BOW17.1451: Crow Wood Solar Array – Bat Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy

Introduction

The following Bat Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy has been produced for and on behalf of Kirkwells Planning Consultant to discharge pre-commencement Planning Condition 9 requested by Burnley Borough Council (Planning Application No. FUL/2023/0332). The application is for the proposed erection of a solar farm comprising 1978 panels, transformer housing, CCTV and boundary fencing (central NGR: SD 83095 34205). Condition 9 is worded as follows:

"*Prior to development on site, a bat mitigation and avoidance strategy for works near to the mature Oak Tree to the southern edge of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To ensure the protection of species/habitat protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and in the interests of biodiversity incompliance with policy NE1 of Burnley's adopted Local Plan and The NPPF*."

Bowland Ecology undertook a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) to inform the proposals. One mature oak tree (BT1) on the southern boundary of the application site was identified as providing 'high' potential for use by roosting bats (BT1; location provided in Appendix A). It is not anticipated that BT1 will be directly adversely impacted, however the tree may be subject to indirect adverse impacts by the proposals. This report presents a Bat Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy to ensure possible adverse impacts to the mature oak tree are minimised.

Bat Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy

BT1 provides 'high' potential to be used by roosting bats during the at active season (March – October inclusive). It is not considered that BT1 provides suitable potential for hibernating bats and bats are unlikely to be present within the potential roost features during winter months (November – February inclusive). As such care should be taken during any works which occur within the bat active season which may adversely impact roosting bats within BT1. The following measures should minimise the risk to roosting bats.

- If possible, careful timing of works to avoid any indirect impacts to bats (if present) within the potential roosting features of BT1 should be considered. Therefore, potentially disturbing works within 5 m of BT1 (see Appendix A) should be undertaken over winter.
- Should potentially disturbing works be unavoidable, and it be anticipated that noise / vibration will be sufficient to disturb bats with active bat season e.g., works within 5 m and / or noise levels at the tree exceed >70dB for prolonged periods, works should be preceded by close inspection of the trees potential roost features by a suitably experienced ecologist.
- Care should be taken when installing the site's southern perimeter deer fencing and planting of adjacent hedgerow to ensure identified potential roosting features located on the structure of BT1 are left open and

viable for use by roosting bats (for description of features, see Appendix D of associated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal[1]).

- Any works undertaken within the bat active season in proximity to the mature oak tree should be limited as much as possible, limiting time, avoiding the use of machinery, limiting personnel movement and avoiding storage of any materials in proximity to the oak tree.
- Consideration should be given to the erection of heras fencing to ensure the 5 m buffer from the oak tree is maintained.
- Any lighting associated with the installation of the solar panels which would nocturnally illuminate the mature oak tree should be avoided.
- If proposals are altered and BT1 will be directly impacted by the development (e.g. pruning / removal) further advice from the project ecologist should be sought.

Conclusion

BT1 offers 'high' potential to be used by roosting bats during the bat active season. No direct impacts to BT1 are anticipated. However, bats, if present may be indirectly adversely impacted by works if these are conducted within 5 m of BT1 within the bat active season. Potential indirect impacts to bats can be avoided through mitigation measures including careful timing, keeping noise / vibration to a minimum, monitoring of decibel levels with 5 m of BT1, pre-works close inspection of potential roosting features where potentially disturbing work is unavoidable, limiting disturbance, avoiding lighting and maintenance of the viability of the existing roost features on the structure of BT1.

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References:

BOW17_1451 Crow Road Solar Array PEA_June 2023_FINAL – Bowland Ecology 2023.

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[1] BOW17_1451 Crow Road Solar Array PEA_June 2023_FINAL.

Appendix A – Bat Mitigation Strategy Plan