Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Rachel Whyte
Date:	29/08/2023
Application number:	PL/2023/06399
Proposal:	Convert redundant farm stone barns into holiday let accommodation. Insertion of one new window, one new internal door opening and 4 conservation style rooflights into fabric. Rebuild chimney. Replace windows. New stud partitions to first floors.
Site address:	Little Thornham Farm, Trowbridge Road, Seend, Melksham, SN12 6PQ
Case officer:	Jane Sanger

Recommendations:

	No comment
	Support
	No objection
	Condition (no objection subject to conditions)
x	Objection - further information required
	Objection in principle
	HRA completed

Further Information Required:

	Issue	Policy/Legislative Compliance	Date Information Requested & Further Information Required	Satisfactorily Addressed (Document & Date)
1.	Bats	WCA 1981, Hab. Regs.	**29/08/2023** – Bat loft to be shown on enforceable drawing	**NO**
2.			**29/08/2023** – Existing and Proposed Elevations drawing to be updated to show bat access tiles	**NO**
3.			**29/08/2023** – Assessment of the impacts of the development on special features of the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	**NO**

The outstanding document(s) listed above are needed to enable the council's ecology team to consider all the relevant impacts and benefits of the proposed scheme. The council's ecologists will provide a further response once <u>all</u> the above information has been submitted via the case officer.
Please Note: When resubmitting a revised document, ALL changes must be highlighted to enable review.

Thank you for consulting Ecology, I have reviewed the application and supporting documents against OS Maps and aerial photography of the site and surrounding area, together with GIS layers of statutory and non-statutory sites and existing records of protected species.

Ecological survey of the site was carried out by Darwin Ecology at a suitable time of year and following industry guidelines. I consider that the level of survey has been thorough and appropriate to both the nature of the site and the scale of the development.

The bat surveys found the barn to support a common pipistrelle day and hibernation roost, natterer's hibernation roost and a brown long-eared night, day and hibernation roost. Multiple species including lesser horseshoe were recorded around the barn during emergence surveys. The ecology report makes a series of recommendations in Section 6 for precautionary measures to be implemented as part of the development, to ensure that protected species are not adversely impacted by the works. These include avoidance measures and some provision of alternative features to ensure that wildlife continues to be accommodated within the development.

A European Protected Species (EPS) bat Mitigation Licence will need to be obtained for the lawful construction of this development. In carrying out its statutory function the LPA needs to be reasonably sure that the proposed development will not result in adverse impact to protected habitats and species and that the necessary licence is likely to be forthcoming from Natural England. This information is required prior to determination of the application.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

The application site is located within an informal consultation zone for bats associated with the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to the presence of a significant lesser horseshoe roost within 2 km. The development therefore has potential to result in significant adverse impact on the special features of that site. Lesser horseshoe bats have been recorded on the site and insufficient information has so far been submitted to determine the impacts of the development on this species and therefore to enable the HRA to be undertaken.

Artificial Lighting

The habitat within the proposed development site and the surrounding area is suitable for roosting, foraging and commuting bats. An increase in artificial lux levels can deter bats which could result in roost abandonment and/or the severance of key foraging areas. This will likely result in a significant negative impact upon the health of bat populations across the region. Artificial light at night can have a substantial adverse effect on biodiversity. Any new lighting should be for the purposes for safe access and security and be in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institute of Lighting Engineers in their publication GN01:2021, 'Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light' (ILP, 2021), and Guidance note GN08-23 "Bats and artificial lighting at night", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

Biodiversity No Net Loss/Enhancement

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires all development to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity and encourages developments to seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

The submission of a Site Location & Block Plans (Drawing no: 3928-03, March 2022) document which shows the mitigation and enhancement measures is welcomed and I am satisfied that the proposed recommendations would ensure that the site will continue to offer opportunities to bats and nesting birds post-development. Furthermore, the ecology report recommends providing two bat boxes, two swallow nests and a wildlife beneficial landscaping scheme to enhance the site for biodiversity.

Further Information Required

1. Bat loft to be shown on enforceable drawing e.g. technical elevations drawing. This drawing should include details of access points (e.g., location, type, size) and any other features to be installed associated with the bat loft.

2. Existing and Proposed Elevations drawing to be updated to show bat access tiles.

3. Assessment of the impacts of the development on special features of the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, specifically lesser horseshoe bat. The assessment must cover impacts from internal and external artificial light.

Conditions to be imposed once the above issues have been addressed.

Final sign off – all matters addressed:

Ecologist	Date