

Plan Change 5

Hearing summary

Andrew Blayney (Ecology), for The Adare Company Limited

28 September 2022

1. I provided a statement of evidence dated 16 September 2022 and a statement of reply dated 21 September 2022.
2. I understand that the evidence has been pre-read by the Panel.
3. I summarise below the key points I wish to emphasise, after which I am happy to take questions from the Panel.

Summary

4. Within my evidence I have focused on the resources and functions of the habitats present within the Peacocke Structure Plan Area provide to long-tailed bats. By doing so, I sought to identify and explain what is important about the current landscape that bats persist in.
5. By focusing on the resources and functions of habitat useful observations and inferences can be made on how we might preserve and enhance the functionality of the habitats as the Peacocke Structure Plan Area (**PSPA**) becomes increasingly developed.
6. Of key importance is to retain and enhance the connectivity between habitats, the sheltering and buffering from disturbance (such as artificial light at night), the foraging opportunities provided by the habitats, and roosting resources.
7. The development of the PSPA through the direct impacts, such as vegetation clearance and indirect effects such as artificial light at night, act to reduce the habitats available or compromise the resources and functionality they provide. Due to the potential for functional loss of habitats, despite physical retention, both direct and indirect effects must be considered and managed to avoid effects on long-tailed bat habitats.
8. In providing for connectivity of habitats within a developing PSPA it is important to ensure habitats are efficiently connected together with minimal obstacles to

movement such as gaps in corridors or areas of disturbance such as artificial light at night.

9. For habitats to fulfil their connectivity role and be functionally useful for the entire spectrum of possible use, they must be effectively buffered from external disturbance as well as environmental factors such as wind. This can be achieved through bespoke design of the habitats which includes appropriate composition and complexity of habitat types, controls on the development interface, setbacks and appropriate habitat widths.
10. Providing foraging and roosting resources are largely a result of the provision of connectivity and structurally diverse vegetation within habitats. Roosting habitats require active maintenance and retention of typically, old and damaged trees within well connected habitats.
11. Common across all of these requirements is the need to carry out habitat retention, enhancement, and creation early (if not in advance) to manage the time lag until habitats are functional. This should occur at a landscape scale to achieve a functional cohesive outcome and avoid spatial and temporal lags where isolated high-quality habitats are created and/or retained with no connectivity.
12. PC5 proposes a suitable approach to managing development and long-tailed bat ecological values and I support the proposed landscape scale approach to the management of long-tailed bats and their habitats within the PSPA and the wider area.
13. However, I identified issues with PC5 as notified, as the implementation of the landscape scale approach is proposed to occur in a way that is misaligned with the need to minimise spatial and temporal lags. Triggers for assessment and implementation of the proposed management take a consent application by consent application approach, which is likely to result in ad hoc small scale habitat management and considerable lags between development and the efficacy of management interventions.
14. My recommendation therefore is that there is a need for pro-active, evidence based, and coordinated delivery of the proposed landscape scale approach for long-tailed bat management in the PSPA. I do not consider this can effectively be achieved at a developer/ landowner level and needs a central body like HCC to take the lead.

Andrew Blayney