

Dear Planning Team,

Re: Planning Application APP/26/00574 – Havant Thicket Reservoir NW Corner Visitor Centre, Hub and Hide

I am writing to formally object to the proposed development in its current form. My primary concerns are the protection of local wildlife, public safety, accessibility, and ensuring that the reservoir can be enjoyed safely and responsibly by the community.

1. Protection of local wildlife and the wetland conservation area

The reservoir and its surrounding habitats are important for local wildlife and must be protected from unnecessary disturbance. Locating the visitor centre on a floating pontoon or island within the wetland conservation area is inappropriate. It risks increasing disturbance to birds and other wildlife through human activity, noise, lighting and the associated movement of visitors.

The proposed external terraces would create further noise and disturbance, with additional risks from litter and food waste affecting the surrounding habitat. The design should prioritise conservation and minimise the impact of visitors on this sensitive environment, rather than placing facilities within the wetland itself.

2. No use of the facilities after dark

I strongly object to the proposed introduction of nighttime use, including restaurants, events and associated car parking. This represents a significant change from the original planning assumptions, which did not envisage nighttime use of the facilities.

After-dark activity would introduce unnecessary lighting, noise and vehicle movements into an area that supports nocturnal wildlife, including bats, nightjars, woodcock, badgers and glow-worms. Vehicle movements through ancient woodland would increase the risk of wildlife collisions and cause further disturbance. Keeping car parks open at night would also create additional risks of antisocial behaviour and fly-tipping.

Nighttime use of the visitor centre and associated facilities and car parks should therefore be prohibited entirely. This restriction should be secured through clear and enforceable planning conditions, with access road barriers closed at night in accordance with the original planning permission.

3. Public safety and responsible use of the reservoir

The reservoir must remain a safe and welcoming place for the public to enjoy. The design and operation of the proposed facilities should not create avoidable risks to visitors, wildlife or the surrounding environment.

The planning authority must consider how access will be controlled, how visitors will be kept away from sensitive wetland areas, and how antisocial behaviour and

unauthorised access will be prevented. Appropriate motorcycle barriers should be installed at all new access points into the north-western area, alongside suitable fencing and landscaping to prevent uncontrolled access by people and dogs into the wetland.

These measures should be established before the facilities open, with appropriate ongoing management and enforcement arrangements.

4. Accessibility and the floating visitor centre

I strongly question the proposal to locate the visitor centre on a floating pontoon within the wetland. This is an unnecessarily costly and complicated approach that also raises significant concerns about inclusive access.

A floating facility risks creating practical barriers for disabled people and others with limited mobility. The community should not be expected to accept a design that makes access more difficult when a more accessible, practical and cost-effective land-based alternative could be considered.

Public facilities should be designed from the outset to be inclusive, allowing disabled visitors, older people, families and people with mobility difficulties to enjoy the reservoir on equal terms. The visitor centre should therefore be located on land in a position that minimises disturbance to wildlife and provides safe, straightforward and accessible access.

5. A publicly accessible bird hide

The proposed bird hide appears too small and restricted to educational use, with no general public access. This is a missed opportunity to provide a valuable community facility that encourages people to appreciate and learn about local wildlife.

A dual-purpose, publicly accessible hide should be provided, designed to accommodate families, older people and disabled visitors. Its location should ensure that it is genuinely accessible and does not require people with mobility difficulties to make a long journey from the car park to reach it.

Wildlife education and public enjoyment should complement conservation, rather than being unnecessarily restricted by the proposed design.

6. Value for money and appropriate facilities

The floating visitor centre appears to introduce unnecessary construction, operational and maintenance costs, while potentially making the facility less accessible and increasing disturbance to the wetland. These additional costs need to be justified against a more practical land-based alternative.

Adequate provision should also be made for grounds maintenance storage and workshop facilities to ensure that the reservoir can be managed effectively without creating further operational problems.

Requested planning conditions and changes

If the Council is minded to approve the application, I ask that the following requirements be secured through enforceable planning conditions:

- Prohibit all use of the visitor centre, restaurant, event facilities and associated car parks after dark.
- Require access road barriers to be closed at night, consistent with the original planning permission.
- Install motorcycle barriers at all new access points into the north-western area.
- Require appropriate fencing and landscaping to prevent unauthorised access by people and dogs into the wetland conservation area.
- Require measures to minimise lighting, noise, litter and disturbance to local wildlife.
- Reconsider the floating visitor centre in favour of a practical, cost-effective and fully accessible land-based facility.
- Provide a dual-use bird hide with meaningful public access, including provision for disabled visitors.
- Ensure adequate space for grounds maintenance storage and workshop facilities.

I ask the Council to give proper weight to the protection of local wildlife, public safety, accessibility and the long-term interests of the community. The reservoir should be a place where people can enjoy nature safely without compromising the habitats and species that make the site valuable in the first place.

For these reasons, I object to Planning Application APP/26/00574 in its current form and ask the Council to refuse the proposed arrangements, unless these fundamental concerns are satisfactorily addressed.

Yours faithfully,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the person writing the letter.