Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Rachel Whyte
Date:	06/10/2023
Application number:	PL/2023/07301
Proposal:	2 no. proposed new dwellings and associated works.
Site address:	Land South West of Ashdown Farm, New Road, Codford, Wilts
Case officer:	Jemma Foster

Recommendations:

	No comment
	Support
	No objection
	Condition (no objection subject to conditions)
X	Objection - further information required
	Objection in principle
	HRA completed

Further Information Required:

	Issue	Policy/Legislative Compliance	Date Information Requested & Further Information Required	Satisfactorily Addressed (Document & Date)
1.	Ecological Assessment	CP 50, WCA 1981, NPPF 2021, Hab. Regs	**06/10/2023** - Ecological Assessment which covers all the concerns raised in this response.	**NO**
2.	Lighting	WCA 1981, Hab. Regs.	**06/10/2023** – Details of proposed lighting.	**NO**
3.	Trees	WCA 1981, Hab. Regs. CP 50	**06/10/2023** – Demonstrate that the integrity of all trees will be maintained.	**NO**
4.	River Avon - Nutrients	Hab. Regs, CP 69	**06/10/2023** - Demonstrate how the development meets all small scale threshold criteria.	**NO**

The outstanding document(s) listed above are needed to enable the council's ecology team to consider all the relevant impacts and benefits of the proposed scheme. The council's ecologists will provide a further response once all the above information has been submitted via the case officer.
Please Note: When resubmitting a revised document, ALL changes must be highlighted to enable review.

Thank you for consulting Ecology, I have reviewed the application and supporting documents against OS Maps and aerial photography of the site and surrounding area, together with GIS layers of statutory and non-statutory sites and existing records of protected species.

The application has been supported by an Ecology Assessment however it appears that this was not carried out by a professional ecological consultant.

The application includes measures to avoid and mitigate impacts on ecology, as well as some provision of alternative features to provide an enhancement for biodiversity. It is acknowledged that the proposals have demonstrated a commitment to incorporating biodiversity into the development and these measures, which are listed below, are welcomed:

- No trees will be removed, and existing trees will be incorporated into the development.
- Apart from the usual movement activated security lighting, no further external lighting is planned for the development.
- Provision of two nesting boxes for birds and two bat tubes
- An area of the site will be fenced and maintained as a 'nature reserve'
- Sedum roof on both dwellings
- The removal of a section of boundary wall to enhance the permeability of the site for fauna

Salisbury Plain

This application lies within the 6.4 km buffer zone of the Salisbury Plain SPA and in light of the HRA for the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the HRA for the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan it is screened into Appropriate Assessment due to the potential impact of recreational pressure on stone curlew in combination with other plans and projects. In April 2023 Natural England (NE) confirmed that the 2018 Appropriate Assessment for Salisbury Plain continues to be supported by NE. That Appropriate Assessment reached a conclusion of no likely significant effect on the conservation objectives of the SPA, for development within 6.4 km of the SPA boundary provided that the mitigation scheme continues to be implemented. Annual stone curlew monitoring and protection measures continue to be secured by the Council.

River Avon

This development falls within the catchment of the River Avon SAC and has potential to cause adverse effects alone or in combination with other developments through discharge of phosphorus in wastewater. The submitted Drainage Statement (Rev A) seeks to demonstrate how the proposals could meet the thresholds for insignificant levels of phosphorus discharges to ground. The thresholds are as follows:

a) The drainage field is more than 50 m from the designated site boundary (or sensitive interest feature), and;
b) The drainage field is more than 40 m from any surface water feature e.g. ditch, drain, watercourse, and;
c) The drainage field in an area with a slope no greater than 15%, and;
d) The drainage field is in an area where the high-water table groundwater depth is at least 2 m below the surface at all times, and;
e) The drainage field will not be subject to significant flooding, e.g. it is not in flood zone 2 or 3, and;
f) There are no other known factors which would expedite the transport of phosphorus for example fissured geology, insufficient soil below the drainage pipes, known sewer flooding, conditions in the soil/geology that would cause remobilisation phosphorus, presence of mineshafts, etc, and;
g) To ensure that there is no significant in combination effect, the discharge to ground should be at least 200 m from any other discharge to ground, and;
h) The percolation test has been performed of the proposed location of the drainage field with the resulting value lying within the required range under the Building Regulations 2010, which specify an average Vp value of between 12 and 100.

Considering the information available it is anticipated that the proposals could meet criteria a, b, e, f and h. There is however insufficient information to determine compliance with criteria c, d and g.

If sufficient information cannot be provided to demonstrate the development can meet all of the criteria or if the development fails one or more criteria, then the small scale threshold cannot be considered met. In this instance a bespoke mitigation strategy will be required. The mitigation strategy must be supported by a completed nutrient calculator. Information on calculating the phosphorus budget can be found here: https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-bio-phosphorous-nitrogen-mitigation.

Where mitigation is required, a bespoke scheme must be agreed by Natural England in the first instance. We advise that developers contact Natural England through their charged advice service https://www.gov.uk/guidance/developers-get-environmental-advice-on-your-planning-proposals. Natural England has set out guidance on the type of phosphorus removal measures that are appropriate as mitigation such as permanent removal of agricultural land or creation of wetlands.

The Council, as competent authority needs to have certainty that the development proposals will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site.

Further Information Required:

1. Ecological Assessment

   An Ecological Assessment must be carried out by a professional ecologist with the results submitted to the LPA in a report which includes the methodology and results of any field survey. The report should include (but not necessarily be limited to) the following:
   - An assessment of impacts on all sensitive ecological features on the site and within the zone of influence. The assessment must include impacts during both the construction and operational phases e.g., lighting, trampling of ground flora, noise etc.
   - Demonstrate how the proposals are in accordance with planning policy and legislation, including the mitigation hierarchy and biodiversity no net loss/enhancement.
   - Recommendations to protect sensitive ecological features and provide an enhancement for biodiversity, including how the 'nature reserve' area will be managed for biodiversity.
   - A scaled plan showing any sensitive areas (where access may need to be restricted), extent of habitat to be impacted and enhanced, and how any mitigation/enhancement measures will be included in the proposal.

   The Ecological Assessment can be proportional to the size and scale of the development.

2. Lighting Scheme

   Details of lighting must be provided which show how the proposals are in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institute of Lighting Engineers in their publication GN01:2021, 'Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light' (ILP, 2021), and Guidance note GN08/23 "Bats and artificial lighting at night", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

   The scheme must be available to the ecologist for an assessment of impacts to be included in the requested ecological appraisal.

3. Trees

   Whilst it is noted that no trees are due to be removed to facilitate the proposals, the proposed Package Treatment Plan is proposed for installation within the root protection zone of four retained trees. Furthermore, the footprint of both dwellings is within the root protection area of additional retained trees. Evidence must be provided to demonstrate that the integrity of all retained trees can be maintained.

4. Nutrients

   Provision of appropriate data and/or plans to demonstrate how the development meets small scale threshold criteria c, d and g.

   OR

   The application must submit their own mitigation strategy and nutrient calculator showing the development will achieve nutrient neutrality, together with a letter from Natural England demonstrating that the strategy and development proposals submitted for planning have been reviewed by them and found to be compliant with the Habitats Regulations.

Final sign off – all matters addressed:

Ecologist	Date