

Ecology response for F/23/96629 Land at Fieldfare Road, adjacent to the roundabout with Winchester Road.

Erection of 70-bed C2 Care Home with new vehicular access to Fieldfare Road

Liz Harrison

23/1/24

I have reviewed the following documents:

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) by Ecosupport (November 2023)

Soft Landscape Specification by ACD (December 2023)

DAS by ADG Architects (December 2023)

Proposed site plan by ADG Architects (rev K, November 2023)

The outline consent for the larger site is O/15/75953. This site was originally allocated as the local centre to include retail and healthcare.

The proposed site layout avoids impact on the three large trees (with TPOs) existing on the northern edge of the site.

Biodiversity net gain:

Schedule 14 of the Environment Act allows planning authorities to recognise any habitat degradation since 30th January 2020 and to take the earlier habitat state as the baseline for the purposes of biodiversity net gain. In order to ascertain the habitats present and their condition on 30th January 2020, aerial imagery or data sets from that time could be used. 30th January 2020 is the relevant date as it was the day the Bill entered Parliament.

Aerial photos on Google Earth show the whole site as a green field in December 2020, and the next available photos are March 2022 show the field habitat has been degraded with tire marks, bare soil, mounds of soil, building materials, storage containers, large concrete pipes, and parking. It has obviously been used as a site compound for other areas of the wider development.

Section 6.11.1 of the PEA lists the habitats on site as being 0.49 ha of other neutral grassland and 0.173 ha of artificial unvegetated unsealed surface from a survey done in September 2023. Biodiversity net gain must be determined from the December 2020 baseline, which would be roughly 0.663 ha of other neutral grassland.

I raise a holding objection to this proposal until it can be demonstrated that biodiversity net gain is achievable.

Should the issue of biodiversity net gain be resolved, the following comments on protected species should be considered:

The site has been assessed as having moderate potential for foraging and commuting bats, with three mature oak trees which were only able to be surveyed for potential roost features at a distance. Other assessments included high potential for reptiles, moderate potential for foraging and commuting badgers, low potential for terrestrial great crested newts, and moderate potential along the northern boundary for breeding and nesting birds.

Mitigation for reptiles proposes translocation of any reptiles found on site, however a suitable receptor site has not been identified either on or off site. We cannot agree to any translocation without a receptor site being identified and agreed upon before determination.

A protected species mitigation timetable will need to be developed to ensure that all mitigation and habitat manipulation can be done during appropriate months and depending on the weather. This would cover breeding birds (March-August), terrestrial GCN (March-October), reptiles (April-June, September), badgers and other small mammals (potentially all year, excavations and building materials) and can be conditioned.

Bat and swift nest boxes and flowering plants to attract pollinators have been recommended as biodiversity enhancements. The recommendation is for three bat bricks installed in the building, two general purpose bat boxes on retained trees, and at least three swift bricks. I think that this large building could accommodate a greater number of nesting and roosting features but the locations of lighting and windows on the appropriate elevations will need to be used to determine their placement. Increased numbers should be agreed before determination, but the positions can be conditioned in a biodiversity enhancement plan.

A surface water drainage plan will be required. Proposals for components which depend on infiltration must be supported by infiltration test results.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist