

Dormouse statement - Plot 2 B8 distribution centre

Introduction

- 1.0 The presence of hazel dormice within the habitat surrounding the plot has been confirmed through survey work in late October 2015 and therefore it must be assumed that this species could occur in any dense woody vegetation, including bramble, in the vicinity. As such, an EPS licence will be required to carry out the removal and replacement of the defunct hedgerow at the front of the site, currently programmed for April/May 2016.
- 1.1 An EPS licence can only be granted if the development proposal is able to meet three tests:
1. *the consented operation must be for 'preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment'; (Regulation 53(2)(e))*
 2. *there must be 'no satisfactory alternative' (Regulation 53(9)(a)); and*
 3. *the action authorised 'will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range' (Regulation 53(9)(b)).*
- 1.2 In order to assist the local planning authority in assessing the first two points this brief statement has been prepared, drawing on information that was successfully used by Portsmouth City Council to obtain a previous EPS dormouse licence from Natural England (*their reference: 2014-456-EPS-MIT*) prior to commencing construction of the access link road.
- 1.3 The third issue is covered in the Ecology Report submitted to support the reserved matters application, and the response to this of the county ecologist is reproduced below:

'In order to assess the development against the third test, sufficient details must be available to show how killing/injury/disturbance of dormice will be avoided and how any loss or damage to habitat will be avoided or, if not avoided, compensated. In this case I am of the opinion that there is now sufficient evidence to demonstrate that dormouse impacts have been adequately considered: there is a clear process for avoiding/minimising habitat impacts and for ongoing management and monitoring of the site and we can have confidence that the third test can be met.'

Tristan Norton, HCC Senior Ecologist, 16th November 2015

'Other imperative reasons of overriding public interest (social & economic)'

- 2.0 Dunsbury Hill Farm (DHF) is one of the few pre-eminent sites in South Hampshire capable of delivering large scale employment floorspace across a range of commercial, manufacturing and logistics business types. At a national level, the NPPF published in March 2012 (after adoption of the HBC Core Strategy) supports the notion that planning should facilitate and encourage growth.
- 2.1 The role of DHF in the region should also be analysed. As far back as 2008, a logistics study was carried out for PUSH that identified an outstanding requirement for over 70,000m² of distribution space largely from major employers locally wishing to expand and remain in the area. The report stated that DHF was a prime location for such floorspace as with the exception of DHF, the market in South Hampshire was and continues to be constrained by a shortage of available sites and development opportunities. At a local level the Havant Core Strategy, adopted in March 2011, identifies DHF in Policy CS18 as a key strategic site that could provide approximately a third of all new employment floorspace required within Havant during the plan period to 2026.
- 2.1 The importance of DHF on a social and economic level to the local area cannot be underestimated. This has been crystallised by the current reserved matters application for Fat Face, a major local employer who wish to move to DHF to enable the continued expansion of their international lifestyle clothing brand business. Without DHF, this company and all associated jobs and supply chain benefits would be lost to the region.

'No satisfactory alternative'

- 3.0 Section 2 above details how DHF is the key strategic employment site within the region that has helped to secure a key retailer and their expansion plans, with no realistic alternative available. In terms of the specific work requiring a licence, the scheme will result in the loss of a defunct hedgerow containing mainly thick bramble but also hawthorn, small stands of goat willow, English oak and bracken at either end that runs along the northern boundary of the site and no longer provides connective habitat to the woodland on the east side due to the access points into Plot 2.
- 3.1 The hedgerow will be replanted in a location immediately north of the current hedge, using a diverse range of native hedgerow species and trees. Where possible hawthorn and young standard trees within the current hedgerow will be retained and translocated. Additional buffer planting within the plot (predominantly along the southern and eastern boundaries) will help to improve dormice habitat by including species that dormice rely on for feeding, nesting and hibernating, such as hazel, bramble, honeysuckle, blackthorn and

elder. Ten dormouse boxes will be erected within Cherry Tree Row woodland SINC to provide additional nesting sites.

- 3.2 The reason the existing hedgerow cannot remain in situ is for a combination of factors including the topography of the DHF site, the necessity to provide vehicular access for fire trucks around the entire perimeter of the building and the height parameters set by the hybrid permission.
- 3.3 There is approximately a 7 metre drop from the access road to the southern edge of Plot 2. In order to achieve an appropriate gradient for into the service yard, the site must therefore be raised. This also means the building has to be set back within the plot with the car park area at the front to provide an acceptable slope down to the fully accessibly loading bay area. The necessity to maintain the emergency access route at the rear means the building cannot however sit at the very back of the site.
- 3.3 The obvious alternative would be to reduce the footprint and increase the height of the building, therefore enabling the defunct hedgerow to be retained. Aside from the commercial and operational issues with this, it is not possible due to the height restriction set by the parameter plan attached to the hybrid permission. The apex of the curved roof on this scheme already sits fractionally above this limit and any further increase would start to impinge on views into the site from key visual receptors. By removing the defunct hedgerow and re-planting with more appropriate species, it is considered the most workable balance has been struck.

Summary

- 4.0 The grant of a hybrid planning permission for DHF certified the importance of the site to the local and regional economy. Since PCC as landowner commenced construction of the access link road, partly funded by the Solent LEP, negotiations with a major international retailer have resulted in DHF providing a location for their expanding business.
- 4.1 To facilitate this development it is necessary to remove a defunct hedgerow at the front of the site, before replanting with a more appropriate mix of native species that will provide improved feeding habitat for dormice, alongside other enhancements and buffer planting. It is considered that the proposed scheme meets all three tests in order to obtain the required EPS licence for the temporary loss of habitat.