

Date: 23 July 2026
Our ref: DAS/ A024337
Your Ref: MOD008



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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear [REDACTED]

Discretionary Advice Service (Charged Advice): DAS A024337
Development proposal and location: MOD Bicester

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 29 June 2026, which was received on the same day.

This advice is being provided as part of Natural England's Discretionary Advice Service. The Home Office has asked Natural England to provide advice upon:

- Bicester HRA Report
- Bicester PEA Document

This advice is provided in accordance with the Quotation and Agreement dated 18 May 2026.

The following advice is based upon the information within

- Email Correspondence of 16 July 2026.

Hydrological impact pathways between the MOD Bicester site and Arncott Bridge Meadows SSSI

Thank you for providing additional information regarding the drainage design for the MOD Bicester application. As Natural England has not had sight of the drainage details themselves, our advice at this stage is based on the email of 16 July 2026.

As Natural England has advised, the proposal could have potential significant effects on Arncott Bridge Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

I note that hydrological connection between the site and the SSSI cannot be ruled out and have advised that the project will need to demonstrate that it will not alter the existing hydrological regime and therefore risk impacting the interest features of the downstream SSSI.

Based on the detail provided in your email of 16 July 2026 we note that the project will be designed to ensure greenfield runoff rates which are lower than existing runoff rates. I advise that the project designs an appropriate system with sufficient treatment trains to ensure water runoff prevents any degradation in water quality, and subsequent impact to Arncott Bridge SSSI's interest features.

I also note that it is anticipated that foul water will be connected to mains and should this not be the case Natural England would also need to be consulted on the alternative means.

Please re-consult Natural England once this information has been obtained.

This letter concludes Natural England's Advice regarding the Bicester HRA and PEA at this stage. within the Quotation and Agreement dated 18 May 2026.

☒ The advice provided in this letter has been through Natural England's Quality Assurance process

The advice provided within the Discretionary Advice Service is the professional advice of the Natural England adviser named below. It is the best advice that can be given based on the information provided so far. Its quality and detail is dependent upon the quality and depth of the information which has been provided. It does not constitute a statutory response or decision, which will be made by Natural England acting corporately in its role as statutory consultee to the competent authority after an application has been submitted. The advice given is therefore not binding in any way and is provided without prejudice to the consideration of any statutory consultation response or decision which may be made by Natural England in due course. The final judgement on any proposals by Natural England is reserved until an application is made and will be made on the information then available, including any modifications to the proposal made after receipt of discretionary advice. All pre-application advice is subject to review and revision in the light of changes in relevant considerations, including changes in relation to the facts, scientific knowledge/evidence, policy, guidance or law. Natural England will not accept any liability for the accuracy, adequacy or completeness of, nor will any express or implied warranty be given for, the advice. This exclusion does not extend to any fraudulent misrepresentation made by or on behalf of Natural England.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature block]

Annex 1

European Protected Species

A licence is required in order to carry out any works that involve certain activities such as capturing the animals, disturbance, or damaging or destroying their resting or breeding places. Note that damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place is an absolute offence and unless the offences can be avoided (e.g. by timing the works appropriately), it should be licensed. In the first instance it is for the developer to decide whether a species licence will be needed. The developer may need to engage specialist advice in making this decision. A licence may be needed to carry out mitigation work as well as for impacts directly connected with a development. Further information can be found in Natural England's ['How to get a licence'](#) publication.

If the application requires planning permission, it is for the local planning authority to consider whether the permission would offend against Article 12(1) of the Habitats Directive, and if so, whether the application would be likely to receive a licence. This should be based on the advice Natural England provides at formal consultation on the likely impacts on favourable conservation status and Natural England's [guidance](#) on how the three tests (no alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest and maintenance of favourable conservation status) are applied when considering licence applications.

Natural England's pre-submission Screening Service can screen application drafts prior to formal submission, whether or not the relevant planning permission is already in place. Screening will help applicants by making an assessment of whether the draft application is likely to meet licensing requirements, and, if necessary, provide specific guidance on how to address any shortfalls. The advice should help developers and ecological consultants to better manage the risks or costs they may face in having to wait until the formal submission stage after planning permission is secured, or in responding to requests for further information following an initial formal application.

The service will be available for new applications, resubmissions or modifications – depending on customer requirements. More information can be found on [Natural England's website](#).