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Your ref: APP/20/00241



Ms L. Wells
Havant Council
Public Service Plaza
Civic Centre Road
Havant
Hampshire PO9 2AX

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

BY EMAIL ONLY

Planning.development@havant.gov.uk

Dear Ms Wells

Planning consultation: Construction of 1No. 5 bed detached dwelling and detached garage (alternative design for one of two dwellings granted planning consent in 2003 (ref: 03/53651/016) and partially implemented).

Location: Land adjacent Saxted House, 5 Tower Street, Emsworth, PO10 7BH

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 28 April 2020 which was received by Natural England on 28 April 2020

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S ADVICE

FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IMPACTS ON DESIGNATED SITES

Habitats Regulations Assessment – waste water impacts on Solent European sites

Proposals that comprise new development with overnight accommodation will have waste water implications. It is Natural England's view that these implications, and all other matters capable of having a significant effect on designated sites in the Solent, must be addressed in the ways required by Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

This only applies to developments where the treated effluent discharges into any Solent European site (Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Southampton Water SPA, Portsmouth Harbour SPA, Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA or Solent and Dorset Coast pSPA), or any water body that subsequently discharges into such a site. It is for your authority to determine if this development meets these criteria.

If so, Natural England's advice is that the nutrient content of the discharge needs to be considered, in combination with other nutrient inputs, for impacts on the receiving site and the following advice is relevant.

Further Information

Deterioration of the water environment

With regard to the integrity of the designated sites, we advise that there is currently uncertainty as to whether the increase in waste water from new housing in the Solent catchment will have an adverse effect on the international sites.

There is existing evidence of high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in the Solent water environment with evidence of eutrophication at some designated sites. The Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), Natural England (NE), and Environment Agency (EA) have been jointly working to develop an Integrated Water Management Strategy (IWMS). This examines the potential for the PUSH region to accommodate future housing growth without having a detrimental effect upon the water environment. A Water Quality Working Group has been set up to identify and analyse the existing evidence gaps and evaluate the need for strategic mitigation measures. However, there is currently uncertainty as to whether there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the new housing growth.

Where proposals comprise new overnight development, this will have inevitable waste water implications. It is Natural England's view that these implications, and all other matters capable of having a significant effect on designated sites in the Solent, must be addressed in the ways required by Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

It is Natural England's view that there is a likely significant effect on the internationally designated sites (SPA, SAC, pSPA) due to the increase in waste water from the new housing. As you are aware, where there is a likelihood of significant effects (excluding any measures intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on the European site), or there are uncertainties, a competent authority should fully assess (by way of an "appropriate assessment") the implications of the proposal in view of the conservation objectives for the European site(s) in question. Appropriate assessments cannot have lacunae and must contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions capable of removing all reasonable scientific doubt as to the effects of the works proposed on the protected site concerned. Complete information is required to ensure that the proposal will not affect the integrity of the international sites.

Natural England advises that the waste water issue is examined within the appropriate assessment and that the existing nutrient and conservation status of the receiving waters be taken into account. LPAs will be aware of recent CJEU decisions regarding the assessment of elements of a proposal aimed toward mitigating adverse effects on designated sites and the need for certainty that mitigating measures will achieve their aims. The achievement of nutrient neutrality, if scientifically and practically effective, is a means of ensuring that development does not add to existing nutrient burdens. Natural England has prepared a methodology setting out how this can be achieved and this is attached for your information. It is appreciated that this may be difficult for smaller developments or developments on brownfield land. Natural England has advised that local planning authorities set up an interim approach that developments can contribute to thereby ensuring that this uncertainty is fully addressed by all applications. Natural England is working closely with affected local planning authorities to help address this issue. Natural England can also provide further advice to the applicant on mitigation options under our [Discretionary Advice Service](#).

Please note we advise that the competent authorities to whom Natural England gives its statutory advice on the environment will need to seek and rely upon their own legal advice on the interpretation of the Habitats Regulations and case law.

DESIGNATED SITES [EUROPEAN] – FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED

Since this application will result in a net increase in residential accommodation, impacts to the coastal Special Protection Area(s) and Ramsar Site(s) may result from increased recreational disturbance.

Your authority has measures in place to manage these potential impacts through the agreed strategic solution which we consider to be ecologically sound. Subject to the appropriate financial contribution being secured, Natural England is satisfied that the proposal will mitigate against the potential recreational impacts of the development on the site(s).

Notwithstanding this, Natural England's advice is that this proposed development, and the application of these measures to avoid or reduce the likely harmful effects from it, may need to be formally checked and confirmed by your Authority, as the competent authority, via an appropriate assessment in view of the [European Site's conservation objectives](#) and in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

This is because Natural England notes that the recent [People Over Wind Ruling](#) by the Court of Justice of the European Union concluded that, when interpreting article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, it is not appropriate when determining whether or not a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a site and requires an appropriate assessment, to take account of measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the plan or project on that site. The ruling also concluded that such measures can, however, be considered during an appropriate assessment to determine whether a plan or project will have an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site. Your Authority should have regard to this and may wish to seek its own legal advice to fully understand the implications of this ruling in this context.

Natural England advises that it is a matter for your Authority to decide whether an appropriate assessment of this proposal is necessary in light of this ruling. In accordance with the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), Natural England must be consulted on any appropriate assessment your Authority may decide to make.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zones

The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 requires local planning authorities to consult Natural England on "Development in or likely to affect a Site of Special Scientific Interest" (Schedule 4, w). Our SSSI Impact Risk Zones are a GIS dataset designed to be used during the planning application validation process to help local planning authorities decide when to consult Natural England on developments likely to affect a SSSI. The dataset and user guidance can be accessed from the data.gov.uk website

Further general advice on the consideration of protected species and other natural environment issues is provided at Annex A.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries regarding this letter, for new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Beth Seale
Consultations Team

Annex - Generic advice on natural environment impacts and opportunities

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

Local authorities have responsibilities for the conservation of SSSIs under s28G of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 175c) states that development likely to have an adverse effect on SSSIs should not normally be permitted. Natural England's SSSI Impact Risk Zones are a GIS dataset designed to be used during the planning application validation process to help local planning authorities decide when to consult Natural England on developments likely to affect a SSSI. The dataset and user guidance can be accessed from the Natural England Open Data Geoportal. Our initial screening indicates that one or more Impact Risk Zones have been triggered by the proposed development, indicating that impacts to SSSIs are possible and further assessment is required. You should request sufficient information from the developer to assess the impacts likely to arise and consider any mitigation measures that may be necessary.

Biodiversity duty

Your authority has a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of your decision making. Conserving biodiversity can also include restoration or enhancement to a population or habitat. Further information is available here.

Protected Species

Natural England has produced standing advice¹ to help planning authorities understand the impact of particular developments on protected species. We advise you to refer to this advice. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on protected species where they form part of a SSSI or in exceptional circumstances.

Local sites and priority habitats and species

You should consider the impacts of the proposed development on any local wildlife or geodiversity sites, in line with paragraphs 171 and 174 of the NPPF and any relevant development plan policy. There may also be opportunities to enhance local sites and improve their connectivity. Natural England does not hold locally specific information on local sites and recommends further information is obtained from appropriate bodies such as the local records centre, wildlife trust, geoconservation groups or recording societies.

Priority habitats and Species are of particular importance for nature conservation and included in the England Biodiversity List published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Most priority habitats will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. The list of priority habitats and species can be found here². Natural England does not routinely hold species data, such data should be collected when impacts on priority habitats or species are considered likely. Consideration should also be given to the potential environmental value of brownfield sites, often found in urban areas and former industrial land, further information including links to the open mosaic habitats inventory can be found here.

Ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees

You should consider any impacts on ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees in line with paragraph 175 of the NPPF. Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland Inventory which can help identify ancient woodland. Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced standing advice for planning authorities in relation to ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees. It should be taken into account by planning authorities when determining relevant planning applications. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees where they form part of a SSSI or in exceptional circumstances.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

² <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

Protected landscapes

For developments within or within the setting of a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), we advise you to apply national and local policies, together with local landscape expertise and information to determine the proposal. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (paragraph 172) provides the highest status of protection for the landscape and scenic beauty of National Parks and AONBs. It also sets out a 'major developments test' to determine whether major developments should be exceptionally be permitted within the designated landscape. We advise you to consult the relevant AONB Partnership or Conservation Board or relevant National Park landscape or other advisor who will have local knowledge and information to assist in the determination of the proposal. The statutory management plan and any local landscape character assessments may also provide valuable information.

Public bodies have a duty to have regard to the statutory purposes of designation in carrying out their functions (under (section 11 A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended) for National Parks and S85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 for AONBs). The Planning Practice Guidance confirms that this duty also applies to proposals outside the designated area but impacting on its natural beauty.

Heritage Coasts are protected under paragraph 173 of the NPPF. Development should be consistent the special character of Heritage Coasts and the importance of its conservation.

Landscape

Paragraph 170 of the NPPF highlights the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes through the planning system. This application may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes, including any local landscape designations. You may want to consider whether any local landscape features or characteristics (such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls) could be incorporated into the development in order to respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness, in line with any local landscape character assessments. Where the impacts of development are likely to be significant, a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment should be provided with the proposal to inform decision making. We refer you to the [Landscape Institute](#) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for further guidance.

Best and most versatile agricultural land and soils

Local planning authorities are responsible for ensuring that they have sufficient detailed agricultural land classification (ALC) information to apply NPPF policies (Paragraphs 170 and 171). This is the case regardless of whether the proposed development is sufficiently large to consult Natural England. Further information is contained in [GOV.UK guidance](#). Agricultural Land Classification information is available on the [Magic](#) website on the [Data.Gov.uk](#) website. If you consider the proposal has significant implications for further loss of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land, we would be pleased to discuss the matter further.

Guidance on soil protection is available in the Defra [*Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites*](#), and we recommend its use in the design and construction of development, including any planning conditions. Should the development proceed, we advise that the developer uses an appropriately experienced soil specialist to advise on, and supervise soil handling, including identifying when soils are dry enough to be handled and how to make the best use of soils on site.

Access and Recreation

Natural England encourages any proposal to incorporate measures to help improve people's access to the natural environment. Measures such as reinstating existing footpaths together with the creation of new footpaths and bridleways should be considered. Links to other green networks and, where appropriate, urban fringe areas should also be explored to help promote the creation of wider green infrastructure.

Relevant aspects of local authority green infrastructure strategies should be delivered where appropriate.

Rights of Way, Access land, Coastal access and National Trails

Paragraphs 98 and 170 of the NPPF highlights the important of public rights of way and access. Development should consider potential impacts on access land, common land, rights of way, coastal access routes and coastal margin in the vicinity of the development and the scope to mitigate any adverse impacts. Consideration should also be given to the potential impacts on any nearby National Trails, including the England Coast Path. The National Trails website www.nationaltrail.co.uk provides information including contact details for the National Trail Officer.

Environmental enhancement

Development provides opportunities to secure net gains for biodiversity and wider environmental gains, as outlined in the NPPF (paragraphs 8, 72, 102, 118, 170, 171, 174 and 175). We advise you to follow the mitigation hierarchy as set out in paragraph 175 of the NPPF and firstly consider what existing environmental features on and around the site can be retained or enhanced or what new features could be incorporated into the development proposal. Where onsite measures are not possible, you should consider off site measures. Opportunities for enhancement might include:

- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.
- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Designing lighting to encourage wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.

You could also consider how the proposed development can contribute to the wider environment and help implement elements of any Landscape, Green Infrastructure or Biodiversity Strategy in place in your area. For example:

- Links to existing greenspace and/or opportunities to enhance and improve access.
 - Identifying opportunities for new greenspace and managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips)
 - Planting additional street trees.
 - Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network or using the opportunity of new development to extend the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition or clearing away an eyesore).