9th December 2024

Kate Turner
Horsham District Council
Parkside,
Chart Way,
Horsham,
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

By email only

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/24/0322**
Location: **Four Seasons Fuel Coneyhurst Road Coneyhurst Billingshurst West Sussex RH14 9DG**
Proposal: **Erection of an agricultural storage building**

Dear Kate,

Thank you for consulting Place Services on the above application.

a) No ecological harm/No objection	
b) Requires further information	
c) Recommend grant permission subject to conditions	Yes
d) Recommend refusal	
e) Subject to Natural England's formal comments on the conclusion of the Water Neutrality Appropriate Assessment	Yes
f) Discharge of condition	

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.

Summary

We have reviewed the Ecological Impact Assessment (South Downs Ecology, January 2024) relating to the likely impacts of development on designated sites, protected & Priority species and habitats, and identification of appropriate mitigation measures. Please note that comments on mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain are provided by Horsham District Council in-house.

We note from the Ecological Impact Assessment (South Downs Ecology, January 2024) that the buildings and habitats onsite have negligible bat roost potential. We therefore agree that no further surveys for bats are required.

The site lies approximately 6.8km east of The Mens Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and therefore lies within the 12km Wider Conservation Area for the SAC (Sussex Bat Special Area of Conservation Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol). The qualifying feature for the SAC is Barbastelle bats, but there are no records for this species within 2km of the site (Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBIS) - accessed under licence and MAGIC maps).

No European Protected Species Mitigation Licenses (EPSML) have been granted within 2km of the site (MAGIC maps). There are approximately 25 records for bats within 2km of the site, including Common Pipistrelle, Natterer's bat, Brown Long-eared bat and Soprano Pipistrelle bat (SxBIS – accessed under licence). The site lies approximately 11.7km east of Ebernoe Common SAC and is therefore outside the Wider Conservation Area for the SAC. The sites lies approximately 7.5km northeast of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar site.

We understand from the submitted documents that the site is currently used for storage and comprises hard standing, sparsely vegetated urban land and scattered scrub. There are no hedgerows or woodlands within the red line boundary. Therefore, 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.

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

We are 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).

The mitigation and enhancement measures identified in the Ecological Impact Assessment (South Downs Ecology, January 2024) 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 support the proposed reasonable biodiversity enhancements for protected and Priority species, which have been recommended to secure net gains for biodiversity, as outlined under Paragraph 180d and 186d of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023). The enhancement measures should be outlined within a Biodiversity Enhancement Layout and secured by a condition of any consent for discharge prior to slab level.

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 and enhancement measures and/or works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in the Ecological Impact Assessment (South Downs Ecology, January 2024), 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 and enhance 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) and Policy 31 of the Horsham Development Framework.

2. **PRIOR TO BENEFICIAL USE: BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT LAYOUT**
   "A Biodiversity Enhancement Layout, providing the finalised details and locations of the enhancement measures contained within the *Ecological Impact Assessment (South Downs Ecology, January 2024), shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.*

   The enhancement measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation and all features shall be retained in that manner thereafter."

   Reason: To enhance Protected and Priority Species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended).

Please contact us with any queries.

Yours sincerely

Genevieve Broad 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.