

Eastleigh Borough Council

13/11/2023

Attn: Rachel Morris, Case Officer

Dear Rachel

Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Letter for C/23/95647 BISHOPSTOKE MEMORIAL HALL, RIVERSIDE, BISHOPSTOKE, EASTLEIGH, SO50 6LQ

1. Introduction

This Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening document has been prepared to assess the potential impacts of the proposed development, located in close proximity to the River Itchen Special Area of Conservation (SAC), in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the "Regulations").

The works involve the demolition of the existing memorial hall, parish office and storage shed. The works will also encompass the tree-line adjacent the buildings.

The internal ecology response from EBC on the 11th September 2023 states, in part:

“Due to the proximity to the River Itchen SAC an HRA screening and a CEMP will be required prior to determination. The CEMP must include protective measures against pollution including surface water drainage, dust and air pollution. The roof of the Memorial Hall is constructed of asbestos cement sheets, and other asbestos has been identified on site so the asbestos removal procedures will also need to be included in the CEMP”.

The text in **bold** is the subject of this letter.

2. Background

The River Itchen SAC is a designated site of European importance due to its unique and sensitive habitat and species composition. It is protected under the EU Habitats Directive, and its conservation objectives include the preservation of important habitats and species. These are:

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site.

- 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation. The Itchen is a classic example of a sub-type 1 chalk river. The river is dominated throughout by aquatic *Ranunculus* spp. The headwaters contain pond water-crowfoot *Ranunculus peltatus*, while two *Ranunculus* species occur further downstream: stream water-crowfoot *R. penicillatus* ssp. *pseudofluitans*, a species especially characteristic of calcium-rich rivers, and river water-crowfoot *R. fluitans*.

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site.

- 1044 Southern damselfly *Coenagrion mercuriale*. Strong populations of southern damselfly *Coenagrion mercuriale* occur here, estimated to be in the hundreds of individuals. The site in central southern England represents one of the major population centres in the UK. It also represents a population in a managed chalk-river flood plain, an unusual habitat for this species in the UK, rather than on heathland.

- 1163 Bullhead *Cottus gobio*. The Itchen is a classic chalk river that supports high densities of bullhead *Cottus gobio* throughout much of its length. The river provides good water quality, extensive beds of submerged plants that act as a refuge for the species, and coarse sediments that are vital for spawning and juvenile development.

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection

- 1092 White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*
- 1096 Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*
- 1106 Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*
- 1355 Otter *Lutra lutra*

3. Purpose of the Screening

The purpose of this screening is to determine whether the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the River Itchen SAC. If the screening concludes that significant effects are unlikely, then a full Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) may not be required. However, if significant effects cannot be ruled out, a full HRA will be necessary to assess the potential impacts and, if necessary, develop appropriate mitigation measures.

4. Screening Process

The screening process involves the following steps:

Step 1: Identify Likely Effects

Identify and assess the likely effects of the proposed development on the River Itchen SAC, considering factors such as:

- Habitat disturbance: Evaluate whether the development may result in damage or destruction of habitats within the SAC.
- Species disturbance: Assess whether there may be adverse effects on species of European importance present within the SAC.
- Indirect effects: Consider any indirect effects, such as changes in hydrology, pollution, or increased human activity, that may affect the SAC.

Step 2: Consideration of Alternative Solutions

Explore alternative development solutions or locations that would avoid or minimize potential adverse effects on the SAC. Evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of these alternatives.

Step 3: Screening Conclusion

Based on the information gathered in Steps 1 and 2, reach a screening conclusion:

- Negative Conclusion: If the screening concludes that the proposed development is not likely to have a significant effect on the River Itchen SAC, no further HRA is required, and the development can proceed.
- Positive Conclusion: If the screening suggests that the development may have a significant effect on the SAC, proceed to a full HRA to assess the potential impacts and identify appropriate mitigation measures.

5. Screening Results

Screening Conclusion: Negative (no impact on designated sites) providing a competent CEMP is prepared and adhered to. This includes protective measures against pollution including surface water drainage, dust and air pollution. It is recommended that lighting restrictions are also imposed close to any water courses.

Reasons for the Conclusion:

The Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site will:

- not be polluted by nutrient or pesticide run-off (harmful to aquatic invertebrates and plants); and
- not be impacted by increased sediment (harmful to crayfish gills and reduce light for aquatic vegetation).

The Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site will not be impacted for the reasons given below.

- Southern damselfly *Coenagrion mercuriale*. No loss or disturbance of habitat will occur. No indirect effects through pollution etc will occur.
- Bullhead *Cottus gobio*. No loss or disturbance of habitat will occur. No indirect effects through pollution etc will occur, this includes loss of refuge and spawning sites.

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection will not be impacted for the reasons given below.

- White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*. The works will not cause an increase in sediment (this can be particularly harmful to crayfish as sediment can damage their gills).
- Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*. No loss or disturbance of refuge or spawning sites will occur.
- Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*. No decrease in water quality or obstruction of migration routes will occur as a result of the development. No increase in light spill will occur that could otherwise impede migrating salmon.
- Otter *Lutra lutra*. No increased obstruction of animals moving between catchments. No additional light spill over suitable habitat. No disturbance to the species using the nearby river banks.

6. Next Steps

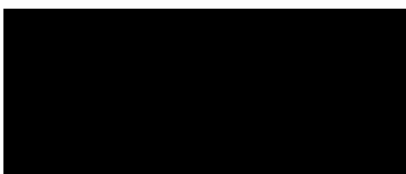
- As the screening concludes that no significant effects are likely, proceed with the development in accordance with relevant planning and environmental regulations. This must include a CEMP.
- Ensure close coordination with contractors and EBC pre- and post-development ensuring enforcement action is taken where necessary.

7. Conclusion

No further assessment is required. This screening document provides an initial rapid assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed development on the River Itchen SAC. It is essential to consider these findings when determining the project's next steps and compliance with environmental regulations.

For further information, or to initiate a full Habitat Regulations Assessment, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



John Poland CEnv MCIEEM CBiol MRSB
Principal Ecologist

For and on behalf of HAMPSHIRE ECOLOGICAL SERVICES LTD