

From: [Kate Dewey](#)
To: [Curley, Jane](#); [Planning Comments \(SMDC\)](#)
Cc: [fpcr general email](#)
Subject: SMD/2022/0047 Land Adjacent Cellarhead Substation
Date: 23 March 2022 12:47:41

SMD/2022/0047

Land Adjacent Cellarhead Substation, Rownall Road, Wetley Rocks, Staffordshire

Erection and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System and associated infrastructure and equipment

5.4 hectares

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has been asked to review the above application as part of a service level agreement with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to provide ecology advice regarding planning and development management functions.

SUMMARY – No objection subject to conditions.

Secure via condition should approval be granted:

1. Long-term habitat management plan to secure net gain habitats for the minimum period.
2. Bat method statement for any tree works (e.g. limb removal, felling), including bat survey of any moderate-high potential trees as per the ecological appraisal.
3. Nesting bird precautions for any hedgerow and/or tree works.
4. Bat box enhancements (suggested minimum of 6), shown on updated landscaping plan.
5. Bird box enhancements (suggested minimum of 6), shown on updated landscaping plan.

Documents reviewed:

- Biodiversity Impact Assessment (FPCR, January 2022)
- Ecological Appraisal (FPCR, December 2021)
- Landscape Mitigation Plan (FPCR, 21 January 2022)
- Arboricultural Assessment (FPCR, January 2021)
- Site Plans (21/1/2022)

DESIGNATED WILDLIFE SITES & WIDER ECOLOGICAL NETWORK

Impacts to important sites are not anticipated. Furthermore, the proposed habitat enhancements will help to improve habitat connectivity in the area.

HABITATS

Biodiversity Net Gain

Policy NE1 in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Adopted September 2020, expects that 'all development where possible seeks to deliver a net gain in biodiversity proportionate to the size and scale of the development. In circumstances where adverse impacts are demonstrated to be unavoidable, developers will be required to ensure that impacts are appropriately mitigated, with suitable compensation measures towards loss of habitat used only as a last resort where there is no alternative'.

The application includes a biodiversity impact assessment using DEFRA metric 3.0 which shows a net gain in both habitat and hedgerow units. All habitats appear to have been included. Although the survey was undertaken outside of the optimal period we do not feel additional survey effort is required in this case due to the present nature of the fields. The suggested enhancements and habitat creation appear suitable. We welcome the suggestion of green hay strewing and may be able to help identify a suitable donor site. We are happy for the habitat proposals to go ahead as shown within the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (FPCR, January 2022).

A long term habitat management plan will be required. **Please secure via condition.**

Trees and hedgerows

The ecological appraisal found hedgerow 6 (H6) to be of importance under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997). A section of this hedge is to be removed to facilitate site access. However, from aerial photography this appears to be located within an existing gap between the trees. This will also be compensated for by the proposed additional hedgerow planting and enhancements as part of the net gain proposals.

The recommendations as set out in the arboricultural assessment must be followed in full with regards to Root Protection Areas (RPAs) for all retained features. Please also note the comments for bats and birds below.

SPECIES

Bats

The Ecological Appraisal found numerous trees on site to have moderate bat potential. Any works to these trees such as limb removal or felling will need to be preceded by a bat survey to check for bat roosts. As the arboricultural report recommends some trees with signs of decay to be removed or monitored, we recommend that a bat method statement is in place for these works as a further precaution – this should include a bat survey if they were identified as having bat potential in the Ecological Appraisal. **Please secure via condition.**

The ecological appraisal recommends that Schwegler (or similar) 1F bat boxes are installed on retained trees on the eastern or northern site boundaries as a species enhancement. We suggest a minimum of 6 as compensation for potential lost tree roosting opportunities. **Please secure via condition.**

Birds

Any tree or hedgerow works must take place outside of the bird nesting season (March – August, inclusive), or be subject to an inspection by an ecologist prior to works commencing. Any nests encountered (including those in the process of being built) must be left undisturbed with a suitable buffer zone until all birds have fledged. **Please secure via condition).**

The ecological appraisal recommends that "a mixture of small hole (26 mm and 32 mm) nest boxes such as the 1B Schwegler nest boxes" are included as an enhancement. These should be included and shown on an updated landscaping plan. We suggest a minimum of 6 as compensation for potential lost tree nesting opportunities. **Please secure via condition.**

Regards,

Kate Dewey BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

Senior Planning Officer

Planning consultations- please send to planning@staffs-wildlife.org.uk

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2 Attachments



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