

[REDACTED]

Sent: 31 July 2013 15:08
To: Daphney Haywood
Cc: Planning and Development Shared Mailbox; Havant Auto-Reply
Subject: APP/13/00639 Land north of Station Road/East of Furniss Way, West Town, Hayling Island 13.0759.

Dear Daphney,

APP/13/00639 Outline Planning permission for mixed-used development comprising up to 60 dwellings and 1,250 sq.m of light-industrial accommodation (Use Class B1) Land north of Station Road/East of Furniss Way, West Town, Hayling Island 13.0759.

Thank you for consulting me on this application. Whilst the application documents are of a good standard, recent evidence has come to light which questions the assessment of the site's importance to overwintering birds and therefore I consider that additional bird survey works is required.

The application is accompanied by an 'Ecological Assessment' report (Tyler Grange, June 2013) which provides details of the current ecological value of the application site.

Application Site - Habitats and Protected Species (Excluding Overwintering Birds)

The site comprises predominantly arable farmland which has been utilised for both grassland and crop production (various kinds) in recent years. A small parcel of unmanaged, rough grassland habitat forms a small finger of land to the south-west. The site is bordered by structured boundary vegetation to the west and south-west, comprising hedgerows and treelines presumably of planted origin. The site also borders several dry drainage ditches.

The vegetation communities present within and immediately adjacent to the site are common and widespread and the site would appear to offer little potential for supporting populations of legally-protected species. As a result, the site is considered to be of negligible ecological value.

In general, I am content with the ecological assessment of the application site itself and do not consider that any additional ecological survey works are required at this stage. I would state that I consider there to be a reasonable likelihood of common reptile species occurring within the rough grassland to the south and welcome the provision of vegetation manipulation and capture prior to soil stripping. I would note however that should any animals be encountered, these must be accommodated either within the application site or within a suitable off-site receptor area: encouraging animals onto third-party land (adjacent gardens are suggested) is not an acceptable strategy. I would therefore request that a more detailed reptile mitigation strategy (or better, a site-wide ecological mitigation and enhancement strategy document) is provided within any future Reserved Matters application and secured via a suitable-worded condition such as:

Prior to commencement, a detailed strategy of ecological mitigation, compensation and enhancements to be incorporated into the development shall be submitted for written approval to the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall include but not necessarily be restricted to: timing of vegetation works, details of protected species mitigation (location, timing), results of updating surveys (where required), location and composition of new plantings, location and type of mitigation features e.g. bat and bird boxes, details of ongoing management of mitigation features. Development shall subsequently proceed in accordance with any such approved details. Reason: to enhance biodiversity in accordance with NPPF, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and Policy CS11 of the March 2011 Havant Borough Core Strategy.

Designated Sites and Impacts to Birds

The application site falls within the locally-designated Saltmarsh Lane East Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The ecology report states that the SINC designation is recent (was not highlighted within a 2012 data search from Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC)), although there is a HBIC vegetation survey report of the application site dated September 2009 which makes reference to the SINC designation and the site (H34E) was classified as of importance in the 2002 Solent Brent Goose Strategy and subsequently given the SINC designation thereafter.

In any case, the site is a SINC and is designated for the presence of brent geese: the issue is whether that designation is justified and should present a constraint to the proposal. In order to address this issue, the application is accompanied by bird survey data covering two full winters – 2011/12 and 2012/13 – in recognition of the fact that the existing data for the site (arising from the 2010 SWBGS) is incomplete. Many potentially-important sites for overwintering birds are classified as 'uncertain' within the 2010 strategy, leading to a misunderstanding of these sites' values. The 'uncertain' category reflects the fact that either too few surveys were undertaken or that surveys were not spread appropriately through the recognised survey season: it is perfectly possible for a site supporting large numbers of birds (and thus clearly of importance) on one or a few occasions to be placed in the 'uncertain' category or for a site not used at all to be 'uncertain' as too few surveys were undertaken.

The survey data presented within the application (see Appendix 2 of ecology report) demonstrate that the site was not used at all by either brent geese or waders during the survey dates over the two winters. It would thus appear on the basis of evidence that the application site should be classified as 'no recorded use' rather than 'uncertain' and that the SINC designation should be removed.

However, it has recently come to my attention that a local resident has been collecting evidence of overwintering bird species on the application site for a number of years. This individual has been providing survey results to the RSPB – these include dated photographic and written evidence demonstrating that significant flocks of brent geese, and numbers of waders, have been present within the application site in recent years: the surveys covered the winters of 2011/12 and 2012/13 and there are some earlier records. It is apparent that birds are responding to local farming regimes and, when a crop is not suitable, the birds use other nearby sites. I am also aware that the applicant cannot be expected to have surveyed the site every day over two years and so it is entirely possible for birds to occur on days when no survey are planned – this is unfortunately a risk inherent in survey sampling.

There is clearly the need for further works on the use of the application site by overwintering birds and, as a first resort, I would recommend that the applicant tries to obtain any outstanding survey data. I would expect additional bird survey works to be undertaken this coming winter and, depending on the results of these surveys, an appropriate mitigation strategy to be provided.

Other Comments

I welcome the recommendations for increasing the site's ecological value through the use of new plantings. The existing and new swales and new attenuation pond provide excellent opportunities for increasing species diversity. Similarly, there are excellent opportunities for providing other enhancement features such as bat and bird boxes both within the fabric of new buildings and on suitable on-site trees. Details of these should be provided within any site-wide mitigation strategy.

It is disappointing to see that the proposals contain essentially no open-space provision. On-site open space has an important role to play both in soaking up a proportion of recreational pressure

locally (and thus mitigating to a degree any impacts to European designated sites) as well as contributing to the overall green infrastructure of the local area.

Summary

In summary, I consider that further bird survey works are undertaken in order to establish the usage of the application site by overwintering birds. This will then allow a suitable mitigation strategy to be devised. I recommend that this information is provided by the applicant prior to further determination of this application.

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

Kind regards,

Tristan

Tristan Norton

Senior Ecologist

Ecology Team

Strategic Environmental Delivery Group,
Economy, Transport and Environment Department
Hampshire County Council
Elizabeth II Court West
The Castle, Winchester
Hampshire SO23 8UD
Direct Line: 01962 832335
Mobile: 07885 594878

E-mail: tristan.norton@hants.gov.uk; www.hants.gov.uk/biodiversity

Please consider the environment before printing this email.

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. These comments are expressed as a professional view provided to Havant Borough Council and should not, therefore, be interpreted as those of Hampshire County Council.