

APP/21/00893 (Land north of Long Copse Lane, Emsworth, PO10 7UN) objections

Commenter: Dr. David Mason,

Hollybank Cottage,

Long Copse Lane,

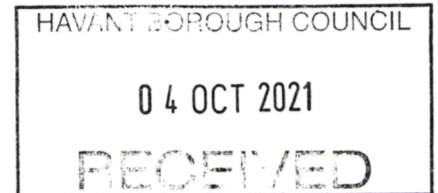
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Commenter type: Complainant

Stance: Object



Comments

(a) The site currently lies in the countryside.

The proposed development is in the countryside outside the Urban Area Boundary as defined on the Proposals Map and is therefore non-urban land. The proposal is not a small-scale householder development, does not meet an overriding public need, and does not meet the policies for exceptional development in rural areas. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy CS17 of the Havant Core Strategy (2011) and Policy AL2 of the Havant Local Plan (Allocations) 2014. While the emerging Local Plan includes the site in the revised urban area, this carries limited weight as the new Plan is not yet adopted.

(b) The site is in an unsuitable location.

The proposed development is in an unsustainable location not well connected to local shops, schools or community infrastructure. The site is not within easy walking distance of any public transport route. As such the proposal is contrary to Policy CS20 of the Havant Core Strategy (2011).

(c) The eastern part of Long Copse Lane (LCL) towards Westbourne would become more dangerous.

Along this section, LCL is only a single-track road and has no footpath. The application includes no plan to widen this part of LCL or to provide passing places or footpaths. From local knowledge, about 40% of the journeys of the 500 or so cars on site would be made towards Westbourne, as this has the closest amenities and is the easiest way to Chichester. The T-junction of LCL with North Street is dangerous, with a blind exit due to cars parked opposite the junction in North Street. Building the estate would be damaging to Westbourne, which already has a traffic problem due partly to the recently-built Redlands Grange estate in Emsworth. Why not consider access to the estate via Emsworth Common Road?

(d) HBC could not be certain that the development would not have an adverse effect on the Bechstein bat population.

Bechstein's bat is very rare, with a population of only 1500 in the UK. The woodland bordering the site is home to the second largest roost in the UK, which is of national importance. A large population of Bechstein bats was confirmed in Southleigh Forest bordering the northern boundary of the site by Portsmouth Water. They have also been recorded as roosting in Colman's Copse. The applicants' EIA says that their survey does not provide a full account of all bat activity in the area, and only a few Bechstein bats were tagged. However, their survey says that several female Bechstein bats roosted on Long Copse Hill in Southleigh Forest in July 2021.

The bat is of the *Myotis* species that predominantly associated with ancient broad-leaved woodland, in particular oak and ash. It is a gleaner bat that forages high up in tree canopies [1]. It is likely that the estate would add significantly to pressure on the colony, through increased light, increased noise, reduced food supply, and increased human disturbance.

(1) Light. Bats of the *myotis* species are known to be particularly sensitive to light, and a lit-up section of the foraging route will become a barrier that they will not cross [2]. The developer proposes a 30-40 m buffer between the proposed estate, the forest to the north, and the bat corridors to the west and east. Even so, if development were to be allowed, there would be nothing to stop residents putting up external lighting, which could nullify the mitigation measures proposed by the developer.

(2) Noise. Bechstein's bat is a gleaner bat that uses echolocation to navigate, but finds its insect prey passively, by listening for their movements. The rustling sound of the insects produces a series of broadband clicks with peak energy around 12 KHz. Traffic noise also contains considerable energy at this frequency, so will have an effect on the way the bats detect returning echoes. A recent study showed that one gleaner *Myotis* spp. bat experienced a twofold to threefold reduction in foraging efficiency when exposed to road noise, even up to 640 metres away from the road [3]. Traffic moving around the estate would be much closer than this. There would also be additional noise from the pumping station on the northern boundary of the site, which would be near the bat roosts. In addition, during the building of the estate, there would be substantial additional noise from construction traffic. Unfortunately, the building phase would last up to 5 years.

(3) Food supply. Bats like an environment in which trees are adjacent to grass. They need to eat up to half their body weight in insects each night, and forage where there are lots of insects. Woodland adjacent to traditional pasture such as currently in Hollybank Fields is a good source. The traditional pasture involves horse dung, in which lots of insects breed. This traditional pasture would be largely lost under concrete if the estate was built, which could result in a reduction of the bats' available food supply. This loss would be compounded by the fact that insects are attracted to lit areas from further afield. The insects would therefore tend to congregate in the lit areas within the estate, but the Bechstein's bats would not be able to follow them because they are light-avoiding. There would also be fewer insects in the adjacent unlit habitats. This would further negatively impact the ability of bats like Bechstein's to feed [4].

(4) Human disturbance. The estate would border on Southleigh Forest at Long Copse Hill, and also Colman's Copse. As the building of the estate would bring humans closer to the

bats, it would be more likely that human activities in the forest could disturb the roosts. There have already been press reports of fires being deliberately started in trees in Colman's Copse [5] and Hollybank Woods [6].

The NPPF (2021) says that, if the presence of Bechstein's bat is established on site and/or nearby, planning permission will only be granted where impacts on Bechstein's bat breeding habitat (i.e. net loss of/significant disturbance to woodland or trees containing roosts) are avoided, unless the applicant can show that there would not be an adverse effect on the population.

It seems that the proposed estate would add significantly to pressure on the colony, through increased light, increased noise, reduced food supply, and increased disturbance. It is likely that these negative effects could not be fully mitigated by the developer's strategy. While the developer plans increased bat habitat by linking Southleigh and Stansted forests, this is 2 km to the north of the estate, and it is not clear that this invitation to the bats to move their roosts would be taken up by this particular bat population.

HBC have a duty to protect the Bechstein bat colony. However, in view of the above, they could not be certain that building the proposed estate would not lead to this colony of rare bats being adversely affected.

(e) The site would violate the principle of nitrogen neutrality.

The development would drain to Thornham WwTW. The developers plan to mitigate the additional nitrogen generated by H8 by re-wilding Horsepasture Farm in Stansted. Thornham WwTW drains to the Thorney Channel in Chichester Harbour. But Horsepasture Farm is in the catchment of a stream that drains to the Emsworth Channel.

In their re-wilding scheme, the developers have followed the approach used by HBC in HBC's re-wilding of Warblington Farm. HBC have treated all of Chichester Harbour SAC as single unit, and used the re-wilding of the farm to mitigate this. However, this ignores the fact that nitrogen 'hot spots' may be created by their mitigation plan. The Riccardo report on Warblington Farm Mitigation [7] says that it is possible to treat "Chichester Harbour and the East Solent as a hydrological unit that has a level of exchange, predominantly at high tide. Therefore, the direct proximity of Warblington Farm to Chichester Harbour makes it suitable for mitigating housing development draining to Thornham." The report does not back up this statement by presenting the results of any quantitative water quality modelling to check the effect of re-wilding Warblington Farm on the nitrogen levels in the Thorney Channel.

The statement is likely to be an oversimplification. After re-wilding, both Horsepasture and Warblington Farms would produce water of lower nutrient content at the north end of the Emsworth Channel. In order for this water to influence the Thorney Channel on the other side of Thorney Island, it would have to move south down the Emsworth Channel for 4 km, travel east past the southern tip of Thorney Island for 2 km, then flow north back up the Thorney Channel for 3 km to the Thornham outfall, a total of 9 km.

It can certainly move down the Emsworth Channel on the ebb tide, but at the southern tip of Thorney Island it will meet a large body of water ebbing out of the Thorney Channel and the rest of Chichester Harbour, which will force it out into the Solent. There it will be mixed with the general Solent waters, which will include water with increased nutrient content from the

Budds Farm Long Sea Outfall. So the water flowing back into the Thorney Channel on the rising tide would be unlikely to have a lower nutrient content than before the 10,000 houses in the Local Plan were built. Meanwhile the nutrient outflow from Thornham would increase if the houses planned for H8 were built. The nitrogen budget for the Thorney Channel would therefore be positive.

This scenario should be compared to the Riccardo one using a computer-based tidal model driving a water quality model predicting concentrations of nitrogen at various points in Chichester Harbour. The tidal model would simulate the currents moving the nitrogen around the Solent and Chichester Harbour. The modelling should simulate the situations before H8 had been built, and afterwards when Horsepasture Farm had been re-wilded. Unless the developer or HBC carries out this modelling, it won't be able to say for certain that Horsepasture Farm will mitigate development draining to Thornham.

HBC admitted at the recent Local Plan Examination Hearings that they treat the whole SAC as a single unit, that they had not carried out the above tidal modelling, and that they had ignored hot spots. The Thorney Channel is a serious nitrogen hot spot, since its inter-tidal zone is 5 sq.km, which is a large area, and it already suffers from serious algal growth. If the developers implement their mitigation plan, it would appear to violate the law arising from the 'Dutch case', which makes no mention of the area over which the law should apply. To satisfy this law, it is incumbent on applicants to guarantee beyond all reasonable doubt that the project will not affect the integrity of a protected area (static.turley.co.uk).

(f) The nitrogen balance calculation is over-optimistic.

Natural England's Nutrient Neutral calculator assumes that all the nitrogen emission from site H8 and Horsepasture farm will stop immediately the agricultural activities on H8 cease and the farm is re-wilded, whereas in reality agricultural nitrogen remaining in the soil of these sites will leach out through the groundwater for decades. Over the lifetime of the Local Plan (to 2036) the reduction in this nitrogen would be only about 10% [8]. This means that the true nitrogen budget of H8 will be positive immediately after the houses have been occupied, to the detriment of Chichester Harbour.

(g) Thornham WwTW is close to capacity.

Chichester District Council (CDC) admit that remaining capacity at Thornham WwTW is very limited, and that upgrades to the plant will be needed by 2025 [9]. Nevertheless, CDC are planning to build hundreds of houses between Southbourne and Chidham, and HBC are planning hundreds at H8 and other sites in Emsworth as well. Southern Water will receive its next tranche of funding in 2025, but it may be a decade before improvements are made. A WwTW near to capacity will have a reduced ability to strip nitrogen, which will again be detrimental to the Harbour.

(g) More appropriate sites exist.

The planned development will generate 210 houses. HBC plans to build 2100 houses on the Southleigh (KP5) site, yet not all of them will be delivered during the Local Plan to 2036. If HBC increased the number of homes planned to be delivered before 2036, it would make it easier for it to achieve its planned housing target. If the houses planned for H8 were instead built at KP5, they would not increase the housing density there much. Advantages would be

that a rural lane would not be lost, rare bats would not be affected, and Thornham WwTW would not be used since KP5 drains to Budds Farm Long Sea Outfall.

References

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2. Stone, E.L. (2013). Bats and lighting: Overview of current evidence and mitigation strategies. University of Bristol.
3. Bunkley, J.P. and Barber, J.R. (2015). Noise reduces foraging efficiency in Pallid bats. *Ethology*, 121, 1116-1121.
4. Bat Conservation Trust (2009). Bats and lighting in the U.K
5. Daily Telegraph 05/05/2018.
6. Portsmouth Evening News 22/04/2021.
7. Riccardo E&E (2020). Review of the Warblington Farm mitigation option for nutrient neutral development in the Havant Borough.
8. Amec Foster Wheeler (2018). Chichester District Council Water Quality Assessment.
9. Statement of Common Ground: Chichester District Council and Havant Borough Council (20201). HBC (SCG13).