

Dear Denise,

APP/25/00335 | Proposed change of use of amenity space associated with the Public Service Plaza to outside play area for children attending Growing Places Nursery. Associated erection of a boundary fence with 1No pedestrian gate and 1No double gate to allow grass cutting. | Public Service Plaza, Civic Centre Road, Havant, PO9 2AX

Thank you for consulting me on this application. Following on from our discussion this morning, I can confirm that the proposed hedging is not necessary in order to meet biodiversity obligations. On the matter of mandatory BNG, the inclusion of new hedging within the existing grassland would very likely require a recalculation of habitat impacts, required before planning permission could be granted. The current proposal has been agreed as being exempt from BNG due to the minimal area of grassland habitat affected. The installation of new hedging – whilst obviously a good idea in general – would necessitate the removal of an area of grassland that would tip the proposal over the de minimis BNG threshold (replacing neutral grassland with planted hedging). The hedging, situated adjacent to the proposed security fencing, would be of some biodiversity benefit but its value would be limited by its location alongside the proposed play area. For example, bird species would be unlikely to nest within a hedge in such a location.

The use of climbing plants on the new fencing would potentially be of biodiversity benefit, mostly for pollinating insects. I have no particular preference in terms of species, although native climbers such as Traveller's Joy *Clematis vitalba* and Hops *Humulus lupulus* would be welcome.

The most valuable measure for biodiversity here would be to avoid over eager cutting of the grass within the play area. There is abundant scientific evidence to demonstrate the benefits of young children being exposed to biodiverse places, and therefore a relaxed attitude to grass height would be of benefit to children and wildlife.

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

Kind regards,

Tristan

Tristan Norton

Principal Ecologist | E: tristan.norton@havant.gov.uk