

Date: 08 February 2023
Our ref: 419527
Your ref: F/22/94150



Ms Rachael Morris
Eastleigh Borough Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Rachael,

Planning consultation: HRA & Appropriate Assessment - Construction of an attached end-of-terrace 1 bedroom dwelling with associated dropped kerb.

Location: 20 The Ridings, Bishopstoke, Eastleigh SO50 8PR

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 19 January 2023 which was received by Natural England on the same day.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S ADVICE

OBJECTION – Recreational impacts on the New Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar

Natural England objects to this proposal. As submitted, we consider it will have an adverse effect on:

- New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar

Natural England's further advice on designated sites/landscapes and advice on other natural environment issues is set out below.

We have reached this view for the following reasons:

- *The planning proposal, as currently submitted, is likely to lead to an increase in recreational disturbance in the New Forest designated sites via increasing visitor numbers and there is not enough information to demonstrate that the impacts will be suitably mitigated.*

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Natural England notes that your authority, as competent authority under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations, has screened the proposal to check for the likelihood of significant

effects. Your assessment concludes that your authority is able to rule out the likelihood of significant effects arising from the proposal.

On the basis of information provided, it is the advice of Natural England that **it is not possible** to conclude that the proposal is unlikely to result in significant effects on the European site(s) in question.

Natural England advises that the assessment currently does not provide enough information and/or certainty to justify the assessment conclusion and that your authority should not grant planning permission at this stage. Where there is a likelihood of significant effects (excluding any measures intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on the European site), or there are uncertainties, a competent authority should undertake an appropriate assessment in order to fully assess the implications of the proposal in view of the conservation objectives for the European site(s) in question.

Natural England therefore advises that an appropriate assessment should now be undertaken, and the following information is provided to assist you with that assessment. Natural England must be consulted on any appropriate assessment your Authority may decide to make.

Recreational Impacts on the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar – OBJECTION

The HRA identifies that the development will contribute to an increase in recreational pressure on the New Forest designated sites, in combination with other planned development within the identified 13.8km catchment zone. The Appropriate Assessment outlines that mitigation will be provided in the form of a financial contribution towards Eastleigh Borough Council's Interim Mitigation Strategy to address recreational impacts on the New Forest designated sites. Natural England understands this strategy was approved at a cabinet committee meeting in March 2022, to last for 5 years up to March 2027, while cross-boundary partnership work with other affected local authorities and Natural England progresses the development of a longer term, strategic, proportionate, and co-ordinated approach to suitably address the impacts from planned growth across the area.

Natural England have serious concerns with various elements of the interim strategy, including the reduced provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), the lack of information on increasing visitor capacity at the Itchen Valley Country Park (IVCP) and lack of an accompanying monitoring strategy. This leads to a significant level of uncertainty remaining as to the effectiveness of the proposed in-borough measures. Additionally, we have concerns that the approach will harm ancient woodland at the proposed SANG site east of Allington Lane due to pressure from increased access.

We do not consider the approved Interim strategy is precautionary enough. We advise that further information is provided that demonstrates the effectiveness of providing SANG at a 2ha/1000 people standard, an assessment of current visitor levels/increased capacity at IVCP and agreed measures, and an accompanying monitoring strategy. Without this information, we advise it is not **currently possible to conclude no adverse effects on the integrity of the New Forest designated sites**.

Additionally, information on how impacts on ancient woodland from increased access will be avoided and/or mitigated at the proposed SANG site should be provided to demonstrate alignment with requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework regarding irreplaceable habitat and Natural England's [standing advice on ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees](#).

Nutrient Impacts on Solent and Southampton SPA and Ramsar site and Solent Maritime SAC – FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IMPACTS ON DESIGNATED SITES

Nutrient Budget

On 16 March 2022 we wrote to your authority about the availability of an updated package of tools and guidance in relation to nutrient impacts. An updated nutrient budget calculator for the Solent was released on 20 April 2022

We note the nutrient budget dated 19 January 2023 has been calculated using Natural England's latest guidance on nutrient neutrality to calculate the proposed development will result in an additional **2.89 kg Total Nitrogen (TN)/year**, and **0.1 kg Total Phosphorus (TP)/year pre-2025**, reducing to **0.06 kg TP/year post-2025**, discharging to the Solent designated sites.

Provided the competent authority is assured and satisfied that the site areas used in the calculation are correct and that the existing land uses are appropriately precautionary, then Natural England raises no further concerns with regard to the nutrient budget.

Please note the calculation is based on all wastewater from the development being treated at Chickenhall Eastleigh Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW). If this situation changes, a reassessment of the nutrient calculation will be required and an updated HRA necessary.

Water Usage

It is advised that a suitable water consumption rate is appropriately secured with any granting of planning permission. In accordance with the Nutrient Neutrality Generic Methodology, we advise that the water consumption rate used within any nutrients budget(s) should be 10 litres/per person/per day higher than the rate secured. This is in line with the precautionary approach and accounts for potential changes to less water efficient fittings throughout the lifetime of the development. For example, where 100 litres/per person/day is appropriately secured, 110 litres/per person/day would be applicable within the nutrients budget calculations for the proposed development.

Nitrogen mitigation

It is noted Eastleigh Brough Council's Nutrient Neutrality Offset Scheme will be used to neutralise the additional nutrient burden that will arise from the proposed development. It has been calculated this development will result in a positive nitrogen output of **2.89 kg/TN/yr**. We note that credits will be assigned and recorded through the use of a vesting certificate which will ensure this mitigation has been purchased. This should be secured through condition.

Provided the above measures can be secured, together with long term management and maintenance to ensure effective mitigation for the lifetime of the development, Natural England raises no further concerns.

Phosphate mitigation

It is noted the applicant is to purchase phosphate credits from Eastleigh Brough Council to neutralise the additional nutrient burden that will arise from the proposed development. The applicant will purchase credits equivalent to **0.1 kg/TP/yr**.

Natural England have considered the Council's Phosphate Mitigation Strategy, which relies on the strategic land use change the Council has already secured for nitrogen mitigation. We note that the P baseline figures for the relevant parcels of land have been ascertained using

the Natural England Itchen calculator (2022). We are largely supportive of the scheme as an interim approach, however some further detail and clarification is required in order to ensure the approach is robust and precautionary:

- Geohydrology and surface flow pathways – there is no supporting evidence regarding the geohydrology of the land parcels and how this may affect P leaching rates into the Itchen and which drainage pathways are taken. It appears that roughly a fifth of the strategic land discharges into the Itchen SAC (the river itself) approximately 1.5km below the discharge point at Chickenhall WwTW. A key principle of P mitigation is that it has to take effect prior to the discharge – on a river this means upstream of the wastewater discharge. It is advised these aspects are reassessed for the purpose of the calculations. Any land draining below the point of wastewater discharge from new development is likely to have to be discounted.
- Baseline P loading figures – further clarification is required regarding the baseline figure for Parcel 35, in relation to differing soil types and drainage at the site. We recommend the figures underpinning the strategy are clearly set out within an appendix or similar supporting document for clarity and transparency purposes, confirming soil and drainage types and previous land uses, and how these have been applied to the calculator.
- Define development this scheme can support – clear confirmation is needed of which development within Eastleigh borough this approach can be applied to, i.e. development discharging below the point of mitigation taking effect.

Until the above aspects can be addressed, and the overall interim strategy agreed with Natural England, we advise it is not yet possible to make a conclusion of no adverse effect on integrity within the appropriate assessment where the proposal relies on this scheme as it currently stands.

Recreational Disturbance to Solent SPAs – NO OBJECTION SUBJECT TO SECURING APPROPRIATE MITIGATION

This application is within 5.6km of Solent SPAs and will lead to a net increase in residential accommodation. Natural England is aware that Southampton City Council have adopted planning policy to mitigate against adverse effects from recreational disturbance on the Solent SPA sites, as agreed by the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership (SRMP), also known as Bird Aware Solent.

Provided that the applicant is complying with the policy and the Bird Aware Definitive Strategy, Natural England are satisfied that the applicant has mitigated against the potential adverse effects of the development on the integrity of the European site(s) and has no objection to this aspect of the application.

Please note, your authority's appropriate assessment should reflect the current developer contribution rates, which are updated every April in line with the Retail Price Index.

Water Resources

Natural England strongly recommend that all new development adopt a higher standard of water efficiency of 100 litres/per person/day including external water use and re-use in line with Southern Water's Target 100 demand reduction programme. Consideration should be given to the use of grey water recycling systems and efficient appliances. We note that your authority's Position Statement advises new developments to adopt this higher standard of

water efficiency. We recommend this figure is appropriately secured with any granting of planning permission.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

The above impacts on Habitats sites (SAC/SPA) may also impact SSSIs. Please note that if your authority is minded to grant planning permission contrary to the advice in this letter, you are required under Section 281 (6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to notify Natural England of the permission, the terms on which it is proposed to grant it and how, if at all, your authority has taken account of Natural England's advice. You must also allow a further period of 21 days before the operation can commence.

Further general advice on the protected species and other natural environment issues is provided at Annex A.

Should the developer wish to explore options for avoiding or mitigating the effects described above with Natural England, we advise they seek advice through our [Discretionary Advice Service](#).

Should the proposal change, please consult us again.

If you have any queries relating to the advice in this letter please contact me on 07436902849.

Yours sincerely,

Rosie Carter
Sustainable Development Advisor
Thames Solent Area | Natural England
www.gov.uk/natural-england

ANNEX A

Natural England offers the following additional advice:

Landscape

Paragraph 174 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) highlights the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes through the planning system. This application may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes, including any local landscape designations. You may want to consider whether any local landscape features or characteristics (such as ponds, woodland, or dry-stone walls) could be incorporated into the development to respond to and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness, in line with any local landscape character assessments. Where the impacts of development are likely to be significant, a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment should be provided with the proposal to inform decision making. We refer you to the [Landscape Institute](#) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for further guidance.

Protected Species

Natural England has produced [standing advice](#)¹ to help planning authorities understand the impact of particular developments on protected species. We advise you to refer to this advice. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on protected species where they form part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest or in exceptional circumstances.

Local sites and priority habitats and species

You should consider the impacts of the proposed development on any local wildlife or geodiversity sites, in line with paragraphs 175 and 179 of the NPPF and any relevant development plan policy. There may also be opportunities to enhance local sites and improve their connectivity. Natural England does not hold locally specific information on local sites and recommends further information is obtained from appropriate bodies such as the local records centre, wildlife trust, geoconservation groups or recording societies.

Priority habitats and Species are of particular importance for nature conservation and are included in the England Biodiversity List published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Most priority habitats will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. List of priority habitats and species can be found on [Gov.uk](#).

Natural England does not routinely hold species data, such data should be collected when impacts on priority habitats or species are considered likely. Consideration should also be given to the potential environmental value of brownfield sites, often found in urban areas and former industrial land, further information including links to the open mosaic habitats inventory can be found [here](#).

Ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees

You should consider any impacts on ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees in line with paragraph 180 of the NPPF. Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland [Inventory](#) which can help identify ancient woodland. Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced [standing advice](#) for planning authorities in relation to ancient woodland and ancient

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

and veteran trees. It should be taken into account by planning authorities when determining relevant planning applications. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees where they form part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest or in exceptional circumstances.

Environmental gains

Development should provide net gains for biodiversity in line with the NPPF paragraphs 174(d), 179 and 180. Development also provides opportunities to secure wider environmental gains, as outlined in the NPPF (paragraphs 8, 73, 104, 120, 174, 175 and 180). We advise you to follow the mitigation hierarchy as set out in paragraph 180 of the NPPF and firstly consider what existing environmental features on and around the site can be retained or enhanced or what new features could be incorporated into the development proposal. Where onsite measures are not possible, you should consider off site measures. Opportunities for enhancement might include:

- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Designing lighting to encourage wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.

Natural England's [Biodiversity Metric 3.1](#) may be used to calculate biodiversity losses and gains for terrestrial and intertidal habitats and can be used to inform any development project. For small development sites the [Small Sites Metric](#) may be used. This is a simplified version of [Biodiversity Metric 3.1](#) and is designed for use where certain criteria are met. It is available as a beta test version.

Natural England's [Environmental Benefits from Nature tool](#) may be used to identify opportunities to enhance wider benefits from nature and to avoid and minimise any negative impacts. It is designed to work alongside [Biodiversity Metric 3.1](#) and is available as a beta test version.

Green Infrastructure

Natural England's [Green Infrastructure Framework](#) provides evidence-based advice and tools on how to design, deliver and manage green infrastructure (GI). GI should create and maintain green liveable places that enable people to experience and connect with nature, and that offer everyone, wherever they live, access to good quality parks, greenspaces, recreational, walking and cycling routes that are inclusive, safe, welcoming, well-managed and accessible for all. GI provision should enhance ecological networks, support ecosystems services and connect as a living network at local, regional and national scales.

Development should be designed to meet the [15 Green Infrastructure Principles](#). The Green Infrastructure Standards can be used to inform the quality, quantity and type of green infrastructure to be provided. Major development should have a GI plan including a long-term delivery and management plan. Relevant aspects of local authority green infrastructure strategies should be delivered where appropriate.

GI mapping resources are available [here](#) and [here](#). These can be used to help assess deficiencies in greenspace provision and identify priority locations for new GI provision.

Access and Recreation

Natural England encourages any proposal to incorporate measures to help improve people's access to the natural environment. Measures such as reinstating existing footpaths together with the creation of new footpaths and bridleways should be considered. Links to urban fringe areas should also be explored to strengthen access networks, reduce fragmentation, and promote wider green infrastructure.

Rights of Way, Access land, Coastal access and National Trails

Paragraphs 100 and 174 of the NPPF highlight the importance of public rights of way and access. Development should consider potential impacts on access land, common land, rights of way and coastal access routes in the vicinity of the development. Consideration should also be given to the potential impacts on the any nearby National Trails. The National Trails website www.nationaltrail.co.uk provides information including contact details for the National Trail Officer. Appropriate mitigation measures should be incorporated for any adverse impacts.

Biodiversity duty

Your authority has a [duty](#) to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of your decision making. Conserving biodiversity can also include restoration or enhancement to a population or habitat. Further information is available [here](#).