

F/20/89488 LAND AT SATCHELL LANE, HAMBLE-LE-RICE,

Residential development of 61 no. dwellings, with associated public open space, landscaping and amenity areas with access off Satchell Lane.

Thank you for consulting Ecology, my observations are as follows:

General

The site is located off Satchell Lane and is around 0.5km west of the Hamble Estuary. The estuary comprises a network of statutorily designated sites: Solent Maritime SAC; Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar; Lee-on-the-Solent to Itchen Estuary and Lincegove and Hackett's Marshes SSSIs. There are numerous locally designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) in the local area with Mercury Marshes located around 200m east being the closest.

In addition, the former Hamble Airfield Site is located immediately west of the site boundary and this is listed as a network opportunity (for habitat restoration) as part of the Hampshire Ecological Network Map. The airfield has also been identified as a "Priority Biodiversity Link" in the Eastleigh Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2012-2022 as it is an important link between two priority areas located east and west of the airfield. Opportunities for the application site to contribute to this habitat linking and enhancement should be considered.

Solent Sites Complex

As previously noted, the site is located within 5.6km of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and in the absence of mitigation the development will have a significant impact in terms of recreational disturbance. The development will therefore need to make monetary contributions to relevant mitigation scheme secured through a S106 agreement.

Nitrates

The Solent has recognised problems from nitrate enrichment; high levels of nitrogen from human activity and agricultural sources in the catchment have caused excessive growth of green algae (eutrophication) which is having a detrimental impact upon protected habitats and bird species. Since mid-April 2019 Natural England (NE) has required developers in south Hampshire including the Borough of Eastleigh to quantify the nitrate level of their development and mitigate any increase in nitrates compared to the existing land use. A development must demonstrate how it will ensure for at least 80 years there will be no nitrate loading from the development within the Solent.

Given that the development will result in an increase in housing the scheme will need to enter into an agreement with the council to purchase Nitrate credits as part of the nitrate strategy to ensure the development can achieve nutrient neutrality and that the obligations of the council are met in terms of the Habitats Regulations.

Drainage

A detailed drainage strategy has been submitted with the application and indicates that surface water runoff from the application site will be managed through permeable paving, two cellular storage tanks and a storage basin. Surface water will be discharged at a rate of 3.5l/s into the public sewer network at the Halyards housing development off Satchell Lane. This is acceptable in principle since the ground investigation showed that infiltration is not feasible at the application site, and in the absence of any nearby watercourse.

The approach detailed here was established as acceptable in the previous application (O/17/80319) process and notwithstanding comments from the Hampshire Flood Team is acceptable here.

Site Ecology

The application is accompanied by an updated (from the previous application) Preliminary Ecology Appraisal (PEA) by ecosupport (December 2020) and an updated Bat Activity Survey report (ecosupport December 2020). Targeted dormouse survey work was also undertaken for the previous application but given the nature of the species and the lack of significant change in the general landscape scale ecology it was not felt necessary to update this work and I agree that this is acceptable. A combination of previous survey work and data held by HBIC also indicates that the site is not currently supporting notable wintering birds including assemblages that may be associated with the Solent and Southampton Water SPA.

The site is predominantly comprised of horse-grazed semi-improved grassland albeit with moderate floral diversity comprising mainly common and widespread species. The boundary features (hedgerows and trees) are also an important feature and are generally retained apart from access. Generally speaking, the site can be considered to have a level of on-site ecology that does not necessarily constrain development on the site.

However, the **NPPF (2019) paragraph 174 (b)** states that plans should “...promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing **measurable net gains** for biodiversity”.

With the recent development of the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric we now have a tool which can quantify the level of enhancement a development will provide. The Environment Bill (which is likely to pass into law later this year) sets a target of a minimum of 10% net gain to be achieved. The PEA and also the Landscape and Environmental Management Plan (LEMP) set out a number of potential enhancements all of which I am supportive of, but they are not quantified.

I also note the comments from the Hampshire Swift Group and I support these. The provision of these nest boxes within the dwellings should be reflected in the Supplementary Design Document and/or the elevation plans indicating where on the proposed dwellings they will be incorporated should permission be granted. These cannot be considered within the framework of the metric but are an important enhancement that should be included.

At this point I would like to place a **holding objection** and request that the DEFRA biodiversity metric is applied, and the calculations submitted to demonstrate that the development will provide a net gain for biodiversity as outlined in the NPPF and draft Local Plan Policy DM11 (Nature Conservation).

I can comment further on the specifics of enhancements, the need for a CEMP and other potential planning conditions that could be applied if the application was to be approved once I have received the additional information requested.

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Ecologist

24/02/2021