

F/24/96895 Land West of Burnetts Lane and north of fir tree lane, Horton Heath, Eastleigh

Construction of areas of Green Infrastructure for the One Horton Heath Development, including open space, landscaping, bridleways (to include an upgrade and diversion of an existing Public Right of Way and causeway works), footpaths, SuDS, play areas and ecological and biodiversity enhancements (proposal constitutes EIA development)

Documents reviewed:

Landscape and Ecology Master plan

Biodiversity Nat Gain Assessments

Ecological Appraisal

Statutory Biodiversity Metrics

Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP)

Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

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

As a separate application for development of various elements of GI in three areas (north, central and south), the principles outlined here reflect the overall agreed approach within the Outline planning permission for the wider One Horton Heath Scheme.

Designated Sites

The whole of the One Horton Heath wider site is hydrologically linked to the River Itchen SAC and SSSI which is located around 1.5km west of the site. There are a number of non-statutorily designated sites in proximity to areas of proposed GI:

Hearts Copse (Southern)

Field north of Hearts Row (southern)

Treeline Break (southern)

Chalcroft Distribution Park (southern)

Round Copse (southern)

Quobleigh Wood and Ponds (Northern)

The submitted CEMP, delivery of SuDS in line with previously agreed overarching approach and embedded mitigation within the Ecological Appraisal will ensure that there are no negative impacts on designated sites.

Baseline Conditions

- Northern – bare ground, urban, modified grassland, cropland (all low distinctiveness), scrub, other neutral grassland, ponds (all medium distinctiveness) and woodland and fen (high and very high distinctiveness)
- Central – crops, modified grassland (low) and woodland, grassland, scrub (all medium)
- Southern – modified grassland (low), neutral grassland and woodland (medium) and wood pasture (high)

All three areas also contain linear features (hedgerows, lines of trees) which are assessed separately within the metric.

Protected species

The protected species that are known to be present and relevant to this application are:

Great-crested newts – population located in pond at Chalcroft Farm, works associated with Southern GI within 250m of pond will need a suitable licence. For the northern and central GI works, a precautionary approach will be adopted.

Dormice – small population present in central woodland belt. EPS licence EPSL 2022-62953-EPS-MIT associated with the main OHH Link Road is delivering habitat enhancement. A precautionary approach will be adopted for removal of small areas of vegetation associated with the central GI.

Barn owl – breeding pair known to be present in and around Chalcroft Farm.

Otter and water vole – no recent records, although otters are present in the wider landscape and could occur on site while passing through. Water vole have historic records on site but there is no evidence they persist at present. Precautionary mitigation will be required for both species.

In addition there will be assemblages of common breeding birds, reptiles, invertebrates and other amphibians present which will require precautionary mitigation in line with that agreed as embedded mitigation as part of the OPA.

Biodiversity Net Gain

A “biodiversity net gain assessment” (BNGA) has been submitted along with completed statutory metrics for each of the three areas of GI. The reports have been produced in line with the principles and rules set out within the DEFRA guidance. High/very high distinctiveness habitats are retained and enhanced while some lower distinctiveness habitats are lost but offset by enhancements to those others that are retained. All “trading rules” have been adhered to.

In summary:

- Northern GI baseline 37.47 habitat units, hedgerows 5.70 units, post intervention 45.68 habitat units, 6.71 hedgerow units. This represents a 21.9% uplift for habitats and 17.85% for hedgerows
- Central GI baseline 45.64 habitat units, hedgerows 4.48 units, post intervention 59.78 habitat units, 5.73 hedgerow units. This represents a 31.9% uplift for habitats and 27.8% for hedgerows
- Southern GI baseline 73.21 habitat units, hedgerows 17.35 units, post intervention 90.16 habitat units, 19.09 hedgerow units. This represents a 23.15% uplift for habitats and 10.03% for hedgerows

The southern GI delivers more BNG than indicated in these figures, but as detailed in the BNGA there is some offsetting required for elements of the associated secondary infrastructure project. Given that the present application and the secondary infrastructure are considered within the same site boundary through the overarching OPA, the BNG can be considered “on site” rather than offsite.

In addition, the Ecological Appraisal indicates that a separate river metric will be submitted that will detail the BNG associated with watercourses in the GI parcels. At this point this has yet to be received.

The principle for the watercourses will be the same as that for habitats and hedgerows – a 10% uplift for the features within the application site boundary will be required.

All BNG will need to be managed in line with the submitted Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) which covers a 30 year period.

Following Government guidance, the following habitats will incur a monitoring fee:

- All on-site creations of habitats with medium or higher distinctiveness.
- Any on-site enhancement where the habitat's condition is increasing as a result of the enhancement or the habitat's distinctiveness is increasing as a result of the enhancement.

Conclusions and recommendations

I have no objection to the application as presented, although I await review of the Watercourse metric and can provide an addendum to these comments as required.

The following should be secured with appropriate planning conditions:

- All works undertaken in accordance with the Submitted CEMP.
- All recommended mitigation in the submitted Ecological Appraisal delivered in full.
- The HMMP is implemented as presented and monitored in line with the agreed monitoring fees secured as part of a legal agreement.

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Ecologist

Date 02/07/2024