Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Rachel Whyte
Date:	19/01/2024
Application number:	PL/2023/04019
Proposal:	Proposed alterations to enable conversion of detached barn store into living space.
Site address:	Glebe Farmhouse, Westbury Road, Little Cheverell, Devizes, SN10 4JP
Case officer:	Lucy Rutter-Dowd

Recommendations:

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

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 Arbtech at a suitable time of year and following industry guidelines. I am satisfied that there is sufficient information to be able to make a judgement as to whether protected habitats and/or species are likely to be adversely impacted by the proposed development. The proposed development must be carried out in strict accordance with Section 4 of the Preliminary Roost Assessment, which includes recommendations for ecological supervision during the works.

The ecology report recommends the installation of two bat boxes and one bird box to provide additional opportunities for bats and birds, this is welcomed. The location of such features should be shown on a site plan, this can be secured via a condition.

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.

Salisbury Plain

This application lies within the 6.4km buffer zone of the Salisbury Plain SPA and in light of the HRA for the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the HRA for the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan it is screened into Appropriate Assessment due to the potential impact of recreational pressure on stone curlew in combination with other plans and projects. In April 2023 Natural England (NE) confirmed that the 2018 Appropriate Assessment for Salisbury Plain continues to be supported by NE.

That Appropriate Assessment reached a conclusion of no adverse effects on site integrity for development within 6.4km of the SPA boundary provided that the mitigation scheme continues to be implemented. Annual stone curlew monitoring and protection measures continue to be secured by the Council.

CONDITIONS:

1. The development will be carried out in strict accordance with the following documents:
    - Preliminary Roost Assessment. Issue 2. 10th November 2023. Arbtech.

    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.

3. Prior to the commencement of any works, including vegetation removal and demolition, details of the number, design and locations of features for bats and birds shall be submitted to the local authority for approval. These details should be clearly shown on an enforceable plan (e.g., site plan/technical elevations drawing). The approved details shall be implemented before occupation of the final works. These features will continue to be available for the target species for the lifetime of the development.

    REASON: To provide enhancement for biodiversity.

INFORMATIVES:

Bats

There is a risk that bats may occur at the development site. Given the nature of this development, the council considers that if bats were found, mitigation would probably not require further planning permission and a European Protected Species Licence would be forthcoming. Nevertheless, anyone undertaking this development should be aware that bats and their roosting places are protected at all times by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). 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. Consideration should be given to obtaining a survey from a professional ecologist before commencing work. If bats or evidence of bats is found at any stage of development, 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.

Final sign off – all matters addressed:

Ecologist **Rachel Whyte**	Date **19/01/2024**