

## Ecology Response to Pro Vision Ecology Technical note 22/11/24 (ref: 8703): O/23/96432 Land at Cobbett Way

This note provides a response to the additional ecological information supplied in the Technical Note (22/11/24) for the planning appeal at Cobbett Way, Botley for the outline planning application of up to 34 dwellings on the site (O/23/96432). The proximity of part of an access road to a block of Lowland mixed deciduous woodland identified as priority habitat was included as a reason for refusal.

Three reasons were given for refusal:

- Insufficient buffer with the priority habitat.
- Additional lighting impacts on the woodland.
- Absence of a 10-metre buffer required for impacts to priority habitat corridor.

### Buffer Zone size and impacts to priority habitat corridor

The technical note highlights that there is no standard guidance for buffer zone size when considering priority habitats in the same way that standing advice exists for ancient woodland. As a local planning authority we have a duty to consider impacts on priority habitats in our decision making under the NERC Act (2006) and strengthened under the Environment Act (2021).

The woodland is not listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory but in Hampshire and in many other places blocks of woodland under <2ha in size were not included, hence woodland not listed on the inventory can still be ancient in character.

Additionally, the fact that there was no arboricultural objection has no bearing on ecology as arboriculture considers issues that sit outside of ecological function and ecological value of woodland habitats.

Ancient woodland and priority lowland woodland have much ecological overlap and there is evidence that the standard minimum 15m buffer to ancient woodland is insufficient to avoid impacts. It is therefore reasonable to require a buffer of 10m to priority woodland habitat.

The technical note highlights that the majority of the access road sits well outside this 10m buffer and indeed there is provision for planting to bolster and protect the existing woodland. It is only a short section at the point of access which encroaches within this buffer to a distance of around 3m at the point of access into the proposed development. The technical note also highlights that many issues associated with residential development and proximity to important habitats are avoided within design as the properties are set well back from the woodland.

While we do consider that there will be impacts on the priority habitat where the proposed access is very close, the potential for increased buffer planting that is proposed will likely offset these impacts.

This planting will ensure that overall there is unlikely to be a significant negative impact of the functionality of the woodland as a corridor.

#### Additional lighting

The addition of lighting associated with development schemes along the edge of woodland corridors has a number of implications for ecology. In this case the technical note confirms that there is no requirement for formal street lighting along the access road and that the only form of direct lighting impacts will come from car headlights.

Car headlights will likely cause some disturbance to the woodland block but these are likely to be temporary and infrequent and are unlikely to have a significant detrimental impact on the woodland or wider corridor as a whole.

#### Conclusion

On reviewing the additional ecology information and explanation supplied in the technical note we now conclude that the impacts from the section of road in close proximity are unlikely to be significant providing there is suitable planting along the buffer as described in the technical note and the road remains free of artificial street lighting.