Dear David,

22/03560/OUT | Outline planning permission with all matters reserved except for access, for up to 140 dwellings (use class C3), public open space, landscape planting and biodiversity enhancements, vehicular access from Bowden Road, community use (flexible use class E, F1 and/or F2), and associated infrastructure works | Land OS 6975 South Of Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset

Ecology

EAD ecology conducted an Ecological Impact Assessment of the site in December 2022. The EcIA details the preliminary surveys as well as the phase 2 surveys (including: bat activity/transect/roosting, breeding bird, reptile, GCN, badger, dormouse, hedgerow, water vole, otter, and habitat condition surveys) conducted on site. No further surveys were recommended in the report (aside from pre-works badger and otter checks – but these should be conducted after planning permission is granted and immediately before the works starts). The EcIA results are summarised below:

Designated sites (taken directly from report)

There are no designated sites of nature conservation importance within or adjacent to the Site boundary. One European-designated site, Rooksmoor Special Area of Conservation (SAC), lies approximately 8km to the south of the Site. The Site lies outside of the surface-water and foul-water catchments of the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site.

Two statutory sites of nationally-designated importance occur within 5km of the Site; however, both are designated for geological interest.

There are eight Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 2km of the study area. The closest of these is Martin's Copse LWS, which is located approximately 350m to the southwest of the Site.

Habitats (taken directly from report)

The Site comprised 2 arable fields and 1 poor semi-improved grassland pasture field located on the northern edge of a stream corridor bordered by a narrow belt of broadleaved woodland.

Native hedgerows formed the majority of the field boundaries, several of which were associated with wet ditches and mature trees.

Non-native ornamental hedgerows were present along sections of the northern Site boundary.

There were localised areas of scattered bramble scrub, tall ruderal, and ephemeral / short perennial habitats located within field margins and at the periphery of the Site.

Protected / notable species (taken from report)

Plants: English bluebell, a notable plant species which receives partial legal protection was recorded within the woodland on Site.

- Invertebrates: Common and widespread invertebrate species. The presence of significant populations of notable species was considered unlikely.
- Amphibians: Due to the lack of great crested newt records within 2km of the Site, the absence of suitable breeding habitat on-Site and sub-optimal breeding habitat within 250m of the Site boundary, this species is considered absent from Site. The Site provided suitable terrestrial habitat for common amphibians including common toad.
- Reptiles: A 'Good' population of slow worm and a 'Low' population of grass snake. Suitable foraging habitat was limited to grassland and arable margins, hedgerows may also provide hibernation habitat and movement corridors.
- Birds: Nesting habitat for widespread bird species, including notable species such as starling, linnet and dunnock; all Priority Species.
- Dormice: Hazel dormouse was not recorded within the Site and considered to be absent.
- Badgers: An active main badger sett was recorded along the southern Site boundary along with three active outlier setts. The Site provides suitable foraging habitat for badgers.
- Bats: A minimum of nine bat species were recorded foraging and/or commuting within the Site including low numbers of greater and lesser horseshoe, Myotis species, long- eared species and barbastelle bat. The highest levels of bat activity were recorded in the south and west of the Site along the edges of the woodland/stream corridor. Based on the recorded activity, it is considered likely that this corridor a regular foraging and commuting route for common pipistrelle and Myotis species. Eight trees were identified as having 'Low' bat roost potential and three as having 'High' bat roost potential (Collins 2016) within the Site. None of these trees would be affected by the development proposals.
- Otter: Evidence of otter was recorded on Site and periodic use of the watercourse within the Site by otter is therefore assumed.
- Water Vole: No signs of water vole were recorded on Site, there were no records of water vole within 2km of the Site and habitats on Site were sub-optimal, therefore this species was considered absent from Site.
- Hedgehog: The Site contained suitable habitat for hedgehog; presence was assumed. Extensive alternative habitat for hedgehog occurred in the immediate vicinity and the Site was considered unlikely to be of particular importance for this species.

SES Comments

Ecology Condition 1:

No one phase of the Development shall commence until a Lighting Strategy for Biodiversity for that phase has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:

a. identify those areas/features of the site that are particularly sensitive for bats, dormice, otter, and badger, as well as other protected species that are vulnerable to light disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging.

b. show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places (including motion sensors and timers where appropriate); and
c. the design should accord with Step 5 of Guidance Note 08/18, including submission of contour plans illustrating Lux levels, showing that lighting will be directed so as to avoid light spillage and pollution on habitats used by light sensitive species, and will demonstrate that light levels falling on wildlife habitats do not exceed an illumination level of 0.5 Lux. Shields and other methods of reducing light spill will be used where necessary to achieve the required light levels.

Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority all external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy and shall be maintained

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity and the protection of European Protected Species in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework 2021, ODPM Circular 06/2005 and Policy CP8 of the policy EQ4 of the South Somerset District Council Local Plan.

Ecology Condition 2:
No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall include the following:

a. Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
b. Identification of "biodiversity protection zones".
c. Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements), including nesting birds habitat clearance measures, badgers buffer zones, etc.
d. Details of the pre-works walkover surveys (badger, otter, etc), as recommended in the EcIA provided by EAD (Dec 2022).
e. The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
f. The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
g. Responsible persons, lines of communication and written notifications of operations to the Local Planning Authority
h. The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person, including regular compliance site meetings with the Council Biodiversity Officer and Landscape Officer (frequency to be agreed, for example, every 3 months during construction phases);
i. Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

j. Ongoing monitoring, including compliance checks by a competent person(s) during construction and immediately post-completion of construction works

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of European and UK protected species. UK priority species and habitats listed on s41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and in accordance with Somerset District Council Local Plan - Policy EQ4 Biodiversity.

Ecology Condition 3:

A report prepared by the Ecological Clerk of Works or similarly competent person certifying that the required mitigation and compensation measures identified in the Construction Environmental Management Plan, have been completed to their satisfaction, and detailing the results of site supervision and any necessary remedial works undertaken or required, shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval before occupation of each phase or sub- phase of the development or at the end of the next available planting season, whichever is the sooner. Any approved remedial works shall subsequently be carried out under the strict supervision of a professional ecologist following that approval.

Reason: To ensure that ecological mitigation measures are delivered, and that protected /priority species and habitats are safeguarded in accordance with the CEMP and that Somerset District Council Local Plan - Policy EQ4 Biodiversity has been complied with.

Ecology Condition 4:

A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to, and be approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development. The content of the LEMP shall include the following:

a. Description and evaluation of features to be managed.
b. Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management.
c. Aims and objectives of management.
d. Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives.
e. Prescriptions for management actions.
f. Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period).
g. Details of the body or organization responsible for implementation of the plan.
h. On-going monitoring and remedial measures.

The LEMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery. The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The approved plan will be implemented in accordance with the approved details. Reason: In the interests of the 'Favourable Conservation Status' of populations of European and UK protected species, UK priority species and habitats listed on s41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and in accordance with Somerset District Council Local Plan - Policy EQ4 Biodiversity.

Ecology Condition 5:

Because there were several Badger setts identified on site, no works with heavy machinery should occur within 30m of a badger sett, and no general construction should occur within 20m of a sett, without a licence form NE. As such, the following condition is required:

The works, including groundworks and vegetative clearance, shall not in any circumstances commence unless the Local Planning Authority has been provided with either:

a) a copy of the licence issued by Natural England pursuant to The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 authorising the development to go ahead; or

b) a statement in writing from the ecologist to the effect that he/she does not consider that the development will require a licence.

Reason: A pre-commencement condition in the interests of a UK protected species and in accordance with Somerset District Council Local Plan - Policy EQ4 Biodiversity.

Ecology Condition 6 (can be included in CEMP):

A Risk Avoidance Measures Method Statement (RAMMS) detailing a strategy to prevent adverse dust levels; run off from chemical liquids such as petroleum and detergents into the nearby watercourse which is adjacent to the application site along the southern boundary; and using bunded storage for example when refuelling vehicles and storing oil and fuel accordingly shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development. The development will thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved strategy.

Reason: Pre-commencement condition: In the interests of European and UK protected species. UK priority species and habitats listed on s41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and in accordance with Somerset District Council Local Plan - Policy EQ4 Biodiversity.

Biodiversity Enhancement:

A Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) shall be submitted to, and be approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority prior to completion of the development. Photographs of the installed features will also be submitted to the Local Planning Authority prior to occupation: The content of the BEP shall include the following:

A. A Schwegler 1FR bat tube or similar will be built into the structure of 50% of the proposed dwellings, positioned at least four metres above ground level and away from windows of the west or south facing elevation

B. Schwegler 1SP Sparrow terraces or similar will be installed on to 30% of the proposed dwellings, directly under the eaves and away from windows on the north or east elevations

C. A cluster of three Schwegler 1a swift bricks or similar will be built into the structure of 10% of the proposed dwellings, built into the wall at least 60cm apart, at least 5m above

ground level on the north and/or east facing elevations, ensuring unobstructed access for the birds to leave/enter the nests.

D. 30 x Schwegler 2F-DFP bat boxes (or similar) will be installed on suitable trees throughout the site, at least 4m high and facing south or west.
E. 30 x bird boxes (a combination of 5 Schwegler 1B and 2H or similar) will be installed on suitable mature trees on site, between 1.5 and 3m high, facing east or north.
F. Installation of 2 x Barn Owl boxes (Eco barn owl box or similar) on suitable trees within the site, as instructed by an onsite ecologist.
G. A bee brick built into the structure of all proposed dwellings, located 1 metre above ground level on the south or southeast elevation.
H. Any new fencing must have accessible hedgehog holes, measuring 13cm x 13cm to allow the movement of hedgehogs into and out of the site
I. Installation of 5 x hibernacula/log piles for reptiles/amphibians will be created within the site, ideally near areas of scrub/woodland/hedgerows, near the boundaries of the site, as instructed by an onsite ecologist.
J. The wetland/SuDS areas should be planted up with an appropriate seed mix for wetlands (such as Mixture EM8 found at https://wildseed.co.uk/product-category/mixtures/complete-mixtures/meadow-mixtures-for-specific-soils/Areas) and areas of rough grassland should be created and retained as an enhancement for reptiles, as well as a forging habitat for other protected species
K. Tree and native shrub planting; All new shrubs must be high nectar producing to encourage a range of invertebrates to the site, to provide continued foraging for bats. The shrubs must also appeal to night-flying moths which are a key food source for bats. The Royal Horticultural Society guide, "RHS Perfect for Pollinators, www.rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators" provides a list of suitable plants both native and non-native. All new trees planted on site should ideally be from local native stock, such as field maple, ash, hornbeam, dogwood, spindle and beech.

Reason: In accordance with Government policy for the enhancement of biodiversity within development as set out in paragraph 174(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill 2018.

As long as the above is implemented as worded, SES have no further comment to make on this application at this time.

Kind regards,

Megan Belanger

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