

Appropriate Assessment of Effects on a European Site

This is a record of the appropriate assessment of Wiltshire Council required by Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The project has been assessed as likely to have significant effects upon one or more European protected sites and is not directly connected to or required for the management of such sites. This assessment is made in accordance with the relevant guidance documents (ref. *HRA Handbook*, David Tyldesley Associates).

PART A: INFORMATION REVIEWED	
Information about the plan or project	This Appropriate Assessment (AA) is for redevelopment of the site to deliver an extension to the existing Spring Park data centre campus consisting of (a) free standing data centre building (b) energy, power, and water infrastructure (c) site access and internal roads (d) site security arrangements (e) diverted Public Rights of Ways (f) hard and soft, green and blue, landscaping and (g) other ancillary and auxiliary forms of development, Land South of Westwells Road, Westwells Road, Neston, SN13 9GB. Application PL/2024/05527 Bat activity surveys including walked transects and static detector surveys were undertaken at the site (Ecological Impact Assessment. June 2024. Tyler Grange) and confirmed use by at least 8 bat species with 3 of the Annex II Bat species confirmed. Roosting Surveys of potential trees were undertaken and no roosts in trees were identified. Bat roosting is confirmed within the slope shaft adjacent to the site and it is understood that the slope shaft supports lesser and greater horseshoe bats. No impacts to the existing slope shaft and surrounding wooded vegetation is proposed. Given the proximity of the site to the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat SAC, habitats within the site offering foraging opportunities for bats are considered to be functionally linked to the SAC. The assemblage of foraging bats within the site is therefore likely to form part of the SAC assemblage and is considered to be of international importance. There is a confirmed greater horseshoe bat flight line along the northern boundary and a confirmed lesser horseshoe bat flight line along the southern boundary (Tyler Grange), Drews Pond Wood direct mitigation route, as outlined within the Corsham Batscape Strategy 2019 also lies within the site. Mitigation proposals will include a CEMP and LEMP and Lighting Strategy which demonstrates that dark foraging and commuting routes for bats will be retained. The application site is within a consultation zone for bats associated with the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The proposals have potential to result in significant adverse impact on the special features of that site due to the loss of foraging and commuting routes and has therefore been screened into AA.
Natura 2000 site(s)	Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

List of European Site interest features	Qualifying Features: 1. Bechstein's bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i> 2. Greater horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i> 3. Lesser horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> The conservation objectives for the site are to: <i>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</i> • <i>The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species;</i> • <i>The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species;</i> • <i>The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely</i> • <i>The populations of qualifying species; and</i> • <i>The distribution of qualifying species within the site."</i> Publication Date: 30th June 2014 – version 2. This document updates and replaces an earlier version dated 29 May 2012 to reflect Natural England's Strategic Standard on European Site Conservation Objectives 2014 (accessed from Natural England website on 26th June 2015).
Information about the site	Most SSSI units underpinning the SAC were either favourable or unfavourable recovering during the last condition assessment. The internationally important designation of Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC is comprised of a network of significant underground sites in both the Wiltshire and BNES administrative areas, including four nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), namely Box Mine, Winsley Mines, Combe Down and Bathampton Down Mines, and Brown's Folly. These component sites are used by bats for hibernation, breeding, mating and as a staging post prior to dispersal. Also of importance are habitats with opportunities for foraging and flight corridors connecting the mines with foraging and roosting opportunities elsewhere. The persistence of bat populations at the SAC relies upon good connectivity to significant roosts in the wider landscape (i.e. maternity/transitory roosts).
Other relevant plans or projects	• Wiltshire Core Strategy adopted January 2015 • 13/07002/FUL is adjacent to the development boundary and is undergoing remaining permitted construction • PL/2025/00957 lies to the west of the site and is proposed solar development
PART B: IMPACT PREDICTION	
Likely Significant Impact(s)	Predicted Effect of Impact(s)
Temporary / permanent loss of roosting habitat, foraging habitat and flight corridors	The development will result in the loss of suitable low value foraging habitat and has the potential to impact commuting routes and roosting features through habitat loss and connectivity from lighting

Risk of collision and bat fatality	The proposed development is large and there may be some low risk of collision but this is considered negligible.
Disturbance to bat flight/foraging activity from light spill	The site sits adjacent to Drews Pond Wood Direct Mitigation Route for the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat SAC as identified within Corsham Batscape Strategy 2019. Records of lesser horseshoe and greater horseshoe bats support the evidence that the site is used for foraging and commuting. Proposed lighting impacts are considered to be significant especially along the northern and eastern boundaries where road lighting already exists and habitat will be removed creating a pinch point of retained suitable habitat. Lighting along the woodland edge close to the roost entrance could also have significant impacts on foraging and commuting behaviour.
Disturbance to bat flight/foraging activity from noise or human presence – construction and operational phases	The development site is located between the existing data centre and residential development and so is already subject to some human disturbance. Impacts due to disturbance to bat flight/foraging activity from noise or human presence – construction and operational phases is considered possible but not significant.
PART C: CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES	
Does the project or plan have the potential to:	
Cause delays in progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site?	The site sits adjacent to Drews Pond Wood Direct Mitigation Route for the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat SAC as identified within Corsham Batscape Strategy 2019. Whilst no direct impact to roosts are anticipated, in the absence of mitigation, habitat loss and lighting impacts have the potential to significantly impact on commuting routes.
Interrupt progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site?	See above
Disrupt those factors that help to maintain the favourable condition of the site?	See above
Interfere with the balance, distribution and density of key species that are the indicators of favourable condition of the site?	Distribution impacts are not predicted
Cause changes to the vital defining aspects (e.g. nutrient balance) that determine how the site functions as	No.

a habitat or ecosystem?	
Change the dynamics of the relationships that define the structure and/or function of the site?	In the absence of mitigation, impacts to foraging and commuting may occur through habitat loss and lighting impacts, this is predicted to be localised.
Interfere with predicted or expected natural changes to the site?	The loss of tall ruderal habitat on site will result in the loss of low value foraging habitat that had the potential to become more valuable in time through natural succession. In the absence of mitigation, this could be considered significant. However, enhancement of adjacent habitat to be retained is anticipated to mitigate for this loss.
Reduce the area of key habitats?	2.517ha of low value foraging habitat will be lost.
Reduce the population of key species?	There will be no direct impact to the existing roosting site adjacent. However, impacts to foraging and commuting routes may affect the efficacy of this roost.
Change the balance between key species?	No.
Reduce diversity of the site?	As above, there will be a loss of 2.517ha loss of low value foraging habitat.
Result in disturbance that could affect population size or density, or the balance between key species?	In the absence of mitigation, the proposals could lead to roost abandonment and fragmentation of commuting routes
Result in fragmentation?	Loss of habitat and increased lighting of the site and boundary features have the potential to result in habitat fragmentation.
Result in the loss or reduction of key features?	No direct impacts on roosting features are anticipated. However, in the absence of mitigation there is anticipated there could be an impact on a key flight corridor, Drews Pond Wood Direct Mitigation Route for the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat SAC as identified within Corsham Batscape Strategy 2019.
PART D: MITIGATION	
Mitigation proposed	The development will result in the loss of suitable low value foraging habitat and has the potential to lead to severance of key flight lines through habitat loss and lighting impacts. There will be no direct loss of roosting locations. The following will be implemented and secured as part of any permissions granted: • Woodland habitat surrounding the roosting locations will be retained • A 15m buffer zone around the development will remain unlit to ensure retention of bat commuting routes. • A Construction Environment Management Plan will be conditioned as part of any planning permission granted to ensure works are undertaken to protect habitat to be retained and reduce construction lighting to ensure a reduction in construction impacts in accordance with the bat mitigation recommendations

	• A Landscape Environment Management Plan will be conditioned as part of any planning permissions granted to ensure the retention, protection and enhancement of foraging and commuting routes onsite in perpetuity. • Landscape enhancements will be undertaken to compensate for lost foraging habitat to include additional hedge/tree planting, creation of attenuation basins and retention of grassland, as outlined within the Supporting Ecological Information Report (December 2024. Tyler Grange) and included on landscape plans which will be secured by compliance condition • A proportion of the habitat will be created prior to commencement of works to ensure suitable foraging/commuting links are retained during both construction and operation, this will be secured at condition. • A lighting strategy has been produced and will be conditioned as part of any permissions granted to ensure dark foraging and commuting routes and a core buffer zone is retained unlit in perpetuity. • Lighting will be monitored annually to ensure the retention of the bat buffer zone. Remedial action will be secured within the monitoring strategy. • Monitoring provision to ensure remedial action is included within the LEMP will be secured by condition and results of the monitoring will be submitted to the LPA. The loss of foraging habitat and potential impacts to foraging and commuting routes is therefore considered moderate but not significant.
PART E: CONCLUSION	
Is the project likely to affect site integrity?	
a) Alone?	
b) In combination with other plans or projects?	No, all planning applications are subject to ongoing work to ensure no loss of foraging or commuting habitats for bats using the SAC hibernation sites (and maternity), particularly by ensuring existing vegetation is left unlit as far as possible, maintaining existing vegetation along key potential flight lines and including additional planting to provide new commuting and foraging habitat for the future. Surveys and mitigation are carried out in accordance with the Council's Bat Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) Planning Guidance for Wiltshire, which is regularly updated in light of new information and available to download on the council website. This Guidance includes buffer areas around the hibernation sites designated as part of the SAC and other key roost sites, which forms a consultation zone, highlighting where the Council Ecologist should be consulted on planning applications. This consultation zone is also broken down into buffer areas by SAC species. Surveys within the consultation zone are expected to employ a higher level of survey effort and ecological consultants are reminded that they should agree the survey scope of potential development sites with the relevant council ecologist in advance.
Recommendation:	

The appropriate assessment concludes assuming mitigation measures are secured at determination and implemented it is considered there will be no adverse effects on site integrity. The application can be positively determined subject to suitable mitigation measures being secured by condition and implemented.

**Name of officer(s)
making the
assessment
Date:**

Jenna Buss, Ecologist
Ecology team, Natural & Historic Environment
18/11/2025

**Natural England
Comments**

**Name of Natural
England officer
Date:**