

Consultee Comments for Planning Application APP/22/00001

Application Summary

Application Number: APP/22/00001

Address: Land to the rear of 49 - 71, Fathoms Reach, Hayling Island

Proposal: Demolition of Nos 61-69 Fathoms Reach (inclusive) and development of 51 dwellings, to include 19 No. 2 bed, 18 No. 3 bed, 4 No. 4 bed, 3 No. 1 bed apartments and 6 No. 2 bed apartments, with play area and associated infrastructure; new vehicular and pedestrian access to Fathoms Reach and footpath link to Southleigh Grove; includes works to trees the subject of Tree Preservation Order No.1249.

Case Officer: Gary Christie

Consultee Details

Name: Mr Tristan Norton

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

Email: Not Available

On Behalf Of: County Ecologist

Comments

Dear Gary,

APP/22/00001 | Demolition of Nos 61-69 Fathoms Reach (inclusive) and development of 51 dwellings, to include 19 No. 2 bed, 18 No. 3 bed, 4 No. 4 bed, 3 No. 1 bed apartments and 6 No. 2 bed apartments, with play area and associated infrastructure; new vehicular and pedestrian access to Fathoms Reach and footpath link to Southleigh Grove; includes works to trees the subject of Tree Preservation Order No.1249. | Land to the rear of 49 - 71, Fathoms Reach, Hayling Island 22.1490

Thank you for consulting me on this application.

The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (EcoSupport, November 2021), a Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (EcoSupport, February 2022), and an updated Phase II Bat Surveys report and Reptile Surveys and Mitigation report (EcoSupport, June 2022). The site comprises an area of dense scrub and rough semi-improved grassland situated at the edge of an existing residential area, with arable farmland to the east and rough grassland to the north. The site was subject to detailed botanical survey by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) in 2015 and found to comprise predominantly unmanaged improved grassland and scrub. The site is not of significant botanical interest but is nevertheless an area of high local biodiversity value due to its generally unmanaged character. The site also has high amenity value to local residents. The unmanaged nature of the site will inevitably lead to continued scrub encroachment.

Species-specific surveys have been carried out for bats and reptiles. Unsurprisingly, the site has been shown to support a range of bat species, including mouse-eared bat species calls (*Myotis* spp.) in good numbers. Trapping surveys did not record the rare Bechsteins Bat but did record Natterers Bat. The bat activity at the site was dominated by the two commoner Pipistrelle species. The assessment of bat activity/diversity places the site at County/Regional value for bats. Surveys of the residential dwellings has recorded no evidence of roosting bats. My main concern is the impact on foraging/commuting bats and the retention of meaningful semi-natural habitat for bat species. The development layout has been amended slightly but remains very tight, with limited accommodation for any natural greenspace. The retention of boundary vegetation is obviously welcome, and the amendments to the width of the buffer zone to the north and east is acknowledged.

The amended buffer zone along the eastern and northern boundaries is now slightly wider. My concerns remain in respect to the viability of maintaining this buffer as a disturbance-free, well managed habitat situated within a dense residential development: the suitability of this buffer will be wholly dependent on a secured long-term management strategy. The value to bat species will be entirely dependent upon the retention of existing boundary vegetation as well as the use of artificial lighting: no indication of lighting contours has been provided and I do consider that at least an outline lighting strategy is required before any permission is granted. This is especially relevant to the proposed footpath link (bisecting the buffer at the north-eastern corner) and the main access road parallel to the eastern boundary: presumably these will require lighting, and it would be inappropriate to defer any consideration of that potential impact to post-determination matters. In summary, there is no assurance that the sensible lighting recommendations within the Bat Report can be delivered.

The site is immediately adjacent to an area of arable land to the east which features as a Core Area within the Solent Waders & Brent Goose Strategy (SWBGS). The proposal would result in construction- and operational-phase impacts on overwintering bird species using the arable land. There is especially potential for construction activities to result in noise levels sufficient to deter wintering birds from utilising the adjacent Core Area, and for new housing to result in recreational disturbance (via walking/dog walking/informal access to fields) resulting in disturbance of birds. The Shadow HRA confirms that there is high potential for construction noise (and to a lesser extent visual disturbance) to impact the supporting habitat and result in disturbance. The likely noise disturbance envelope extends well into the Core Area, with any source noise greater than c.70dB(A)max highly likely to disturb birds. It is therefore imperative that construction activities either avoid entirely the overwintering period or there are substantial restrictions on noise emissions during construction. Most construction plant such as large vehicles would easily exceed this noise threshold at distances over 10m (see British Standards 5228:-1:2009 for estimated noise levels from construction).

The proposed mitigation (as explained within the submitted CEMP) is for a noise attenuation fence

along the sites eastern boundary. This is acceptable in principle (and should assist in reducing noise within parts of the development site), although I have some queries regarding the efficacy of a noise barrier for some aspects of the construction. For example, the proposed flats at the north-eastern corner of the site will require construction works at a height significantly greater than the fence: this will presumably negate any attenuation effect from the fence. In addition, recent noise testing at another Hayling Island site has shown that any assessment of noise impacts needs to include measurements from various locations within both the application site and the ecological receptor (the adjacent Core Area), and to assess a range of activities. The Core Area to the east is of significant value as supporting habitat for bird species associated with the nearby Chichester & Langstone Harbours Special Protection Area (SPA) and there is a very obvious likelihood of ongoing disturbance from construction (and operation) sufficient to deter use by wintering birds.

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 dont hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Tristan

Tristan Norton

Senior Ecologist
Ecology Team
Specialist Environment Services
Economy, Transport and Environment Department
Hampshire County Council
Elizabeth II Court West
The Castle, Winchester
Hampshire SO23 8UD