

APP/16/00774 | Erection of 192 dwellings with associated parking, access, landscaping, and surface water drainage, pumping station and sub station. | Land north of Havant Road and west of Selangor Ave, Emsworth 16.1408

Thank you for consulting me on this application. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to you. Overall I have no overriding concerns with this proposal in terms of its ecological impact but consider that some additional information is required on the matter of impacts to off-site areas supporting wintering bird species.

The application is accompanied by an Extended Phase1 Habitat Survey (WYG, July 2016) and Wintering Bird Survey (WYG, July 2016) which provide a useful assessment of the site's ecological constraints. The habitats within the site are not especially rich, comprising agriculturally-improved grassland with poor species-diversity with boundary and internal hedging, none of which is considered to be 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations. Other habitat present are scrub and herbaceous vegetation.

In terms of protected species, the site supports a typical assemblage of bird species and a small number of slow-worms. No trees offering bat roosting potential were identified and the site is considered to offer moderate value bat foraging/commuting habitat.

The ecology report suggest that suitable reptile habitat will be situated in the north of the proposed site, and the submitted landscape plans do show a strip of semi-improved grassland running along the northern/western boundaries. I cannot see the proposed 0.6Ha reptile receptor area (if this is distinct from the proposed boundary buffer) on these plans, and the proposed receptor area (as per the WYG report) seems to be outside the red line boundary as per the latest landscape masterplan. Some clarification would be helpful.

I note that an updating badger survey is recommended and I agree that this is a sensible approach.

Overwintering birds

The site features as Site H21 within the Solent Waders & Brent Goose Strategy (SWBGS) 2010 and therefore constitutes supporting habitat for birds associated with the nearby Chichester & Langstone Harbours Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. H21 has never supported SPA birds, although the level of survey effort deployed has not been sufficiently comprehensive to allow the site to conclusively be 'removed' from the SWBGS – the site was essentially highlighted as a potential site for use by SPA birds but surveys for the 2010 strategy did not confirm this. Wintering bird surveys have been carried out in 2013 (by Aluco Ecology) and again in 2014/15 (by WYG) with no SPA birds recorded. It would seem that additional surveys are/have been underway although no results are made available. On the basis of information submitted so far it can be reasonably concluded that the fields within this site are not currently used and may indeed be unsuitable for use altogether – given the presence of internal hedging and livestock it is highly unlikely that brent geese in particular will occur and therefore the potential would be for grassland wader species such as curlew, lapwing, oystercatcher and golden plover. I am content that given

the level of survey effort deployed at this site over the years there seems minimal potential for SPA birds to occur – clearly any newly-completed surveys may amend this view.

Some fields to the south of the site are however used by SPA birds. SWBGS sites H22B, H23D and H23F situated immediately south of the application site have each supported SPA birds in the past and there is some indication from Natural England that recent records have been collected. These fields are larger than the application site and lack any internal hedging and so the presence, albeit irregular, of SPA bird species, is not surprising. Whilst it is unlikely that direct impacts would occur, given the distances between the application site and these fields, there may be an increase in recreational pressure which, if not managed, may result in impacts to SPA birds. I note that Natural England have requested some further information on the extent to which human access from the application site and into the fields to the south is already an issue. There are no formal rights of way between the two (as far as I can see) but informal access e.g. for dog-walking or just as short-cuts may occur and, consequently, become more intense post-development as 'desire-lines' become established. Some additional detail from the applicant would be useful here in order that the full potential implications of any future development can be understood. There may, depending on the proximity of development activities and the location of any birds using the fields to the south, be a need to mitigate the potential impacts of noise and visual disturbance during construction over the winter months.

Alongside any site-specific measures there will clearly need to be a contribution towards the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership in order to mitigate for the in-combination effects of increased recreational disturbance.

In summary, whilst I do not have any significant concerns there are several matters which require further clarification if they are to be acceptable.

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

Kind regards,

Tristan

Tristan Norton

**Senior Ecologist
Ecology Team**