

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist

Date 27/08/25

Ref: 25/01141/FP

Att: Henry Thomas

Irongate Barn, Halls Green, Weston, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 7DR

Change of use of existing barn from storage and distribution (Use Class B8) to use as a community events and learning centre for agriculture, cookery and related rural-based activities (Use Class F1). Single storey extension to barn following demolition of existing lean-to. Installation of solar panels to roof of converted barn and plant to the roof of the proposed extension including six cycle spaces.

Consultee comments;

Thank you for consulting me, having read through the submitted documents. The application is exempt from BNG and I have no ecological objection to the proposal.

The March 2025 Ecological Appraisal (EA) advised further bat roost assessment. Three surveys were undertaken and the final report confirms multiple bat species using the site for foraging and roosting. It is considered the renovation and conversion of B1 will result in the loss of bat roosting sites of Common pipistrelle and potential foraging sites for both this species and Brown Long Eared bats. Renovation works proposed for B2 will also destroy present Barbastelle and Common pipistrelle roosts or exclude bats due to works disturbance. As such the report advises that a Natural England European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) is required to permit lawful development and the following condition should be added to any permission granted.

No works are in any circumstances to commence unless the local planning authority has been provided with either:

- *a licence issued by Natural England authorizing the specified activity/development to go ahead; or*
- *a statement in writing from the relevant licensing body to the effect that it does not consider that the specified activity/development will require a licence.*

Reason: To ensure that works do not result in adverse impacts to protected species.

In addition to the required mitigation measures for bats the EA also makes recommendation for enhancements and I welcome the introduction of a green, wildflower, roof. Due to the presence of bats foraging in the area the use of artificial lighting at night must be strictly controlled and the following condition for a sensitive lighting strategy is advised;

A lighting design strategy for biodiversity for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall;

a) identify those areas/features on site to which bats and other nocturnal species are particularly sensitive and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting

places, or along important routes used to reach key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging,

and b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.