

1102. Additional survey work and associated information on bats, Great Crested Newts and wintering birds led the Council, after consultation with Natural England, to decide not to pursue the reason for refusal which alleged that the planning application had not demonstrated that interests of national and county nature conservation interest would not be significantly harmed. Instead conditions have been suggested requiring monitoring and mitigation strategies for bats and Great Crested Newts respectively. Nothing presented at the Inquiry, notably by Carsington and Hopton Parish Council, the Action Group and Carsington Bird Club, persuades me that the Appellant's assessments were unacceptably flawed or that the Council's approach of relying on safeguarding conditions is inadequate.

04. I appreciate the concern of Carsington Bird Club about the site's proximity to Carsington Water and the possibility of it lying on a north-westward migratory route. I also understand the potential pitfalls in drawing general conclusions from sightings of relatively small numbers of birds over limited periods. However, the Appellant's surveys appear to me to be sufficiently thorough to support the conclusion that the site does not lie on a major flight route and that the turbines would be unlikely to have significant adverse effects on birds. They were apparently accepted as such by English Nature who do not object in relation to wintering birds. I was also told that RSPB had withdrawn their objection at an earlier stage and, whilst there might be speculation as to why they did so, they evidently did not have such misgivings as to maintain it. Observations by Bird Club members are clearly those of concerned and knowledgeable enthusiasts but what was said at the Inquiry does not seem to me to take the debate much beyond a possibility that some migrating birds might be at some risk. On all the evidence I consider that risk to be of acceptable proportions.