

From: Norton, Tristan [<mailto:Tristan.Norton@hants.gov.uk>]
Sent: 03 October 2013 13:27
To: Daphney Haywood
Cc: Planning and Development Shared Mailbox
Subject: APP/13/00804 Woodcroft Farm Development Site, Woodcroft Lane, Waterlooville. 13.1080

Dear Daphney,

APP/13/00804 Development of 293 residential units comprising of 6 x one bedroom, 115 x 2 bedroom, 132 x three bedroom and 40 x four bedroom, retention of existing farmhouse, new access road from Eagle Avenue, internal access roads, associated car parking, open space and landscaping and including works to trees under TPO 1931. Woodcroft Farm Development Site, Woodcroft Lane, Waterlooville. 13.1080

Thank you for consulting me on this application. Please accept my apologies for the delay in getting this response to you – I hope this has not caused any difficulties.

The application is accompanied by a 'Woodcroft Farm, Wecock Ecological Assessment Report' (WSP, May 2013) which provides (within the main report and several appendices) a comprehensive assessment of the site's current ecological value. The assessment includes details of a suite of Phase 1 and Phase 2 habitat and protected species surveys undertaken during 2011 and 2012. There is subsequently a large amount of complex data and other information and I hope that I have been able to extract the key issues.

The site essentially comprises a series of species-poor improved grass pastures surrounded by tall boundary hedgerows and trees. A collection of various agricultural buildings is present within the west of the site.

Ecologically, the key findings are:

- Numerous boundary trees offering bat and bird roosting/nesting habitat;
- Species-rich hedgerows, half classified as 'Important' under Hedgerow Regulations;
- Confirmed bat roosts within two buildings;
- Confirmed bat roost within three trees;
- Badger setts close to site boundaries;
- Range of nesting bird species present.

The trees within and adjacent to the application site have been thoroughly assessed and I am content that trees with ecological value have been identified. Similarly, the hedgerows on site have been subject to detailed survey and a number of them have been identified as qualifying as 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations 1996.

Whilst I am generally content that the bat surveys have been undertaken to a high professional standard I do have a small number of queries and request that some additional information is provided:

I would suggest that further clarification is required in respect to the identity of the long-eared and mouse-eared bat species recorded at the site. There are two long-eared bat species (brown and grey) and whereas the brown long-eared is very common and widespread, the grey long-eared is extremely rare and localised and is of the highest conservation importance. The bat survey report (Section 3.3.1) states that the long-eared species was 'unconfirmed'. Could I suggest that clarification is sought on this issue as clearly the importance of the site is dependent upon the correct identification. I should add that it is highly likely that any long-eared roost in this locality will relate to the brown long-eared.

Similarly, the manual and automated bat surveys recorded a number of mouse-eared (*Myotis*) bats throughout the site. There are at least six *Myotis* species in the UK (about one third of British species) and therefore effort should be made to identify which of these species is present on site. In this case we know there are significant maternity roosts of the rare Bechstein's bat within 1.5km of the site and therefore there is a real possibility that this species may occur here (it appears that this wider landscape is important for the species). Without any attempt to identify the species I cannot see how it is possible to make a robust assessment of the implications of any development at this site. I would welcome clarification of this issue – if digital recordings have been made it should be relatively straightforward to make a specific ID using software such as Batsound, Analook or Sonobat.

There is also the issue of whether a development of this scale would result in recreational impacts to nearby European designated sites such as Portsmouth Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA). I would suggest that the site is sufficiently distant (and in proximity to numerous alternative greenspaces) for there to be much-reduced potential for recreational impacts to coastal areas although I would strongly advise that Natural England are consulted on this matter.

These issues aside, I am content that the likely ecological implications have been assessed realistically and that the proposed mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures detailed within Section 6 of the main ecology report are sound (although will require firming up). Therefore (subsequent to the additional information above being provided) if you are minded to grant permission, could I suggest that any mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures are secured via a suitably-worded planning condition, such as:

Prior to commencement, an Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Scheme for the site shall be submitted for written approval to the Local Planning Authority. This Scheme should include (but not necessarily be restricted to): location, extent and timing of vegetation loss; protected species protection (including results of any updating surveys, details of lighting strategy methods

to prevent harm or disturbance); location, extent and composition of habitat creation; location and ongoing management of mitigation features such as new habitat, ponds, bat and bird boxes. Development shall subsequently proceed in accordance with any such approved Plan, with all biodiversity mitigation enhancement features permanently retained in accordance with the approved Plan. Reason: to conserve and enhance biodiversity in accordance with local and national planning policy.

I trust the above is suitable – if you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Tristan

Tristan Norton

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