

Dear Lewis,

APP/20/01221 | Erection of retail foodstore with associated car parking, access, landscaping and engineering works. | Land to the west of B&Q, Purbrook Way, Havant 21.0069

Thank you for consulting me on this application. Thank you for your patience.

The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (RPS, October 2020) and now a Dormouse and Bat Survey report (RPS< September 2021). The site comprises an area of dense scrub and rough grassland situated at the edge of an existing commercial development. The site sits within an immediate landscape dominated by woodland, with a large number of woodland Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) present. The grassland on site is reasonably species-rich, with two orchid species noted amongst a range of other herbaceous plants.

The scrub habitat is linked to areas of scrub and woodland off-site and then connected to the areas of woodland in the surrounding area. Surveys for Hazel Dormouse during 2020/21 recorded no evidence of this species and therefore the applicant is justified in assuming absence within the site. The surrounding landscape does support this declining species and the proposed site should provide landscape enhancements to encourage dormice.

This site sits well-within the zone of likely Bechstein's bat occurrence, and the well-wooded character of the surrounding landscape is likely to support a good range of bat species. Automated and walked transect bat surveys carried out during 2021 recorded regular activity by a small number of bat species across the site. There is no evidence to suggest that the site is particularly important to local bat species and it does not appear to support numbers of mouse-eared bat species such as Bechstein's Bat.

Little detail is presented on ecological mitigation, compensation and enhancement. The proposal will remove most of the existing semi-natural vegetation and landscaping proposal replace this with a standard mix of ornamental shrub species. Species included within the landscaping plan include two species of *Cotoneaster*. One of these, *Cotoneaster horizontalis*, is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act: it is a highly invasive species and should not be used in proximity to high-value habitats such as ancient woodland. Native plantings and seeded grassland are restricted to the southernmost boundary, predominantly within Highways land. I would request that a more imaginative, native-led landscaping scheme is proposed that reflects the surrounding landscape and seeks to provide meaningful enhancements to the local ecological network. Expanses of amenity grassland that require regular mowing are a missed opportunity for biodiversity: wildflower-rich grasslands are a more cost-effective solution, require minimal management, will provide demonstrable benefits for biodiversity and will provide colour and interest throughout the year. Similarly, there are numerous native shrub/dwarf shrub species that could be used: these would be suited to the local landscape and soils.

The additional ecological information is welcome, in that it provides clarity on the status of certain protected species. The submission so far includes no detailed information

on ecological mitigation, compensation or enhancement. On this basis, I would request that at least an outline ecological mitigation and enhancement strategy is provided prior to determination.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Tristan

Tristan Norton

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