

Appropriate Assessment of Effects on a European Site

This is a record of the appropriate assessment of Wiltshire Council required by Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations 2017. The project has been assessed as unlikely to have significant effects on 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.

PART A: INFORMATION REVIEWED	
Information about the plan or project	This Appropriate Assessment relates to planning application PL/2025/07598 – Pythouse Farm, Tisbury, Salisbury, SP3 6PA The site comprises a plot of species-poor modified grassland to the north of existing farm buildings and solar panels, and is bound by woodland to the west and hedgerow to the east. It is proposed to install 416 further solar panels and an electrical enclosure. No hedgerow, trees or buildings will be removed. Approximately 0.12 ha of grassland will be lost. The development is located within the bat consultation zone associated with the statutory designated site Chilmark Quarries Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and therefore has potential to result in significant adverse impact on the qualifying features of those sites. Namely, the site falls within three parcel buffers of Barbastelle and Greater horseshoe bats. There is the potential for likely significant effects on qualifying bats as a result of the following: • Loss of foraging and commuting habitat • Disturbance as a result of lighting during demolition/construction and post-development. Chilmark Quarries SAC is considered to be one of the best in the UK for Bechstein's bat, barbastelle, and greater horseshoe bats, and supports a significant population of lesser horseshoe bats. The surrounding woodland, grassland and open water habitats provide vital roosting, commuting and feeding areas for these important populations. <i>In light of the judgement in Case C 323/17 CJEU “people over wind” (12 April 2018) the Council has determined that the application should be subject to an appropriate assessment under Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations 2017.</i> Survey information: <i>“Bat Transect Survey Report, Enims, October 2025”</i> Following a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in November 2024, bat transect surveys of the wider site were undertaken in May-September 2025, and static monitoring surveys in September 2025. Common pipistrelles were the most frequently recorded species. No Barbastelle or Greater horseshoe bats were recorded (the site falls within the core

	area buffers of said Annex II species). A low number of unidentified <i>Myotis</i> calls were recorded by the static detectors on 4 of 13 survey nights, but it is not known if these belonged to Bechstein's bats specifically. Otherwise, no evidence of Annex II species was recorded. The bat survey report concludes that the site had "moderate" levels of bat activity from common bat species, and "low" levels of activity from uncommon species.
	Chilmark Quarries SAC
List of European Site interest features	<u>Qualifying Features</u> Annex II species that are a primary feature of this site: 1. Greater horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i> 2. Barbastelle bat <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i> 3. Bechstein's bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i> Annex II species present as a qualifying feature but not a primary reason for site selection: 1. Lesser horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> The conservation objectives are¹ to '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; • The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features • The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features • The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely • The population of each of the qualifying features, and, • The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.
Information about the SPA/SAC	Chilmark Quarries SAC comprises two separate SSSIs situated in the Chilmark Vale to the west of Salisbury: Chilmark Quarries and, 2½ miles further west, Fonthill Grottoes. They form a complex of abandoned mines and subterranean follies regularly used by an important assemblage of bat species as a hibernation site. The current condition of the European site is favourable/unfavourable recovering. The extensive system of abandoned mines at Chilmark Quarries is undisturbed and displays constant temperature and humidity while the subterranean follies at Fonthill Grottoes also offer a wide range of niches. Together these sites provide suitable conditions for large numbers of hibernating bats.
Other relevant plans or projects	• Wiltshire Core Strategy adopted January 2015 • On Pythouse Farm:

¹ Publication Date: 21 February 2019 (version 3). This document updates and replaces an earlier version dated 30 June 2014 to reflect the consolidation of the Habitats Regulations in 2017.

	15/11185/FUL - solar array immediately south of the application site boundary [approved] 15/00993/FUL - erection of agricultural barn [approved] 17/00206/FUL - erection of agricultural barn [approved] 19/00441/FUL - erection of agricultural barn [approved]
PART B: IMPACT PREDICTION	
Impact	Predicted Effect of Impact
Chilmark Quarries	
Temporary / permanent loss of foraging and roosting habitat and flight corridors.	Approximately 0.12 ha of species-poor modified grassland will be lost. However, the transect and static detector surveys have demonstrated that the site is not likely to be acting as a significant resource for Annex II bats. In the wider site, the higher levels of bat activity were recorded at the woodland edges and around the farm buildings – the proposed solar panels would be set back from the woodland by 20m and hedgerow by 12m at their closest points. Furthermore, bats were recorded still foraging around the area of the site already containing solar panels, indicating that the current site could retain some bat foraging value (primarily for common species) post-development. Overall, it can be argued that there will be no loss of core foraging habitat for Annex II bats. The BNG proposals include enhancement of a section of grassland to the north, mitigating for the loss of species-poor modified grassland. There are no roosting opportunities or linear flight features that will be removed.
Does retained core bat habitat connect to the wider habitat network?	Yes. The woodland to the east, and hedgerow to the west, are further connected to woodland patches, pasture and hedges.
Risk of collision and bat fatality	No risk considered likely.
Disturbance to bat flight/foraging/roosting activity from light spill.	Artificial lighting introduced during and post-development may cause disturbance to bat flight paths and foraging activity due to light spill.
Disturbance to bat flight/foraging/roosting activity from noise or human presence – construction and operational phases	During the construction phases of the development, there is potential for disturbance to bat flight and foraging activity due to increased noise levels and human presence. These impacts are considered temporary and moderate in nature but may affect sensitive species and potential flight paths along, e.g., the tree and hedge lines surrounding the site.

	Disturbance from additional noise/human presence is not likely during the operational phase.
PART C: CONSEQUENCES FOR CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES	
Does the project or plan have the potential to:	
Cause delays in progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site/s?	Unlikely
Interrupt progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site?	Unlikely
Disrupt those factors that help to maintain the favourable condition of the site?	No loss of core habitat is proposed. However, light spill on boundary features during construction/operation may reduce the extent and distribution of habitats available for qualifying species, although this is considered to be de-minimis, given that qualifying species were not recorded on-site, and the proposed site is set back from the woodland and hedgerow features.
Interfere with the balance, distribution and density of key species that are the indicators of favourable condition of the site?	As above.
Change the dynamics of the relationships that define the structure and/or function of the site?	Unlikely This could be disrupted if habitat between roosts and other sensitive features becomes less favourable for bats (e.g., through light disturbance). However, the risk is low, given that qualifying species were not recorded on-site, and the proposed site is set back from the woodland and hedgerow features.
Reduce the population of key species?	Unlikely
Reduce diversity of the site?	Unlikely
PART D: MITIGATION	
Disturbance to bat flight/foraging activity from light spill	
Lighting Plan condition	The bat survey report states: <i>“Lighting during the hours of darkness should not be used for this development, with no additional lighting to the farm buildings and woodland edges adjacent to the site”.</i> The potential impacts of artificial lighting are considered manageable through sensitive lighting design. Should

	permission be granted, the submission of and adherence to an appropriate lighting scheme will be secured by condition.
Disturbance to bat flight/foraging activity from noise or human presence – construction and operational phases	
Construction Method Statement	These impacts are considered manageable through controlling construction lighting, and measures to reduce noise pollution and impacts on adjacent habitats, including the woodland. Such measures will be detailed within a Construction Method Statement (CMS). Should permission be granted, the submission of and adherence to a CMS will be secured by condition.
PART F: CONCLUSION	
Is the project likely to affect site integrity?	
a) Alone?	No
b) In combination with other plans or projects?	No
Recommendation:	
The appropriate assessment concludes no adverse effects on the SAC site. The application can therefore be positively determined, subject to suitable mitigation measures being secured by condition and implemented.	
Name of officer(s) making the assessment and date	Abi Gazzard (Ecologist) Natural & Historic Environment Wiltshire Council 13/01/2026
Natural England Comments	
Name of Natural England officer and date	
Authorised by: Wiltshire Council Manager and date	