Wiltshire Council

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Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Max Hemmings
Date:	~~16/01/2024~~ 21/02/2024
Application number:	PL/2023/09365
Proposal:	Erection of new learning centre building, erection of a re-constructed Neolithic communal structure, retention of existing temporary facilities building and related landscaping works
Site address:	Stonehenge Visitors Centre, Winterbourne Stoke, Salisbury, Wilts, SP4 7DE
Case officer:	Julie Mitchell

Recommendations:

	No Comment
	Support
	No objection
X	Condition (no objection subject to conditions)
	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	Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan	CP50, NPPF, WCA	~~**16/01/2024** A Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan to detail the proposed species mitigation measures.~~	**YES** Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan, submitted on 5th February 2024 **21/02/2024**
2	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	CP50, NPPF	~~**16/01/2024** Please see the comment for the required documents and amendments~~	**YES** Biodiversity Metric 4.0 Calculation-27-09-23, Stonehenge Education Project, Date: 30 August 2023 by Bill Wadsworth (submitted on 5th February 2024) Condition Assessment Sheets Stonehenge Education Project, Biodiversity Net Gain Report V2 ref: 22122, Date:1st February 2024 by

				Corylus Ecology **21/02/2024**

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.

The ecology reports submitted to this application are welcomed and are listed below for reference:

- Ecological Impact Assessment, Stonehenge Education Project, ref: 22122, Date: September 2023 by Corylus Ecology
- Biodiversity Metric 4.0 Calculation-27-09-23, Stonehenge Education Project, Date: 30 August 2023 by Bill Wadsworth
- Biodiversity Metric 4.0 Calculation-27-09-23, Stonehenge Education Project, Date: 30 August 2023 by Bill Wadsworth (submitted on 5th February 2024)
- Condition Assessment Sheets
- Stonehenge Education Project, Biodiversity Net Gain Report V2 ref: 22122, Date:1st February 2024 by Corylus Ecology
- Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan, submitted on 5th February 2024

The Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) confirms the site hosts:

- Sixteen bird species, of which seven were confirmed breeding. Four of the seven breeding species are red-listed
- Brown hare of Site Importance
- Invertebrates

In addition, the site has the potential to host:

- Commuting and foraging bats
- Commuting and foraging reptiles
- Commuting and foraging mammals

The construction phase avoidance and mitigation measures for these species should be detailed in a CEMP if this application is approved. The CEMP will also need to detail the suitable avoidance measures for the existing landscaping planting.

1. **Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan**

~~A plan is required which details the location and specification of the species mitigation and enhancement measures to ensure the continued functionality of the area for biodiversity. These measures should include but not be limited to artificial bird nests, reptile basking/hibernacula habitat and measures specific to the area's potential invertebrate assemblage.~~

21/02/2024 – this information request has been satisfactorily addressed. The submitted plan should be incorporated into the conditioned LEMP if this application is approved.

2. **Biodiversity Net Gain (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. DEFRA has prepared a Statutory Biodiversity Metric Tool alongside a Small Site Metric Tool. 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 unlocked Version 4.0 Biodiversity Metric calculation tool has been submitted to this application and is welcomed. This version of the tool should be used for the remainder of this application to ensure continuity.

~~The spreadsheet should be supported by the condition assessment sheets and maps showing the specific areas of land identified in each row of the calculation tool for the baseline and operational phase of development.~~

~~The entire area within the red line boundary and any off-site areas should be shown in the proposed landscaping plans.~~

~~The BNG strategy should incorporate the below principles:~~

~~For Area 1 (the northern section/ new learning centre):~~

~~The BNG baseline for this application should be based on what habitat would be present if the mitigation detailed in 16/03988/FUL (Drawing: "Proposed landscape masterplan" HED.1152.103 Rev A dated 04/04/16) was implemented and established i.e. "meadow planting" or a higher distinctiveness if confirmed by the EcIA. Figure 3 of the EcIA categorises the grassland to be impacted as calcareous grassland. A wildflower grassland in this geographic area would not host less than nine species per m^2 or an abundance of perennial ryegrass and therefore the baseline is not considered to be modified grassland.~~

~~Any proposed grassland enhancements within the site must be the same condition and distinctiveness as the baseline used in the metric. Since the site is the biodiversity mitigation area for the works associated with application 16/03988/FUL the grassland should have been managed for the favourable condition for biodiversity. It is therefore inappropriate to suggest the management of grassland as part of this application will achieve a better distinctness/condition from what should be established.~~

~~For Area 2 (the southern section/neolithic structure):~~

~~The previous planning applications in this area do not specify the habitat to be created. Therefore, the EcIA's botanical survey should inform the grassland's distinctiveness. Justification supported by evidence is required to confirm the designation of "modified grassland" as the baseline grassland habitat. This evidence should include but not be limited to the percentage of cover of grass species including the cover of rye-grasses and white clover where present and the number of plant species per m^2. Section 3.2.4 of the EcIA does not list rye-grass and Appendix 3 does not suggest rye-grass is located in this area.~~

~~Clarification is also required on why it modified grassland is proposed to be re-created here as part of the operational phase in the and not enhanced to other neutral grassland. Any proposed~~

~~enhanced grassland within this area must be the same condition and distinctiveness as the baseline used in the metric for Area 1 for the same reasons as described above.~~

Any off-site mitigation measures will need to be secured by an appropriate legal agreement such as a condition or S106.

~~Evidence of no net loss of biodiversity has not been submitted and measures to deliver net gain not proposed. The issue of no net loss must be addressed prior to determination of this application.~~

21/02/2024 – this information request has been satisfactorily addressed.

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) - Test of likely significance:
- Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Hampshire River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Catchment

A test of likely significance has been carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (Wiltshire Council) as required by Regulation 63 Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. This concluded that given the scale and nature of the development any temporary construction impacts and operational impacts would be de-minimus. **The HRA has concluded that the application is not likely to have significant impacts on the SAC and Appropriate Assessment is not required.**

In carrying out its statutory function, the LPA must be reasonably sure that the proposal will not result in significant adverse effects on protected habitats or species. ~~The information outlined above must therefore be submitted and reviewed by the LPA's ecology team prior to determination of the application.~~

CONDITIONS:

1. **Lighting**

No external light fixture or fitting will be installed within the application site unless details of existing and proposed new lighting have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. The submitted details will demonstrate how the proposed lighting will impact on bat habitat compared to the existing situation.

REASON: To avoid illumination of habitat used by bats.

2. **Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP)**

Prior to the commencement of works, including demolition, ground works/excavation, site clearance, vegetation clearance and boundary treatment works, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval in writing. The Plan shall provide details of the avoidance, mitigation and protective measures to be implemented before and during the construction phase, including but not necessarily limited to, the following:

a) Identification of ecological protection areas/buffer zones and tree root protection areas and details of physical means of protection, e.g. exclusion fencing.
b) Working method statements for protected/priority species, such as foraging/commuting bats, hares, nesting birds and reptiles.
c) Work schedules for activities with specific timing requirements in order to avoid/reduce potential harm to ecological receptors; including details of when a licensed ecologist and/or ecological clerk of works (ECoW) shall be present on site.
d) Key personnel, responsibilities and contact details (including Site Manager and ecologist/ECoW).
e) Timeframe for provision of compliance report to the local planning authority; to be completed by the ecologist/ECoW and to include photographic evidence.

Development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved CEMP.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection and mitigation for ecological receptors prior to and during construction, and that works are undertaken in line with current best practice and industry standards and are supervised by a suitably licensed and competent professional ecological consultant where applicable**.**

3. Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP)

Prior to the start of construction, a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The LEMP should encompass the on-site and off-site mitigation areas and will include:

a. Long term objectives and targets in accordance with the Calculation of Biodiversity Net Gain using *Biodiversity Metric 4.0 Calculation-27-09-23, Stonehenge Education Project, Date: 30 August 2023 by Bill Wadsworth (submitted on 5th February 2024)*
- Monitoring, management and maintenance responsibilities and schedules for each ecological feature (including those detailed in the *Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan, submitted on 5th February 2024*) within the development for a period of no less than 30 years from the commencement of the scheme.
b. The mechanism for monitoring success of the management prescriptions with reference to the appropriate Biodiversity Metric target Condition Assessment Sheet(s).
c. A procedure for review and necessary adaptive management in order to attain targets.
d. Details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which long-term implementation of the plan will be secured.

The LEMP shall be implemented in full and for the lifetime of the development in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure the long-term management of landscape and ecological features retained and created by the development, for the benefit of visual amenity and biodiversity for the lifetime of the scheme.

Final sign off – all matters addressed:

Ecologist **Max Hemmings**	Date **21/02/2024**