Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Jenna Buss
Date:	20/11/23
Application number:	PL/2023/07710
Proposal:	Upper Farm, Wexcombe, Wiltshire, SN8 3SQ
Site address:	The proposed demolition of the existing barn and the erection of a dwelling (Use Class C3) car port, repair of former chapel to create a home office, together with landscaping enhancements and associated works.
Case officer:	David Millinship

Recommendations:

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

Further Information Required:

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.

The following submitted documentation was reviewed to inform this response:

- Ecological Impact Assessment. July 2023. Davidson-Watts Ecology;
- Landscape Masterplan 1072-MO-01 D. April 2023. Indigo Landscape Architects Ltd and;
- Proposed Site Plan 4270-003 H. September 2022. Llewellyn Harker Lowe.

Protected Species
The plot is located within the North Wessex Downs AONB. The Ecology Report (Davidson-Watts 2023) confirmed continued use of the buildings by small numbers of day roosting common pipistrelle together with evidence of current nesting by barn owl. Bats and their roosts are afforded stringent protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) and as such are a material consideration within the planning consultation process. All roosts will be impacted by the proposals. However, mitigation measures have been recommended within the report to included raised ridge tiles and bat boxes. The proposals also include the relocation of the barn owl nesting box.

A European Protected Species (EPS) bat Mitigation Licence will need to be obtained for the lawful construction of this development.

Previously, surveys were undertaken which identified a small population of slow worm on site. Although more recently it would appear that a large proportion of habitat suitable to support this

species has been removed, reptiles may still be present in the retained habitat. Reasonable avoidance measures to reduce the likelihood of impacting this species has been included within the ecology report and should be implemented.

BNG

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires all development to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity and for major applications the expectation is that development will deliver a net gain. The NPPF also encourages applications to deliver measurable net gains (para 174 d) and the government has signalled its intention to bring forward legislation to require development to deliver 10% net biodiversity gain. Natural England has now prepared version 4.0 of the Biodiversity Metric that includes a small site metric Beta version. At the current time therefore, the Council expects all applications to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity and where appropriate to deliver a net gain.

The wider site appears to support deciduous woodland designated as priority habitat. A site plan has been submitted outlining the proposed planting and inclusion of native species. It would appear from the plan that the woodland will be retained. However, additional information in relation to proposed protection, enhancement and management of the landscape should be included within a Wildlife Protection and Enhancement Scheme and detail how the soft landscaping will be retained in perpetuity to ensure bat foraging and commuting routes will be retained together with suitable reptile habitat.

Conditions:

1. The development will be carried out in strict accordance with the following documents:
   (i) Ecological Impact Assessment. July 2023. Davidson-Watts Ecology

   REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and for the protection, mitigation and enhancement of biodiversity.

2. Prior to the commencement of works, including demolition, ground works/excavation, site clearance, vegetation clearance and boundary treatment works, a Wildlife Protection and Enhancement Scheme will be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include:

   (i) The location of proposed mitigation measures included on technical drawings showing the location and orientation of the bat tiles and bat/bird boxes.
   (ii) Details of proposed measures that will be taken to avoid harm to wildlife, including timing of works to avoid nesting birds, and pre-commencement checks for protected species and any reasonable avoidance measures for reptiles.
   (iii) Quantification of biodiversity net gain provision including a plan showing the location(s) and type(s) of feature(s) to enhance the site for bats, nesting birds, invertebrates and hedgehog.
   (iv) Identification of ecological protection areas/buffer zones and tree root protection areas and details of physical means of protection, e.g. exclusion fencing. To ensure protection of the adjacent priority woodland habitat.

   REASON: To avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity. And mitigate for impacts to bats arising from the development.

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3. Replacement bat roosts will be incorporated into the development in accordance with*:* Section 7 of ecology report *'*Ecological Impact Assessment. July 2023. Davidson-Watts Ecology'. The installation of these bat roosts and access features will be supervised by a professional ecologist and this part of the condition will be discharged when photographic evidence of installed features have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These bat roosts and access points will continue to be available for bats for the lifetime of the development.

   REASON: To mitigate for impacts to bats arising from the development.

4. No external lighting shall be installed on site until additional plans showing the type of light appliance, the height and position of fitting, illumination levels and light spillage overlaid on aerial images have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plans will be in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institute of Lighting Engineers in their publication GN01:2011, 'Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light' (ILP, 2011), and Guidance note GN08/23 "Bats and artificial lighting at night", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

   REASON: In the interests of the amenities of the area, to minimise unnecessary light spillage above and outside the development site

INFORMATIVES:

Bats
The buildings at Upper Farm are used as a bat roost. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), it is an offence to harm or disturb bats or damage or destroy their roosts. Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation. **The applicant is advised that a European Protected Species Licence will be required before any work is undertaken to implement this planning permission**. Future conversion of the roof space to living accommodation or replacing the roof could also breach this legislation and advice should be obtained from a professional bat ecologist before proceeding with work of this nature.

Nesting Birds
All British birds, their nests and eggs are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 while birds are nesting, building nests and sitting on eggs. The applicant is advised to check any structure or vegetation capable of supporting breeding birds and delay removing or altering such features until after young birds have fledged. Damage to extensive areas that could contain nests/breeding birds should be undertaken outside the breeding season. This season is usually taken to be the period between 1st March and 31st August but some species are known to breed outside these limits.

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 in the UK", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

Final sign off – all matters addressed:

Ecologist Jenna Buss	Date