

WSCC COUNTY ECOLOGIST response to planning consultation

Application reference number: WSCC/042/23

Location: Land to the west of Mannings Heath Wastewater Treatment Works, Gaggle Wood, Mannings Heath, Horsham

Proposal: Construction and operation of a sewer network pipe-bridge and retrospective planning permission for the temporary widening and use of a vehicle access onto the A281 Brighton Road

District: Horsham

Date: 08/01/2024

Summary response: No objection.

Conclusion:

There will be some limited impacts on ancient woodland however efforts have been made to minimise the damage and enhance the wider retained woodland. Given the need and the minor scale of the harm there is no ecological object to the proposed works subject to the proper implementation of the proposed mitigation.

Comment

The EcIA largely focusses on the impact on the ancient woodland. It describes the CEMP, Preliminary Arboricultural Assessment and Method Statement, and Ecological Memo including measures to ensure the ancient woodland is safeguarded throughout the construction phase. These include:

- The site Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be an ecologist experienced in botany who will oversee all ecological mitigation and enhancement measures on site.
- Trees and shrubs in the outer 2.5m of the working width through the woodland will be coppiced down to the ground, protected with matting and allowed to regrow following completion of the works. This will include the largest and most ecologically valuable hazels, and will help to maintain the condition of the ancient woodland and increase its potential as dormouse habitat.

- For trees and shrubs which require removal, they will be cut down to approximately 50cm in height before digging them up complete with intact rootballs and retaining on site for replanting postconstruction.
- The ECoW will advise on which herbaceous (i.e. non-woody) plant material to retain, and the machine operators instructed to dig up clumps of ancient woodland indicator and other notable plants whole complete with their root systems.
- A designated space within the working easement immediately on the west side of the woodland will be used to store rootballs of shrubs and dug up clumps of perennial herbaceous species.
- The ancient woodland indicator plant species in particular will be gathered and retained here, including yellow archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*, enchanters' nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, and wood sedge.
- Dead wood material produced from coppicing will be used to create log piles and create habitat for stag beetles, as well as diversifying the structure of the woodland.
- Protection from deer browsing is to be used when the shrubs are replanted to increase survival chances.
- All works will adhere to the Preliminary Arboricultural Assessment and Method Statement, and a hard copy of these will be held on site.

Impacts appear to have been minimised with a reduction has been secured in the proportion of the overall 10m working width in which tree and shrub roots will need to be removed/ grubbed equating to 2/3rds of the working width. The outer sides (2-3m on both sides) of the working width will not need to have the rootballs removed and will only be cut to ground level (during winter). Protective matting will then be placed over this zone for the duration of the construction works (estimated c.3 weeks), after which the matting will be removed and the plants allowed to re-grow. In the deeper central parts of the stream valley it has been confirmed that rootballs will remain with plants cut to ground level. The areas to be cut down and protected will be agreed with the project ecologist on site prior to commencement of the works and clearly demarcated.

Enhancement of the remaining woodland is proposed and includes opening up the canopy and removing invasive non-native species.

A CEMP has been produced and will be implemented during the construction phase of the proposed works to monitor, avoid and or minimise likely impacts to ecological receptors arising from the proposed works.