



Contact: Jess Price

E-mail: swtconservation@sussexwt.org.uk

Date: 17 December 2021

By email only

Germaine.Asabere@hastings.gov.uk

Attn: Ms Asabere

Dear Germaine,

Planning Application Reference: HS/FA/21/00327

Description: Business park development to deliver business units consisting of 4010m² of light industrial/manufacturing units (use classes E/B2), 490m² of bespoke space for a local employer, and the renewal of planning permissions HS/FA/16/00330 & HS/FA/18/00761 for car showrooms (1215 sqm), as well as associated uses including plant, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, car parking, cycle parking, hard and soft landscaping and utilities.

Location: Queensway North, Queensway, St Leonards-on-sea

Thank you for consulting the Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) on the further information submitted by the applicants. We have been waiting for the information listed in the Environmental Implications Letter to appear on the planning portal.

Our previous objection was clear as to what was required in order to make the development policy compliant:

- Redesign plot 1.1 to ensure a full 15 meter buffer to the ancient woodland as per Natural England standing advice and policies EN3 and EN4
- Identify all impacts on bats, including operational impacts, and avoid, mitigate and compensate for these through good design.
- Follow the mitigation hierarchy firstly avoiding and where needed minimising risk to the adjacent SSSI, ensuring no adverse impacts. We believe leaving Plot 2.1 undeveloped is a reasonable method and would allow more space for both SuDS and biodiversity enhancements.
- Redesign the proposal in order to deliver a net gain in biodiversity as required by NPPF paragraph 170 and 175

We have now examined the new documents provided on the portal, but unfortunately, this has not satisfied our reasons for **objection** and therefore, this stands. The proposal is still not consistent with the development plan or national policy, particularly, policies LP2, EN3 and EN4.

Ancient Woodland

No changes have been made to plot 1.1 and therefore the buffer around the ancient woodland is still not sufficient. We note that the response to objections and letters states that a sufficient root protection area is being provided, however this does not meet the requirements of Natural England Standing Advice or policy EN3. This is clear that ancient woodland buffers must be a minimum of 15 metres, and may need to be bigger depending on specific circumstances. Ancient Woodland buffers are not only there to protect tree roots, but to protect the whole woodland ecosystem from both direct and indirect impacts. We also do not believe that the building will only be used in daylight hours, given that in autumn/winter it gets dark between 4pm and 6pm.

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Bats

SWT's concerns about the lack of bat surveys have not been addressed. The response to objections letter states that 'Enhanced woodland boundaries will be unlit after-dark, where possible, as part of the Lighting Strategy', however the boundary along plot 1.1 is not being enhanced, it is being encroached into by parking. We note that bats were recorded along this boundary in October, when dusk is around 6pm. We are not clear how the applicants can guarantee that cars will not be turning on headlights at this time of year.

Marline Valley

Natural England's initial response was very clear. It requested further information on a number of issues, which does not appear to have been provided. From the planning documents available, it still does not appear that the mitigation hierarchy has been followed or that risks to the SSSI have been avoided and minimised. The Site Management Plan may clearly state that the use of potentially harmful chemicals will be subject to strict controls, however SWT is still not clear how this will be enforced once the different businesses are in operation.

Biodiversity Net Gain

We have not seen the full metric spreadsheet, so we cannot comment on the accuracy of the calculations, particularly for the habitat creation values. However, despite the amendments proposed, it is clear from the Biodiversity Net Gain Letter this development will still result in a net loss. This is not compliant with paragraph 174 and 180 of the NPPF.

Yours sincerely

Jess Price
Conservation Officer