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Our ref: 11751
Date: 19 January 2026

By email only: Planning Department, planning@horsham.gov.uk

Thank you for requesting advice on this application from Place Services' ecological advice service. This service provides advice to planning officers to inform Horsham District Council planning decisions with regard to potential ecological impacts from development.

Application: DC/25/1370
Location: McDonalds Restaurant Worthing Road West Grinstead Horsham
Proposal: Installation of various internal and external signage

Thank you for consulting Place Services on the above application.

No ecological objection	☐
Recommend approval subject to attached conditions	☐
Further information required/Temporary holding objection • European Protected Species (bats)	☒
Recommend Refusal	☐
Subject to Natural England's formal comments on the conclusion of the LPA's Appropriate Assessment	☐

[Please refer to Horsham District Councils advice regarding Water Neutrality requirements following Natural England's Withdrawal Statement \(31st October 2025\).](#)

Summary

We have reviewed the documents supplied by the applicant, relating to the likely impacts of development on designated sites, protected & Priority species and habitats and identification of proportionate mitigation. Unfortunately, no information has been submitted in relation to

ecology. Please note that comments on Biodiversity Net Gain are provided by Horsham District Council in-house.

We are not satisfied that there is sufficient ecological information available for determination of this application and recommend that further information with regard to bats is provided prior to determination. The reasons for this are outlined below:

We note that an assessment of the lighting proposals has been made in accordance with national guidelines (Illuminated Signage Lighting Assessment (Strenger, November 2025)). However, we understand that this does not include an assessment of the impact of the lighting on foraging and commuting bats. [Government Standing Advice](#) says you should ask for a survey if:

- distribution and historical records suggest bats may be present
- the development proposal includes lighting of buildings or green spaces close to habitats that bats tend to use.

The survey information for bats is required prior to determination because paragraph 99 of the ODPM Circular 06/2005 highlights that: *“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision.”*

This information is therefore required to provide the LPA with certainty of likely impacts on legally protected species and be able to secure appropriate mitigation either by a mitigation licence from Natural England or a condition of any consent. This will enable the LPA to demonstrate compliance with its statutory duties, including its biodiversity duty under s40 NERC Act 2006 (as amended) and prevent wildlife crime under s17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Furthermore, the Local Planning Authority, as a competent authority, should have regard to the requirements of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) when reaching planning decisions and must not leave this until the licence application stage. Therefore, if a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence is required for this application, appropriate mitigation measures to support the provision of the licence must also be outlined prior to determination to allow certainty to the LPA that a licence will likely be granted.

This is needed to enable the LPA to demonstrate its compliance with its statutory duties including its biodiversity duty under s40 NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

Additional Comments

The site lies approximately 13.1km east of The Mens Special Area of Conservation (SAC) ([MAGIC maps](#)) and therefore lies outside within the 12km Wider Conservation Area for this SAC. Therefore, a project level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will not be required.

We also recommend that reasonable biodiversity enhancements for protected, Priority and threatened species should be identified by a suitably qualified ecologist and implemented to

secure net gains for biodiversity, as outlined under Paragraph 187d and 193d of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024). The reasonable biodiversity enhancement measures need to be outlined within a separate Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy and secured by a condition of any consent.

Please note that we have no comments on Great Crested Newt as we have been instructed to leave comments on this European Protected Species to the [NatureSpace Partnership](#).

We look forward to working with the LPA and the applicant to receive the additional information required to support a lawful decision and overcome our holding objection.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

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Place Services provide ecological advice on behalf of Horsham District Council.

Please note:

This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.

We are unable to respond directly to applicants/agents or other interested parties.

Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant/agent or other interested parties may have, must be directed to the Planning Officer at the relevant LPA, who will seek further advice from us where appropriate.