

2014/442 Spicer Hill Wind Farm Extension

Ecology Addendum



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This addendum is in response to comments received from the Biodiversity Team at Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council on 6th January 2015. The comments refer to the Environmental Statement submitted for planning application 2014/1442, Spicer Hill Wind Farm Application.

Text shown in blue is taken directly from the Council response.

1.2 *At s6.4.2 the nearby SPA is referred to but not the SAC – the report needs updating with this information. (The SAC is referred to at s6.7.7 but without any interpretation). Both are just within 5km of the nearest proposed new turbine, not just outside*

The South Pennines Moor is classed as both a SPA and also an SAC. In regards to the SAC it is designated for dry heath, blanket bog and old sessile oakwoods, which would not be impacted by the development.

1.3 *Although information regarding 3 Local Wildlife Sites is provided, another 2 – Royd Moor Reservoir and Small Shaw & High Bank – are not, yet these are the ones closest to the application site. The applicant/ their ecologist should clarify whether this data was provided by Barnsley Biological Records Centre, and in any case should be evaluated in an updated report.*

BBRC supplied data regarding Royd Moor Reservoir stating that a number of nationally important bird species are recorded for this area and there is a rich diversity of floral interest on the site. Great crested newts are recorded. Several of Barnsley's LBAP Priority habitats are found on this site.

BBRC also supplied data regarding Small Shaw and its acidic habitats and plant species on site.

It is considered that given the location of both these sites that no connectivity would occur between the sites and the proposed turbines and that the level of impact due to the construction of the turbines would be considered negligible.

1.4 *s6.6.7 notes that other data shows bats present within 5km of the site but not how close – this really ought to be detailed more fully to enable the reader to understand the significance.*

Bat data was supplied by South Yorkshire Bat Group within a 5km radius of Spicer Hill (file attached). In total there were 147 records relating to 5 definite species (common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, noctule, natterers bat and brown long eared bat). The great majority of the records were quite distant from Spicer Hill at Penistone, Thurlstone, Gunthwaite, Hazelhead, New Mill, Hepworth. The nearest and only relevant records to Spicer Hill were a single common pipistrelle and a noctule recorded at Royd Moor. The nearest records apart from those at Royd Moor were at Penistone.

1.5 *I do not accept as proposed at s6.7.1 that no mitigation should be offered for breeding birds at all.*

No mitigation is deemed to be required if construction of access tracks or turbine bases occur outside the bird breeding season. If this is not possible then a pre-construction breeding bird survey will be required. The details of this approach are set out below and could be implemented as a planning condition:

- That staff are given a “toolbox talk” to alert them to wildlife legislation and make them aware of signs of breeding birds.
- If possible, construction activities should be completed outwith the bird breeding season (1st April to 31st July inclusive).
- If this is not possible, vegetation should be cleared before breeding birds could occupy their territories or after young birds have fledged.
- Any vegetation work (such as ground clearance, hedgerow and/or tree removal) that takes place during the bird-breeding season must be preceded by a breeding bird survey by a qualified ecologist or ECoW. Should any active bird nests be discovered then work would have to stop in that area until the ECoW is informed and the appropriate procedures implemented.
- Removal of brash – it is important that brash should not remain in situ in the construction footprint as this can provide nesting habitat for certain species. Vegetation should be chipped or removed offsite.

1.6 *The bullet-point recommendations at s6.7.3 regarding protecting badgers during construction should be conditioned.*

Agreed

1.7 *As for breeding birds, I do not accept regarding s6.7.5 that no mitigation is needed at all for bats.*

It is considered that as described in 1.8 proposals for habitat enhancement would be beneficial for bats and birds in providing linear pathways and feeding corridors. It is also considered that a minimum of twelve bat boxes be erected on suitable trees adjacent to Whitley Road and in trees adjacent to the Blackwater Dyke that runs north-west towards Spicer House Lane. The hedgerows and linear pathways as planned in 1.8 would then connect the roost areas with the quarry, the vegetated stream that runs from

the centre of the site to Spicer House Lane and also suitable foraging areas to the north. These measures are shown in the attached plan.

1.6 *The recommendations at s6.7.6 regarding habitats during construction can be conditioned but the applicant must offer some mitigation for damages and losses, even if they are small.*

Habitat enhancement for habitats, birds and bats is covered in Section 1.8.

1.7 *The Barnsley Biodiversity Action Plan is referred to early on and late on but is not detailed within the body of the report – this needs to be updated.*

BBAP is defined by two distinct elements – Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans. None of the habitats on the list are present on site apart from occasional poor quality hedgerows. The construction would not have a detrimental impact on any hedgerows as none are to be removed for construction. The habitat enhancement plan in 1.8 would substantially increase the amount of hedgerows on site.

It is considered that none of the species on the BBAP breed on site with exception of lapwing and possibly skylark. It is considered that the construction would have no detrimental impact on any species listed. The habitat enhancement plan would be very beneficial to bats with linear pathways and roosts provided. It is also considered that grey partridge and other birds would find suitable habitat to breed and forage along the hedgerows once mature.

1.8 *I would suggest that the applicant proposes biodiversity mitigation for damage and losses of habitat, which also benefits bats and breeding birds. For example, ecological improvements to some grassland habitat somewhere on the application site. This need not be exhaustive as it only needs to be proportionate to the small losses that are possible. But it should be detailed in a way that could be conditioned.*

It is proposed to erect bat boxes along the wooded area adjacent to Whitley Road and in trees adjacent to the Blackwater Dyke that runs north-west towards Spicer House Lane.

From the western edge of this wood it is proposed to plant 850m of hedgerow with native species e.g. native hawthorn and alder. This would head north past the quarry edge then eventually reach Spicer House Lane. This would create linear pathways for bats leading them to foraging areas at the quarry and also to the Blackwater Dyke and beyond. The hedgerows would also create shelter, nesting sites and foraging habitats for a variety of bird species.

These measures are shown in the attached plan.

1.9 *The following paragraph should be included as an informative if planning permission is gained: “You are advised that the biodiversity information/ecological assessment provided as part of this application will be made available to Barnsley Biological Records Centre. This will assist in a key principle of the National Planning Policy Framework that planning policies and decisions should be based on up-to date information about the natural environment and other characteristics of the area by building up the data base of up-to-date ecological information and this will help in future decision making. “*

Agreed.

DISCLAIMER

This report has been prepared by Dr Garry Mortimer of GLM Ecology, with all reasonable skill and care within the terms of the agreement with the client. Dr Mortimer disclaims any responsibility to any parties in respect of matters outside this scope.

Best efforts were made to meet the objectives of this study through desktop study and field survey.

Information supplied by the client or any other parties and used in this report is assumed to be correct and GLM Ecology accepts no responsibility for inaccuracies in the data supplied.

It should be noted, that whilst every endeavour is made to meet the client's brief, no site investigation can guarantee absolute assessment or prediction of the natural environment. Numerous species are extremely mobile or only evident at certain times of year and habitats are subject to seasonal and temporal change.

GLM Ecology accepts no responsibility to third parties who duplicate, use, or disclose this report in whole or in part. Such third parties rely upon this report at their own risk.

Document Prepared By
Dr Garry Mortimer
GLM Ecology