

APP/15/00228 41-49 - Frogmore Lane, Waterloooville, PO8 9QN – Ecology Ref: 15.0378

Thank you for sending through this revised ecology report (Reptile Survey Report) (Brian Masterton Wildlife, May 2015).

I have reviewed the submitted information with specific reference to the primary concern raised by my colleague Tristan Norton in our last consultation response. This was primarily concerned with the suitability of the proposed reptile receptor site at the Alver Valley Nature Reserve, Gosport. The concerns are summarised as follows:

- further details of the proposed receptor site are required; and
- the agreement of the third party are required; if the LPA is to have confidence that animals will be translocated to a suitable site.

I note that the revised report provides useful information in addressing the first of these queries and the information is gratefully received. Unfortunately and in summary, this information appears to demonstrate that the Alver Valley site is not suitable for the reptile population proposed for translocation. This is assessed with reference to the Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland (1998) guidance *Evaluating local mitigation/translocation programmes: maintaining best practice and lawful standards* (cited by the Reptile Survey Report) and as described in (Beta) *Standing advice for local planning authorities who need to assess the impacts of development on reptiles* (Natural England's standing advice for local planning authorities who need to assess planning applications that affect reptiles).

At this stage, with the information available, I cannot recommend that impacts on protected species have been sufficiently addressed.

The Reptile Survey Report (Section 2.1.3) confirms that initial surveys (no specific details provided) have identified a slow worm population at the proposed receptor site. As set out in Standing Advice and HGBI Guidance (cited by the Reptile Survey Report), sites with existing populations of the species to be moved are not suitable as translocation sites, as fundamentally translocation should result in no net loss of sites.

It is accepted that this requirement may not apply with very low numbers of individuals being moved where they would not be able to form a viable breeding population on their own, but in this case the report provided describes that survey of the development site (Section 3.1.4) "indicates that a viable colony exists within the two gardens". This conflict has not been addressed by the report, which identifies the existing population of slow worms to be indicative of the suitability of the receptor site and does not consider net loss.

Section 4.1.1 identifies that the proposed receptor site is "suitable for an additional population of slow worms" but no supporting evidence for this increased population (or limits on the current population) has been provided and no enhancement of the proposed receptor site has been committed to. Section 5.1.5 suggests that "consideration will be given to the creation of hibernaculum within the receptor site and precisely when the slow worms enter their winter hibernation" but this is not considered to be sufficient for translocation to a site with an existing current population assessed on undisclosed survey effort.

As a result, the use of this site as a receptor is considered to result in the currently unjustified net loss of sites and the suitability of the proposed receptor site to support the additional slow worms has not been demonstrated.

The query relating to agreements for managing a suitable receptor site will need to be addressed and remains outstanding, as (set out in Natural England's standing advice for local planning authorities), the planning authority is responsible for assessing the mitigation plan for effectiveness; reliability; timing; delivery; and duration as well as the difference it would make to the predicted impacts of the development. There may also be other points of query relating to any proposed translocation activity, once the fundamental issues identified here have been addressed.

Please do contact me if you need any further information.

Kind regards

Owen

Please note that this advice is given in accordance with the Service Level Agreement that has been signed between Hampshire County Council and your Council. The comments within this letter are expressed as a professional view provided to Havant Borough Council and should not, therefore, be interpreted as those of Hampshire County Council.

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