

F/23/96631 Land between Burnetts Lane and Fir Tree Lane, Eastleigh

Construction of an internal distributor road and associated footways, cycleways, lighting, landscaping and SuDS basins, and diversion of Public Rights of Way footpaths FOHHF 701 and 702 as part of the One Horton Heath development (proposal constitutes EIA development)

Thank you for consulting Ecology, my observations are as follows:

General

This application is also covered within the outline planning application (OPA) O/20/89498 for the wider One Horton Heath Scheme. The scheme is for an internal road (and associated landscaping, SuDS and lighting) from the permitted Link Road linking parcels of development from Lower Acre in the southeast corner back to the link road in the northwest of the wider site. The broader concept in terms of ecology and drainage has been discussed and deemed acceptable as part of the OPA.

These comments will focus on the detail provided within the specific ecological appraisal (Johns Associates, December 2023), landscaping, SuDS and lighting documents provided with this submission.

On site habitats and designated sites

The Proposed Development site comprises an existing compacted stone/soil track associated with a solar farm, agricultural fields previously associated with cattle grazing and arable crop production, together with hedgerows and lines of trees, mixed scrub, a small section of woodland, a seasonally wet ditch and both modified and other neutral grassland. Updated habitat surveys were carried out in July 2023 which were extended to update protected species information compared to previously undertaken surveys associated with the OPA.

The River Itchen SAC/SSSI is located around 1.5km to the northwest of the site and is hydrologically linked. Downstream of the Itchen are the Solent and Southampton Water complex of Natura 2000 sites. There are no non-statutorily designated sites within the application boundary but Treeline Break SINC is about 200m to the south east.

Relevant mitigation for protected sites

All works will be implemented in accordance with the site wide OHH Ecological Mitigation and Management Strategy (EMMS) prepared for Eastleigh Borough Council by Johns Associates in 2022. It also recommended that a project specific Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan (EMMP) is secured through a condition which will build on the principles established and previously agreed.

In addition, a project specific CEMP should be produced and agreed prior to construction to ensure that the River Itchen is protected from discharge of sediments during construction.

Relevant protected species and embedded mitigation or survey requirements

These are:

Badger – no evidence found but given mobile nature could be present in the future. Vigilance during works needed and a pre-construction update survey.

Bats (several species) – important assemblage of up to nine species. No trees to be removed that have been identified as having bat potential. Sensitive lighting strategy needed (see below).

Birds (several species) – loss of potential nesting habitat.

Dormouse – precautionary mitigation needed due to presence of population in woodland to the south.

GCN and other amphibians – precautionary working method statement for GCNs required.

Otter and Water vole – no records of either associated with this site although there is a history of association with the wider OPA site (especially otters) so precautionary mitigation needed.

Reptiles – small numbers of slow-worm and grass snakes have been recorded on site and therefore precautionary mitigation will be required.

Hedgehog – no direct records but low numbers assumed. Precautionary mitigation required.

Invasive non-native species (INNS) – none recorded on site up at present but INNS have been recorded within the wider site and therefore updated surveys needed.

Mitigation

The ecological appraisal details integrated mitigation and additional ecological measures in section 4. These include the detailed production of a CEMP based on the outline measures detailed in section 4 and species-specific mitigation measures (summarised above) to mitigate in potential impacts on the Itchen SAC/SSSI or further downstream that I support. The measures are precautionary, reflecting the low level of risk.

Biodiversity Net Gain

BNG has been calculated using DEFRA metric 4.0 which at the time was the most recent version available. Overall this proposed element of the works delivers a net loss in terms of habitats and a significant gain in hedgerow (linear) units. While as a standalone project this would be unacceptable in policy terms, this application forms part of the wider suite of work on the One Horton Heath Project.

The wider OPA delivers a substantial net gain overall and in this case units can be borrowed from other phases of the wider project (in this case the Southern Green Infrastructure elements). This is recorded on a scheme-wide Biodiversity Net Gain tracker to ensure that the commitment for the OPA to deliver a minimum 10% net gain is achieved.

Lighting

Hydrock have provided a Lighting Impact Assessment (LIA) which considers and cross references the Johns Associates Ecological Impact Assessment. This includes buffer zones established around key sites where no additional lighting is proposed (>0.5 Lux). Other suggested mitigation measures are:

- Warmer Colour temperature LEDs
- Dimming controls
- Cowls, Shield or Hoods installed onto the luminaires
- Applying Buffer Zones

The lighting assessment concludes that more detailed information needs to be provided prior to construction so that these principles can be applied and agreed to avoid impacts on sensitive ecological receptors. I would suggest this could be done through an appropriate planning condition.

Landscaping

A Landscape Management Plan has been produced by Deacon Design (July 2023). This document sets out the principles for protection of ecological receptors and also the specifications for tree and

hedgerow planting, grassland creation/enhancement and SuDS planting. It contains a detailed maintenance schedule which allows for delivery and management to be easily understood and carried out. I support the interventions and principles in the document.

Drainage

Ridge (December 2023) have produced a drainage strategy to accompany this application. This document builds on the strategy that accompanies the wider OPA application. The LLFA have requested more information on a number of points and I can comment further when this information has been produced. However, the broad principles of the drainage strategy are acceptable and build upon those previously submitted and reviewed with the OPA application.

Conclusions

I raise **no objection** to the proposals on the grounds of ecology subject to:

- Submission of a project specific CEMP
- Submission of a project specific EMMP
- Submission of final lighting details
- Clarification on drainage points raised by the LLFA

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Date 22/03/24