

APP/16/01036 | Construction of coffee unit (Class A3). | Langstone Gate, Solent Road, Havant, PO9 1TR 16.1899

Thankyou for consulting me on this application.

The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report – Protected Species Assessment (Lizard Landscape Design, September 2016) and Water Vole Survey report (Lizard Landscape Design, August 2016).

Consultation with the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) would have identified the presence of numerous recent records of water vole from locations much closer than the record cited in the Ecological Appraisal (330m south). In fact, there are records all along the Langbrook Stream which forms the western site boundary. In this case it is rendered slightly less relevant due to the fact that water vole presence was confirmed by the ecologist, but this does illustrate why it is necessary to consult the local biological records centre (rather than e.g. online sources such as NBN gateway) as the most up to date source of local data.

Overall, the site is unremarkable and comprises expanses of hardstanding, amenity grassland and planted trees and shrubs and a small part-modified stream to the east. The site offers minimal potential for supporting protected or notable species, aside from water voles. I am content that water voles, and impacts to the stream habitat, are the only substantive ecological issues here. The water vole is one of the UK's most threatened mammal species and small populations such as this one in central Havant are of the highest local importance.

The proposal will not result in direct impacts to the watercourse and therefore direct impacts to water voles or their habitat is considered highly unlikely. I am content to concur with this and therefore it remains to determine whether indirect impacts may occur both during and after construction: this is not really explored in depth within the ecological submissions.

The viability of subterranean burrows may be affected by any excavations/piling/breaking works during construction. Is it possible to seek clarification as to the extent to which such works are necessary?

I would also be concerned with any impacts to water quality in the stream. Any discharge into the watercourse could impact water quality (e.g. chemistry, turbidity) which may in response impact vegetation and water voles. I cannot see any details on drainage.

Similarly, the presence of a take-away facility has the potential to result in e.g. litter being thrown/blown into the stream (as happens routinely adjacent to other such facilities nearby). It would be useful to provide some degree of buffering to the stream channel (e.g. through native low shrub/tall herbaceous plantings) to help prevent such instances. The presence of food waste stuffs may also attract brown rats which may be a potential issue for resident water voles. One would presume that facilities such as this will need to provide a strategy for site management/waste management through planning and it would be prudent for this to include measures to avoid impacts to water voles and their habitat.

If you are minded to grant permission can I suggest that a detailed ecological mitigation and enhancement strategy is secured by condition – such a document can be a mechanism whereby the site managers have responsibility for ensuring that impacts are, and continue to be, avoided.

Prior to the commencement of any development activities, a detailed Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy shall be submitted for approval to the Local Planning Authority. This strategy shall be informed by the recommendations detailed within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report – Protected Species Assessment (Lizard Landscape Design, September 2016) and Water Vole Survey report (Lizard Landscape Design, August 2016) unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall then proceed in strict accordance with any agreed strategy. Reason: to provide ecological protection and enhancement in accordance with the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, NPPF, NERC Act 2006 and Policy CS 11 of the Havant Borough Core Strategy March 2011.

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

Kind regards,

Tristan

Tristan Norton

**Senior Ecologist
Ecology Team**