

Ecology response for F/25/98808 POLICE TRAINING CENTRE, ROYAL VICTORIA COUNTRY PARK, NETLEY ABBEY, SOUTHAMPTON, SO31 4TS

Erection of 3.0 metre high steel mesh security fence to site boundaries, with vehicular entrance gates, and widening of access drive from Hamble Lane

Gary Osmond

4/2/25

## **Ecology**

I have reviewed the Ecological Appraisal by the Hampshire County Council Ecology Team (November 2024).

The habitats along the proposed fence line were surveyed as: broadleaved woodland, bracken, other neutral grassland, modified grassland, running water, hardstanding and species poor hedgerow.

Survey results found habitat suitable for breeding birds, badgers in the wider woodland but no setts near the proposed fence, likely presence of bat roosts in woodland trees, high quality bat foraging habitat, tall grassland suitable for reptiles and amphibians, and general suitability of the site for small mammals. The woodland and scrub has been assessed as high quality dormouse habitat and the nearby ponds had potential suitability for great crested newts. Dormouse and great crested newt surveys were conducted and confirmed likely absence for both species.

The mitigation and enhancement recommendations in the report are appropriate. They can be conditioned in a precautionary working method statement to protect nesting birds, reptiles, amphibians, hedgehogs, badgers and bats.

This will include:

Any vegetation removal and fencing work must either be done outside of breeding bird season or if this is not possible then under strict ecological supervision and no more than 24 hours after a check for active nests by a suitably experienced ecologist. If active nests are found work will stop and a 5 m buffer will be created around the nest to avoid disturbance until after the young have fledged and left the nest.

A two -stage precautionary vegetation clearance method for reptiles and hedgehogs as outlined in the report.

Monitoring checks for signs of badgers must be carried out no more than one month in advance of works to identify any new sett building activity and avoid impact when determining the final route of the fence.

A fence method statement must be submitted to include the following:

Ecological supervision will be required to determine the final locations of the fence posts and panels to ensure that the fence is diverted around trees and avoid harm to their root protection areas (RPAs).

Six two-way badger gates will be installed to prevent the fence from becoming a barrier to dispersal of badgers. The fence base will not be buried to permit small mammals to pass underneath.

Precautions to protect the environment during the construction phase must be provided in a CEMP. This must include protection of lowland mixed deciduous woodland, wet woodland, and ancient woodland, waste disposal, the safe management of small pieces of metal and plastic which may need to be cut off of the fence panels, screws, bolts and nuts, refuelling and refilling to be done only on hardstanding on a bunded spill mat, management of concrete washout and waste tarmac, lighting, noise, precautions taken to avoid the inadvertent spread of invasive species (Rhododendron and cherry laurel), minimising trampling,

### **Biodiversity Net Gain**

A BNG metric has been submitted but it has not been uploaded to Mycelia at the validation stage. This must be done before determination and Ecology must be reconsulted.

The development is predicted to deliver 14.89% net gain in area habitats and 52.49% net gain in linear habitats. This is proposed to be done *by enhancement of an area of woodland that is currently dominated by Rhododendron and Cherry Laurel, the enhancement of existing areas of amenity grassland to create a more species-rich and diverse neutral grassland habitat, and new native hedge planting.*

The outline Biodiversity Net Gain strategy has been included in the Ecological Appraisal report. A formal Biodiversity Gain Plan and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) can be conditioned.

### **Surface water drainage**

As shown in the proposed plans for the gates (P2, October 2024) the construction of 3 waiting bays for non-pass holders at the controlled entrance gate and two waiting bays at the Hound Lane entrance will require the addition of a larger amount of hard standing. This should be constructed as permeable pavement. Surface water drainage must be considered wherever the road is to be widened to ensure that drainage of surface water from the road is not impeded. The Planning Design and Access Statement states that improvements to the access road will be designed to avoid pooling of water currently experienced adjacent to the pedestrian road crossing. The use of permeable paving should also be considered in this area.

Lisa Malter

Ecologist