



Balfour Beatty Living Places  
East Sussex Highways  
South Downs National Park Authority

23 August 2024

RE. PLANNING APPLICATION

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Ecological endorsement for the Exceat Bridge Main Site Compound**

The newly proposed location for the Exceat Bridge Main Site Compound has not undergone an ecological assessment. However, an ecological assessment was previously conducted for the original proposed location, approved under planning application SDNP/21/02342/FUL. Since the new location is just 15 metres east of the original site, the habitat and zone of influence<sup>1</sup> remain the same.

The proposed site location features intensively farmed arable cereal crops and a strip of scrub, hedgerow, and grassland running along the entire southern edge of the compound and access route. The scrub habitat primarily consists of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). The hedgerow includes elder (*Sambucus nigra*), hawthorn, gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*). The grassland comprises rye grass (*Lolium spp.*) and white clover (*Trifolium repens*). The new proposed location contains a small amount of more vegetation compared to the original proposed location and has some suitability for reptiles and nesting birds, but timing of works and simple measures to avoid mortality would offset risks to these ecological features. There have been no signs of badgers, and the dense blackthorn is suboptimal for dormice.

There will be temporary habitat losses for the crop, scrub, hedgerow, and grassland due to the construction and use of the compound. However, these habitats are of negligible value (as they are relatively small in area and part of an intensive farming system). They will be reinstated after the use of the site as a compound has ended.

The South Downs National Park and the Seven Sisters Country Park will experience some low-level indirect impacts (noise, dust etc) from vegetation clearance, but the habitats for which the parks are designated will not be affected. There will be no notable impact on the other designated and non-designated sites in the zone of influence due to their distance and lack of connectivity to the proposed main site compound.

One bat roost, 48 notable bird species, great crested newt and reptiles have been recorded in the wider area. However, the potential indirect adverse effects from the compound on these species are minor.

Based on the evidence from the previous ecological assessment and an updated data search on Defra's Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC), we believe the newly proposed site location poses a low risk for ecological impact. As there is potential for reptiles and nesting birds within the vegetation, it is recommended that vegetation clearance be carried out under ecological supervision as a form of precautionary method of works to ensure protected and notable species are not affected.

Yours faithfully,

Lisa Royce  
Senior Ecologist

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<sup>1</sup> the 'zone of influence' has been defined as an area over which ecological features may be affected as a result of the construction compound and associated activities during construction or operation. The zone of influence varies for different impacts and may extend beyond the construction compound boundary.

