
Ecology Considerations & Enhancements

Site: Unit 2, Strategic Park, Comines Way, Hedge End

Application: F/22/93417 (additional information)

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Unit 2 is a commercial building located within an existing industrial estate at the end of Comines Way in Hedge End.
- 1.2 The site was found to consist largely of developed land/sealed surface, buildings, built-up areas and amenity grassland.
- 1.3 The site is surrounded by scattered trees, treelines and hedgerows. The site is generally of 'low' ecological value. Off-site trees are the most significant ecological feature.
- 1.4 A total of 2no. buildings exist within the site, albeit only one is the subject of the current application, the buildings are generally considered to offer 'negligible' bat roost potential.
- 1.5 The site is bounded by tree belts, adjacent a small swathe of countryside to the north and east, with the M27 beyond to the east and Charles Watts Way (A334) to the north. To the southwest is the access route into the industrial estate, Comines Way and residential properties in West Road and Upper Northam Drive.
- 1.6 The works proposed are very minor and would not ordinarily require an ecological appraisal, however this note explores the site constraints and opportunities for enhancements.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 The proposal includes some minor works as part of this planning application. These include:
 - The creation of 5 additional loading bays on the southern elevation of the existing warehouse.
 - The removal of a fire hydrant water tank on the northern area of the site.
 - Removal of existing air conditioning plant and equipment on a concrete base within the northern area of the building. and within the existing yard area to the south of the warehouse.
 - New air conditioning plant to be erected on the northern side of the building.

- Acoustic fence to be incorporated in the southern corner, on the east of unit one.
- Solar panels are shown on the roof but subject of a concurrent prior approval application.

- 2.2 The site has been established since the 1990s and used by a various industrial and commercial activities since the premises were erected. Prior to this, the land was used for commercial uses.

3. Baseline Ecological Designations

- 3.1 The site is not located within a designated site for ecology. It is within a local settlement gap (as defined by the Local Plan) despite the presence of buildings and residential properties to the southwest.

- 3.2 There are three statutory designated sites of international importance within 5km of the Site boundary: Solent & Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar Site, The Solent & Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar Site is located approximately 2.5km southeast of the Site.

- 3.3 There are three statutory designated sites of national importance within 2km of the Site boundary:

- **Moorgreen Meadows SSSI**

This SSSI is located 1.24km northeast of Site boundary. The Site is separated from this SSSI by the M27 motorway, A334 and the Ageas Bowl development. The SSSI is 14ha in size comprising neutral meadows and alder wood surrounding a small tributary of the River Hamble. The sward is of scientific importance for its populations of marsh orchids.

- **Wildern Local Nature Reserve (LNR)**

This LNR is located 942m east of the Site boundary and is separated from this LNR by the M27 and residential development. Wildern is a 10ha wetland habitat site comprising ponds, flood meadows woodlands and a valley mire, all linked by streams.

- **Netley Common LNR**

This LNR is located 1km south of the Site boundary. Netley Common is a 12.75ha urban fringe site comprising the last remaining open heathland in the local area, including habitats such as grassland, scrub and mixed woodland.

- 3.4 There are 7 non-statutory Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) within 2km of the Site:
- Wildern Nature Park
 - Bridget Mary Garden
 - Hogsty Corner
 - Netley Hill Heath

- Dumbleton's Copse
- Telegraph Woods
- Harefield Copse

3.5 None of the above designations will be affected by the minor works proposed within the industrial estate. The proposed development site is not located either within or adjacent to any SINC's. Given the intervening distance and lack of connectivity between the proposed development site and surrounding SINC's or other designations, the development is predicted to have a negligible impact.

4. Habitats

4.1 Habitats within and adjacent the site include:

- Buildings
- Developed land / sealed surface
- Built-up areas and gardens / amenity grassland
- Line of trees / hedgerows

4.2 Buildings - The application refers to unit 2 a commercial building, with a fire water hydrant tank / plant building behind and further plant within the southern yard. These buildings are of negligible ecological value.

4.3 Developed Land / Sealed Surface - The majority of the site is taken up by tarmac, herringbone block paving, gravel and concrete hardstanding, used for parking, yard areas and paths. This is of negligible ecological value.

4.4 Modified Grassland - Areas of amenity lawn are present to the north and east of the commercial building and along the road verges as you travel into the site. The grassland is well maintained and dominated by species such as perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*). The habitat is of site ecological value.

4.5 The boundaries of the site contain a variety of planted trees. This semi-natural broad leafed woodland belt contains oak (*Prunus sp.*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), cherry (*Prunus sp.*) and holly species. To the rear of site beyond unit one (outside of site boundary) is a bank of larger trees, forming a feature of local value. The northern and western belt of trees are protected by an area Tree Preservation Order.

4.6 Each of the above features are shown in the plans which accompany this note and extracts are contained in Appendix one and two, on pages 6 and 7. Appendix 3 shows various photographs of the site and Appendix 4 illustrates the area where works are proposed.

4.7 Evaluation and enhancements proposed:

- The vegetation on the site is predominantly of low / site value.
- Off-site mature and semi-mature trees and hedges are of moderate / local value and should be retained and protected through the proposals.
- The proposals should be designed to achieve a Biodiversity Net Gain or include ecological enhancements. This could be achieved through adding native planting to replace ornamental, infill planting to treelines, and planting of species of benefit to pollinators (proportionate to the scale of the works proposed).
- Inclusion of a log pile on the edge of the amenity grassland / woodland belt
- Erection of bird boxes suitable for a range of species to be incorporated
- Bat boxes to be installed on the edge of the site / within the tree belt. The installation of roosting features within the mature trees would be an enhancement to the site.
- Planting of three trees (2no. Silver Birch and 1no. Oak) new tree planting on the edge of the amenity grassland to provide additional habitat and connectivity.
- Existing Redundant Cooling Plant, concrete base and associated services removed will be reinstated with a wildflower seed mix (for example using Emorsgate seed mix EM1 General Purpose Meadow Mixture - <https://wildseed.co.uk/mixtures/category/meadowand-grassland> or by using wildflower turfs <https://www.wildflowerturf.co.uk/>).

5. Evaluation

- 5.1 The site was found to consist largely of developed land/sealed surface (formed of hard surfacing), buildings, built-up areas and garden (formed of ornamental landscaping), and modified grassland (amenity grass). The site is bordered by scattered trees, treelines and some hedging. The site is generally of 'low' ecological value. Hedges and off-site trees on the boundaries of the commercial buildings contain some ecological value but are not to be impacted by the minor works proposed.
- 5.2 The buildings on-site are modern warehouse and security buildings. They are metal-clad with metal seam flat and pitched roofs. All buildings are in a good state of repair and considered highly unsuitable for bats. No potential ingress points or external roost features were noted. The water tank and plant (air conditioning units) to be removed are all generally considered to offer 'negligible' bat roost potential. The commercial building is also generally considered to offer 'negligible' bat roost potential.
- 5.3 The works proposed on the warehouse only relate to the insertion of 5 loading bays on the southern elevation, each of which are positioned away from the eaves and do not impact on the roof.

- 5.4 It is therefore possible that the treeline, whilst unlikely to be of significant foraging value due to the species composition, may be used by bats for commuting, especially light-tolerant species such as pipistrelle and serotine. However, none of the adjacent trees will be impacted by the proposals.
- 5.5 The proposals have been designed to have a negligible impact upon biodiversity in the local area and could provide a Biodiversity Net Gain / ecological enhancements.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The site is dominated by buildings and hard surfaces of low ecological value. The site was found to be of very limited potential for protected species, with the only potential for any significant harm present within the adjacent treelines which are not impacted by the proposed works.
- 6.2 Overall the impacts of the planned development upon biodiversity will be negligible, nonsignificant with proposed ecological enhancements resulting in a minor net gain and a long-term positive increase in biodiversity in line with national planning policy guidance.

Appendix One - Habitats within the site



Appendix Two – Extract of Ecological Enhancements

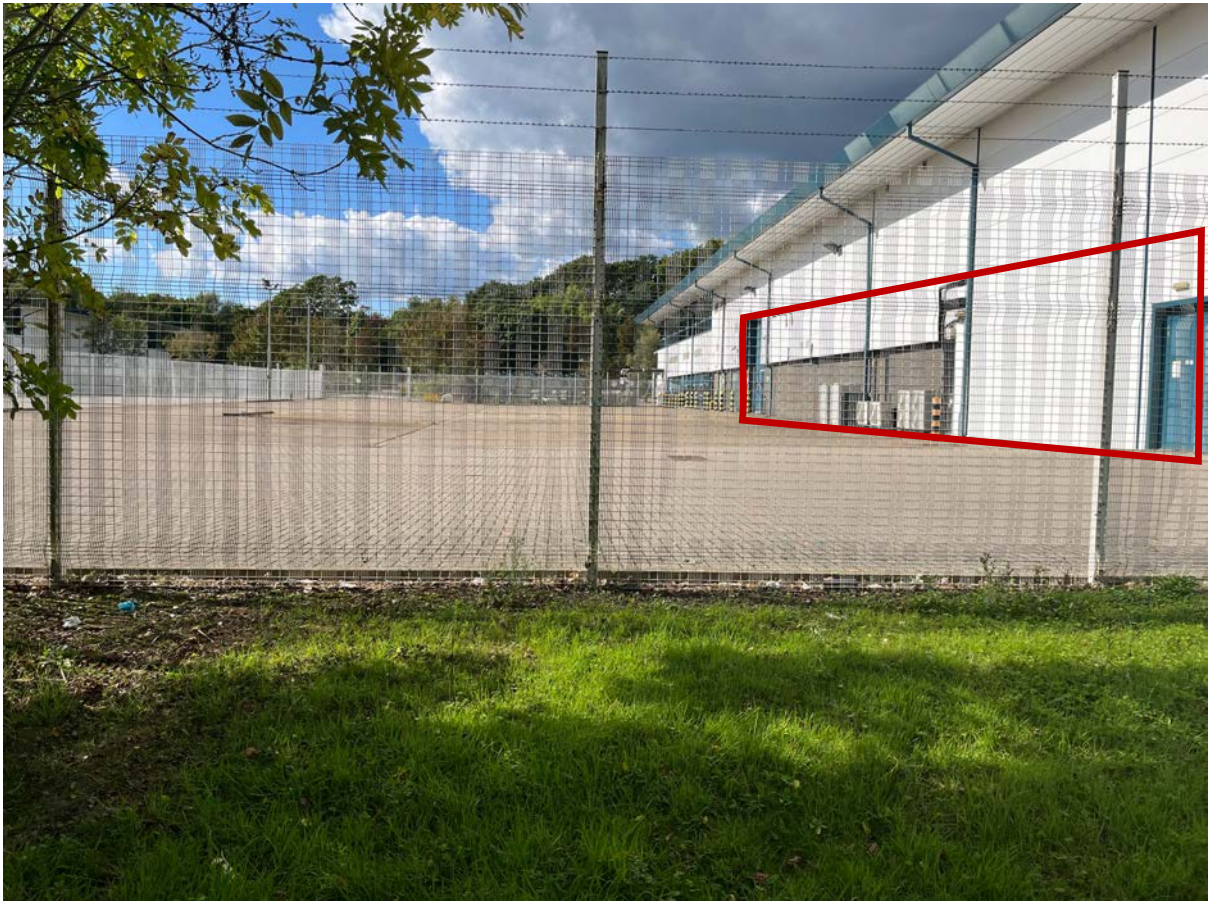


Appendix Three - Site Photographs









Appendix Four – Area of works



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