

Dear David,

Land at Rook Farm, St Marys Road, Hayling Island

APP/17/00007 – Outline planning application for the erection of up to 210 residential dwellings (including affordable housing) and 0.6ha for apartments with care (C2), structural planting and landscaping, informal public open space, children's play areas, sustainable drainage system (SuDS) vehicular access from St Mary's Road and associated ancillary works. All matters reserved with the exception of the main vehicular access.

Fully delegated Officer decision from Chichester Harbour Conservancy

Recommendation – Objection, being contrary to Policy DM23 of the Development Plan, being premature to the consideration of whether this site becomes allocated for housing in the Development Plan and with insufficient/poor information provided on bird counts.

Should the local planning authority be minded to approve the application, this should be subject to a S.106 covering:-

- (i) an appropriate amount specified in hectares of public open space as part of the Development to accord with Policy CS1 (3) of the Development Plan, provision, future maintenance and retention of the public open spaces within the development;
- (ii) recreational disturbance payment under Local Plan Policy 50 for the net gain of dwellings on the site, as the site is within 5.6km of the Chichester Harbour AONB; and,
- (iii) any ecological mitigation measures as a material planning consideration under Policies CS11 and DM23 of the Development Plan.

Reasoned justification

Firstly, the conservancy is disappointed that it was not consulted on this major application which has recreational disturbance implications for the Chichester Harbour SPA.

Leaving aside ecological issues, from a pure planning perspective it is somewhat surprising that a mixed use development has not been promoted with some employment land perhaps being more sustainable in terms of the potential for trips off the island to reach employment to be reduced in the long term.

It is noted that the site, listed as with “uncertain potential” on page 12 under reference UE77 in the council's Local Plan Housing Statement | December 2016, and is land currently unallocated under Policy CS17/AL2, as not within the urban area of the Development Plan Proposals Map, with paragraph 3.24 setting out –

“The consultation on the Draft Local Plan Housing Statement highlighted specific infrastructure issues on Hayling Island which will require further investigation before future development can be considered sustainable under the NPPF. In particular, stakeholders highlighted issues relating to flooding, highway capacity, the single access to the Island, healthcare, education and the provision of utilities. These are strategic issues which relate to the Island as a whole and not necessarily within the ability of a single development proposal to overcome in the absence of a comprehensive framework, which can only be provided through the new Local Plan”.

This proposal has the potential to impact on internationally designated species, namely wintering dark-bellied brent geese and wader species.

The submitted ecological appraisal (Baker Consultants, Dec 2016) generally fails to recognise the importance of arable land in close proximity to the SPA/Ramsar site for feeding and/or roosting of species such as brent geese, lapwing and curlew, and that arable land on Hayling supports thousands of wintering birds as part of the broad mosaic of habitats.

In particular (in sections 3.4.20 and 3.4.21) the report quotes WeBS Core Count (highly selectively) and Low Tide Count data as evidence that brent geese only use inland areas in small numbers, and are not present in high numbers nearby. Low Tide Counts, by definition, do not gather data on bird use of inland arable areas, and WeBS core counts typically only cover fields immediately adjacent to the shoreline.

In fact, data from WeBS core count sector 20435/South Hayling (Tournerbury-Mill Rytte) shows high Brent goose presence (5 yr mean of peak counts for winters 2011-12 to 2015-16: 2225 birds, range 1251-3496) in close proximity to the site. Records on www.solentbirds.org and from local residents also suggest the site is regularly used by wintering brent geese. Further information is likely to be needed to fully establish the use of the site by brent geese and wader species.

The loss of this site as potential feeding and/or roosting area will likely have an impact on the wintering bird populations of Chichester and Langstone Harbour SPA, and mitigation would be required in the form of alternative feeding and/or roosting areas.

The Conservancy is otherwise pleased to see the illustrative figure 14 masterplan containing open space margins and a permeable housing layout to provide and alternative for dog walking, other than visiting the Harbour shoreline.

The Conservancy is disappointed that the developer has not chosen to have layout and landscaping considered with a full landscape design submitted to demonstrate enhancement of the biodiversity value of the site.

Having regard to the distance from the Chichester Harbour AONB boundary, the Conservancy does not consider the proposed development would adversely visually affect the setting of the AONB, but could be likely to harm the purposes of its designation, considered against the *Policy framework listed below.

Yours sincerely

Steve Lawrence MRTPI
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