

APP/20/00441 | Outline planning application with all matters reserved except access for the development of up to 120 dwellings and associated improved site access, landscaping, footpaths, SuDS and other associated works on land to the west of Hulbert Road, Havant. | Land west of, Hulbert Road, Havant 20.0962

Thank you for consulting me on this application. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to you.

The application is accompanied by an Ecological Appraisal (WYG, December 2019) and a Reptile Survey report (WYG, December 2019). I have also reviewed the Habitats Regulations Assessment (WYG, July 2020). I note that additional ecological surveys have been recommended but not yet provided – survey findings for bats and hazel dormice should be provided prior to determination. The bat surveys in particular are critical, as the site falls within an area likely to support the very rare Bechstein's bat as well as other nationally rare species such as Alcaethoe's and Barbastelle bats, both of which have been recorded locally.

The application site comprises a large square field of semi-improved grassland with developing scrub which has been subject to pony grazing. An area of bare ground is present at the south-western corner, and a lined wet ditch occurs around this bare ground. The site boundaries to the north, south and east comprise the edges of blocks of semi-natural woodland, all of which are classified as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The only species-specific surveys submitted to date are for reptiles, and reptiles are considered to be absent from the site.

The proposals are for high-density housing. Obvious concerns relate to the proximity of new housing to the surrounding semi-natural woodland SINCS and the potential for damage and disturbance to sensitive habitats. In addition, the presence of new artificial lighting is likely to present issues with nocturnal/crepuscular species such as bats. The absence of a bat report means that it is not possible at this stage to assess the likely impacts from this proposal. Similarly, the lack of a hazel dormouse assessment presents issues in assessing impacts to this sensitive species.

Overall, the submitted information is not currently sufficient for me to provide detailed comments. The absence of bat and dormouse reports is a significant limitation. I am assuming that surveys have been completed so presumably reports will be forthcoming.

I would also request that, once the full assessment is provided, a detailed ecological mitigation, compensation and enhancement strategy is provided. This should provide details of measures to avoid, mitigate and compensate the identified impacts on ecological receptors and should include measures to achieve biodiversity net gain.

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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Coronavirus (Covid-19)

Hampshire County Council's response to the Covid-19 is available here (<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/coronavirus>).

In line with Government advice to reduce non-essential travel and work from home where possible, Ecology officers are now working remotely. Whilst we will endeavour to conduct our services in a timely manner and to meet statutory timescales where we can, there may be some impact to the services we deliver. We will ensure that we keep all applicants / interested parties informed of any further impacts to our services should they arise. The Council's response also means that no non-essential site visits or face to face meetings will be undertaken until further notice. Essential and contractual surveys may continue take place where there is no risk to the surveyor or the public, and in line with Government advice. This will be reviewed on an on-going basis.



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Please note that this advice is given in accordance with the Service Level Agreement that has been signed between Hampshire County Council and your Council. These comments are expressed as a professional view provided to Havant Borough Council and should not, therefore, be interpreted as those of Hampshire County Council.