

Date: 02 June 2025
Our ref: 511918
Your ref: APP/W1715/W/24/3353080



Jonathan Alden

BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Jonathan Alden,

Planning consultation: Erection of 2no. dwellings, with access, parking & landscaping
Location: South of Peewit Hill, Bursledon, SO31 8BL

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 07 May 2025 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

1. Is Natural England content that the proposed measures, outlined below, would be sufficient to avoid an adverse impact to the integrity of the site in relation to the specified qualifying features?

No. We consider the proposal will still have an adverse effect on the integrity of the New Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site from increased recreational disturbance which has not been sufficiently mitigated. The impacts are also likely to affect the features of the associated Sites of Special Scientific Interest which underpin the above habitats site designations. It is noted the applicant proposes to provide a financial contribution towards Eastleigh Borough Council's Interim Mitigation Strategy to address recreational impacts on the New Forest designated sites. Natural England currently have serious concerns with various elements of the interim strategy, including the reduced provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), the lack of information on increasing visitor capacity at the Itchen Valley Country Park and lack of an accompanying monitoring strategy. This leads to a significant level of uncertainty remaining as to the effectiveness of the proposed in-borough measures. We do not view that the proposed mitigation meets the requirements of certainty, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2017 (as amended). Consequently, it is Natural England's view that the competent authority will not be able to ascertain that this proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of the sites and therefore it cannot pass an Appropriate Assessment. There is potential for alternative solutions to the proposal and no imperative reasons of overriding public interest to allow it, therefore despite a negative assessment, the proposal will not pass the derogation tests of Regulation 64.

To mitigate against the increase of recreational disturbance to Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar, we note the contribution to the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership (SRMP), also known as Bird Aware Solent. Provided that the applicant is complying with the policy and the Bird Aware Definitive Strategy, Natural England are satisfied that the applicant can mitigate against the potential adverse effects of recreation from the development on the integrity of the Solent sites and has no objection to this aspect of the application.

To offset the nutrient burden resulting from the proposed development, nitrogen mitigation will be purchased from Eastleigh Borough Councils mitigation scheme and appropriately secured through a Unilateral Undertaking. Natural England is of the view that if these measures, including contributions to them, are implemented, they will be effective and reliable in preventing harmful effects on the Habitats Sites from nutrient impacts for the duration of the proposed development and has no objection to this aspect of the application.

2. Can Natural England confirm that the European Sites and associated qualifying features that may be subject to likely significant effects are comprehensive and correct? If not, then please indicate any additional site(s) and/or features that may need to be addressed either alone or in-combination with other schemes.

The European Habitats Sites do not differ from your email and are listed below.

- New Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), and Ramsar
- Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar
- Solent Maritime SAC

3. Are there any other matters that Natural England wishes to raise in relation to the proposal?

N/A

Yours sincerely

Emma Foster
Sustainable Development Higher Officer
Thames Solent Team