Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Rachel Whyte
Date:	20/03/2024
Application number:	PL/2023/09968
Proposal:	Change of use of land from agricultural to commercial. Extension to commercial building (Ref: PL/2023/04036), extension specifically falling under use class B2/B8, associated works and associated parking
Site address:	Snarlton Farm, Snarlton Lane, Melksham, SN12 7QP
Case officer:	Russell Brown

Recommendations:

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

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 Ecological Impact Assessment by Ethos Environmental Planning. I consider that the level of survey has been thorough and appropriate to both the nature of the site and the scale of the development. I am satisfied that there is sufficient information to be able to make a judgement as to whether protected habitats and/or species are likely to be adversely impacted by the proposed development and that no further survey is required in relation to the current application.

The ecology report makes a series of recommendations in Section 6 for precautionary measures to be implemented as part of the development to ensure that protected species are not adversely impacted by the works. These include good practice measures to be incorporated during construction to protect badger, dormouse, water vole, breeding birds and foraging/commuting bats.

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires all development to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity and encourages developments to seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Policy 13 of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan expects development to deliver a 10% improvement in “biodiversity value”. Policy 16 of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan supports new tree planting.

The existing hedgerow will be retained, and functionality of the wider landscape is therefore expected to be maintained. This would be in accordance with Core Policy 50. The proposals

include new native tree planting, this would provide an enhancement for biodiversity and would be in accordance with Core Policy 50 and Policy 16 of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan. Evidence has not been submitted to demonstrate the proposals will achieve 10% (as required by Policy 13 of the Neighbourhood Plan) however I am satisfied that a net gain will be achieved. The application is minor and submitted prior to BNG becoming a mandatory requirement, therefore given the reasons above a Biodiversity Metric will not be requested at this time. Section 7.1 of the ecology report details how habitat enhancements will be carried out (e.g., wildflower grassland and tree planting, enhancements to retained hedgerow). This detail should be secured via condition.

CONDITIONS:

1. The development will be carried out in strict accordance with the following documents:
    - Location Plan. Drawing no: CC/10/STA.
    - Block Plan. Drawing no: CC/11/STA
    - Ecological Impact Assessment. Report ref: ETH23-354 V1. January 2024. Ethos Environmental Planning.

    REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and for the protection, mitigation and enhancement of biodiversity.

2. No new external artificial lighting shall be installed at the site unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

    REASON: In the interests of conserving biodiversity,

Note to case officer: please include a condition to secure the habitat planting and enhancement set out in Section 7.1 of the Ecological Impact Assessment.

INFORMATIVES:

Protected Species General

The applicant should note that under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) it is an offence to disturb or harm any protected species including for example, breeding birds and reptiles. The protection offered to some species such as bats, extends beyond the individual animals to the places they use for shelter or resting. Please note that this consent does not override the statutory protection afforded to any such species. In the event that your proposals could potentially affect a protected species you should seek the advice of a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist and consider the need for a licence from Natural England prior to commencing works. Please see Natural England's website for further information on protected species.

Final sign off – all matters addressed:

Ecologist **Rachel Whyte**	Date **20/03/2024**