



THE PLANNING ACT 2008

THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE) RULES

2010

Sheringham Shoal Extension and Dudgeon Extension Offshore Wind Farms

**Appendix I3 to the Natural England Deadline 3 Submission**

**Natural England's Comments on the Bats Technical Note and Related Advice to the  
Outline Code of Construction Practice and Outline Ecological Management Plan  
[REP1-063, REP1-024 and REP1-028]**

For:

The construction and operation of the Sheringham Shoal Extension and Dudgeon Extension Offshore Wind Farms located approximately 16km and 27km respectively from the Norfolk Coast in the Southern North Sea.

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010109

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2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023

## **Natural England's comments on the Bats Technical Note and related advice to the Outline Code of Construction Practice and Outline Ecological Management Plan [REP1-063, REP1-024 and REP1-028]**

In providing this advice, Natural England has reviewed the following documents received at Deadline 1 in relation to Bats:

- [REP1-024] 9.17 Outline Code of Construction Practice (Revision B) (Tracked)
- [REP1-028] 9.19.3 Outline Ecological Management Plan (Revision B) (Tracked)
- [REP1-063] 13.10 Bats - Alderford Common SSSI and Swannington Upgate Common SSSI Technical Note

### **Summary**

1. Natural England welcomes the Applicant's updates within the 13.10. Bats - Alderford Common SSSI and Swannington Upgate Common SSSI Technical Note [REP1-063] at Deadline 1. As outlined in our response at Deadline 2 [REP2-063], comments relating to Bats within the Outline Code of Construction Practice (OCoCP) [REP1-024] and Outline Ecological Management Plan (EMP [REP1-028] were deferred until review of the technical note could be undertaken. Therefore we advise further updates to the OCoCP and EMP in relation to bats should take into consideration our comments on the Bats technical note, in addition to the OCoCP and EMP as set out below.
2. Natural England notes that the technical note focuses on the existing Alderford Common and Swannington Upgate Common SSSIs, which form part of the wider area and Core Sustenance Zones (CSZ) for foraging and commuting barbastelle maternity roosts. However, we advise that trenchless crossing methods (Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) should also be considered where there is the potential for significant effects on supporting hedgerows/treelines/ditches/linear features for the foraging and/or commuting bats within the Weston, Morton on the Hill and Scotchwood Hills areas. In particular, an open cut section is proposed through the east of Scotchwood Hills which has been identified as a key barbastelle area (Figure 5 of .3.20.3 Environmental Statement Appendix 20.3 - Bat Activity Survey Report [APP-216]). We advise that if this section can't be avoided then HDD methods should be considered by the Applicant.
3. As outlined at Deadline 1 [REP1-063], Natural England advises that as a protected species, bats, along with their breeding roosts and resting places, are afforded protection whether notified features of a designated site or not. It is acknowledged that a draft licensing decision has been issued for the projects in the form of a Letter of No Impediment. However, due to

the 3 - 7 year gap between consent and construction of the DEP and SEP projects; we also suggest that the Applicant considers adopting appropriate mitigation measures at the consenting phase in recognition that the area to the west of Norwich known as Wensum Woodlands is being considered for SSSI notification for bats, including barbastelles. Whilst it is recognised under [Natural England's designations programme](#) that inclusion is not a commitment to designate, and therefore areas on this list are not afforded the same legal protection as those notified as a SSSI under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); we would encourage the adoption of further best practice due to the potential that this area could be a notified SSSI in the future. This is likely to future proof the project by avoiding any unnecessary disruption/delay to the projects in the event that the Wensum Woods area becomes notified.

### **Detailed Advice**

#### **13.10 Bats - Alderford Common SSSI and Swannington Upgate Common SSSI Technical Note [REP1-063]**

4. Para 7: It is stated that *'arable habitat was not surveyed as it was considered relatively unlikely to be a key habitat for bat species'*. We advise that arable areas form potential suitable foraging habitat and should not be automatically ruled out. We advise that the requirement for surveys should be based on several factors including: the presence of other habitats/features, potential impacts and a combined wider scale impact, and not just based on land usage.
  
5. Para 10: Natural England welcomes that *'the majority of what are considered to be the key habitat connection in the area between Swannington and Attlebridge would be retained through the use of trenchless techniques'*. However, there are several sections of hedgerow presented in Figure 1 that are proposed for partial removal or breach with which Natural England has concerns. These are:
  - Two sections of hedgerow opposite Alderford Common SSSI are to be partially removed or breached. These are located approximately 250m and 180m east of the common. It is not clear from the information provided if these areas have been surveyed. There appears to be no maps or data to suggest survey and no monitoring at this location. Wild Wings Ecology survey data (Figure 5, 2020/2021 Static Bat Detector and Bat Transect Survey Report in [APP-216]) shows barbastelle key areas south of this, and therefore it is presumed these key areas would extend further north.

- A section of hedgerow near to Swannington, approximately 1km east of the church. Aerial mapping indicates that this may not be a hedgerow. Natural England requests clarification on the actual status of this feature to determine if we have concerns with the works proposed in this area.

We advise that unless further evidence can be provided by the Applicant and/or pre-construction surveys that these areas are of sufficiently low importance to bat species, the default should be to undertake trenchless crossings at these locations.

6. Para 10: As per the Outline EMP, we welcome that pre-construction bat activity surveys would include surveys at *'potentially sensitive positions throughout the Order Limits where there is considered to be a risk of impacts to foraging or commuting bats'* and will include hedgerows, ditches and other boundary features that may be impacted/ severed by construction works, which have potential connectivity importance. However, we advise that the pre-construction bat surveys should also aim to:
- assess and understand the use of foraging and commuting bats within this area.
  - inform the decision on whether to open cut or Horizontally Directionally Drill (HDD) at crossing points

This is in line with the requirements for the draft licence decision, but also in recognition that the area to the west of Norwich known as Wensum Woodlands is being considered for SSSI notification for bats, including barbastelles.

7. Para 10: Natural England welcomes the use of HDD to avoid removal of some sections of hedgerow and along the Marriot's Way within the Swannington/Alderford Common Area.
8. Para 11: Natural England notes that a section of hedgerow north and diagonal to Marriott's Way is to be partially removed or breached. But this is observed to be a key area for barbastelles (Figure 5, 2020/2021 Static Bat Detector and Bat Transect Survey Report [APP-216]). We advise that if this section can't be avoided then HDD methods should be considered by the Applicant.
9. Para 11: Natural England notes that there is a section of potentially remnant hedgerow on Felthorpe Road which is proposed to be breached. Please could the Applicant clarify if in fact this is remnant hedgerow. We advise that if this is found not to be remnant hedgerow, further mitigation measures are likely to be required.

10. Para 11: Natural England notes that approximately 350m of hedgerow is proposed to be breached/partially removed along Fakenham Road at Attlebridge, a long section of which connects with a parcel of woodland southeast, the church, River Wensum and other suitable commuting hedgerows within approximately 250m. As the wider area forms part of the Core Sustainment Zones (CSZ) for barbastelle maternity colonies (including the area known as Wensum Woodlands currently being considered for SSSI notification under [Natural England's designations programme](#)), we advise that sufficient survey data is collected as part of the pre-construction surveys to assess potential impacts on the foraging and commuting bats, and HDD methods considered if necessary.
11. Para 12: We welcome that further pre-construction surveys will be carried out for the two hedgerows north of Reepham Road, which may support community and foraging bats between the SSSIs, to ensure that the risks of habitat severance are appropriately considered.
12. Para 13: Natural England welcomes the commitment the Applicant has made '*where hedgerows are found to be important for bats, the Applicant would seek to implement mitigation to ameliorate the effects of habitat severance. This may include timing works so that the hedgerow breach is in effect during bat dormancy periods (broadly from late October to late March)*'. We advise this commitment is included as appropriate by the Applicant in the OCoCP and EMP and secured in the DCO. In addition, Natural England advises the Applicant provides details of further mitigation measures to manage the gap outside of the dormancy period in the event hedgerow is not re-instated immediately.
13. Para 13: We welcome the commitment the Applicant has made to restrict night working in open cut sections of the route. However, if night working is required to carry out HDD, we advise lighting is cowed and must be directed downwards away from boundary habitats such as hedgerows and watercourses and kept to a minimum.
14. Para 14: Natural England welcomes '*the Applicant will micro-site the precise construction footprint to avoid features of high ecological value*', which in the context of hedgerows means the crossing will be through any gaps or the poorest sections. We advise this commitment is secured within the Outline CoCP and EMP.
15. Para 15: Natural England welcomes that '*SEP and DEP have been able to ensure that woodland habitat in the vicinity of the River Wensum (key barbastelle maternity roost colony) will be avoided by committing to HDD sections that intersect woodland habitat*'. As per our advice in relation to the Wensum Woodlands area being considered for SSSI notification and

the benefits of considering further mitigation measures; we advise this should also include linear features such as hedgerows that may form part of the foraging and/or commuting habitat for these roosts, and for other bat species using the area. These commitments should be incorporated within the Outline CoCP, EMP and secured within the DCO.

16. Para 16: We welcome that information from the *'the forth coming study'* of the barbastelle colony will *'be factored into the design of pre-construction surveys to ensure that impacts are appropriately considered and mitigated'*. Natural England seeks clarification as to when the forth coming study is planned to be undertaken and requests to be consulted to review the findings of these surveys and any mitigation proposed.

**9.17 Outline Code of Construction Practice (Revision B) [REP1-024] and 9.19.3 Outline Ecological Management Plan (Revision B) [REP1-028]**

17. Natural England’s comments in relation to bats within the Outline Code of Construction Practice (OCoCP) [REP1-024] and Outline Ecological Management Plan (EMP) [REP1-028] are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Natural England’s detailed comments to Outline Code of Construction Practice (OCoCP) [REP1-024] and Outline Ecological Management Plan (EMP) [REP1-028]

NE Ref	Section	Para / Table	Natural England’s Concern	Natural England’s Recommendation	Risk
Outline Code of Construction Practice (OCoCP) [REP1-024]					
1	2.5.10	55	Once survey data have been obtained for hedgerow boundaries between and around Alderford Common SSSI which are potentially sensitive, including the Onshore Substation, and for where open cut crossings are proposed through hedgerow/tree/ditch or other linear features within the Weston, Morton on the Hill, Scotchwood Hills areas, we advise trenchless (HDD) crossing methods should be considered where there is the potential for significant effects.	In addition, Natural England advises that the project should ensure sufficient mitigation measures are included such as a lighting strategy and sufficient habitat and hedgerow planting for areas where hedgerows are removed and outlined within the EMP and secured within the DCO. As tree planting is prohibited within the construction corridor, we advise efforts should be made to minimise tree and hedgerow removal in those areas sensitive for commuting/foraging and roosting bats.	

NE Ref	Section	Para / Table	Natural England's Concern	Natural England's Recommendation	Risk
2	3.7	72	We welcome that emissions from artificial light during construction will be in accordance with Bats and Lighting in the UK guidance (Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Engineers, 2018), and will include the use of directional beams, non-reflective surfaces and barriers and screens, to avoid light nuisance whilst maintaining safety and security obligations.	<p>Please also refer to our comments for the Outline EMP (NE Point 24) [REP2-063].</p> <p>We advise that a detailed lighting plan is included in the EMP and secured within the DCO during the consenting phase to ensure impacts upon sensitive habitats and species, particularly in the area around Alderford Common SSSI/Swannington/Weston/Morton on the Hill, Scotchwood Hills areas can be suitably mitigated for.</p>	
3	9	155	Please refer to our comments provided in the OEMP with regards to further surveys and roosting bats.	We advise any noise and vibration impacts to roosting bats should be considered. We welcome the inclusion of a Construction Noise (and vibration) Management Plan (CNMP) within the CoCP.	
Outline Ecological Management Plan (EMP) [REP1-028]					
1	2.2	30	In the Outline EMP, the crossing techniques for the areas closest to Alderford Common have not been confirmed. This appears to be addressed in Alderford Common SSSI and Swannington Upgate Common SSSI - Technical Note [REP1-063].	<p>Please refer to our comments to the Alderford Common SSSI and Swannington Upgate Common SSSI - Technical Note [REP1-063]. above.</p> <p>We advise the crossing techniques are included within the EMP.</p> <p>In addition, we advise that if the pre-construction surveys confirm that crossings are functionally linked to Alderford Common SSSI (noted for roosting bats) and therefore provide important commuting and foraging routes for roosting bats, that</p>	

NE Ref	Section	Para / Table	Natural England's Concern	Natural England's Recommendation	Risk
				the use of HDD methods should be considered for these crossings.	
2	2.3.3	36	This section does not refer to the pre-construction bat activity surveys as included in Table 2.	We advise, that for consistency this section should be updated to include pre-construction bat activity surveys.	
3	2.3.3	40	Natural England welcomes that all trees with High, Moderate or Low bat roost potential will be soft-felled and that where roosting bats have been recorded within trees the EPS mitigation licence will likely include the use of soft-felling.	N/A	
4	2.3.3	41	We welcome <i>'that hedgerow removal will be undertaken during the winter, to allow time for bat species to adjust; that the length and width of hedgerow requiring removal will be minimised wherever possible; and where existing habitats are located adjacent to construction works areas, these areas will be retained and protected from damage using fencing where possible.'</i>	We advise that as many of these areas as possible should be protected, particularly in sensitive areas as detailed in Table 2.	
6	Appendix A - Bat Roost Appraisals	Table 2	We welcome pre-construction bat roost appraisal surveys.	However, the Applicant should note that surveys should include any potential new constraints for bats, for example strong winds over winter may create more potential roost features within trees. We advise that if additional roost features are identified further survey should be considered.	
7	Appendix A - Bat Roost Appraisals	Table 2	As outlined in our para 8 to the Bats Technical Note above, we welcome that bat activity surveys would include surveys at <i>'potentially sensitive positions throughout the Order Limits where there is considered to be a risk of impacts to foraging or commuting bats'</i> and will include hedgerows,	Please see our summary advice above in Paras 3 and 4 and comments and advice above on the Bats Technical Note [REP1-063].  As outlined in our Relevant Representation [RR-063] and reflected in our Risks and Issues Log [REP2-064], we	



NE Ref	Section	Para / Table	Natural England's Concern	Natural England's Recommendation	Risk
			<p>ditches and other boundary features that may be impacted/ severed by construction works, which have potential connectivity importance.</p> <p>We also welcome that hedgerow boundaries between and around Alderford Common SSSI have been scoped in as requiring surveys on the above and that other areas which are potentially sensitive, including the Onshore Substation and Horizontal Directional Drilling compounds and areas will also be surveyed if these are to be sited in areas of potential sensitivity to bats.</p>	<p>advise that where sites outside of the DCO boundary that provide suitable foraging and roosting habitats, functionally linked and core sustenance zones have not been considered for surveys, evidence is presented as to why surveys are not required.</p>	