditions as the car park currently has multiple lights present with lux levels on the boundary vegetation currently recorded at peaks of 6.5 lux (Hydrock 2022). This will be reduced to 1-3 lux in line with lighting guidelines (ILP, 2018).

The fencing along the eastern garden boundaries will comprise badger proof fencing to ensure the badgers within the retained setts do not have access to the gardens to prevent any conflicts with the new residents. The fencing will be partially buried with a horizontal return to prevent badgers digging under the fencing. The badgers present around the boundaries of the site use the surrounding areas of grassland fields for foraging which they will be able to access to the south and east without crossing through the development or any gardens.

Wintering birds

The field to the south and east of the development is listed in the Solent and Waders Brent Goose Strategy and were subject to wintering bird surveys as part of the application for Campdown (APP/19/01101). The county ecologist has requested further information about the potential impacts to these sites from the development. Impacts could result from increased noise levels during construction and increased visual disturbance once

constructed. Increased recreational pressure on these fields is considered unlikely. There is no public access to the field to the east and south of the site, with the woodland boundaries preventing easy access to these areas from the development. The development will strengthen these boundaries through the erection of badger proof fencing and through the presence of private houses adjacent to the boundary. None of the footways within the new development lead out to this area and there are no public footpaths that enter this area. The impact of increased recreational pressure to the main areas of Chichester and Langstone Harbours Ramsar and Special Protection Area will be mitigated through the payment of a financial levy in line with the Solent and Waders Brent Geese Strategy.

There is the potential for disturbance from noise during the construction stage of the project. This will be mitigated through the timing of construction works on the site. All percussive piling or works with heavy machinery (works resulting in a noise level in excess of 69dbAmax – measured at the receptor) will be avoided during the bird overwintering period (October to March). This can be secured by condition.

The retention of the 5-metre wide vegetation buffer along the eastern boundary will screen the new houses from the neighbouring field and prevent any visual impacts for birds using this area. The average height of the trees along this boundary is 7 metres (ACD 2018), which is taller than the proposed buildings, and will obscure the buildings from view for any birds within the field.

Enhancements

The majority of the development is located on an area of hardstanding which has no ecological value. This will be replaced with areas of garden and residential dwellings alongside areas of wildflower. This will provide a more natural edge to sections of the retained woodland. It is not possible to provide additional woodland planting in the scheme due to the restrictions in planting in the west of the development zone relating to the presence of utilities. The retained woodland boundaries, 0.45 hectares, will be enhanced to compensate for the loss of 0.12ha of woodland habitat. These are currently considered to be in a poor condition and will be enhanced to a moderate condition.

The scheme includes the provision of 70 small native trees which will provide canopy cover and provide additional foraging resources for the local bat and bird populations. Areas of wildflower planting (0.15 hectares) will be created around the edges of the development which do not form part of the public open space.

A biodiversity net gain assessment was completed for the site using Defra metric v.4.0 based on the latest proposals for the site, shown in **Appendix A**. This includes the measures set out above with the results of the metric resulting in a net gain in habitat units of 0.55, resulting in a 10.96% net gain. The metric has been provided alongside this technical note. Due to the loss of urban trees on the site the trading rules have not been met but it is not possible to plant enough trees within the site to offset this loss. The measures to provide wildflower areas, enhanced woodland and native planting are considered to provide beneficial gains considering the setting of the site and the importance of the woodland boundary.

Further enhancements will be included in the scheme with the provision of 102 swift boxes which will be erected in groups of 3 across the development site. This is in a ratio of one per dwelling as set out in the RIBA guidance (RIBA 2013). Integral bat boxes will also be placed in the buildings around the edges of the development facing the retained woodland areas.

It is anticipated that enhancement measures can be secured via condition through the requirement of a Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP).

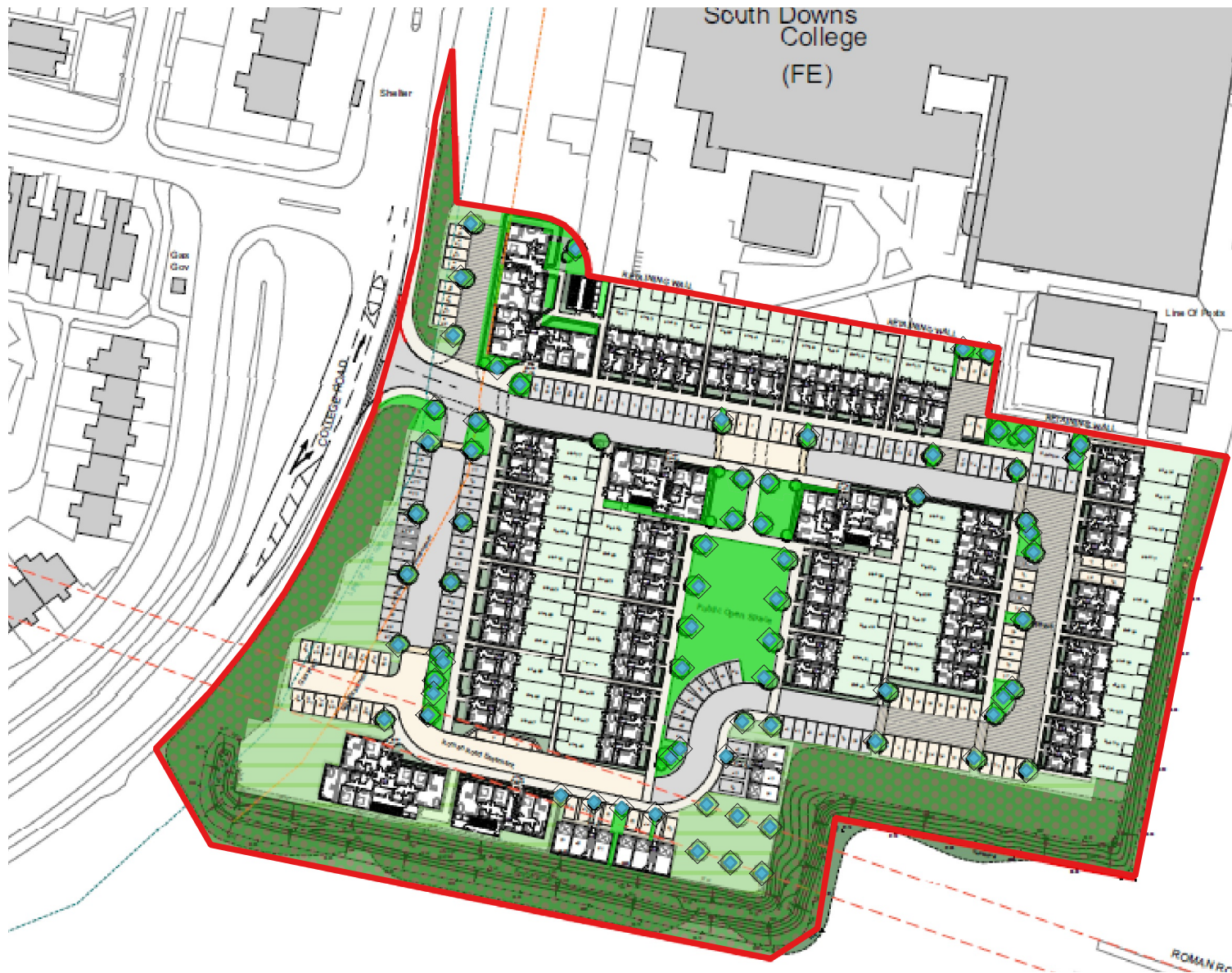
References

Hydrock (2022) Havant and South Downs College External Lighting Assessment

ACD Environmental (2018) Havant and South Downs College Tree Survey

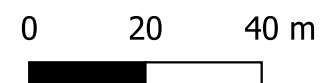
RIBA (2013) Designing for biodiversity: A technical guide for new and existing buildings

Appendix A – Habitat Enhancement Plan



Legend

- Red Line Boundary
- ◆ Proposed Small Urban Tree
- Modified grassland
- Other neutral grassland
- Other woodland; broadleaved



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 Development
 PROJECT: Havant and South Downs College
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