

Ecology response for F/23/96586 MOORLANDS FARM, BOTLEY ROAD, WEST END, SOUTHAMPTON, SO30 3HD

Demolition of all existing buildings and detailed planning approval for light industrial floorspace [Use Class E(g)(ii) & E(g)(iii)] and estate office (Use Class E(g)(i).(Application Resubmission)

Summer Sharpe

18/1/24

This application appears to contain a suitable ecological buffer to the SSSI and the SuDS pond is located within the area of green infrastructure. Since the red line boundary of this site is substantially different from the boundary from the previous application, to avoid any confusion, a 20 m SSSI buffer free of all development must be marked on a site plan.

Ecology did not raise an objection to the previous application, and we are not raising an objection to this application. It is acceptable in terms of ecology and surface water drainage with the addition of the information discussed below.

Ecology

I have reviewed the DAS by Radley House Partnership (December 2023). Compared to the previous design, this proposal removes the farmhouse and the northern part of the site from the red line boundary and moves all development further away from the SSSI boundary. The ecological buffer zone would be enlarged and enhanced with additional planting and the parking areas have been moved away from the SuDS pond.

The Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) by Ecosupport (December/January 2023) provided a biodiversity gain assessment but has not updated any of the surveys done for the previous applications (F/22/93835 and O/21/91192). The last walkover survey was done in August 2022. The surveys were given an 18-month validity period. An additional ecology walkover will be required after February 2024 to confirm whether any changes have occurred on site which could affect habitats for protected species.

Bat surveys: Since the farmhouse is not part of this application, those bat surveys do not have to be updated for this application, however buildings 2, 4 and 6 are still included within the red line boundary. These buildings were included in the emergence survey in 2021 and were considered not likely to support roosting bats. They should be included in the walkover survey to determine whether any conditions have changed and whether or not they would require an additional/updated Phase II bat survey.

There is an error in section 3.3 Habitat Assessment. Biodiversity Metric 4.0 was only released in March 2023, so could not have been used in April 2022. The metric used at that time was most likely either Metric 3.0 or 3.1 (April 2022 publication date). I appreciate the effort to

update the report to the most recent version of the metric, but this and any differences between the two metrics must be explained for accuracy. The updated biodiversity metric demonstrates an increase in habitat units of 22.69% and in hedgerow units of 28.22%, with the trading rules satisfied.

A medium population of grass snakes were recorded on the eastern part of the site, with swallows nesting in an outbuilding. The site was considered to have moderate suitability for badgers, occasional use by hedgehogs, and suitability for nesting birds.

The mitigation strategy for reptiles in section 8.3 is acceptable, as the ecology buffer area will provide suitable retained habitat and includes the areas where most of the reptiles were recorded.

The proposed mitigation and precautionary working methods include an updating badger walkover (section 8.4) and avoidance measures to protect nesting birds (section 8.5), lighting during the construction phase (8.7) and avoidance of entrapment during the construction phase (8.8). These can be conditioned in a CEMP in addition to control measures for air and water pollution including sediment (8.9). A wildlife sensitive lighting plan is required and can be conditioned. This must include avoidance of light spillage on boundary vegetation or towards the farmhouse, which is a known bat roost.

The Proposed Site Layout-Landscape Mitigation and Enhancement plan (LMEP) by ACLA (December 2023) shows the landscape buffer along the eastern boundary as all of the area to the east of the Exolium pipeline easement. This is shown as existing rough grassland and developing scrub, with a native field hedge mix along the site boundary. The proposed UK Hab map by Ecosupport (December 2023) shows a buffer area of mixed scrub and does not include the pipeline easement. The LMEP shows native woodland blocks and scrub in species rich grassland along the northern boundary, and the UK Hab map shows this area as species rich grassland with scattered trees. Along the northwestern boundary the LMEP shows post and rail fencing, native hedges, small woodland blocks and individual trees with scrub, while the UK Hab map shows mixed scrub along the SSSI buffer, with species rich grassland and scattered trees to the southwest of the buffer. To resolve these differences, a detailed landscape environmental management plan (LEMP) with planting specifications can be conditioned.

The DAS mentions green roofs and reed beds but this is not shown anywhere on a plan.

Surface water drainage

I have reviewed the Flood Risk Assessment and Sustainable Drainage Strategy by Fernbrook Consulting Engineers (December 2023).

Section 5.3 of this report states that an allowance of 20% for the effects of climate change will achieve policy requirements, but the fact sheet *Applying climate change allowances to*

SuDS design (2018, Susdrain/Ciria) recommends a 40% increase in rainfall intensities be applied to residential, commercial and other types of development (with the exception of water compatible development) where the proposed lifespan of the development exceeds 2069.

[applying climate change allowances to suds design draft.pdf \(susdrain.org\)](#) Unless there is a suitable argument for using the 20% figure, a 40% allowance for climate change will be required.

The simple index approach has been used to show that the pollution hazards have been mitigated by the proposed SuDS design. Before discharge to Moorgreen Stream, surface water will pass through either permeable paving or a filter trench, a SuDS basin, a downstream defender and a sediment forebay.

The package sewage treatment plant has been placed in a location where if it malfunctioned it would not be likely to contaminate the surface water drainage system. The treatment plant must have a monitored alarm system to indicate any malfunction and an emergency procedure in place to ensure that no contamination would be possible. The treated foul effluent would flow into the proposed bioretention forebay before being discharged off site.

Additional comments and concerns

Section 3.9 of the Planning and Economic Statement by The Brentano Suite (December 2023) states that *The house and flat will be refurbished under permitted development rights and will be provide(d) with a private access off the service road and with screening.* The ecology surveys for the previous application F/22/93835 very clearly showed that this building was a bat roost and therefore would require a mitigation license from Natural England before any works can be done on the building.

If planning permission is not required for this proposal **(which it should be, as the presence of protected species is a material consideration)**, wildlife protection laws still apply. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) is the primary legislation that protects wild animals, plants, and habitats in the UK. It lists the species which are protected by law along with their resting places and the non-native invasive species which must not be allowed to spread into the wild. If you suspect that protected or invasive species may be affected by your development **(and in this case, there is survey evidence to show that this is a confirmed bat roost)** it is your responsibility to get an ecology survey and implement the recommended mitigation measures.

The following resources may be helpful:

The Wildlife Trusts <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/uk-wildlife-law>

Bat Conservation Trust <https://www.bats.org.uk/>

CIEEM <https://cieem.net/i-need/finding-a-consultant/>

Crown Prosecution Service *Wildlife Offences* available at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/wildlife-offences>

In section 3.11 and 3.12 of the Planning and Economic Statement there is a discussion of the impact of the proposal on the SSSI and Natural England condition assessment (July 2023). This proposal is more acceptable on an ecology and surface water drainage than the previous proposal. Detailed advice has been provided to the landowner by Natural England on how management of the SSSI could be undertaken to return many of the units to favourable condition and this is to be encouraged.

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