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Date: 9 May 2025 Our ref: 03603

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

Application: DC/25/0377
Location: Downsview Grange East Street West Chiltington West Sussex RH20 2LU
Proposal: Demolition of existing stables and store and erection of a stable building.

Thank you for consulting Place Services on the above application.

a) No ecological objection	☐
b) Recommend approval subject to attached conditions	☒
c) Further information required/Temporary holding objection	☐
d) Recommend Refusal	☐
e) Subject to Natural England's formal comments on the conclusion of the Water Neutrality Appropriate Assessment	☒
f) Discharge of condition	

g) Subject to Natural England's formal comments on the conclusion of the Bat HRA (screening only)	☒

Please note that following receipt of Natural England's position statement on developments in the Sussex North Water Supply Zone, decisions on planning applications should await the completion of a Sussex North water neutrality strategy unless they can demonstrate water neutrality.

Summary

We have reviewed the Bat Roost Assessment (Derek Finnie Associates, February 2025) relating to the likely impacts of development on designated sites, protected and Priority species & habitats and identification of appropriate mitigation measures. Please note that comments on Biodiversity Net Gain are provided by Horsham District Council in-house.

The habitats on site only comprise an existing horse stable, a nearby new build residential dwelling, horse ménage and residential garden. In addition, we understand from the plans that no trees will be removed and there will be no works to any trees.

The site lies approximately 8.6km southeast of The Mens Special Area of Conservation (SACs) for which one of the qualifying features is Barbastelle bats. Therefore, the site lies within the 12km Wider Conservation Area for the SACs (Sussex Bat Special Area of Conservation Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol) and may be within the range of foraging areas required by the bats. MAGIC shows there to be one granted European Protected Species licence application, which includes Barbastelle bat from 2019 (2019-42554-EPS-MIT). However, there are no records for Barbastelle bat within 2km of the site (Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) - accessed under licence).

There are approximately 17 records for bats within 2km of the site, including Brown Long-eared bat, Serotine, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brandt's bat and Natterer's bat (Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) - accessed under licence). The site lies approximately 14.5km southeast of Ebernoe Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and is therefore outside the within the 12km Wider Conservation Area for this SAC (Sussex Bat Special Area of Conservation Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol). The site lies approximately 3.9km east of Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar site.

We understand there will be no severance to the flight lines of foraging or commuting bats from the SAC and habitat connectivity within the site will be maintained. Additionally, from reviewing the plans and documents it is our understanding that no external artificial lighting is proposed.

We therefore believe there will be no Adverse Effect on Integrity of the bat SAC. The LPA will need to prepare a project level HRA Screening Report to record its decision and retain on file.

This provides certainty for the LPA of the likely impacts on designated sites, protected and Priority species & habitats and, with appropriate mitigation measures secured, the development can be made acceptable.

The mitigation measures identified in the Bat Roost Assessment (Derek Finnie Associates, February 2025) should be secured by a condition of any consent and implemented in full. This is necessary to conserve and enhance protected and Priority species particularly those recorded in the locality.

We are now satisfied that there is sufficient ecological information available for determination of this application. We have no objections on ecological matters excluding Great Crested Newt as we have been instructed to leave comments on this European Protected Species to the NatureSpace Partnership.

This provides certainty for the LPA of the likely impacts on designated sites, protected and Priority species & habitats and, with appropriate mitigation measures secured, the development can be made acceptable.

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

Reasonable biodiversity enhancements for protected, Priority and threatened species, are required to secure net gains for biodiversity, as outlined under Paragraph 187d and 193d of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024). Such as the provision of integrated bat and bird boxes, and Hedgehog friendly fencing. The reasonable biodiversity enhancement measures should be outlined within a separate Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy and should be secured by a condition of any consent.

Impacts will be minimised such that the proposal is acceptable, subject to the conditions below based on BS42020:2013. We recommend that submission for approval and implementation of the details below should be a condition of any planning consent.

Recommended conditions

1. ACTION REQUIRED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL RECOMMENDATIONS

"All mitigation measures and/or works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in the Bat Roost Assessment (Derek Finnie Associates, February 2025) as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the local planning authority prior to determination.

This may include the appointment of an appropriately competent person e.g. an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) to provide on-site ecological expertise during construction. The appointed person shall undertake all activities, and works shall be carried out, in accordance with the approved details."

Reason*:* To conserve protected and Priority species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

2. PRIOR TO ANY WORKS ABOVE SLAB LEVEL: BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

"Prior to any works above slab level, a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for protected, Priority and threatened species, prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The content of the Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy shall include the following:

a) Purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed enhancement measures;
b) detailed designs or product descriptions to achieve stated objectives;
c) locations of proposed enhancement measures by appropriate maps and plans (where relevant);
d) persons responsible for implementing the enhancement measures; and
e) details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant).

The works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details shall be retained in that manner thereafter."

Reason: To enhance protected, Priority and threatened species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under paragraph 187d of NPPF 2024 and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

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

Hayley Dean MCIEEM MSc BSc (Hons)
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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.