

Application No: F/22/94174

Address: Fair Oak Sports Pavilion, Fair Oak, SO50 7PS

Description: Conversion of the existing playing field to accommodate [2.no](#) football pitches and [2.no](#) cricket pitches with the loss of [1.no](#) football pitch. Erection of a single-storey cricket score-box & storage cabin. Associated landscaping and footpath upgrade.

Ecology Comments 9.1.23

The application has not changed substantially since the pre-application submission (Q/22/93293), therefore my comments below are similar to those previously made.

The development does not adhere to Policies DM6 and DM11 in relation to culverting of a watercourse and the loss of priority habitat respectively and I therefore **object to the proposals** as they stand.

The proposals will result in the culverting of 44 metres of a watercourse (as stated by the applicant, however it appears to be closer to 60m on OS maps) resulting in the loss of open watercourse and associated wet woodland habitat (a priority habitat) with a significant number of trees, approx. 30 years in age, predominantly goat willow (covering an area approx. 800-900m²) being removed. This is also suitable habitat for great crested newts, dormice and other small mammals which are recorded in proximity and for reptiles.

Culverting of watercourses results in the loss of the open channel, associated habitats and wildlife corridor. Please note, Hampshire County Council's ordinary watercourse policy states that consent will not normally be given to build a culvert that a watercourse can flow through. Consent from HCC will be required prior to any development commencing on the watercourse.

Wet woodland is a UK BAP priority habitat. Wet woodland combines elements of many other ecosystems and as such is important for many taxa. The high humidity favours bryophyte growth. The number of invertebrates associated with willows and birch, is very large. The association of dead wood with water provides specialised habitats not found in dry woodland types.

The applicant has stated that the layout of the site cannot be successfully modified in a way which both avoids the culverting of the watercourse and loss of associated woodland and still accommodates a second cricket pitch. It is also my understanding that alternative locations for an additional cricket pitch have not been identified. Ultimately, the Councillors will need to decide if the provision of a second cricket pitch at this location takes precedent over the environmental protection policies.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Should the scheme be supported, sufficient ecological compensation will need to be approved prior to determination. The proposals do not currently demonstrate this.

The applicant has stated that a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain will be provided. However, BNG calculations (using the DEFRA 3.1 metric) have not been submitted. A suitably qualified ecologist will need to calculate this for the whole of the application site and show how it relates to the enhancement plan (Figure 5, Ecological Appraisal Report, November 2022).

Within these calculations, the area of replacement wet woodland habitat must at least equal that being lost. The plans appear to be providing about half the area of that being lost (440m² in the SW corner of the site). The time to achieve the target condition of the created wet woodland, compared to the age/ condition of that being lost, is taken into account within the calculations. The calculations may determine that a larger area of wet woodland creation is favoured. Rotating the football pitch 90° to a north-south alignment, as discussed on site, would provide more space to accommodate a larger wet woodland area.

The replacement wet woodland planting also provides compensation for the loss of GCN and dormouse habitat along the watercourse to be culverted.

Drainage

Plan *Existing Primary Drainage System_Lapstone* is referred to in the DAS but I cannot find this plan.

It is not clear on the proposed drainage plan where the water will be coming from to supply the wet woodland compensation area in the south-west of the site. It is understood that the drainage from the football pitch (and possibly other areas of the playing field) will be directed to this area. This needs to be shown and demonstrated that a sufficient amount of water will reach this wetland habitat.

Any excavation associated with the drainage and wetland creation will have to be away from existing trees and their RPAs. This will also protect the Wyvern Technology College Meadow SINCS which is adjacent to the site at the southern half of the site's western boundary.

Culvert

The drainage proposals show details of the collector pipes for the drainage of the pitches. However, I cannot find details regarding the proposed dimensions of the culvert and how this interacts with the drainage of the playing fields. I cannot see a response from the Flood and Water Team at HCC but I would encourage a response from them regarding their requirements for this.

Landscape Management Plan

Section 2.1 refers to a proposed hedge shown on plan LS1 within the document. Plan LS1 shows two hedgerows with new planting; one at the north (presumably this is supplementary planting to the existing hedge – the hedge is identified in the Ecological Appraisal Report) and one at the east of the site (presumably a new hedge).

Neither of these hedgerow proposals are shown on the mitigation and enhancement plan in the Ecological Appraisal Report. These should be included in the BNG calculations.

Any other mitigation proposals shown on plan LS1 or elsewhere in the Landscape Management Plan should be included in the BNG calculations. These proposals should be agreed with the project ecologist who should carry out the calculations.

Other potential habitat loss

The pre-application stated that there will be loss of habitat at the north of the western boundary, although the extent was not specified, to provide clearance for the playing area (dormice recorded in this area). It was additionally stated that there may be crown raising of trees to 2m (max) along the western boundary for ball retrieval (trees with bat roost potential in this area). Please can the applicant confirm if this is still proposed or if any other additional habitat loss is proposed elsewhere on site and provide further details. Any further losses will need to be included in the BNG calculations.

Other points:

No additional lighting (temporary or permanent) is proposed.

I believe the netting is to be put away when not in use. Please can this be confirmed.

A detailed CEMP and LEMP are required. The Landscape Management Plan could be revised to accommodate the latter.

Nutrients – The land use of the site is not changing. Is there proposed to be a change in the amount of fertiliser used to maintain the sports fields? Good soil management should be considered here as a starting point to maintain healthy soils and thus reduce the need for chemical fertilisers.

Sarah Boyd, Ecologist