01 October 2024

Hannah Darley
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.

Dear Hannah

Application: **DC/24/0568**
Location: **High Beech Mill Lane Lower Beeding West Sussex RH13 6PX**
Proposal: **Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of a new residential dwelling and the erection of an office / leisure room.**

Thank you for consulting Place Services on the above application.

a) No ecological harm/No objection	
b) Requires further information on European Protected Species (bats)	Yes
c) Recommend grant permission subject to conditions	
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 unless they can demonstrate water neutrality.

Summary

We have reviewed the documents supplied by the applicant, but unfortunately there is an absence of ecological information included with the application to help assess the potential use of the current dwelling and outbuildings by bats. We understand from the Design, Access and Planning Statement (Scandiahus, April 2024), that the current dwelling is to be demolished and the outbuildings are to be consolidated into the design to create a home office / leisure room.

A European Protected Species Mitigation (EPS) licence for Brown Long-eared, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Whiskered bat was granted approximately 1.2km to the east of the site in 2020 and a further EPS licence was granted for Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared bat 1.2km to the southwest of the site in 2010 (MAGIC maps). There are also approximately 23 records of bats within 2km of the site, including Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, Serotine, Myotis sp. and Bechstein's bat (Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre – accessed under licence).

In addition, it appears from Google maps (Lower Beeding) that there may be trees on site which may be impacted by the works, in which case Ground Level Tree Assessments should be undertaken in accordance with the 4th Ed. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Bat Conservation Trust (Collins ed., 2023).

All bat species are designated and protected as European Protected Species, protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This means that it is an offence to deliberately kill, injure, disturb or capture bats and to damage or destroy bat breeding sites and resting places (including access points even when bats are not present). It is also an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to intentionally or recklessly disturb bats while they occupy a structure or place used for shelter or protection or to obstruct their access. This is considered a reasonable request as bats may be present and affected by the development, given that the current dwelling is being demolished and the outsbuildings will be impacted. This request for information is justified, and therefore reasonable, as protected species are a material consideration for planning.

It is therefore reasonable for a suitably qualified ecologist to check for any potential roost features (PRFs) in the buildings and in any trees to be removed and prepare a Preliminary Roost Assessment as well as assessing if any features used by foraging bats will be impacted. This assessment can be undertaken at any time of the year and the results need to be submitted to the LPA together with full details of any mitigition and compensation required to avoid an offence, in accordance with Government Standing Advice.

The results of the above surveys for bats are required prior to determination because paragraph 99 of 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 required to provide the LPA with certainty of 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.

We also recommend that reasonable biodiversity enhancements should be identified and implemented to secure net gains for biodiversity, as outlined under Paragraph 180d of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023). The reasonable biodiversity enhancement measures should be outlined within a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy and should be secured by a condition of any consent.

Additional information
Please note that comments on Biodiversity Net Gain are provided by Horsham District Council's in-house ecologist.

Also, please note we do not provide comments on Great Crested Newt as we have been instructed to leave comments on this species to the NatureSpace Partnership.

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

Please contact us with any queries.

Yours sincerely

Genevieve Broad MCIEEM MSc BSc (Hons)
Ecological Consultant
Place Services at Essex County Council
placeservicesecology@essex.gov.uk

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.