

Consultee Comments for Planning Application APP/22/00439

Application Summary

Application Number: APP/22/00439

Address: The South Downs College, College Road, Purbrook, Waterlooville, PO7 8AA

Proposal: Redevelopment of southern section of site to provide 102 dwellings comprising 56 No. 2, 3 & 4 bed houses and 46 No. 1 & 2 bed flats with associated parking, landscaping, waste and cycle storage. New roundabout access from College Road.

Case Officer: Arleta Miszewska

Consultee Details

Name: Mr Tristan Norton

Address: Elizabeth II Court West, The Castle, Winchester SO23 8UD

Email: Not Available

On Behalf Of: County Ecologist, Strategic Environmental Delivery

Comments

Dear Arleta,

APP/22/00439 | Redevelopment of southern section of site to provide 102 dwellings comprising 56 No. 2, 3 & 4 bed houses and 46 No. 1 & 2 bed flats with associated parking, landscaping, waste and cycle storage. New roundabout access from College Road. | The South Downs College, College Road, Purbrook, Waterlooville, PO7 8AA 23.1176

Thank you for consulting me on this application, which includes an amended scheme layout.

The application is accompanied by a Technical Note (Pro-Vision, dated April 2023 but surely July) as well as an Ecological Assessment (Pro-Vision, April 2022). The site comprises a large area of predominantly hardstanding with associated areas of semi-improved grassland/scrub with numerous planted trees. The proposed development area includes a modern building immediately north of the hardstanding. The site is bordered to the south, east and west by strips of broadleaved woodland. The site sits at the southern end of the South Downs College complex, with extensive areas of ancient woodland to the north/north-east. The land to the south of the site comprises extensive open semi-improved grassland.

The site has been subject to detailed ecological surveys throughout 2021, including surveys for Badgers, bats, Hazel Dormouse and reptiles. I am content that the scope, content and timings of ecological surveys are acceptable.

Based on the comments from your Landscape consultee it would appear that further revision/discussion is needed to ensure an appropriate level of greenspace for the number of

dwelling, as well as including additional trees. This also chimes with the general reduction in vegetation, most notably the woody boundary vegetation, as evidenced by the submitted BNG assessment. Due to the loss of woody habitat (in this case urban trees) the BNG trading rules cannot be satisfied. With further discussion needed on additional tree planting (as per Landscape comments) there may be a requirement to adjust the BNG calculations: the current position that further tree planting (or further retention of existing boundary vegetation) cannot be achieved appears not to be satisfactory from a landscape perspective. Also, the submitted BNG calculations have assessed the wooded boundary habitats as being of Low Strategic Significance. However, these boundaries are included within the Hampshire Ecological Network Map as network opportunity areas. This may affect the BNG calculations, and I would request further exploration of this issue.

It is also not immediately apparent exactly how the retained boundary vegetation will be enhanced: what management activity is proposed, what is the intended habitat condition, and how will this accord with the presence of Badgers within these areas?

The site supports Badgers, with active setts located within the site boundaries. I agree that much of the site comprises unsuitable hardstanding habitat, and that the animals will be utilising the surrounding woodland and especially grassland habitats located south of the site. The proposals now include the retention of a greater area of the eastern boundary vegetation which is welcome. The presence of active Badger setts in such close proximity to residential dwellings has the potential to result in human/Badger conflict: Badgers will routinely forage within gardens and can and do undermine fences and buildings by tunnelling. The proposal is now to construct Badger-proof fencing along the eastern site boundary, in order to avoid animals entering the new residential gardens. This seems sensible (in the context of proposed development adjacent to Badger setts) but again I would raise the potential for future problematical interactions between residents and Badgers. This does not seem like an ideal design solution. It is unclear how the amended scheme will impact the identified setts and whether the previously submitted mitigation remains appropriate.

The modern building in the north of the site is considered to offer negligible potential for supporting roosting bats, and none of the trees within the site are considered to offer potential for tree-roosting bats. The site sits within a landscape known to support a diverse bat assemblage, including very rare/scarce species such as Bechsteins Bat and Western Barbastelle. The bat activity surveys carried out at the site have covered the main bat activity season and will have provided a robust assessment of bat activity. The site unsurprisingly supports a good number of flying bat species but is dominated by the common and widespread Common Pipistrelle. A good percentage of recordings from the automated detectors were from the Mouse-eared Bat group which may include the very rare Bechsteins bat. A small number of Western Barbastelle were recorded, as well as Nathusius Pipistrelle. Key locations for bat activity were the eastern boundary, with greater numbers of bat recordings at this location for most species, although the southern and western boundaries were also shown to support good levels of bat activity. The

majority of these boundaries will be retained within the proposed scheme, and the amended scheme now retains more of the eastern boundary. The existing lighting results in excessive illumination of the site and the proposed lighting layout will result in a reduction in illuminance.

Land to the south is listed in the Solent Waders & Brent Goose Strategy (SWBGS) for its function as winter terrestrial supporting habitat for bird species associated with the nearby Solent Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Whilst there will be no direct loss of this supporting habitat, the proposal could result in construction-phase noise and visual disturbance within very close proximity. Further information has been provided, stating that there is no direct pedestrian linkage between the application site and the adjacent SWBGS site. In terms of potential construction disturbance, it is stated that construction works (with the potential to result in noise disturbance) will avoid the overwintering bird season (1st October to 31st March). Firm details of avoidance and mitigation measures, including exactly how it is proposed to monitor noise levels to ensure impact avoidance, can be secured through a Construction Environment Management Plan.

I welcome the inclusion of the stated number of nesting boxes for Common Swift: this is acceptable.

In summary, there are a number of queries that require clarification.

NPPF, Circular 06/2005 and Natural England Standing Advice on Protected Species, require that planning decisions are based on full, up-to-date ecological information and it is essential that all necessary survey, assessment and mitigation information is available to the LPA prior to determination, particularly in the case of protected species, which are a material planning consideration. This will enable the LPA to determine the application on the basis of full knowledge about the ecological impacts of the proposal and to ensure that any impacts can and will be mitigated, and are acceptable

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

Kind regards,

Tristan

Tristan Norton

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