

Dear Steve,

APP/25/01004 | Hampshire County Council Consultation for Demolition of the existing footbridge and construction of a replacement footbridge.| Havant Footbridge, Havant, PO9 2AB

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this application

I have reviewed the submitted Ecological Appraisal and Baseline Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (HCC Ecology Team, October 2025) and Statutory Biodiversity Metric (HCC Ecology Team, October 2025). The site comprises an existing pedestrian footbridge and associated habitats such as modified grassland, hard surfacing, several large trees, Bramble scrub, sparsely vegetated land, and ornamental plantings. I am content that the site is of relatively limited ecological value overall in terms of habitats and that overall loss of habitat is limited. The site is considered to offer limited potential for supporting protected and notable species, albeit with some potential for widespread 'garden' nesting bird species and common reptiles to be present. There is also some bat foraging and commuting habitat. Overall, impacts to protected and notable species are considered unlikely or minimal, and no additional survey information is necessary. I concur with this assessment.

The loss of several large trees within the north-eastern corner of Havant Park is unfortunate. The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment (HCC Arboriculture, November 2025) describes the tree loss as a Major Impact at the local level. It is for the Council's Tree Officer to determine the suitability of any proposed compensatory plantings. I would request that any compensatory plantings are within the general locality of Havant Park as far as possible – it would be highly undesirable for tree replacements not be beneficial to users of the park – and seek to maintain or enhance overall ecological connectivity. Further information has been provided (DRAFT Mitigation planting for tree loss, HCC Arboriculture, December 2025) on the proposed compensatory measures for some tree loss on Network Rail land north of Havant Station, plus some details of suggested tree species replacements for Havant Borough Council losses. Again, the Council's Tree Officer will be able to provide expert advice on the acceptability of these proposed measures. There may be opportunities for tree replacements on HBC land elsewhere, but again the ideal would be for any losses to be mitigated locally rather than at some distant location. Tree aftercare will be essential.

The Biodiversity Net Gain assessment has been undertaken correctly. The submitted BNG metric calculations conclude that the proposed development will result in a habitat unit deficit of -1.06 which equates to a -49.48% overall loss. No indication is provided of how the anticipated loss will be addressed, though this is not required at the application stage and will be presented within a Biodiversity Gain Plan and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan. The BNG hierarchy dictates that on-site measures should be the first consideration. There are very limited opportunities for habitat creation and enhancement within the development footprint, and any such measures will need to be subject to long-term management commitments. I would strongly recommend that any measures are realistic and deliverable in the long-term – managing small, fragmented areas of grassland for biodiversity need careful planning and commitment to be able to deliver the anticipated benefits.

It seems inevitable that some form of off-site BNG measures will be needed. There may be opportunities within the peripheral areas of Havant Park, where existing poor quality ornamental plantings may be suitable locations for more biodiverse measures. Similarly, there may be other locations that the Council can suggest as suitable for BNG measures, ideally linked to priorities within the recently published Local Nature Recovery Strategy. I am of course happy to engage with any discussions on this matter.

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

Kind regards,

Tristan

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