

Date: 14 September 2016  
Our ref: 191193  
Your ref: PLAN/2016/0742



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**BY EMAIL ONLY**

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Dear Dan

**Planning consultation:** Demolition and clearance of the site and erection of a phased development comprising 560 residential units, 10,582 sqm of offices, 843 sqm of retail and gym use (A1-A4 and D2) with 395 parking spaces, public realm improvements and highway works to Goldsworth Road. Block A to comprise ground plus 34 storeys, Block B comprising ground plus 25 and 20 storeys, and Block C comprising ground plus 17, 14 and 10 storeys.

**Location:** 20-32 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 6JT.

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 14 July 2016 which was received by Natural England on the same day.

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.

### **THAMES BASIN HEATHS SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA (SPA)**

This application is within 5 km of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA).

There is an Interim Avoidance Strategy for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA in place with Woking Borough Council, which can be viewed at the following link:

<http://www.woking.gov.uk/planning/policy/ldf/tbhspa/spastrategy2010>

We will assume that the proposals are meeting the requirement of that plan (e.g. in terms of mitigation, such as contributions to Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)) and the legislation around protected species has also been addressed. If the applicant is complying with this Strategy, then Natural England **do not object** to this application. It is our understanding that the developer is likely to make these contributions to the Heather Farm SANG, which must be secured through a legal agreement prior to granting consent. This is on the understanding that the development site is within a relevant catchment area to facilitate this development, as outlined in page 8 of the [Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework](#), and that there is currently sufficient capacity to facilitate the proposed 560 dwellings.

If an applicant is not complying with the avoidance plan, then please do contact myself in order that we can address how to proceed, however it is likely that we would like to review our above position.

### **Other advice**

We would expect the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to assess and consider the other possible impacts resulting from this proposal on the following when determining this application:

- local sites (biodiversity and geodiversity)
- local landscape character
- local or national biodiversity priority habitats and species.

Natural England does not hold locally specific information relating to the above. These remain material considerations in the determination of this planning application and we recommend that you seek further information from the appropriate bodies (which may include the local records centre, your local wildlife trust, local geoconservation group or other recording society and a local landscape characterisation document) in order to ensure the LPA has sufficient information to fully understand the impact of the proposal before it determines the application. A more comprehensive list of local groups can be found at [Wildlife and Countryside link](#).

### **Biodiversity enhancements**

This application may provide opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife, such as the incorporation of roosting opportunities for bats, the installation of bird nest boxes or the use of native species in the landscape plans. The authority should consider securing measures to enhance the biodiversity of the site from the applicant, if it is minded to grant permission for this application. This is in accordance with Paragraph 118 of the NPPF. Additionally, we would draw your attention to Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) which states that *‘Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’*. Section 40(3) of the same Act also states that *‘conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat’*.

### **Protected Species**

We have not assessed this application and associated documents for impacts on protected species.

Natural England has published [Standing Advice](#) on protected species. The Standing Advice includes a habitat decision tree which provides advice to planners on deciding if there is a ‘reasonable likelihood’ of protected species being present. It also provides detailed advice on the protected species most often affected by development, including flow charts for individual species to enable an assessment to be made of a protected species survey and mitigation strategy.

You should apply our Standing Advice to this application as it is a material consideration in the determination of applications in the same way as any individual response received from Natural England following consultation.

The Standing Advice should not be treated as giving any indication or providing any assurance in respect of European Protected Species (EPS) that the proposed development is unlikely to affect the EPS present on the site; nor should it be interpreted as meaning that Natural England has reached any views as to whether a licence may be granted.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Amy Steel on 0208 225 6386 or [amy.steel@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:amy.steel@naturalengland.org.uk). For any new consultations, queries relating to our Standing Advice on EPS, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely

Amy Steel  
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Sustainable Development and Regulation