

Ecology response 6/6/24 for F/23/95872 Land at South Side of Heath House Lane, Hedge End

Change of use of land to Agricultural with associated works including, engineering works to land to raise ground levels to allow erection of 2 x poly-tunnels and 2 x outbuildings.

Rachael Morris

6/6/24

I have reviewed the updated CEMP, BMEP and EclA by Abbas Ecology (June 2024), Proposed Site Layout Plan Rev B, Site Section Rev A and proposed poly tunnels and outbuilding plans.

The EclA mentions a *concrete bund to prevent potential run-off entering the tributary* but I don't see this on any of the site layout plans. I think a hay bale bund wrapped with Terram or similar landscaping fabric and pegged down into the soil would be more appropriate than concrete to trap sediment from runoff during the construction phase but still allow the surface water to drain normally. This would be left in place until vegetation has grown and stabilised the soil. The position of this bund must be shown on a plan.

The lighting system as described in section 6.5 of the EclA is appropriate and shall be implemented. It is not clear whether any lighting will be required at night.

The precautionary working methods for reptiles, dormice, badgers, nesting birds and hedgehogs are appropriate and shall be implemented.

The reptile mitigation strategy under an ecological watching brief as described in section 6.7 of the EclA is appropriate and must be implemented.

If dormice are discovered, then the works will stop immediately, and Natural England will be contacted for further advice, and this may result in a European Protected Species licence application being obtained. The root balls of the cut scrub must be removed by November of the same year. If the scrub removal happens during the bird breeding season an ecologist must be present.

The bird boxes and bat boxes, log piles, planted scrub and two additional oak trees are appropriate enhancements and are shown on figure 4 in the BMEP.

Photos of the biodiversity enhancements and silt bund in place must be submitted to the LPA in a monitoring report 1 year after completion.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist

2/4/24

Ecology

I have reviewed the Ecological Impact Assessment by Abbas Ecology (March 2024). This proposal has the potential to affect commuting badgers, hedgehogs, invertebrates, nesting birds, dormice and reptiles and Pilands Copse SINC which is designated for ancient woodland. I agree with the recommendations in this report except for the recommendation of a 15 m buffer for the ancient woodland. In September 2023, the Ecology team discussed this application, and the email from Rob Wiles (19/9/23) and concluded that while a 50 m buffer would not be achievable for this scheme, a 35 m buffer free from any infrastructure, with biodiversity enhancements would allow this proposal to move forward. Replacement trees will be required to compensate for the trees that were lost when the site was levelled. Planting of fruit trees in this area could be considered as biodiversity enhancements if this is acceptable to the tree officer.

Badger prints and a mammal path were found on the site, providing evidence of foraging and commuting badgers using this site. There is low potential for the scrub, log piles and tussocky grassland to support reptiles and limited potential for the scrub to support hazel dormice. The scrub has the potential to support nesting birds. The protected species mitigation recommended in section 6 of the report is satisfactory and must be implemented.

The report recommends a CEMP and a buffer to remove risks to Pilands Copse SINC. This is not a residential development and access to the woodland from the site will be limited however the following precautions must be followed:

No rubbish, agricultural or garden waste must be deposited in the SINC buffer zone or be allowed to enter the SINC. This includes soil, plants, grass clippings, hedge clippings, scrub or anything from this site. The report notes (section 4.2.2) that there is Rhododendron scrub along the eastern boundary and there is also bramble scrub where discarded items and rubbish were recorded. Rhododendron is an invasive species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and it is unlawful to allow it to spread into the wild. If Rhododendron invades the ancient woodland in the SINC it would out compete the native species and create shade where no other plants can grow. Cherry Laurel is also invasive, and while not listed in the Wildlife and Countryside Act, should also not be allowed to spread into the SINC. Pendulous sedge also spreads quickly and should be controlled.

Information on how these issues will be mitigated and how any green waste will be managed must be provided by the applicant.

The CEMP must include the following information:

- Pollution protection measures for Hoe Moor Creek which is a tributary of the River Hamble. Using soil as a bund (as suggested in section 6.1) is not sufficient, as sediment carried by runoff from soil must be prevented from entering the river.

- Precautionary working methods for habitat manipulation under ecological supervision during construction.
- Precautionary working and mitigation recommendations for commuting badgers, hedgehogs, invertebrates, dormice and reptiles.
- The scrub must be removed outside of the bird nesting season (usually March through August). If this is not possible, then a nesting bird check must be done by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to clearance. If any active nests are found the nests must be protected from disturbance by a 5 m buffer until after the young have fledged and left the nest.

The report recommends new native species planting, and allowing grassland to naturally colonise, and biodiversity enhancements consisting of bat roost boxes, bird nesting boxes, and log piles. A biodiversity enhancement and management plan can be conditioned which shows the locations of these enhancements. Monitoring can be conditioned and photographs of the buffer, mitigation and enhancements in place one year after completion can be submitted to satisfy the condition.

Surface water drainage

The DAS by Kode Architecture (September 2023) states that the site is to be served by a water supply and an area of the site is to be used as a rainwater harvesting area with water butts and a rainwater harvesting tank system. Drip irrigation will be used which reduces the volume of water required and amount of runoff. I am satisfied that there are no further surface water drainage concerns.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist

12/9/23

This site is on the boundary between an amber and green great crested newt impact risk zone. There are records of slow worms, bats, hedgehogs and badgers nearby.

Pilands Copse SINC is located along the southern boundary of this site. This is designated 1A ancient and semi-natural woodlands. A 50 m buffer free from all development is required for ancient woodland boundaries. The site measures roughly 74 m from Heath House Lane to the SINC boundary, so if the application were to be approved, development must only be allowed within the 24 m between the road and the northern edge of this 50 m buffer. The proposed site layout plan shows only an 18 m buffer from protected trees which is not acceptable. Ancient woodland is much more than protected trees, it is an irreplaceable priority habitat.

The stream that runs along the southern boundary is a tributary of the River Hamble SPA, SAC. It also runs through the Upper Hamble Estuary and Woods SSSI (Vantage Copse, Bottom Copse and Hoe Moor Copse) before it enters the River Hamble.

There is high potential for nutrient enrichment and chemical pollution from pesticides and herbicides from agricultural use to enter the protected waters of the River Hamble via surface water runoff.

Engineering works to the land before submission of this application may cause/may have already caused sediment to enter the watercourse.

Toilet facilities are not shown in the outbuildings on this plan, but since people would be working on site, they would be required. It is not clear how this would be provided.

Compensation for the habitat that has been lost and biodiversity enhancement would also be required.

I raise an objection due to the lack of a suitable ancient woodland buffer zone, potential for nutrient and sediment pollution to the watercourse, potential impact on the River Hamble SPA and SAC and lack of biodiversity information, lack of mitigation and lack of biodiversity enhancement.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist