

Dear Sir/Madam, many thanks for the above consultation. Our advice is as follows:

River Avon SAC and River Avon System SSSI

The MoD, as a competent authority, has undertaken an HRA of the Army Basing Programme (ABP) and this may be used to inform the Council's HRA of the current application. On the assumption that this application is one of the components considered in the HRA of the ABP, we are content that this application would not raise a likely significant effect on River Avon SAC European site provided there is confidence that mitigation identified in the HRA is delivered in full as part of the ABP. You have previously advised us that this could be achieved through a Section 106 Agreement and the heads of terms of such an agreement have been agreed with Natural England (communications with Louisa Kilgallen, Wiltshire Council ecologist). Subject to such a S106 Agreement and related planning conditions being put in place, Natural England is able to advise that the current application is consistent with achieving the conservation objectives of the River Avon SAC, and is also consistent with the conservation and enhancement of the constituent SSSIs.

Salisbury Plain SPA - Stone curlew

We note the site's proximity to the Salisbury Plain SPA, and advise that an appropriate contribution is made to the stone curlew mitigation scheme, or it is otherwise shown that the development will be Habitats Regulation Assessment compliant with regards to this feature of the SPA.

Protected Species

We have not assessed this application and associated documents for impacts on protected species. Natural England has published Standing Advice on protected species. The Standing Advice includes a habitat decision tree which provides advice to planners on deciding if there is a 'reasonable likelihood' of protected species being present. It also provides detailed advice on the protected species most often affected by development, including flow charts for individual species to enable an assessment to be made of a protected species survey and mitigation strategy.

You should apply our Standing Advice to this application as it is a material consideration in the determination of applications in the same way as any individual response received from Natural England following consultation.

The Standing Advice should not be treated as giving any indication or providing any assurance in respect of European Protected Species (EPS) that the proposed development is unlikely to affect the EPS present on the site; nor should it be interpreted as meaning that Natural England has reached any views as to whether a licence may be granted.

If you have any specific questions on aspects that are not covered by our Standing Advice for European Protected Species or have difficulty in applying it to this application please contact us with details at consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Biodiversity enhancements

This application provides opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife, such as the incorporation of roosting opportunities for bats or the installation of bird nest boxes. The authority should consider securing measures to enhance the biodiversity of the site from the applicant, if it is minded to grant permission for this application. This is in accordance with Paragraph 118 of the NPPF. Additionally, we would draw your attention to Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) which states that '*Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of*

conserving biodiversity'. Section 40(3) of the same Act also states that '*conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat*'.

Other advice

The lack of case specific comments from Natural England on other matters should not be interpreted as a statement that there are no other impacts on the natural environment. Other bodies and individuals may make comments that will help the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to fully take account of the environmental value of this site in the decision making process.

Regards

Charles Routh

Lead Advisor, Planning & Licencing, Somerset, Avon and Wiltshire Area Team, Natural England.