

SHRA

Sovereign Harbour Residents Association



Mr Leigh Palmer
Head of Planning
Eastbourne Borough Council
Eastbourne Town Hall
Grove Road
BN22 4UG

20 November 2023

(by email to Leigh.Palmer@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

Dear Mr Palmer,

Site 7a Sovereign Harbour - Planning Application Nos. 220849, 220850, 220852 – Clearance Work

We have received emails from several residents very concerned by the commencement of clearance work on Site 7a and the relocation of wildlife.

In view of these concerns and our observations below, we would respectfully request that any further clearance work and wildlife relocation be immediately halted until we have received assurances that all relevant and necessary documentation and permissions have been given for this work to take place.

With planning consent normally subject to a number of conditions being met, including ecological translocation issues, the translocation should be carried out in accordance with established methodology and reporting procedures.

As planning permission has not been granted, it appears that the work is not approved, and is taking place without third party supervision. Although ecologists contracted by the developers are on site, it does not seem that it is being carried out in a professional manner or in accordance with any planning agreement.

Site 7a currently has a reptile fence on two sides only, and small squares of roofing felt were being used to 'trap' the reptiles. Our understanding is that the site should have more robust animal-proof fencing, with areas of the land covered in tarpaulins and marked in sequence in order for the collection of invertebrates and other animals to be logged and moved to an agreed similar site.

We have been advised a period of up to 6 months of collection would be normal with collections on a regular basis in the early morning and evenings. No trapping should take place within their breeding periods, which vary dependent upon the species involved. In the case of hibernating species, they are busy building their storage of food for the winter months, so relocation is problematic at this time of year with little time to rebuild. The relocation site should be prepared before any movement takes place in order to provide the right habitat for the particular species.

These requirements are normally documented in a paper setting out the work to be carried out and would normally be agreed with the ecology officer at the local authority and supervised. The collection period on site 7a has only been two months and in the last three weeks, two large diggers have been tearing up the vegetation while the ecologists watch them with fishing nets in hand. Any reptiles caught are being moved to Willingdon golf club.

We are also aware of the presence of badger setts and hedgehogs and our understanding is that the destruction of the badger setts has been reported to the police and we believe that their rural crime unit is investigating.

We've asked on a number of occasions who gave permission for this work to take place and the only answers to date are "planning consent isn't required", and from an EBC planning committee Councillor that "planning consent was granted at the August planning meeting".

We now seek evidence that a proper check was made for the presence of protected wildlife on the site, that the relocation work is being carried out in the required manner and is being properly supervised, and that the ground clearance work has not been started prematurely.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Dilys Iverson

Chair

Sovereign Harbour Residents Association

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CC Councillor Hugh Parker, Kate Cole - County Ecologist - East Sussex County Council, Caroline Ansell MP.

Forwarded to: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
Natural England, Sovereign Ward Councillors.