

APP/21/00647 Land south of The Mallards and west of Langstone Road, Havant

Dear Adrian,

APP/21/00647 | Outline (all matters reserved except for access) application comprising 65no. dwellings with access from The Mallards, together with car parking, landscaping, electrical substation, public open space and associated work. | Land south of The Mallards and west of Langstone Road, Havant 21.0853

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

The application is accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment, a Biodiversity & Mitigation Plan, and a Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (all ECOSA, July 2021). The site comprises a large field of poor semi-improved grassland with part-vegetated boundaries including a mature tree line to the west where a poplar plantation is present. The site is situated within the village of Langstone and forms a significant area of greenspace within the village.

A series of ecological surveys carried out in 2020 have recorded a good assemblage of bat species within the site, including a record of Greater horseshoe bat, an extremely rare species in Hampshire. Whilst the site is not likely to support roosting bats (although several trees do exhibit potential roosting features), the site is clearly a valuable foraging/commuting resource for local bat species. The presence of Greater horseshoe bat is not discussed in any detail within the submitted reports: this is, as far as I am aware, the first published record of this species in Havant borough and further exploration and discussion of this important record is required. This species may be roosting in the surrounding area, and the application site (comprising grazed pasture) may provide a valuable foraging resource for this species.

Whilst the site is not of particular botanical value (it was surveyed in detail by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre in 2017 and judged to be improved grassland, albeit with some evidence of former unimproved coastal grassland), the site's biodiversity value lies primarily in its importance as an area of open greenspace 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 features in the Solent Waders & Brent Goose Strategy (SWBGS) as Site H27, classified as a Secondary Support Area due to recent records of Dark-bellied brent geese (up to 90 birds in January 2017) and Curlew (consistent pattern of several tens of birds between 2008-2018). 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.

No details are provided of proposed compensatory measures for the loss of SPA supporting habitat. A financial contribution has been acknowledged, but no details are provided of where this resource will be targeted. It is my view that further details of a bespoke compensatory solution are required in order for the proposal to be judged acceptable: the loss of a Secondary Support Area must be compensated. This should entail details of a specific site or sites where resources will be targeted, with details of specific measures to protect and enhance the wider SWBGS network and provide at least the same function to SPA birds as provided by the affected site. This information must be provided prior to determination.

The site also features on the Ecological Network map for Hampshire, in recognition of its role as a valuable area of undeveloped greenspace within the cluttered coastal plain of south-east Hampshire. Impacts to the wider ecological network should be considered in all planning submissions.

In summary, whilst the site is clearly not of highly significant ecological value in isolation, it does nevertheless form an integral part of the wider network of functionally linked land supporting the Solent SPAs. The site has also been shown to support Greater horseshoe bat and further information is required to explain this occurrence and its significance in terms of impacts to this site.

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 and designated nature conservation sites, which are material planning considerations. 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.

I hope the above is suitable – if you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

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