

LAND WEST OF OLD STREET, STUBBINGTON

Introduction

My name is Barry Duffin. I support Fareham Borough Council's decision to refuse the planning application from Bargate Homes, and request that you dismiss their appeal against this decision.

In my presentation I shall refer to the two fields west of Old Street as 'the Site'. I have been familiar with 'the Site' and nearby Titchfield Haven since the early 1960s. From 1972 until 2012 I was employed by Hampshire County Council to manage the newly purchased Titchfield Haven nature reserve. As I have lived and worked on the nature reserve for these 40 years I feel that I am suitably qualified to convey the concerns I have for the future of the nature reserve if 150 houses were to be built on 'the Site'.

Those concerns are shared by both professional and amateur naturalists, Titchfield Haven's volunteers and visitors to the reserve, and many hundreds of residents

The Importance of the Location of the Old Street Buffer Zone

'The Site' is situated on high ground, overlooking and adjacent to the eastern meadows of the nature reserve. There is no more sensitive an area within the reserve that is prone to disturbance from human activities than these meadows.

The overriding attraction to wildlife that the reserve and 'the Site' land offers, and the most important contribution 'the Site' has made in the past has been that of peace and tranquility, and freedom from public intrusion. This can only be achieved in the future by maintaining that envelope/cushion of undeveloped land.

I would remind you that the central point I am here to make is that the sustainability of the Haven, and the wellbeing of the wildlife depends upon the protection afforded by the surrounding land, of which these fields are a crucial part. From the aerial photograph it is plain to see how residential development is squeezing the Strategic Gap.

*Appendix 1 – Photos 1 & 2 Aerial photographs of Titchfield Haven taken from a westerly approach. 'The Site' is clearly shown adjacent to the nature reserve with the tide of urban development beyond.
(Photos taken on 1st August 1989 by B.S.Duffin)*

The nature reserve is notably linear in shape, being no wider than 500 metres at any point over its entire two miles of the lower Meon valley. This narrowness renders many of the most sensitive areas within the Haven vulnerable to unsympathetic activities on neighbouring land.

The Importance of the Eastern Meadows within the National Nature Reserve

A variety of feeding and roosting flocks of wading birds and wildfowl are attracted during the late autumn and winter months, to the reserve's eastern meadows. These birds originate from their summer breeding grounds in the high Arctic, western Russia and Iceland, areas where they have little or no contact with humans. They are notoriously nervous creatures, and who can blame them. Outside of the nature

reserve many of these species are legitimate quarry for wildfowlers from 1st September until 31st January. Already whilst overflying other countries on their migration, they may have been shot at several times.

Appendix 2 – Photos 3 & 4 of a wintering flock of Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits in flight over the eastern meadows of the reserve, and a single Black-tailed Godwit (Photos taken by Dennis Bright on 16th January 2008)

Access within the nature reserve is carefully managed so that these birds are viewed at some distance so as not to disturb the feeding and roosting flocks. Movement and sounds created on 'the Site' land when these flocks are present has often caused these birds to vacate the reserve for long periods, forcing them into less protected sites within the Solent.

In stark contrast to the eastern meadows in the reserve, the western meadows attract very few birds nowadays, except during times of exceptionally cold weather when birds are forced into feeding here. The main reason for the lack of birds in this locality is the nearness of the increasingly heavily used public footpath, running from the coast to Titchfield village.

This footpath is popular for dog walking, and, despite being a statutory footpath, is frequently used by cyclists. Such usage does, however, have an adverse effect on wildlife trying to feed in these meadows. Hence the concern regarding the east meadows in the future where there is currently little disturbance from the Old Street buffer land.

The Threats to the National Nature Reserve

Titchfield Haven has had its fair share of threats to its habitats and wildlife in the past.

Oiled birds as a result of spillages at the Fawley Oil Refinery.

Sewerage from burst pipes crossing the valley.

Leakage of effluent from at least three illegal landfill sites in the Meon Valley.

All these threats have been weathered in one way or another. The construction of 160 houses just metres away from the reserve boundary, would however present irreversible damage not only to the NNR but the SPA as a whole.

The adverse impacts of residential developments in close proximity to nature reserves are well documented.¹ A significant increase in dwellings will in turn lead to an increase in recreational disturbance, trespass, light and noise pollution, chemical polluting runoff from the land and increased predation by stray cats and dogs.

A random sample of almost 2980 households in the UK in 2007 showed that 26% of households owned a cat and 31% owned dogs². So potentially we could be seeing an influx of 60+ dogs and 40+ cats into the neighbourhood.

And where will these dogs be exercised?

Most probably on the sliver of green mitigation land on the reserve boundary and the access track to the nature reserve.

And where will the 18 small birds and mammals that each cat is likely to catch annually emanate from?

The nature reserve.

Titchfield Haven Location and Designations

Titchfield Haven lies within Joint Character Area 126: The South Coast Plain, as designated by Natural England. Although the coastal plain is heavily developed and highly populated, there is however a feeling of openness in the vicinity of the National Nature Reserve, being on the shores of the Solent, and where over 500 acres of farmland is in close proximity. Titchfield Haven is one of the most highly designated nature reserves in Hampshire and on the south coast of England.

1959 – Titchfield Haven was declared at a national level as a Site of Special Interest (SSSI)

Extract from Natural England's citation for Titchfield Haven SSSI.³

"There are probably no more than ten comparable sites on the south coast and these are collectively vital pre-migratory feeding localities for some species of wetland birds, besides supporting a fauna and flora now highly restricted in distribution in England."

1973 – A year after the purchase of Titchfield Haven it was declared a statutory Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

1995 – The Haven was incorporated into the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA)⁴, designated under EC Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC), and as a Ramsar site.

The reserve was also designated a National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Nature Conservation Interest within the NNR

Development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted⁵.

The primary nature conservation interest on the National Nature Reserve is the assemblage of bird species that utilise the diverse variety of habitats throughout the year. In addition the reserve hosts an impressive range of mammals and plants.

The Facts

270 species of birds have been recorded in last fifty years.

150 of these species occurring annually.

60 of these species remain to breed annually.

6 species of birds currently protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981⁶, currently breed on the nature reserve, namely **Barn Owl**,

Marsh Harrier, Cetti's Warbler, Mediterranean Gull, Bearded Reedling and Avocet.

Internationally important numbers of Icelandic breeding **Black-tailed Godwits** regularly visit the reserve during the winter months, along with wildfowl such as **Teal** and **Wigeon** from western Russia and the Baltic regions.

Otters now incorporate Titchfield Haven into their home range on the River Meon.

The Otter is protected under:

Regulation 39 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 (as amended) (Schedule 2) as European Protected Species ⁷

Following a 3 year reintroduction programme from 2013, **Water Voles** are now widespread within the reserve and along reserve boundaries, in suitable habitat. On the 6th April 2008 water voles were granted full protection in England and Wales, under Section 9 of Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

2 UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP), ⁸ fish species occur in significant numbers in the River Meon namely the **European Eel** and the **Sea Trout**.

7 Nationally scarce plant species occur on the reserve including the one Red Data Book species **Slender Bird's-foot-trefoil**, along with **Marsh Mallow, Divided Sedge, Annual Beard-grass, One-flowered Glasswort, Suffocated Clover** and **Frogbit**.

6. Notable species are found in the aquatic, swamp and tall-herb communities of the ditch systems traversing the eastern meadows.

Dependence of Wildlife on Land Bordering the National Nature Reserve

In managing Titchfield Haven knowledge of the needs and habits of the wildlife has been essential in order to manage the varied habitats in a sympathetic manner. Therefore regular monitoring and surveying of the animals and plants has been an integral part of management. It soon became apparent how reliant the reserve's wildlife was on the surrounding agricultural land. With wildlife not recognising boundaries, the surrounding agricultural land has served as an unofficial extension to the reserve, and a welcome cushion to the spread of residential development.

The recording of all breeding birds using the Common Bird Census technique ⁹, has been carried out annually since 1973. In addition a number of species frequenting the western boundary hedgerow and open agricultural land of 'the Site' were incorporated each year during the censuses.

Data concerning wetland birds has been collated annually since 1972 and contributed to the national 'Wetland Bird Survey' (**WeBS**).

The Facts concerning the two fields west of Old Street, i.e. 'the Site'

65 species of birds recorded within the nature reserve have also been noted on 'the Site'.

8 species of birds on the RSPB's Red List of 'Birds of Conservation Concern', species in decline, namely **Lapwing, Mistle Thrush, Cuckoo, Song Thrush, Linnet, House Sparrow, Starling** and **Skylark** all occur within the reserve and on 'the Site'.

In the spring and summer, breeding birds have been found to be mainly in the surrounding hedgerows on 'the Site'. Many of these hedgerow species rely on the nearness of the agricultural land for food, particularly during the breeding season when young have to be fed.

The presence of an extensive network of badger setts, extending into 'the Site' from the nature reserve boundary, has presented the reserve's **Shelduck** with ideal nesting sites in redundant setts. The duck have laid their eggs in the setts in late April/early May and then accompanied the newly hatched chicks down to the river during June.

Skylarks, one of the RSPB's Red Listed species, have nested annually on 'the Site', except on occasions when rank vegetation has dominated, as has been the situation during the last two years.

From late October until early March wintering **Snipe** from Scandinavia leave the reserve at dusk and fly to the surrounding farmland, including 'the Site' land to feed through the night on earthworms, returning to the reserve at first light. In recent years an annual census has recorded the highest numbers in Hampshire to be present.

Several hundred wintering **Brent Geese** from Siberia have grazed 'the Site' in the past. On one occasion the number of birds peaked at 1000+ feeding on the lower field of 'the Site'. This spectacle has usually occurred when the field has been sown in the previous autumn with a cereal crop, in years when a significant number of juvenile birds are accompanying the adults. This follows a successful breeding season which may happen only once or twice in every five to six years. 'The Site's lower field is listed as a compartment in the Brent Goose strategy map. In the last three years 'the Site' has been dominated by unkept vegetation and hence unsuitable for the feeding geese. 'The Site' could play an important role in providing additional sanctuary areas for over-wintering waders and Brent geese, if the land, was retained in favourable management. It is estimated that the Solent as a whole supports about 10-13% of the world population of Dark-bellied Brent Geese and about 30% of the UK population¹⁰.

Appendix 3 – A photograph shows wintering Brent Geese flying into the east meadows of Titchfield Haven after disturbance on Old Street lower field. The Brent Goose Strategy Map is also shown in this Appendix (*Photograph taken by B S Duffin 3rd February 2007*).

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 states:

“Any impact on a wader roost or Brent Goose feeding site outside of the SPA/Ramsar site boundaries may be considered to have an effect on the international site itself.

There is a detailed process by which a plan or project affecting an SPA/Ramsar or other international site, including feeding or roosting grounds beyond the boundary of the designated site should be considered. This is set out under Regulations 61, 62 and 66 for 'plans and projects', and regulations 102-105 specifically for land use plans” (*The application of the Habitats Regulations to land use plans in the UK derives from an October 2005 European Court of Justice Ruling on the transposition of the Habitats Directive into UK law.*)

Besides badgers being dependent on the surrounding farmland during the hours of darkness there are three species of owl that have been regularly recorded, namely

Little Owl, Tawny Owl and Barn Owl. All three have been recorded breeding on the nature reserve, and over the neighbouring farmland.

The most recent addition to the list of breeding birds within the National Nature Reserve has been the **Marsh Harrier**. As recently as 1971, after decades of persecution only a single pair of Marsh Harriers remained in Britain. The implementation of protection measures in subsequent years has led to a much improved situation. Having been absent as a breeding species in Hampshire for sixty years, a pair successfully reared two young in 2017 and three young in 2018.

Close monitoring of the birds has been carried out with a 200m radius EXCLUSION ZONE in place around the nesting area from mid March until the end of July, as females are known to be extremely vulnerable to disturbance and are prone to desert the nest. This exclusion zone is 150m away from 'the Site' and is only visited for gathering survey data by persons holding the relevant Schedule 1 Licence/Permit. (See Appendix 4 for map showing Exclusion Zone).

During surveillance of the breeding Marsh Harriers, they were found to visit 'the Site' in March/early April to collect nesting material. Once the eggs had hatched 'the Site' formed part of the hunting territory where small mammals and birds were targeted for feeding the young.

A wide variety of birds are known to frequent 'the Site' for feeding in the winter months, not necessarily on an annual basis, but when severe weather limits feeding within the reserve, during extensive flooding or icing over of the river and meadows. Outside these occasions agricultural operations such as harvesting and ploughing have always attracted flocks of birds from within the nature reserve. (See Appendix 5 for photograph of Siberian Bewick's Swans on Lower field of 'the Site'.)

The Ecological and Mitigation Management Plan (WYG November 2017)

The appellant's Ecological and Mitigation Management Plan surveys, despite their short time span, and being carried out at times when rank vegetation had become dominant and unattractive to wildlife in the southernmost field of 'the Site', have reported a number of species of birds and mammals that are afforded special protection measures as outlined ¹¹.

Since the current owners purchased 'the Site', land use has deteriorated, particularly in the most recent years and it is no wonder that the usage by wildlife has become depleted. The upper field on 'the Site', once cut for hay and occasionally grazed by cattle, has become infested with ragwort and disturbed by horses and the animal husbandry activities associated with managing horses. Similarly the lower field has deteriorated into an area of rank, uncontrolled vegetation.

Extracts from the appellant's Ecological Mitigation & Management Plan 2017.

1 Introduction

1.4 Biodiversity Benefits

"The proposed ecological enhancements shown will benefit the local wildlife by creating a more diverse habitat range within the Site, increase the areas of existing habitat present and provide an extension/buffer to Titchfield Haven NNR."

My comments are that a robust and effective buffer is already there on 'the Site', and is acting as an extension to the reserve. If this development goes

ahead then 70% of the current buffer zone will be lost and the narrow strip remaining will not function as intended.

2.0 Baseline Ecological (Extract from appellant's EMMP)

"Table 1 below provides a summary of the baseline ecological work that was completed by WYG and Hampshire Ecological Services to support the planning application. This information has helped inform the design of the masterplan."

The summary of the Winter Bird Survey in Table 1 states that the majority of species recorded at 'the Site' was typical of farmland and improved grassland habitat. No significant numbers of wintering birds were recorded during the surveys and all species occurring on 'the Site' are either common or fairly common within Hampshire and the surrounding area.

It is misleading at the very least to say that all species occurring on 'the Site' are common or fairly common, when 8 of those recorded are on the RSPB's Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern, and 6 are on the Amber List one of which is also a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species. These birds are on the Red and Amber lists because of their decline.

I won't dwell on the Breeding Survey section at this stage, as a more in depth appraisal will be dealt with later whilst reviewing the Hampshire Ecological Services Breeding Bird Survey Report.

Section 6 of the appellant's MMEP

6.0 Habitat Mitigation

Sub-section

6.1 Hedgerows and mature trees

6.1.2 Mitigation

"The current masterplan shows all existing trees and hedgerow boundaries to be retained apart from an approximate length of 80m for the widening of the existing accesses in to the Site. Sections of the better-quality hedgerows to be removed will be translocated where possible to facilitate the visibility plays. Species rich hedgerows and tree planting are proposed for the Site which will mitigate for the small loss in existing hedgerow habitat."

My comment is that many of the hedgerows around 'the Site' are up to 100 years or more old. I would say the removal of 80m (30%) of presumably the roadside hedge for access, as excessive. Hedgerows may support up to 80% of our woodland birds, 50% of our mammals and 30% of our butterflies¹².

6.1.3 Enhancement

"A graduated buffer of 5m will be instated along the entire western boundary of both the northern and southern field. The buffer will bolster the existing hedgerow present and include thorny planting such as hawthorn and blackthorn, removing potential access to Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve to the west. Once the buffer has been planted temporary fencing will be installed to protect the new planting to aid establishment.

Furthermore, new hedgerow/tree groups will be planted along the western extent of the construction area along the border between the area enhanced as permanent grassland and the proposed development, as shown Figure 2."

The planting of hawthorn and blackthorn along the western edge of 'the Site' without ensuring that a substantial fence is in place, will not deter intruders from entering into the nature reserve.

The appellant's EMMP says.

7.4 Badgers

7.4.3 Enhancement

"The retention and enhancement of the hedgerows including the graduated buffer and grassland margins will ensure badger commuting routes and foraging areas are maintained across the development area. The proposed landscaping and habitat creation works within the Site, including new hedgerow and understory planting will partly replace the loss of foraging habitats as a result of the development and bolster commuting routes surrounding the development Site. The retention of the existing vegetated Site boundaries will allow for badgers to commute through the Site to the wider landscape."

My comment is that as badgers become deprived of their long established feeding areas and squeezed into this narrow sliver of land, would they really have a future on this Site? Particularly as the grassed areas would eventually become recreation areas. Dogs and badgers do not fair well together.

Extract from appellant's EMMP

7.7 Overwintering Birds

7.7.3 Enhancement

"An open space area to the west of the Site will be retained and enhanced for over wintering birds to act as an extension to the habitats within Titchfield Haven NNR. The enhancements include:

- The creation of wader scrapes.
- Creation and management of a designated permanent grassland area."

This open space appears to be approximately 50m in width over much of its length apart from within the most northerly section. In my opinion no wintering wading bird or wildfowl would be attracted to this area. Firstly this sliver of open space will be hemmed in on one side by a housing estate with an associated footpath, and on the other side by a tall hedge. Wetland birds are attracted to open areas where they can easily detect the approach of a predator. Secondly there is an optimum size for a wader scrape to actually function as one. We are talking in hectares here. What is on offer in this plan is a mere puddle.

Extract from an RSPB Paper - Farming for Wildlife – 'Scrape creation for wildlife'

"Scrapes for wading birds will usually be located in the lower lying and more open areas of a site, away from tall hedges, woodland and overhead lines. Fields over three hectares are best, while for some aquatic invertebrates a wider variety of situations will be of benefit."

(Extract from EMMP November 2017)

7.7.3 Enhancement (continued)

"The wader scrapes and permanent grassland will be protected during the peak over wintering bird season November – March. Post and rail fencing will be installed along

the eastern boundary footpath of the open space area to the west of the Site and will be stock proofed and incorporate lockable gates which will be locked during November – March to restrict access to reduce the impact on over wintering birds.”

So for five months of the year wildlife will be protected in this green space, and then for the following seven months will be subjected to recreational use. This would send mixed messages to the residents and would be unenforceable. It would certainly send a mixed message to the badgers and other wildlife in the in this area. Additionally I have to say that in my experience post and rail fencing does not deter human beings.

There is further confusion with regards to the function of the open space on ‘the Site’ forming the so called extension to the nature reserve. This occurs when reading through the appellant’s ‘Proof of Evidence on Ecology Matters’ report, Appendix A: Land Trust Letter of Intent. In this letter dated 15th November 2018, following discussions between WYG and the Land Trust, the Land Trust are confirming subject to board approval, that they will be taking formal ownership of the proposed land. The Land Trust would be accepting ownership subject to conditions for the Commuted Sum of £470,000. Here we find that one of those conditions is ‘No public access is to be provided to the Landscape Buffer.’

7.7.4 Monitoring

“The area of open space with the wader scrape and permanent grassland enhancements will undergo a suite of at least ten surveys carried out between November and March consisting of one high tide and one low tide survey per month, during the first, second and third year following their construction.”

I can confidently say that birds associated with the intertidal feeding area on the shoreline of Hill Head would not fly back and forth between tides to this narrow strip of land on ‘the Site’. Estuarine feeding birds rarely fly any distance inland on a rising tide. Instead they will utilise coastal refuges such as shingle banks above the high water mark, or areas similar to the Titchfield Haven scrapes that are a mere 50m inland.

The word ‘enhance’ and its derivatives appear on 58 occasions in the EMMP plan. But when I read through it to me the word ‘plunder’ would be more appropriate.

Is the removal of 80m of long established hedgerow, enhancement?

Is the loss of 70% of this green field land, and buffer to existing development, enhancement of the area?

Breeding Bird Survey Report, Hampshire Ecological Services February 2017

Section 4 Results

Sub-section 4.2.1 General

“A full list of bird species recorded during the Site surveys is given in Table 4.2.1.1”

The Breeding Bird Survey Report documented in the Ecological Appraisal Report by Hampshire Ecological Services, has found that 7 species of birds currently on the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds UK Red List for Birds of Conservation Concern were present on ‘the Site’.

This is a significant figure, practically 50%, considering that only 16 species on the RSPB's Red List could realistically be said to be associated with farmland in southern England.

The stated purpose of the survey was to assess the species and populations of breeding birds present, and to evaluate the conservation importance of 'the Site' as this was required to determine the likelihood of any impacts upon the breeding bird community in association with the proposed development. However this aim was not achieved as the surveys did not fully follow the standard breeding bird survey protocol detailed in the Common Bird Census (British Trust for Ornithology, 1983).

If the true value of a site for breeding birds is to be assessed, then it is necessary not only to have determined what species are present, but in what quantity they occur. To carry out the Common Bird Census (CBC) the recommended standard adopted is to complete 10 mapping visits during the breeding season, at no less than 10 day intervals. Hampshire Ecological Services staff made only 5 visits to 'the Site' and hence in the results no species could be confirmed to be breeding. This tends to send a very inaccurate assessment of the value of 'the Site' for breeding birds. The results show the 'visit maps' in figures 4-8 of the report but no analysed 'species maps', due to the fact that too little information was collected.

Interestingly a full breeding census of birds within Titchfield Haven was carried out in 2016, as has been done annually since 1973 with 10 complete visits. In this survey the 450m (500yd) hedgerow on the western boundary of 'the Site' was included as has been the case in the past. The analysed results showed that in this length of hedgerow 28 pairs of birds of 13 species were confirmed breeding, whilst a further 8 species were probably breeding. The Hampshire Ecological Services breeding bird survey covered approximately 1600m (1750yds), and no species were confirmed breeding. Taking the Titchfield Haven survey results into account might suggest that there could be up to 100 pairs of birds breeding in the hedgerows around 'the Site', many of which would have some reliance on finding food away from the hedgerows and out into the open land. The true conservation value of 'the Site' in terms of breeding birds has not been determined. (See Appendix 7 Map of Titchfield Haven breeding bird census map extracts)

Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy

(Extracts from appellants report November 2017)

2.2 Topography

2.2.1 "The topography of the Site can affect the movement of water through soil. This is as a result of gravity, which directly influences water movement. It is a major factor in determining how much water enters the soil, how much water is stored in the soil and how water moves through the soil."

2.2.2 "The Site falls from the central track outwards. The high point of the Site is 10.35m Above Ordnance Datum and is located where the track meets Old Street. The low point is 4.50m Above Ordnance Datum and is located along the boundary with Titchfield Haven Nature Reserve."

Water moving through the soil, and the low point of 'the Site' being the edge of the nature reserve poses a threat to the ditch systems within the eastern meadows of the reserve. The sand and gravel deposits detailed in the

appellant's report 'Minerals Safeguarding Assessment', form an aquifer with a spring feeding water into the reserve.

Three ditches traverse the eastern meadows within the nature reserve, and are fed from water off of 'the Site'. As part of my continued involvement as a volunteer at the Haven, I am a member of the Conservation Forum. I am aware that rare flora exists in the ditch system and it is vital that this is protected. This ditch community and flora (or fauna) are not specifically mentioned within the SSSI citation, though the presence of ditches is listed as one of the habitats present. These are of potential SSSI value in themselves. It is hoped that in the future, the ditch habitat is explicitly referred to within the SSSI citation, as of significant interest.

The fact that the ditches are of such high value is most likely due to the relatively unpolluted water within the reserve. Maintaining this high water quality has to be regarded as one of the priority management aims for the reserve in the future. Its maintenance should also be a requirement within any local planning framework, to avoid any potential pollution, particularly if any mineral extraction work is being considered.

Furthermore it is stated in paragraph 3.3.4 of the appellant's 'Report to Inform Habitats Regulations Assessment Stage 1 and Stage 2 – Water Pollution', that for any residential development of a Greenfield site, there is potential for an increase in impermeable surfaced to result in changes in hydrology. These can cause localised changes to primary receiver waterbodies in terms of water quantity and quality. These can then lead to impacts to secondary and tertiary receivers.

For this development, surface water from 'the Site' will discharge into field drains within the SPA and Ramsar site. In addition to potential contamination, both during construction work and after houses have been built there is another concern. If the water flow from the aquifer is disturbed and the water is prevented from discharging into the Haven then the flora in the nearby meadows and reed-beds could also be affected by lack of spring water.

Extracts from appellant's Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
2.3 Hydrology

2.3.2 "The nearest Main River is the River Meon, approximately 250m west of the Site. The River Meon flows southwards through the South Downs, discharging into the Solent. A Main River is defined by the Environment Agency's Main River map and is the responsibility of the EA rather than the LLFA."

2.3.3 "An unnamed tributary of the River Meon is located approximately 900m to the north of the Site.
This is also considered a main river."

The presence of an unnamed tributary of the River Meon being 900m to the north of 'the Site' has been identified in this report. However a major drain is situated less than 100m to the north of 'the Site'. Otters are extremely mobile creatures and will visit drainage ditches and drains, particularly if they are regularly flowing as this one is known to be.

Conclusion

Natural England staff have given advice to appellants with regard to this planning application. Unfortunately they have shown in their correspondence to be unfamiliar with Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve.

Much of the advice offered is simply not practicable, and shows that little or no up to date information on the status of wildlife within the NNR or the management of the reserve has been sought, recognized, or even understood. In other words their homework hasn't been done. The suggestion that a footpath running from the mitigation area into the NNR is most unhelpful, and would be creating an extremely damaging effect on the very species the reserve was designated to protect. This only serves to reinforce my earlier comments. Reserve management plans and agreements under Section 28E of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), held by Natural England would have been enlightening if these documents had been paid due attention.

To consider that the mitigation associated with this application would offer an extension to the nature reserve is pure fantasy. Clearly a major window dressing exercise has been launched which is misleading and unworkable.

With global warming leading to accelerated coastal erosion, seawater inundation and the need for further managed retreat on the south coast, areas such as this 'Site' on the periphery of the National Nature Reserve and the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area will be of even greater importance in the future.

I quote from the National Planning Policy Framework-July 2018, Section 15, Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, sub-section, Habitats and biodiversity, paragraph 175),

"When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;"

The loss of these fields west of Old Street as a vital buffer zone would have a huge impact on the National Nature Reserve and its wildlife. Disturbance from people, pets, cars and general noise close to the reserve boundary is a serious threat to this wildlife sanctuary.

The proposed development overlooks a vital wetland area which forms part of the historic landscape of the Meon Valley, giving light, space and enduring views for all to enjoy.

The last 50 years of work, care and commitment to maintain and conserve Titchfield Haven Nature Reserve as a sanctuary for wildlife, a migratory bird route and ancient landscape, must continue in order that it is preserved and protected for future generations.

An entry in my diary for the 20th October 1962 states that two Cirl Buntings were observed in the Marsh Lane fields. How was I to know at the time, that this was to be the last known sighting of this seed-eating farmland bird at Titchfield Haven? Only two years later the Cirl Bunting, formerly a moderately common breeding bird in the Haven area, became extinct in Hampshire and hasn't been recorded since.

Nowadays with the availability of government agri-environmental schemes, the Cirl Bunting has become the subject of a species recovery project in the UK since 1995. The species was then in imminent danger of being lost from the UK with a small number remaining at their stronghold in south Devon. The Cirl Bunting population is now expanding and who knows it could return to these very same fields alongside Marsh Lane in the not too distant future.

I hope that due consideration will be given to the issues I have raised that have stemmed from my experience in managing the National Nature Reserve.

Thank you

Barry S Duffin

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¹⁰ Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, (2010) *Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy Group*

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