



Objection to Planning Application 55318/001 Based on the Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)

Dear Samantha Owen,

I am writing to formally object to the planning application submitted by Bargate Homes for speculative development on the land off Beechlands Road, Medstead, Alton, Hampshire.

My objections are based on the Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) prepared by LC Ecological Services Ltd, which contains significant flaws, underestimates adverse impacts, and fails to provide sufficient mitigation for the proposed development. Additionally, the previous development by Bargate Homes in 2018, which is adjacent to the current proposal, has already impacted the local area. Furthermore, there has been a significant population increase in the area due to development between 2011-2021, amounting to a 40% increase, which has already strained local resources and infrastructure. It is important to note that no comprehensive ecological assessments were conducted during this period of rapid population growth. Below are the detailed points of my objection:

KEY CONCERNS

Significant Biodiversity Net Loss

The EclA identifies a substantial biodiversity net loss of -76.35%, primarily due to the residual loss of neutral grassland habitat and adverse effects on foraging and commuting bats. This is contrary to national and local planning policies, which require developments to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.

Insufficient Mitigation and Compensation Measures

The report suggests that mitigation and enhancement measures, along with off-site compensation, will address the ecological impacts. However, it lacks detailed, enforceable commitments and clear off-site compensation plans, making the proposed measures insufficient and speculative.



Potential Adverse Effects on Local Wildlife

The development poses significant risks to various protected species, including badgers, bats, birds, and reptiles (slow-worm and grass snake). The mitigation measures proposed, such as habitat enhancements and exclusion efforts, are not adequately detailed to ensure their effectiveness.

Cumulative Impact with Previous Developments

The previous development by Bargate Homes in 2018, adjacent to the current proposal, has already contributed to habitat loss and increased urbanization. The cumulative impact of this new development will exacerbate these issues, leading to further habitat fragmentation and increased pressure on local wildlife.

Impact on Non-Statutory Designated Sites:

There is a potential risk of adverse impacts on thirteen non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation within the vicinity, primarily due to dust pollution and increased recreational pressure from the new development. The mitigation strategies for these impacts are vague and lack specificity.

Inadequate Consideration of In-Combination Effects:

The report identifies potential in-combination effects with other local developments, which could lead to significant long-term adverse impacts on local wildlife and habitats. However, it fails to provide a comprehensive assessment of these cumulative impacts and effective mitigation measures.



ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

Strain on Local Infrastructure Due to Population Increase:

Between 2011 and 2021, the local area experienced a significant population increase of 40% due to development. This dramatic rise has already put considerable strain on local infrastructure, resources, and the environment. Further speculative development will exacerbate these issues, potentially leading to unsustainable pressure on local services, traffic congestion, and a reduction in the quality of life for existing residents.

Importantly, during this period of rapid population growth, no comprehensive ecological assessments were conducted to evaluate the cumulative environmental impact, which raises concerns about the sustainability of continued development.

Questionable Impartiality of Ecological Experts:

The impartiality of the ecological experts may be questionable since they are hired by the developers/applicants. This potential conflict of interest could influence the findings and recommendations of the EclA, leading to an underestimation of the ecological impacts and overconfidence in the proposed mitigation measures.



Conclusion

Given the significant biodiversity net loss, insufficient mitigation measures, potential adverse effects on local wildlife, cumulative impact with previous developments, risks to non-statutory designated sites, the existing strain on local infrastructure due to the significant population increase, and the questionable impartiality of the ecological experts, I strongly urge the planning authority to reject this application. The proposed development does not align with the principles of sustainable development and biodiversity conservation as outlined in national and local planning policies.

Thank you for considering my objections. I trust that the planning authority will carefully review these concerns and make a decision that prioritizes the ecological integrity and sustainability of the local environment.

Sincerely,

Note: For privacy reasons, all personal information including a signature has been attached as a separate document, as any comments on the planning application are intended to be published by EHDC.