

Dear Members of the Havant City Council,

I'm writing to formally object to the proposed plan to upgrade footpath 508, an informal footpath used primarily by dog walkers, to a 3-meter-wide tarmac road through the heart of Ramsdale Woods. While I support sustainable transport and encourage cycling, the scale of the development is excessive and unnecessary for its stated purpose. A 3-meter-wide tarmac road, combined with a further 3 meters of woodland cleared either side, would result in a 9-meter-wide corridor being cut through an established woodland. This is a significant alteration to make in a sensitive, natural environment and goes far beyond what is required for a shared use cycle and walk route.

The unnecessary deforestation of 3 meters of forest on either side of the footpath is a particular concern. Removing mature trees and vegetation on this scale would reduce biodiversity through the loss and fragmentation of wildlife habitats and disrupt ecological corridors.

The current footpath path has developed organically with minimal environmental impact and already serves local users effectively. Expanding this very basic footpath into a fully tarmacked road-width surface would not only disturb habitats and cause unnecessary loss of trees and vegetation, but will increase surface runoff of rainwater, causing further soil erosion and degradation. The negative impact of the path you plan to construction is heavily disproportionate to the limited functional benefit gained.

If the intention is to improve access for cyclists and pedestrians, this could be achieved through far less intrusive measures, such as a modest widening of the existing path with some extra gravel (and no trees felled) or the use of natural materials, such as a raised wooden walkway weaving through the forest. This would prevent commuters from deviating from the established path and damaging the surrounding vegetation. It would also help to reduce the littering that would inevitably take place with more human traffic. These alternatives would be a better balance between accessibility and environmental protection and be a far less permanent alteration to the forest.

I'm deeply concerned that this proposal prioritises short-term convenience over long-term environmental responsibility. The decision to destroy a large part of this fragile, natural space by constructing a road through it directly contradicts the responsibility the local authorities have to address biodiversity loss and climate resilience when there are clear alternatives routes available. This clearly indicates the lack of regard local authorities have for the natural environment. Woodland areas play a crucial role in climate regulation and life-supporting habitats should be retained wherever possible. Existing routes already exist to connect Leigh Park and Waterlooville. For example, the

roundabout at Woolston Rd / Calshot Road which is just a few minutes north to Ramsdale Woods on foot, links directly to Fitzwygram Way. This area already has a fully functional road in place which is safe for cyclists and pedestrians due to the roadblocks preventing larger vehicles from passing through. There's also lighting in this area and the connection from Fitzwygram Way to Woolston Road will lead commuters directly to Middle Park Way, which is the main road through Leigh Park. This gives travellers the option to head either south or east into Leigh Park.

Furthermore, the grass verge which runs directly alongside the west side of Hulbert Road could easily situate a cycle / pedestrian path, and the existing path at Park Lane currently provides travellers a direct route between Waterloo and Leigh Park. These routes are already established and would incur a lower cost to the local taxpayers and environment.

Proceeding with this development would set a troubling precedent for Havant City Council, who would willingly sacrifice long-term ecological preservation for short-term minimal gain. It would be a wasteful and inefficient way to spend our tax contributions, only to save commuters a few minutes on their journey at the cost of natural wealth that should be inherited by future generations.

Tarmac footpaths damage woodland areas and have a permanent and detrimental effect on the land's ability to support vegetation. Increased flooding will erode the soil, harm plant life and undermine roots. Rainwater runoff also picks up pollutants which are harmful to the forest ecosystem. Microplastics and fine particles are released when tarmac wears down and rubber from tires will run into the soil, damaging roots and altering soil chemistry. This harms soil microorganisms, such as earthworms and microbes, which play a vital role in the ecosystem. These pollutants will then end up in the nearby stream, harming aquatic life.

Since tarmac is a petroleum-based product, layering it will result in significant CO₂ emissions and will cause an additional expense to the taxpayer through periodical surface maintenance. This type of unnecessary overdevelopment only helps to intensify the climate crisis as tarmac absorbs solar radiation during the day and releases it at night, causing urban areas to heat even further.

I also wish to raise concerns regarding adequacy of the ecological report submitted in support of this planning application. The report appears to lack the depth of analysis expected for a proposal involving the permanent alteration of a natural environment. It provides a very general overview of ecological considerations, based on current and

possibly limited data, but doesn't demonstrate sufficient detail to fully assess the long-term impact on habitats, species or ecological connectivity within the forest.

Specifically, the assessment does not adequately address the cumulative impact, or long-term consequences of habitat fragmentation. Given the scale and permanence of the proposed works, a more thorough, evidence-based assessment will be needed to fully understand the impact of the work. Without such detail, it's difficult to have confidence that the proposal complies with relevant environmental protection principles.

For example, there was no mention of the Roe Deer population that passes through Ramsdale Woods. The report specifies no known amphibian species in the area. However, it's local knowledge they're present. I have seen small brown frogs multiple times, although they're very difficult to see due to their size and colour. The woodland provides a suitable habitat for both these species. Deer play a vital role in influencing woodland ecology due to their movement pattern, and frogs are particularly sensitive to habitat disturbance, vegetation clearance and changes to drainage and surface water.

The absence of any assessment on how the work will impact these species raises concerns regarding the completeness of the survey work undertaken. An ecological assessment that lacks sufficient depth and site-specific detail cannot be used to support informed decision-making.

The report also fails to mention any ecological impact that could be caused by an increase in light pollution that may arise from the development. It's likely that artificial lighting will have to be introduced. Artificial lighting in woodland areas is well documented to disrupt nocturnal wildlife by altering feeding, breeding and movement behaviours, such as flight routes for bats. Wildlife such as deer, amphibians and bats are sensitive to changes in light levels. Increased light will lead to increased predation from predators such as foxes and owls, and lead to habitat avoidance. This will lead to food shortages for the wildlife who live within the ecological web the forest supports.

Given the effects of light pollution and its ability to threaten so many species, I feel this important factor has also been overlooked in the report. It also places disproportionate emphasis on the absence of legally protected, high-risk species to justify support for the construction project, while failing to adequately consider the ecological importance of the existing low-risk species present. Although these species may not be classified as 'at risk', they play a vital role in maintaining local ecosystem function, including food webs, soil health, pollination and habitat stability. The loss and disturbance of these species can lead to cumulative ecological degradation, reduce biodiversity and weakened ecosystem resilience. An assessment that overlooks these factors doesn't accurately reflect a precautionary approach to environmental protection.

Despite the absence of 'high risk', endangered species being present in this area, Ramsdale Woods is still an irreplaceable habitat which supports a complex and delicate ecosystem. The construction of a tarmac road would result in the permanent loss and fragmentation of this habitat, causing significant harm to local biodiversity. Many species depend on the undisturbed soil, vegetation and ecological balance the woodland provides. Once damaged, this environment cannot be recreated or restored within a timescale required for woodland regeneration

Paragraph 174 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires developments to minimise harm to biodiversity and to protect ecological networks where possible. Species not classed as 'at risk' still play an important role in ecosystem function and connectivity. Failure to safeguard these species risks incremental biodiversity decline, contrary to the objectives of the NPPF.

Section 40 of the National Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, states that local authorities have a statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This proposal fails to fall in line with that commitment, as this habitat cannot be effectively recreated elsewhere. The stated compensation strategy in place to restore the old play park to grassland is an inadequate way to compensate for the ecological damage that will be caused to the woodland. Any planting elsewhere will take many decades to restore the area to the ecological value that will be lost.

In summary, I believe the proposed works directly conflict and undermine the principles of environmental responsibilities, proportional development and the preservation of local green spaces. Local woodland plays a vital role in carbon storage, flood mitigation and ecosystem stability. Their destruction undermines both local and national objectives to protect nature and mitigate climate change. Local authorities have a responsibility to act as stewards of the environment, safeguarding habitats for current and future generations. However, the planned work directly contradicts these commitments.

I respectfully request that the council reconsider the scale of the project and explore lower-impact solutions that avoid damage to the woodland entirely and align with its declared environmental commitments. Also, the alternative travel routes previously highlighted that currently exist, adequately address the access needs. Protecting ancient woodland is not only for wildlife, but for the wellbeing of current and future generations.

Thank you for considering my objections,

Yours sincerely,

Local Resident.

