



Date: 03 March 2026

Our ref: 14335

Matthew Porter
Horsham District Council
Parkside,
Chart Way,
Horsham,
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

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/26/0049
Location: Bellway Homes Development Site Wooddale Lane Billingshurst West Sussex RH14 9YX
Proposal: Erection of a temporary residential sales area to include provision of parking, landscaping and use of a sales cabin.

Thank you for consulting Place Services on the above application.

No ecological objection	☐
No ecological objection subject to attached conditions	☐
Further information required/Temporary holding objection for European Protected Species (bats and Hazel Dormouse) and protected species (reptiles)	☒
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, other than that for Biodiversity Net Gain. 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 protected species and habitats is provided prior to determination. The reasons for this are outlined below:

European Protected Species – bats

We note from the Landscape Masterplan Drawing Number 3360-APA-ZZ-XX-LA-L-1003 Revision P01 (Allen Pyke, November 2025) that there are existing trees on site. As the site lies approximately 5.6km east of The Mens Special Area of Conservation (SAC) ([MAGIC maps](#)), it is within the 6.5km Key Conservation Area for this SAC. Within this area all impacts must be assessed as the habitats within this zone are considered critical for sustaining the populations of Barbastelle bats within the SAC, the qualifying feature of the SAC (Sussex Bat Special Area of Conservation Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol). Therefore, we request clarification as to whether any trees will be removed or impacted by this development and whether bats, including Barbastelle bats, will be impacted, in accordance with [Government Standing Advice](#).

The site lies approximately 10.9km east of Ebernoe Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and therefore lies within the 12.0km Wider Conservation Area for this SAC.

There are no records for Barbastelle bat and no European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSML) have been granted within 2km of the site ([MAGIC maps](#)). There are approximately 55 records of bats within 2km of the site, including Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared Bat (SBISx – accessed under licence). The site lies approximately 7.9km northeast of Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar site.

European Protected Species – Hazel Dormouse

We note from the Biodiversity Net Gain Report Vf (Ecology Solutions, December 2025) that a length of 0.04 units of native hedgerow, currently in good condition, and suitable habitat for Hazel Dormouse, comprising Blackthorn, Dog rose, Hawthorn and Bramble, will be lost. [Government Standing Advice](#) for Hazel Dormouse says you should ask for a survey if:

- *distribution and historical records suggest hazel dormice may be present*
- *the development proposal will affect an area of woodland (including deciduous, conifer or mixed woodland), hedgerow or scrub*

Therefore, we request clarification as to whether the hedgerow has been assessed for the presence of Hazel Dormouse, a European Protected Species.

Protected species - reptiles

We note from the map on the planning portal that there is a balancing pond immediately to the south of the site and that Landscape Masterplan Drawing Number 3360-APA-ZZ-XX-LA-L-1003 Revision P01 (Allen Pyke, November 2025) indicates a footpath to be installed on the eastern boundary will go through an existing mature hedgerow and a bridge will be created over an existing ditch. In addition, there is an existing ditch in the middle of the site to the

south of the proposed sales cabin and car park. [Government Standing Advice](#) says you should ask for a survey if:

- *distribution and historical records suggest reptiles may be present*
- *the development proposal is likely to lead to harm to individual reptiles or their habitats*
- *suitable habitat is present at the development site that could support reptiles*
- *the development will alter the water levels of the development site or surrounding area*
- *the development will break apart suitable habitat for reptiles*

The additional information for bats, Hazel Dormouse and reptiles 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.

See Appeal Decisions Ref: APP/P1560/W/24/3344547 at The Oaks, Clacton Road Weeley Essex CO16 9EF and APP/W3520/W/17/3174638 Pooles Farm, Thorney Green Road, Stowupland IP14 4AJ, where the appeals were dismissed as one of the main issues was the effect of the proposal on protected species. The Inspector could not be sure that there would be no adverse effect on protected species in the absence of ecological information. We also highlight that this information is also requested by the Inspector even where ecology has not been a reason for refusal.

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

If external lighting is required and as Barbastelle may use the onsite habitat, we recommend that a Wildlife Friendly Lighting Strategy is implemented for this application to avoid impacts from light disturbance. This should be secured by a condition of any consent and implemented in full. Therefore, technical specification should be submitted prior to occupation, which demonstrates measures to avoid lighting impacts to foraging / commuting bats, which are likely to be present within the local area. This should summarise the following

measures recommended by [Guidance Note:08/23 \(Institute of Lighting Professionals\)](#) will be implemented:

- Do not provide excessive lighting. Light levels should be as low as possible as required to fulfil the lighting need.
- All luminaires should lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, compact fluorescent sources should not be used.
- Warm White lights should be used at <2700k. This is necessary as lighting which emits an ultraviolet component or that has a blue spectral content has a high attraction effect on insects. This may lead in a reduction in prey availability for some light sensitive bat species.
- Where appropriate, external security lighting should be set on motion-sensors and set to as short a possible a timer as the risk assessment will allow.
- Luminaires should always be mounted horizontally, with no light output above 90° and/or no upward tilt.
- Only if all other options have been explored, accessories such as baffles, hoods or louvres can be used to reduce light spill and direct it only to where it is needed. However, due to the lensing and fine cut-off control of the beam inherent in modern LED luminaires, the effect of cowls and baffles is often far less than anticipated and so should not be relied upon solely.

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.*