

Consultee Comments for Planning Application APP/21/00601

Application Summary

Application Number: APP/21/00601

Address: Land north of Solent Road (adjacent to Bosmere Medical Centre) Havant

Proposal: Proposed Portsmouth Water Headquarters building (Use Class E(g)(i) use) and new employment premises (Use Class B2.B8/E(g)(iii) use); widened access onto Solent Road; and associated access, car parking, landscaping and works; including the felling of 7No. trees the subject of TPO No.1801 in order to improve the access and allow for the development.

Case Officer: David Eaves

Consultee Details

Name: Mr Tristan Norton

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On Behalf Of: County Ecologist

Comments

Dear David,

APP/21/00601 | Proposed Portsmouth Water Headquarters building (Use Class E(g)(i) use) and new employment premises (Use Class B2.B8/E(g)(iii) use); widened access onto Solent Road; and associated access, car parking, landscaping and works; including the felling of 7No. trees the subject of TPO No.1801 in order to improve the access and allow for the development. | Land north of Solent Road (adjacent to Bosmere Medical Centre) Havant 21.0898

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

The application is accompanied by an Ecological Assessment (Ecology Solutions, April 2021). This report provides an update to previous survey and assessment works carried out in 2018-19.

The site comprises a large area of species-poor grassland with associated areas of taller herbaceous vegetation, boundary scrub and tall shrubs and trees. A tennis court is present in the sites north-eastern corner and a small watercourse, the Brockhampton Stream, runs along the northern and western boundaries. I am content that the site is of relatively limited ecological value overall, although clearly serves as a valuable area of undeveloped local greenspace.

The site is included within the Solent Waders & Brent Goose Strategy (SWBGS) as Site H11, a Low Use area that has been used by only two Oystercatchers in recent years. I would suspect that the generally unmanaged nature of the grassland at present is less suitable for wintering wader species, and that the site is unsuitable for supporting Dark-bellied brent geese. Nevertheless, the

site is included within the SWBGS and does provide land functionally-linked to the Solent Special Protection Areas and therefore mitigation for the loss of a Low Use site will be required. This is in the form of a financial contribution based on a per-hectare calculation as detailed within the published SWBGS Mitigation Guidelines.

Perhaps the most significant habitat on site is the Brockhampton Stream at the sites boundaries. I welcome the inclusion of a buffer zone alongside the stream and the proposals for this to comprise native grassland and some tree/shrub plantings. I cannot find the Landscape Specification referred to on the Soft Landscaping drawings (document 829.10.03 appears to be missing). I would very much like to review the proposed wildflower grassland specification. The details provided in the appended Biodiversity Net Gain assessment refer to twice-annual management of this grassland, which is suitable. I wonder whether retaining the existing grassland and implementing a suitable management regime would be more sustainable in the longer term, rather than attempting to create a new habitat. This would also avoid having to undertake any soil stripping/seeding works in close proximity to the watercourse. This may of course have implications for the Net Gain calculations. I am also a little unsure about the use of ornamental species such as Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*. The native plant is a scarce woodland species, and the non-native variety (which I suspect is being proposed here) has invasive tendencies. I would much prefer any more formal landscaping in proximity to the watercourse to comprise suitable native tree, shrub and herbaceous perennial species more suited to the local conditions. Sea-buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* also seems like an odd choice as this is also potentially invasive, to the detriment of native flora. Having formalised plantings beds within a few metres of the watercourse raises the potential for nutrients (from mulch) or chemicals (from spot treatment during establishment) to enter the watercourse and its buffer. Some further clarification on these matters would be welcome, and a more innovative native-led planting scheme would provide obvious biodiversity benefits.

I would also like to see incorporated enhancements in the built realm. There are as yet no firm details of proposed bird and bat boxes on new buildings. I would suggest that the new office buildings provide a ready opportunity for integral or wall-mounted nest boxes for Common swift as well as for bat roosting units. Further details are required.

The proposed lighting layout does appear to show minimal light spillage onto the watercourse and proposed buffer, although with areas of c.2-5lux spillage in some places. The preference would be to have no spillage onto the watercourse or its buffer. The ecology report states that light spillage onto boundary vegetation will be minimised and I would query whether the ecology report was produced following the production of the submitted lighting strategy.

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

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