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## **Preliminary Roost Assessment**

Cross Farm  
Chilmark  
SP3 5AR

**February 2026**

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| QUALITY CONTROL                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                          |               |
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| The information which we have prepared and provided is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. |                                                          |               |
| Prepared by                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Lila Chillingworth BSc (Hons), MSc - Assistant Ecologist | February 2026 |
| Approved by                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Olatz Gartzia BSc MSC ACIEEM - Principal Ecologist       | February 2026 |
| <p>This report remains valid for 2 years from date of issue.</p> <p>Survey data are valid for 12-18 months from the date the survey was undertaken.</p>                                                            |                                                          |               |

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*Note this report is informative only and is not suitable for planning.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Darwin Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Historic Building Advisory Service on behalf of their client to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) to inform proposals for the building at Cross Farm, Chilmark, SP3 5AR<sup>1</sup>. The assessment was required to support a planning application for the conversion of the southeastern section of the building into a granny annexe. This will result in the southeastern loft void being converted into living space and the addition of a window into the southeastern hipped roof.
- 1.2. The survey and report follow the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Good Practice Guidelines (2023).

### Site Overview

- 1.3. The site is a large garaged building with a tiled roof and a plastic-roofed lean-to attached to its south-western side.
- 1.4. The main house is located on The Street, a quiet road running through Chilmark, next to the intersection with Barberry Lane. The garage building is located behind the main house with well maintained garden between the two. On the northern side of the garage is a courtyard with large storage barns. East of these storage barns and gardens are mature trees which are part of linear green features connected to the wider landscape. On the opposite side to the property, running parallel with The Street is a chalk river (see **Figure 1**).
- 1.5. The site is located in the centre of Chilmark, a small village in Wiltshire. North of the site, at the end of Barberry Lane, is St Margaret's Church. Most of the properties in the village have associated gardens. There are stands of mature trees within the surrounding area. The village is surrounded by agricultural fields (see **Figure 2**).

### Purpose of this report

- 1.6. The purpose of this report is to provide sufficient information to assess the potential ecological impacts of the proposed development, and to identify what further information is required before a full assessment can be made.
- 1.7. This report is not suitable for planning.

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<sup>1</sup> Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference ST 96980 32670.



**Figure 1:** Site location within the local landscape (Copyright Google Earth, 2026)



**Figure 2:** Site location within the wider landscape (Copyright Google Earth, 2026)

## Legislation

- 1.8. This report has been prepared in accordance with relevant legislation and policy. Further detail is provided in **Appendix 1**, however the following primary documents are of relevance:
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA 1981);
  - The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) (CRoW Act);
  - The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (CHS 2017); and
  - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC).
- 1.9. For any development that impacts on bats or bat roosts, in order to permit the works to legally proceed, it is necessary to obtain a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) or Bat Mitigation Class (BMC) Licence from Natural England in advance of the works taking place. EPS Licences can be considered for up to 35 working days, BMC Licences take 10 working days. It is only possible to obtain a BMC Licence for low impact works.
- 1.10. Further details on the legislation and relevant policy can be found in **Appendix 1**.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **Desk Study**

- 2.1. A desk study was undertaken for designated sites and bat species and habitat records within 2 km of the site:
- The MagicMap website was reviewed to obtain information on any designated sites of nature conservation interest within 2 km of the site;
  - The Wiltshire Planning Portal was searched for past and pending planning applications that may have associated ecological documents detailing results of bat surveys; and
  - Google Maps and Ordnance Survey (OS) Leisure Maps was utilised to view aerial photographs and maps to assess the ecological context of the site within the wider landscape.
- 2.2. Natural England has developed a tool to help assess the potential risks to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) by proposed developments. These are known as 'Impact Risk Zones' (IRZs) and they define the area around a SSSI that could be sensitive to development, considering the particular sensitivities of the feature for which the site is designated.
- 2.3. The IRZs help inform whether a development proposal may affect a SSSI and if so, whether it is necessary for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to seek pre-application advice from Natural England. Information on the IRZs was determined from the MAGIC website to determine if the LPA is required to seek consultation for the current development.

### **Preliminary Roost Assessment**

- 2.4. Assistant Ecologist Lila Chillingworth BSc (Hons), MSc conducted a building inspection at the site at Cross Farm on 4th of February 2026. The weather conditions at the time of the survey were dry, still and approximately 8°C. The following methodology was followed:

#### *External Inspection*

- 2.5. An investigation was carried out of external features with potential for use by roosting bats, such as gaps under roof and ridge tiles, gaps at soffit boxes or fascias. A search for bat droppings was made beneath each potential entry/exit point identified where accessible. The surveyor used binoculars and powerful, low-heat LED torch.

#### *Internal Inspection*

- 2.6. An investigation was carried out of the roof void (including the floor and walls) for signs of bats roosting and the access potential into the roof void for bats. The surveyor looked for bats, bat droppings, likely access points, signs of feeding, dead bats, scratch marks and staining, and made a suitability assessment of the structure of the roof.

## Categorisation of Bat Roosting Potential

- 2.7. Each building was assessed for its potential to support roosting bats as detailed in **Table 1** below which is taken from the Bat Conservation Trust 2023 guidelines Table 4.1, Table 7.1 and Table 7.2.

**Table 1:** Roost classification from the Bat Conservation Trust (2023) guidelines.

| Category                | Description of roosting habitat                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Number of surveys required                                     |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>None</b>             | No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).                                                                                                                                                              | No further surveys                                             |
| <b>Negligible</b>       | No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.                                                                                                                                                    | No further surveys                                             |
| <b>Low</b>              | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis by large numbers of bats.             | Single survey between May to August                            |
| <b>Moderate</b>         | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, condition and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.                                                                                                                             | Two surveys with at least one survey between May to August.    |
| <b>High / Confirmed</b> | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by a larger number of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts. | Three surveys with at least two surveys between May to August. |

## Limitations

- 2.8. Ecological surveys are limited by factors that affect the presence of plants and animals such as the time of the year, weather, migration patterns. The survey was undertaken in February and therefore represents a valid sample of ecological evidence present on that date/season.
- 2.9. Ecological data is typically deemed valid for 18 months. This report remains valid for 2 years from the date of the survey, however, a walkover survey after 18 months may be required to demonstrate whether or not the habitats have remained as described.
- 2.10. The desk study does not include data from the local environmental records centre (LERC). However, following CIEEM guidelines (2017) it is possible to conduct a robust assessment without the need of LERC data, for example for small-scale projects or on sites such as;
- A field in active arable cultivation where there is no impact on any hedges, trees or water bodies;
  - A small area of cultivated garden/amenity grassland, as above; or

- A small urban site comprising mostly asphalt or compacted hardstanding.
- 2.11. The proposals only impact the building and surrounding hardstanding on site. This is a low impact, small-scale project that will not impact the vegetation on the site, and therefore the lack of LERC data is not considered a limitation to the ecological assessment of the site.
- 2.12. Many species of bat in the UK are crevice-dwelling, and bats or signs of bats can be difficult to find within a building. In addition, there may be areas that are inaccessible to the surveyor, for instance, the loftvoid in the southeastern section could not be entered, only viewed from the hatch. Due to an update on the MagicMaps at the time of writing, there was no accessible database proving information relating to EPS licences. As a result, information on EPS licences surrounding the site could not be gathered and is subsequently not included in this report.
- 2.13. No other limitations were encountered, or assumptions made during either the desk study or the field survey and it is considered that with the access gained and recording undertaken an accurate assessment of the site's ecological importance has been made.

### 3. SURVEY RESULTS

#### Desk Study

- 3.1. There is one designated site within 2km of the site, Chilmark Quarries Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). There is one further international designation within 5km of the site, comprising the River Avon SAC. These are detailed on **Table 2**.

**Table 2:** Statutory designated sites within 2 km of the site at Cross Farm.

| Designated sites                                          | Name and designation type                                | Reason for designation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Approximate distance from site |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Within Site Boundaries</b>                             | There are no designated sites within the site boundaries |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                |
| <b>Within 2 km of the site</b>                            | Chilmark Quarries (SSSI)                                 | Hibernating populations of bats -<br>Barbastelle, Bechstein's bat, Greater Horseshoe bat, Lesser Horseshoe bat and mixed assemblages                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1.3km SE                       |
|                                                           | Chilmark Quarries (SAC)                                  | Annex 2 species<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1304 Greater horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i></li> <li>• 1308 Barbastelle <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i></li> <li>• 1323 Bechstein's bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i></li> </ul> Annex 2 species (qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection)<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1303 Lesser horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i></li> </ul>                                                                            | 1.3km SE & 3.4km W             |
| <b>International designations within 5 km of the site</b> | River Avon (SAC)                                         | Annex 1 Habitats<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation</li> </ul> Annex 2 species<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1016 Desmoulin's whorl snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></li> <li>• 1095 Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i></li> <li>• 1096 Brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i></li> <li>• 1106 Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i></li> <li>• 1163 Bullhead <i>Cottus gobio</i></li> </ul> | 2.7km S                        |

- 3.2. There were no relevant records from nearby planning applications.
- 3.3. There are 35 areas of priority deciduous woodland site within 2km of the site. These area of woodland is also registered on the National Forest Inventory (Woodland - Broadleaved). Further priority habitats within 1km of the site comprise Lowland Meadows (780m) and Chalk river (30m).
- 3.4. There is one area of ancient woodland within 1km of the application site, comprising of Cleeve Copes, approximately 950m south east of the site.

## **Preliminary Roost Assessment**

### *External Assessment*

- 3.5. The building was a single storey garage which had been built in the last 20-30 years. The roof was hipped at both ends of the building. It was tiled with flat concrete tiles and had round concrete ridge tiles and hip bonnets. The majority of the south-western side of the roof was covered in solar panels. Below the northwestern hipped roof, there was horizontal wooden cladding. The wall were covered in a smooth white render which was well maintained. Attached to the bottom of the south-western side of the roof was a lean-to constructed of a wooden frame and clear plastic panels.
- 3.6. Under the eaves at the northwestern end of the property, access had been blocked off with chicken wire. On the southwestern end, the eaves had been left open. In places, there were gaps in the mortar under the hip bonnet and tiles, which could provide roosting potential for crevice dwellers. A chunk of mortar was missing from one of the verges, which also provided roosting potential. The wooden cladding on the northwestern end of the building lay very flush together and did not provide roosting potential. The lean-to provided no roosting opportunities for bats.

### *Internal Assessment*

- 3.7. The interior space was divided into two by a breeze block wall creating two completely separate sections. Throughout the entire building, the roof was trusted and lined with bitumen felt, which was in fairly good condition.
- 3.8. The southeastern section had a wooden board ceiling which was 2.5 m tall. The space below this wooden board ceiling is divided into various rooms, including a workshop, a storage garage and a toilet. This section is not accessible to bats or birds. Above the ceiling there was a void approximately 6m long, 7m wide and 3m to the apex. As the roof was trussed, the flight space was cluttered. Access was noted into this void via the open eaves. This results in the loft void being very draughty and cold.
- 3.9. No droppings in the void were recorded, none stuck to the gable walls or scattered droppings on the floor. Within this void there was a large, messy nest of sticks and twigs likely belonging to a corvid.
- 3.10. The northwestern section is an undivided space from the floor to the apex, used as garage storage and appeared to be regularly used. A thorough search of the floor found no droppings, and the planks left on top of the trusses were inspected for droppings, but none were found. The eaves in this section were sealed off with chicken wire, preventing access. There was an old swallow nest up near the apex in this section, and evidence of old swallow droppings throughout. It is likely the nest was built before the installation of chicken wire, and subsequently the birds no longer have access to nest within the building.

## Site Photographs



**Image 1: Northern corner of the building.**



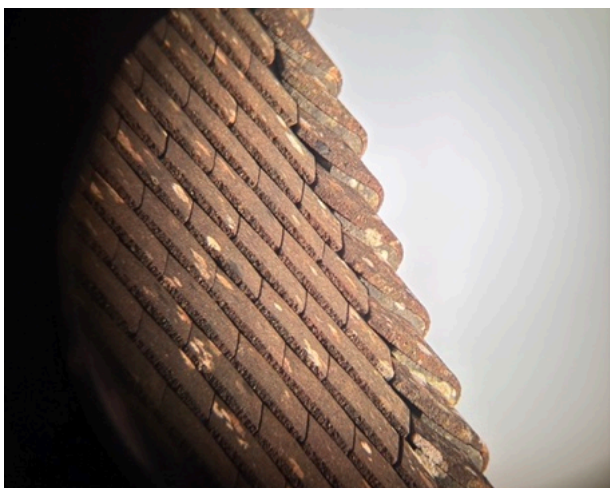
**Image 2: Southern corner of the building**



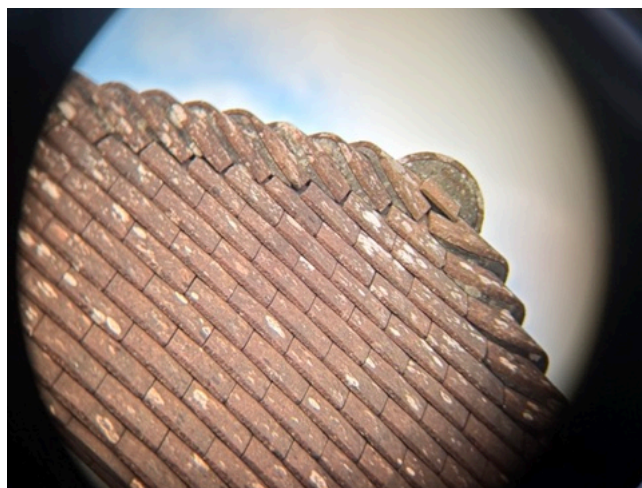
**Image 3: Interior of the northwestern section**



**Image 4: Interior of the loftvoid in the Southeastern**



**Image 5: Missing mortar under hip bonnets**



**Image 6: Potential gaps under tiles.**

## 4. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Designated Sites

- 4.1. There is potential for all proposed developments to have a harmful effect on terrestrial Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and those Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites that they underpin.
- 4.2. The site is located within the Chilmark Quarries SAC buffer zone for greater horseshoe and barbastelle. The building does not support greater horseshoe or barbastelle roosts or habitats; therefore, the proposal does not risk impacting the integrity of the qualifying features of the SAC. The site is an urban site that already contains light spill from houses and the light from the new window will not expand light levels outside the settlement. Therefore, it is not anticipated there will be any impacts to the bats of Chilmark Quarries SAC
- 4.3. As the proposals will contain a bedroom, it will therefore result in a net gain of residential units. The LPA will be required to consult Natural England for nutrient impacts from this development, and therefore, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) informed by nutrient budget calculations will be required in this instance.
- 4.4. The site is close to a chalk river (30m), a priority habitat. However, as the majority of the works are internal and this is a small-scale project, we do not anticipate there will be any impacts to the chalk river.

### Bats

- 4.5. During the PRA, the building on site was assessed as providing a **moderate potential** to support roosting bats and as such, it will be necessary to undertake a minimum of two dusk emergence surveys. The surveys are required to confirm and identify whether a bat roost is present, the species of bats roosting at the site, characterise the type of bat roost (this can be a summer, winter hibernation, transitional, satellite, or maternity roost), and determine the access points bats are using to enter and exit the roost. These details are required to inform the planning application and determine which licensing route is appropriate.
- 4.6. The surveys must be undertaken during the bat activity season (between May to August) to confirm the presence/absence of roosting bats. Should bats be found to emerge from the building, then a total of three dusk emergence/dawn re-entry surveys will be required to inform an EPS mitigation licence application to Natural England.
- 4.7. An overview of general mitigation requirements if bats are found is summarised in **Appendix 2**, however, a full mitigation plan appropriate for the site can only be provided following the recommended further surveys and impact assessment.

**Nesting birds**

- 4.8. In the southeastern section was a large stick nest which looked as if it belonged to a corvid. In the northwestern section, there was a swallow nest, which is likely no longer used due to the chicken wire excluding access.
- 4.9. The proposed works could result in the disturbance and destruction of nesting habitats during the breeding bird season of March to August inclusive and may cause harm and/or disturbance to breeding birds
- 4.10. All occupied bird nests have legal protection from disturbance, damage and destruction under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981). If required, all clearance of suitable vegetation, trees and works within the building where birds nest may be present should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive for most species in the UK).
- 4.11. If works during the nesting season cannot be avoided, the building and all vegetation should be checked for nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to clearance taking place. If any active bird nests are found in the areas that need to be cleared they must be buffered from disturbance and works will not be allowed to resume within this buffer until the chicks have fledged.
- 4.12. The site should be enhanced with the installation of swallow cups such as No. 10 Schwegler swallow nest or similar. The swallow cups should be made of a woodstone/ woodcrete material. These should be positioned on the south-western wall with the lean-to. They should be installed at the western end of the wall, under the eaves which will shelter the cups from the elements. There should be a distance of at least 6cm between the top of the nest and the eaves. Swallows are sociable birds therefore, we recommend at least 3 nest cups, but multiple nests should not be placed at less than 1m intervals. You should ensure there is always access for the birds.

**Overall conclusion**

- 4.13. The full ecological impacts of the proposed development cannot be fully assessed following the PRA survey alone and further survey work will be required. Following the recommended bat activity survey work, detailed mitigation and enhancement recommendations will be made within an Ecological Impact Assessment report that will be suitable for planning.

## 5. REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX 1 - LEGISLATION AND POLICY

### Bat Legislation

In England and Wales, all bat species and their roosts are legally protected under the European *Habitats Directive* (1992); the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations* (2017); the *Wildlife and Countryside Act* (1981) (as amended); the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act*, 2000; and the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act* (NERC, 2006).

Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*, Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii*, greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, and noctule *Nyctalus noctula* bats are all species of principal importance in England under Section 41 of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act* 2006.

You will be committing a criminal offence if you:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats;
- Damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time);
- Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat; or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

The government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for administering EPS licenses that permit activities that would otherwise lead to an offence.

A licence can be obtained if the following three tests have been met:

- Regulation 53(9)(a) - there is "no satisfactory alternative" to the derogation, and;
- Regulation 53(9)(b) - the derogation "will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range" and;
- Regulation 53(2)(e) - the derogation is for the purposes of "preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment".

## Bird Legislation

All wild birds in the UK are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or to take, damage or destroy the nest or its eggs.

Some bird species, such as the barn owl *Tyto alba*, are listed in Schedule 1 of the 1981 Act and receive further protection, making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb these birds whilst building a nest or in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or to disturb dependent young of such a bird.

The NERC Act (2006) inserts a new schedule into the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) to protect the nests of some bird species that regularly re-use their nests, even when the nests are not in use. This protection currently applies to golden eagle, white-tailed eagle and osprey.

## National Planning Policy

- 5.1. The *National Planning Policy Framework (2024)* aims to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity. Chapter 15 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' details what local planning policies should seek to consider with regard to planning applications.
- 5.2. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
  - 187 a) Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
  - 187 b) Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
  - 187 d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
  - 188) Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and local designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement

of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries;

189) Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their settings should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

5.3. Specific policies regarding habitats and biodiversity comprise:

192) To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation and
- b) Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

193) When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoid (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) Development on land within or outside of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the feature of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) Development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around development should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

194) The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

a) Potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;

b) Listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and

c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

### **Local Planning Policy**

- 5.4. The local planning policy for the site is the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015). In particular, Core Policy 50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) provides guidelines for protection and enhancement of the natural environment and refers to the planning guidance for Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in Wiltshire, designated for the presence of nationally important bat species.
- 5.5. Wiltshire County Council (WCC), Natural England (NE) and local experts and researchers have jointly prepared the Bat Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) Planning Guidance for Wiltshire (2015). It is aimed at applicants, agents, consultants and planners involved producing and assessing development proposals in the landscapes surrounding Wiltshire's most sensitive bat roosting sites, which are protected by European wildlife legislation and applies to all types of developments that are subject to planning control.
- 5.6. The guidance gives details on how to mitigate any potential impacts on Wiltshire Bat SACs and to ensure that any potential issues are identified as early in the planning process as possible to prevent unnecessary delays to development projects. The guidance also outlines the ecological documents and plans, which should be submitted in support of planning applications, so as to ensure that the council has all the information required to undertake a reliable Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) should one be required.
- 5.7. In addition to policies relating to bat SACs, the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) includes Core Policy 51 (Landscape), which provides guidance for protecting, conserving and where possible, enhancing landscape character, including locally distinctive patterns and species

composition of natural features (such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and waterbodies). Core Policy 69 (Protection of the River Avon SAC) provides guidelines for the incorporation of measures during construction and operations to avoid and prevent pollution and to minimise disturbance effects.

### **Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan**

- 5.8. The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan was published in 2002 and reviewed in 2008 by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and over 40 delivery partners who make up the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership. It includes habitat action plans for 11 of the most significant of the UK Priority Habitats in Wiltshire, which include woodland, wood-pasture, parkland and ancient trees, hedgerows, calcareous grassland, neutral grassland, traditional orchards, farmland habitats, built environment, standing open water and rivers, streams and associated habitats. In addition, a bat species action plan has also been included, covering all bat species found in Wiltshire, while other priority species have been included under the appropriate habitat action plans.
- 5.9. The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan species list includes species that have national priority and also species having local importance in Wiltshire including county notables. A total of 260 species have been included on the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan species list.
- 5.10. The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan aims to achieve the following:
  - Enable prioritisation and define actions for priority habitats and species in Wiltshire;
  - Create a plan of action that can be delivered through a partnership of statutory, private and third sector organisations;
  - Provide a baseline of current knowledge and a tool to help monitor key habitats and species; and
  - To link objectives, targets and actions to report nationally and enable conservation work carried out in Wiltshire to contribute to national targets and reporting.
- 5.11. In 2012, a landscape scale framework for conservation in Wiltshire was developed, identifying 11 Landscape Biodiversity Areas across Wiltshire and Swindon, made up of a number of priority habitats, designated sites and other areas of conservation significance. This aims to encourage landscape scale planning for species and habitat conservation across Wiltshire.

**APPENDIX 2 - OVERVIEW OF GENERAL BAT MITIGATION**