

OBJECTION FROM SAVE OUR ISLAND
APP/25/00071

This application is from a housing developer who is proposing to build a large housing complex at Campdown. In order to gain approval for the development, a major wildlife mitigation site must be found to move the birdlife somewhere else.

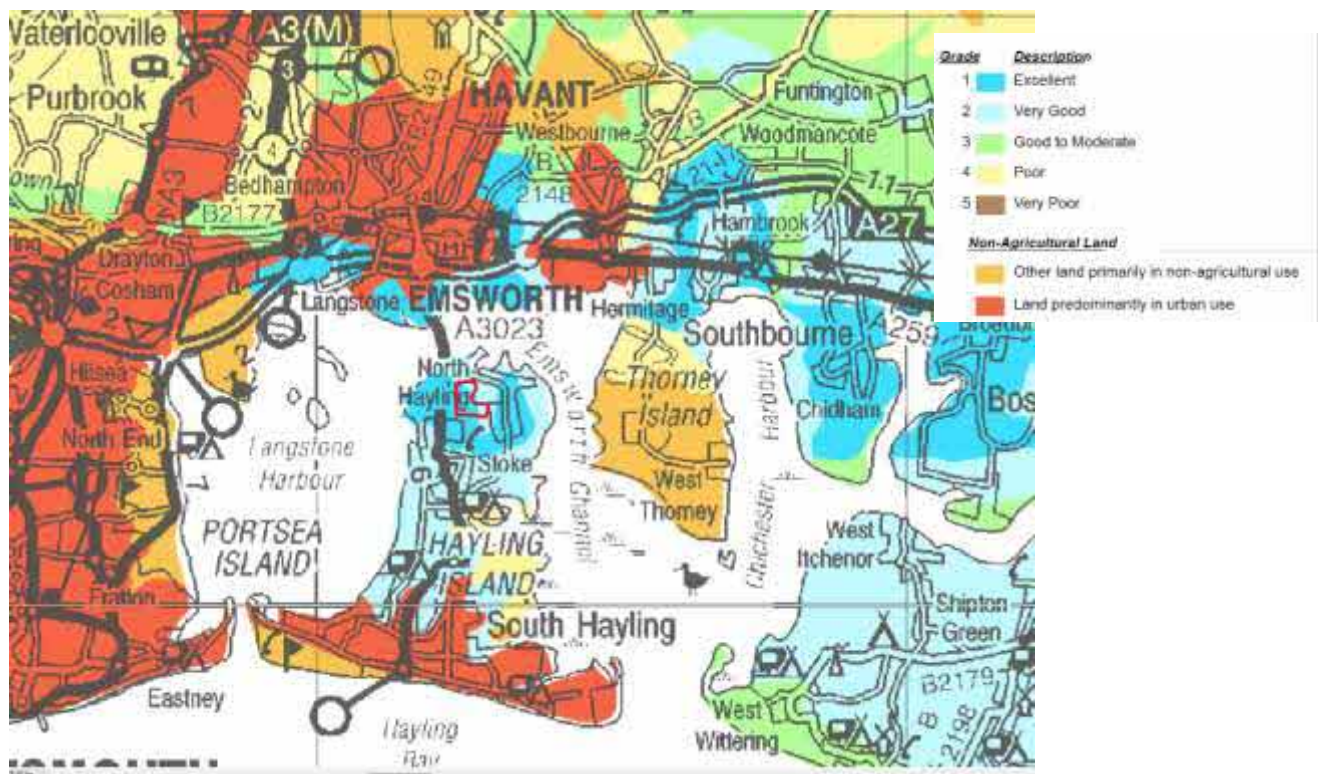
You may remember the first Campdown plan [APP/23/00507] was to claim a large coastal area of Northney Farm and pay for a bund sea wall complex to protect Northney Farm as part of the mitigation project. Natural England, HBC and the Conservancy objected to this, and the application was withdrawn. [REDACTED]

This new application supports a new mitigation site on the same Northney Farm, this time just to the west of the farm complex. This time the application does not reference the wish to build a new sea defence barrier to the west of the farm, but we think it is realistic to assume that the farm owners will be paid an appropriate fee to come forward with a second proposal to resubmit an application for a sea defence to the west of the farm, in line with the original intent.

Looking at the new application, it raises issues which are not answered in the presentation made:

The subject fields are categorised by the Government as EXCELLENT farmland. This is a rare high level, and the fields form part of the EXCELLENT areas from Hayling Island to South Chichester. In fact this area is the best arable land south of London. A new initiative from the Government – Defra's Land Use Consultation – to study future Land Usage already states that the best land across the country should be reserved for food production. This area has historically been used for food production. You can see from Map 1 (provided by Natural England) that the fields in question sit right in the middle of the highest valued land on Hayling Island. The fields in question are bordered in red on the map below. The area is also a Core Site for wading birds and is an internationally recognised site for Brent Geese. Part of the reason like a large part of Hayling Island for overwintering Geese is in part because it is intensively farmed, providing food with winter corn etc.

MAP1



Also from Natural England, Map 2 shows the subject field H60D is a core area of Solent Waders and Brent Geese – and H60F – a candidate site for the same.

MAP 2



Using these fields for mitigation elsewhere is an attempt at double-counting as the fields are already a core site. At this point it is important to understand the basic issue that the developer is looking to mitigate. At the development site in Campdown, it is the loss of Curlew habitat they are looking to move to Hayling. However, the fields at Hayling are not a natural habitat for Curlews, being a farmed area and perfect for over-wintering Brent Geese.

This proposal is to stop farming this highest quality arable land, which has happily served both essential food production and the over-wintering Brent Geese for generations and turn it over to grass with mud scrapes in an effort to attract Curlew, a proposal which may or may not work, and could have a detrimental impact on the resident birdlife. It is not only waterbirds that live here now. Hayling Island is also home to Corvidae, Pigeons and countless small species for whom the existing environment is perfect.

In addition, the assumption that this site can absorb a much higher density of wading birds just because they have been told to go there has no scientific precedent that we can find. Birdlife finds its own environmental equilibrium based on the available sustenance. There is no proof of concept provided in this application.

The purpose of mitigation is to provide additional wildlife provision, not to double-count existing refuges, with probably a huge (millions) financial incentive to the landowners.

The EA and Natural England et al should be evaluating this kind of inappropriate application with a keen eye on environmental sustainability.

This application does not conform to Government advice and fails to provide an environmental solution, and consequently must be rejected.