Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Jenna Buss
Date:	29/11/2023
Application number:	PL/2023/07605
Proposal:	Demolition of agricultural building and replacement with building for Use Class E (g) (i) - (iii)
Site address:	South Farm, Water Eaton, Swindon, SN6 6JU
Case officer:	Samantha Stockley

Recommendations:

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

Matters Considered:

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 application is supported by ecological documents which have been reviewed and include;

- Protected Species Survey Report. November 2023. Windrush Ecology;

The surveys outline the sites low potential to support protected species including bats and nesting birds, we support the conclusions made within the ecological reports.

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. A number of enhancement proposals have been outlined in section 5.6 of the ecology report, to include habitat creation in the form of nest boxes for bats and birds. The inclusion of these features would be in accordance with Core Policy 50.

CONDITIONS:

1. The development will be carried out in strict accordance with the following document:
   - Protected Species Survey Report. November 2023. Windrush Ecology and;
   - Proposed Elevations. July 2023. Silhouette House.

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

2. No new external artificial lighting shall be installed at the site unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

   REASON: In the interests of conserving biodiversity.

INFORMATIVES:

Roosting Bats
There is a low risk that bats may be encountered at the development site. Many species of bat depend on buildings for roosting, with each having its own preferred type of roost. Most species roost in crevices such as under ridge tiles, behind roofing felt or in cavity walls and are therefore not often seen in the roof space. Bat roosts are protected all times by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 even when bats are temporarily absent because, being creatures of habit, they usually return to the same roost site every year. Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation or substitute for the need to obtain a bat licence if an offence is likely. If bats or evidence of bats is found during the works, the applicant is advised to stop work and follow advice from an independent ecologist or the applicant is advised to follow the advice of a professional ecologist or to contact Natural England's Batline through the internet.

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 GN08-18 "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 29/11/23