

APP/21/00647

Land south of The Mallards and west of Langstone Road. (Part of Southmere field). Outline application for 65 dwellings on 2.91 hectares.

There are objections to this application from Langstone Harbour Board, Chichester Harbour Conservancy, and HBC's Landscape Architect, plus serious reservations expressed by the County Ecologist and the Conservation Officer. When these are added to the history and heritage of the field it is clear that the proposal by Persimmon would cause substantial harm to Langstone.

History of the Site– The Conservation Officer makes it clear that development on Southmere field would have a detrimental impact on the Mill Lane Conservation Area setting, which provides 'a visual transition from the built-up area (The Mallards etc.) to a more rural setting'. If you examine the historical evidence, you can see that the Mill Lane CA connects historically with Southmere, the Victorian farmhouse on the north side of the field. This farmhouse was built by William Clarke c.1892 on the site of the C18 century Langstone Farm. The 1842 Tithe Map shows the historic meadow as 'Mill Field' and William Clarke was the miller, who inherited Langstone Mill, then situated in what is now the Mill Lane Conservation Area. Thus, the farmhouse, the field and the mill were inextricably linked and are an important part of Langstone's history and heritage.(See attached map.)The mill race and mill house can still be seen at the west end of Mill Lane.

The Chairman of the **Hampshire Bat Group** has written an outstanding letter of objection in which he suggests that Southmere field, with its stream corridor, and its status as a Secondary Support Area for Brent Geese and Waders, **would be ideal as mitigation for other allocated local housing sites**. He is in the process of identifying the bat species that forage around the edge of the field, using a static detector, and has already found the extremely rare, highly protected Western Barbastelle on several occasions.

I have lived in Langstone for over fifty years and know that the field has never been ploughed in that time. It is also free of pesticides, which means there are more insects for the bats to feed on.

The County Ecologist importantly states that 'the site's biodiversity value lies primarily in its importance as an area of open green space situated in close proximity to the designated coastal/marine habitats of Chichester & Langstone Harbours. The site is part of an arc of greenspace linking the coastal fringes of Langstone Harbour between Farlington and Emsworth, comprising parcels of farmland, permanent grassland and other non-developed land. The site clearly has value as part of the wider network of supporting habitats (Functionally Linked Land) used by bird species associated with the Solent Special Protection Areas (SPA) and its loss would potentially remove a valuable stepping-stone or alternative habitat between

the more extensive areas of supporting habitat to the east and west. In these respects, I consider that my comments chime with those of your Landscape Officer.'

Clearly, because of the meadow's location between two designated areas it would not be possible to mitigate satisfactorily for its loss. Also, as stated by the **HBC Nutrient Team**, it would not be possible to use Warblington as a Nitrates Neutrality mitigation area, as Southmere is not an allocated housing site.

Mill Lane Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan.

The appraisal, written by Peter Fellows, states at **4.2.2.** 'Southmere is separated from the conservation area by a well-defined urban edge comprising a mix of brick wall and boundary fencing/planting. These adjacent open areas form an important component of the setting for the conservation area.' **6.1.** 'Views into and out of the Conservation Area add to the character of the area.'

I agree with this view that the whole field is the setting of the Conservation Area, the value of which has been downplayed by Persimmon.

Housing Density and Flood Risk. The proposal is for 65 houses on 2.91 hectares (7 acres) of what is a 9-acre field. This density of 22 dwellings per acre (based on gross site area) is a reduced plan, as the flood risk assessment (plan attached) illustrates that the applicant could not build on the southern three acres. I understand that Persimmon originally hoped to build some houses south of the gas main, as well as to the north of it but was foiled due to the flood risk.

Offering three acres of this Grade One agricultural land as public open space is of no overall value ecologically, as it would frighten off the endangered curlews and other waders and wildlife that frequent Southmere as a high tide roost, where they are undisturbed by humans, dogs, noise and light pollution etc. Building on the field will simply destroy the whole of it, as many of these rarer creatures would abandon it altogether. And as a result, a nine-acre field currently used by Warblington Castle Farm for a valuable hay crop, would be lost.

The required housing density is a minimum of 35 dwellings per hectare in the current HBC local plan and 40 dph in the emerging Local Plan. 22 dph would not maximise the use of this 7-acre site; therefore, the application does not appear to comply with HBC's Housing Density Policy and should be refused.

Covenant – In 1980 the owner of Southmere farmhouse, in agreement with Havant Borough Council, promised not to build residential accommodation on Southmere field. There is no reason for that promise to be broken, as the field's character has not changed and the recent loss of 'Bosmere field' to a restaurant and hotel makes Southmere even more important as a green space.

Tourism – Page 11 of the Havant Core Strategy states that, "Access on and off the island presents a challenge". It goes on to say that it is because of the limitations of the road, that tourism provision has to be limited on the island. Tourism contributes to the wealth of the borough, providing over 4,000 jobs. Adding to the congestion on the A3023, especially in summer, will increasingly result in driving people elsewhere, to Havant's economic cost.

Traffic – This proposal would have a negative effect on the current plans for the regeneration of Hayling Island. Already there is a policy in place that does not permit new accesses onto Langstone Road unless linked to an allocated housing site. **Policy IN4 of the emerging plan picks out the A3023 for special treatment and states that there will be no intensification of existing accesses.**

Archaeology – I would point out that in 1970, when Langstone Road was widened, Roman Samian ware was found by a Hayling brickmaker along the eastern edge of the field, indicating some kind of path or road.

Sense of Place – The historic Southmere Field provides a carbon sink, helping to reduce pollution from carbon emissions. It is a visual amenity for the residents, with seasonal interest, and adds positively to their quality of life. It links Langstone Harbour SSSI with the Chichester AONB, creating a valuable wildlife corridor and a break from the urban sprawl of Havant, thus allowing the two Conservation Areas in Langstone to remain separate and distinctive places for residents and visitors alike. It is not an allocated housing site and should remain undeveloped.

Attachments include a map from 1870; an aerial photo showing that Southmere is between designated sites; a photo of water gushing out of the field adjacent to Southmere field and across footpath 51b; the southern end of the field, already subject to flooding and Southmere in the 1930s, showing the hay cutting which continues to this day.



Southmoor
Nature Reserve

Langstone

Langstone Meadows











Ordnance Survey County Series, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, 1870

