

13 August 2010

Flo Churchill,
Planning Policy and Urban Design,
Havant Borough Council,
Civic Centre Road,
Havant,
Hants.
PO9 2AX

Dear Flo,

Havant Borough Council Core Strategy – Issues arising related to Havant Thicket

Further to the discussion on 12 August, I am able to provide the following information on the matters raised at the meeting.

Coordinated approach to delivery of green infrastructure:

Portsmouth Water has already entered in to discussions with the Local Planning Authority and Natural England to discuss the delivery of green infrastructure and how that might be phased. The Company is committed to further discussion to determine what can be delivered at the site, to develop a strategy for the phased introduction of green infrastructure.

As part of this approach Portsmouth Water established a Stakeholder Group in 2004 to ensure that cross boundary cooperation and engagement was at the heart of developing a suitable scheme, which met the needs of the local community and green infrastructure. The group comprised Havant Borough Council, East Hants District Council, Hampshire County Council, community representatives, wildlife organisations, the Forestry Commission, Staunton Country Park and others. More detailed discussions have also taken place with HBC and EHDC about the planning requirements for the scheme at joint meetings.

Green infrastructure forms an intrinsic part of the proposed reservoir scheme. In fact it will form a very sizeable part of the total cost of building the reservoir. Based on the current outline plan it is estimated that provision of environmental mitigation and green infrastructure could comprise approximately ten percent of the total building costs.

Habitat impacts;

The Company recognise the need to fully understand all of the environmental and ecological impacts associated with any development of the site to ensure that a robust mitigation strategy is proposed. A comprehensive range of ecological survey work has been undertaken at the site since 2005. In 2008 Natural England identified that some additional survey work would be needed to support a planning application. That work is now complete. Appendix A summarises the survey work undertaken.

Portsmouth Water has been working with the adjacent landowners (Forestry Commission and Staunton Country Park) to explore developing a joint management agreement to maximise opportunities for green infrastructure, both in relation to conservation and recreation. The four small areas of woodland to be lost to the scheme are predominantly plantation blocks (Appendix B). The current conifer plantation habitat on the Forestry Commission land to the north has an enormous amount of potential to be restored to create good quality ancient woodland. The Forestry Commission have confirmed that they are very keen to work with the Company to include enhancement to the woodland as part of the mitigation strategy being developed, to create high quality woodland.

The Company objective is to work with partners to develop a scheme which will provide a net increase in biodiversity on and adjacent to the site in the long-term. The outline plan includes provision of a new retained wetland with islands along the one mile length of the northern shore of the reservoir, new woodland and hedgerow planting, creation of wildflower meadows and species relocation.

Alternatives:

You asked for information on whether we had considered alternative sites for the reservoir. Alternative sites have been put forward and considered for a new reservoir site since the early 1960's. A number of regional and company reviews have identified HTWSR as the preferred site for a new reservoir. Approximately 80 sites were initially considered, with nineteen alternative locations for a reservoir considered in more detail. In addition, seven alternative site layouts were assessed by the Stakeholder Group in 2006. A key outcome from the review was that the site boundary was modified to substantially reduce the area of good quality semi natural ancient woodland to be removed. Full details of the sites considered are included in the updated Draft Water Resources Management Plan (July 2010)

If you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Neville Smith
Finance and Regulation Director

Enclosures:

Appendix A: Ecological survey work undertaken since 2005

Appendix B: Information on woodland blocks within the Havant Thicket site

Appendix A: Ecological Survey Work Undertaken Since 2005

Species	Survey Dates		Methodologies	Guidance Followed
Bats	2005	7 dates June to September	Detector transects - site divided into five transect routes (each walked at least on two occasions)	Bat Conservation Trust 2007 <i>Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidance</i> .
	2006	4 dates May to August	As per 2005	Natural England 2004 <i>Bat Mitigation Guidelines</i>
	2008	3 visits per month April to August	Detector transects, emergence counts, capture and radio tracking on site.	
2009		11 visits September to early Oct	Capture of bats at 6 woodlands within 3km of the site potentially suitable to Bechstein's bats.	
		4 day's survey January to February	Inspections of known tree roost sites for hibernating bats and detector surveys to establish extent of winter activity in key areas	
		Further survey visits proposed (detail to be discussed with Natural England)	Further detector transects, emergence counts, capture and radio tracking on site and in woodlands within surrounding 3km.	Proposal for further work spring/ summer 2009 agreed with NE on 7 April 2009. Work now complete.
Great Crested Newt	2005	Mid April to Early June	All ponds on / immediately adjacent to the site	Natural England 2001 <i>Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines</i>
	2006	Mid April to Early June Note: Repeat survey spring season prior to construction	As above and all ponds within 500m Included egg searches/bottle traps and torch searches (x 4 dates) and netting	

Reptiles	2005	5 visits May to Oct	50 Refugia checked and incidental records when slow walkover and ad hoc records during other site visits	Gent, T. & Gibson, S. 2003 The Herpetofauna Workers' Manual. JNCC. Peterborough.
	2006 2007	Ad hoc checks of refugia when on site, 10 dates August to October	1600 rufugia placed across the site	
	2008	September to October, 15 visits	Survey of Forestry Commission land north of proposed reservoir site using 20 survey transects/ refugia	
Badger	2005		Specific site walkover survey for signs/setts	
	2006		In 2006 to 2008 only incidental observations made	
		Note: Repeat survey proposed prior to construction		
Dormouse	2005	4 visits June to October	68 nest tubes and 98 nest boxes erected in June. 4 checks and nut searches in October	Natural England 2006 2 nd ed. <i>Dormouse Conservation Handbook</i>
	2006 2007	May to October	3 nest box checks and nut searches on 4 dates between October and November 200 tubes & 100 boxes erected to survey the Avenue and surrounding woodland (inc Hammonds Lands Copse)	
	2008	4 occasional visits June to October	Nest box/tube checks	

Water Vole	2005	Summer	Stream and ditch survey	Strachan, R. & Morhouse, T. 2006 2 nd ed. <i>Water Vole Conservation Handbook</i>
	2006	July	Stream and ditch survey	
Vegetation	2005 2006	May to Sept	Phase 1 Walkover DAFOR scale used Species linked to each vegetation block, quadrats in ditch and hedgerows in selected areas	JNCC 1990 <i>Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: a technique for environmental audit</i> Rodwell, J. S. 2000 <i>British Plant Communities</i>
	2008	June and September	Note: Full walkover survey in 2008 excluded woodland	
	2009	May & June	National Vegetation Classification (NVC) surveys of ancient woodland communities on site and in immediate surrounding areas.	
Invertebrates	2005	Incidental recording in April, then 3 monthly visits June to August. April to August.	Visual search, hand net or pooter capture, sweeping vegetation, beating foliage and grubbing	
	2006		Note: No survey as 2005 data considered adequate	
	2008	July and October	Survey of river invertebrates	
Rivers & Streams	2008	July	Baseline Geomorphology survey of streams on site and following pipeline route	Defra, 2003 <i>Guidebook for applied Fluvial Geomorphology</i>
	2008	July & October	River Habitat Survey of selected sections of streams on site and part of pipeline route	EA, 2003 <i>River Habitat Survey in Britain and Ireland: Field Survey Guidance Manual</i>

Wintering Birds	2005/06	6 visits November to March	Transects	Gilbert, G., Gibbon, D., Evans, J. 1998 <i>Bird Monitoring Methods; a manual of survey techniques for key UK species.</i>
	2008/09	December to March Update survey comprising 3 monthly visits, rising to 5 if required (depending on activity).	Transects Note: Three visits completed, additional two visits not required.	
Breeding Birds (General)	2005	4 visits May and June	Walk over survey and noting any singing/displaying	Gilbert, G., Gibbon, D., Evans, J. 1998 <i>Bird Monitoring Methods; a manual of survey techniques for key UK species.</i>
	2008	5 visits May to July	Detailed survey breeding bird communities	
Nightjar	2006	4 visits June and July	Survey of site and surrounding areas.	Gilbert, G., Gibbon, D., Evans, J. 1998 <i>Bird Monitoring Methods; a manual of survey techniques for key UK species.</i>
	2008	4 visits June and July	Targeted survey of breeding birds in FC land to north and other observations	
Pipeline survey	2007	1 visit February	Protected species phase 1 survey of northern section	JNCC 1990 <i>Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: a technique for environmental audit</i>

Harbour Surveys	2005/06 2006/07	Entec	Survey of freshwater creeks and control channels where no freshwater flow.	BTO WeBS methodology
	2007/08	Ecosa	Low water targeted creek counts (x15) over 4 hour low tide cycle. Comparison made to flow in channels.	

Appendix B

Information on woodland blocks within the Havant Thicket site

A mitigation strategy will be presented in conjunction with the planning application.

HTWSR - Current site layout



Note: The blue line illustrates the location of the reservoir upper water level and the grey contours show the provisional location of the embankments. The dark green shapes provide an indicative outline representation of the extent of the proposed new wetland nature conservation area.

Middle Clearing; Is a 2.5 hectare linear single age young oak plantation with little understorey, designated as Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland (SNAW). The area is shown as a clearing on the OS map c.1898. Later maps show some trees in the northern part of the original clearing. An RAF aerial photograph confirms that this area was predominantly a clearing within the woodland in 1946 with some isolated trees. On a 1954 aerial photograph the area of Middle Clearing appears as a young plantation. This is consistent with the observed age of the trees.





Middle Clearing – typical view of this small woodland plantation

Round Wood; Is a 2.5 hectare single age young oak plantation with no understory designated as a Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS). Historic maps show the area was originally part of the larger managed woodland. The area appears to be a young plantation on the 1954 aerial photograph of the site. This is consistent with the observed age of the trees. The wood is not fenced and has been subject to grazing for many years, as a result the area is botanically poor.



Round Wood – typical view of this small woodland plantation

The Avenue; Is a linear strip of woodland 850m long by 85m wide with an area of about 8 hectares and a footpath running through the centre. It comprises predominantly replanted oaks of a similar age and is designated as Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland (SNAW). The mature oak trees that now comprise the Avenue are believed to have been established in c.1870. This is consistent with the observed age of the trees. This was not a planted avenue, but is the remnant of the larger managed woodland which was cleared in the early 1950's long before Portsmouth Water purchased the land.



The understory in The Avenue is less well developed than in the SCP woodland. Some areas of hazel present were coppiced in 2007, but this has not resulted in the subsequent emergence of flower rich areas.

Corsican Pine Plantation; Is a 3.6 hectare typical pine plantation woodland block, with no significant understory, designated as a Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS). Planting took place after 1954.

