

Date: 03 April 2013
Our ref: 82149
Your ref: 13/00575/OUT



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Dear Sir/Madam

Planning consultation: Thames Heritage Boat Museum – Matter seeking approval – access and layout.

Location: Child Beal Wildlife Trust, Beale Park, Lower Basildon, Reading

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 22 March 2013.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Landscape

This application falls within, or is within the setting of, North Wessex Downs AONB. Natural England has no comments to make on this proposal as we do not believe that this development is likely to impact on the purposes of designation of North Wessex Downs AONB. Given the location of the development, however, the local planning authority should seek the views of the AONB Partnership where relevant, prior to determining this planning application, as they may have comments to make on the location, nature or design of this development.

Natura 2000 site

Natural England advises your authority that the proposal, if undertaken in strict accordance with the details submitted, is not likely to have a significant effect on the interest features for which Hartslock Wood SAC has been classified. Natural England therefore advises that your Authority is not required to undertake an Appropriate Assessment to assess the implications of this proposal on the site's conservation objectives.¹

SSSI

This application is in close proximity to the Hartslock Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). However, given the nature and scale of this proposal, Natural England is satisfied that the proposed development being carried out in strict accordance with the details of the application, as submitted, will not damage or destroy the interest features for which this site has been notified.

¹ This reply comprises our statutory consultation response under provisions of Article 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 Regulation 61 (3) of the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)* and Section 28(1) of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*.

We therefore advise your authority that this SSSI does not represent a constraint in determining this application. Should the details of this application change, Natural England draws your attention to Section 28(l) of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended), requiring your authority to re-consult Natural England.

Aside from the comments on designated sites above, we would expect the LPA to assess and consider the other possible impacts resulting from this proposal on the following when determining this application:

Protected species

The application form for this proposal indicates in section 13 that “there is no reasonable likelihood of protected and priority species being affected adversely or conserved and enhanced within the application site, or on land adjacent to or near the application site”.

However, the description and location of the development suggest that an assessment for biodiversity interests needs to be considered. The Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE) have produced [guidance](#) to help planning authorities identify whether they have all necessary information with which to make a planning decision that is compliant with their statutory obligations for nature conservation.

I attach table 1 from the guidance which is a matrix of development type against species. We advise the authority to ensure that the relevant species have been considered and confirmed as not being affected by this development before determining this application.

[Natural England Standing Advice](#) is available on our website to help local planning authorities better understand the impact of development on protected or BAP species should they be identified as an issue for particular developments. This also sets out, when, following receipt of survey information, the authority should undertake further consultation with Natural England.

Local wildlife sites

If the proposal site is on or adjacent to a local wildlife site, e.g. Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) or Local Nature Reserve (LNR) the authority should ensure it has sufficient information to fully understand the impact of the proposal on the local wildlife site before it determines the application.

Biodiversity enhancements

This application may provide 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*’.

Should the proposal be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment then, in accordance with Section 4 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Natural England should be consulted again.

Yours faithfully

Stephanie Jones
Customer Service Consultation Team