

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Jessica Cracknell (Ecologist)
Date:	02/10/2025
Application number:	PL/2025/06615
Proposal:	Erection of building comprising 4No. flexible B8 storage and distribution and/or Class E(g) Commercial, Business and Service units and erection of building for mixed agricultural and equestrian workshop, storage and estate office and stables, all following demolition of existing B8 storage building and site remediation, together with associated parking, servicing, drainage, infrastructure, biodiversity net gain and landscaping and alterations to existing vehicular access
Site address:	Building at Seagry House, Off Henn Lane and Startley Road, Upper Seagry, Chippenham, SN15 5HD
Case officer:	Andrew Thomas

Recommendations:

☐	No Comment
☐	Support
☐	No objection
☐	Condition (no objection subject to conditions)
☒	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	Priority woodland habitat	NPPF 2024, CP50	02/10/2025 Proposals must show how impacts to Priority Woodland Habitat will be mitigated and compensated to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and maintain ecological network integrity.	NO
2	Biodiversity Net Gain	Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021)	02/10/2025 Submission of statutory metric calculation with the correct baseline habitats, condition assessments and associated baseline habitat plans.	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 following submitted documentation was reviewed to inform this response:

- Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA). 24 July 2025. ACD Environmental. Doc File Ref. PRI24552_EcIA;
- Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing Impact Assessment & Conservation Payment Certificate. 10 July 2025. Natural England. Enquiry No. DLL-ENQ-WILT-00127;
- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. 31 July 2025;
- Soft Landscape Specification. July 2025. ACD Environmental. Doc File Ref. PRI24552 Spec;
- Soft Landscape Proposals. July 2025. ACD Environmental. Drawing No. PRI24552 11;
- Hard Landscape Proposals. July 2025. ACD Environmental. Drawing No. PRI24552 12;
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Arboricultural Method Statement, Tree Protection Plan. 27 June 2025. Hillside Tree Ltd. Version No. 1.0;
- Appendix A – Tree Schedule. 21 May 2025. Hillside Trees Ltd;
- Tree Constraints Plan. June 2025. Hillside Trees Ltd. Drawing No. 250603-SH-Comm-TCP-NB;
- Tree Protection Plan Base. June 2025. Hillside Trees Ltd. Drawing No. 250603-SH-Comm-TPP Base-NB;
- Whole Site Plan – Proposed. 28 July 2025. TEA Architects. Project No. 2386. Drawing No. 020. Rev. M;
- Site Plan – Proposed. 28 July 2025. TEA Architects. Project No. 2386. Drawing No. 021. Rev. E;
- Block A – N&S Elevations. 28 July 2025. TEA Architects. Project No. 2386. Drawing No. 041. Rev. A;
- Block A – E&W Elevations. 28 July 2025. TEA Architects. Project No. 2386. Drawing No. 040. Rev. A;
- Block A – Parking & Stable Elevations. 28 July 2025. TEA Architects. Project No. 2386. Drawing No. 042. Rev. A;
- Block A – Parking & Stable Elevations 2. 28 July 2025. TEA Architects. Project No. 2386. Drawing No. 043. Rev. A;
- Block B – N&S Elevations. 28 July 2025. TEA Architects. Project No. 2386. Drawing No. 046. Rev. A;
- Block B – E&W Elevations. 28 July 2025. TEA Architects. Project No. 2386. Drawing No. 045. Rev. A;
- Design and Access Statement. July 2025. TEA Architects;
- Planning Statement. August 2025. DE Planning.

Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland

The site supports deciduous woodland priority habitat, as identified on Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory. This habitat is functionally linked to Seagry Wood and Oak Hill County Wildlife Site (CWS), providing supporting habitat for protected species, particularly bats, through commuting and foraging corridors. The wooded corridor along the eastern boundary is of particular importance, forming part of a wider priority habitat network. Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy sets an expectation that features of nature conservation are *"retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term"*. The proposals must demonstrate that there will be no loss of integrity of trees or impacts to priority woodland habitats. There is also an expectation that *"All development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development"*.

The Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) notes that the majority of woodland will be retained, with root protection zones identified within the Tree Constraints Plan. The Arboricultural report concludes that most significant trees and woodland belts can be retained with appropriate mitigation. However, woodland removal will still result in a measurable loss of habitat, even with enhancements to retained woodland through improved management. The EclA notes that off-site habitat creation may be required to compensate for the direct loss of woodland priority habitat, but details of this bespoke mitigation/compensation strategy have not been provided. The proposals must demonstrate that the anticipated ecological impacts will be mitigated as far as possible and include appropriate compensatory measures to ensure no net loss of the local biodiversity resource and secure the integrity of local ecological networks.

Bat Species

ACD Environmental undertook, three dusk emergence surveys during the active bat survey season (May-July) in 2025, in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016). These surveys identified a number of potential roosting features and potential access features within the building. Two small day roosts for common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle bats were identified within one of the buildings onsite.

A number of trees within the Application Site have been assessed as having potential roosting features for bats. Under the current proposals, no such trees are scheduled for removal. Should plans change and any of these trees require removal, further surveys will be required and the mitigation measures will need to be revised accordingly.

The roof space of (Building at Seagry House, Off Henn Lane and Startley Road, Upper Seagry, Chippenham, SN15 5HD) is used as a bat roost. Under the Conservation of Habitat Regulations, it is an offence to harm or disturb bats or damage or destroy their roosts. Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation. The applicant is advised that a Natural England licence will be required before any work is undertaken to implement this planning permission.

The ACD Environmental Report gives recommendations for precautionary working methods and the provision of mitigation measures, including bat boxes. This mitigation will need to be repeated in the licence application. This mitigation must be included in the site plan and will become an enforceable part of the planning permission. There is sufficient information as to the use of the building by bats and sufficient recommendations for mitigation, such that it is likely that a licence from Natural England would be forthcoming.

Ecological enhancements within Section 7.7 of the Ecological Impact Assessment report are provided through the installation of log piles, bat and bird boxes. **The location of these enhancements must be included in the site plan drawings and will become an enforceable part of the planning permission.**

The habitat within the proposed development site and the surrounding area is suitable for roosting, foraging and commuting bats. An increase in artificial lux levels can deter bats which could result in roost abandonment and/or the severance of key foraging areas. This will likely result in a significant negative impact upon the health of bat populations across the region. Artificial light at night can have a substantial adverse effect on biodiversity. Any new lighting should be for the purposes for safe access and security and be 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. There is an expectation that all lighting provided on site would demonstrate that bat

habitat (trees and woodland) on the perimeter of the site will remain below 0.5 lux. Suitable lighting to ensure dark foraging and commuting routes can be retained could be secured via condition.

Nesting Birds

The woodland, scrub and hedgerows across the site provide suitable nesting habitat for a range of bird species. Where possible, habitat removal must be scheduled outside the bird breeding season (1st March–31st August) to avoid potential disturbance. If removal during this period is unavoidable, a pre-works nesting bird inspection should be conducted no more than 48 hours before clearance.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

Great Crested Newts are recorded in the local area. The applicant has submitted a District Level Licensing (DLL) certificate with the application, to address the potential impacts on this species. In line with Natural England's requirements, the DLL scheme replaces the need for site-specific mitigation and compensation. The Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate (IACPC) has been signed by the applicant and countersigned by Natural England, with 'Annex 3: Site Location' included, which corresponds with the red line site boundary of the planning application.

Reptiles

ACD Environmental undertook reptile presence/absence surveys using artificial refugia across seven visits in 2025. Grass Snakes were recorded on-site with a maximum count of 2 adults and 13 juveniles representing a good population. Given the presence of suitable habitats, the site is assessed as being of local value for reptiles. Site clearance activities will have the potential for direct harm to individual reptiles, resulting in the loss of approximately 1.53ha of grassland habitats suitable for slow worms.

A precautionary method of working must be undertaken including a sensitive (phased) vegetation clearance methodology between the months of April and October, carried out under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist. As stated within the Ecological Impact Assessment report any grass snake (or other reptiles) encountered will be translocated to a suitable offsite area, with heras fencing installed around the site boundaries, which must be established prior to the commencement of works. The above measures must also be incorporated into the Construction Method Statement (CMS), secured by condition.

Badgers

Any identified badger setts must be retained within the development proposals wherever possible, with a minimum 30m buffer from built form or construction activities. Where retention is not feasible, any active setts impacted by the scheme must be closed under a Natural England licence, following best practice protocols. Given the potential for new badger setts to be established, an updated badger survey should be undertaken no more than six months prior to the commencement of development. Should the status of badgers on the site have changed, the mitigation measures will need to be revised accordingly.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) this application is required to deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The Biodiversity Gain Plan condition will automatically apply if approval is forthcoming.

A completed statutory metric calculation (31 July 2025) confirming the baseline and predicted post-development biodiversity units of the site has been submitted (including the habitat maps).

The following issues must be addressed in the baseline prior to determination:

- The submitted baseline information does not provide sufficient detail to confirm the correct UKHab classification for the Woodland or Grassland habitats.
 - Woodland: The species list provided in the Ecological Impact Assessment does not align with that in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (27 June 2025, Hillside Tree Ltd). Clarification and justification of the species list and habitat classification are required which must align with the UK Hab criteria.
 - Grassland: The species list provided does not meet the criteria for classification as Other neutral grassland. Further information is required to confirm the correct UKHab classification, including quadrat survey data (percentage cover/DAFOR values, recorded at an appropriate time of year) and condition assessment sheets.
- The condition assessment sheets for the baseline habitats have not been submitted. This information is a minimum requirement set out in Article 7 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and must therefore be submitted for review by the ecology team prior to determination.

Note to case officer: The Proposed UK Habitat Classification Plan (Appendix 6 of the Ecological Impact Assessment. 24 July 2025. ACD Environmental. Doc File Ref. PRI24552_EclA) identifies the areas of habitat creation and enhancement which contributes to the applications proposed BNG, however detail on the plan is limited. Other neutral grassland is unlikely to achieve “good” condition within an urban environment, the proposed condition should be revised to a more appropriate target. Confirmation of how the development will achieve BNG is a post-determination matter however consideration should be given to how any proposed BNG will be secured.

DRAFT CONDITIONS: these will be finalised once the issues above have been addressed

1. Compliance with submitted documents

The development will be carried out in strict accordance with the following documents:

- Sections 5, 6 and 7, Appendices 2, 6 and 7 of the Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA). 24 July 2025. ACD Environmental. Doc File Ref. PRI24552_EclA;
- Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing Impact Assessment & Conservation Payment Certificate. 10 July 2025. Natural England. Enquiry No. DLL-ENQ-WILT-00127;
- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. 31 July 2025;
- Soft Landscape Specification. July 2025. ACD Environmental. Doc File Ref. PRI24552 Spec;
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REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and for the protection, mitigation and enhancement of biodiversity.

2. Construction Method Statement

No development shall commence on site (including any vegetation removal or works to existing structures), until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Construction Method Statement shall include all precautionary measures to be implemented during the construction period, for the protection of sensitive habitats and species known to be present within or adjacent the site, with particular reference to:

- Bat Species
- Nesting Birds
- Great Crested Newts
- Reptiles
- Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland

The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved Construction Method Statement.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection, mitigation and compensation for protected species and priority habitats throughout the construction period.

3. Ecological Enhancements

Prior to the commencement of any works, including vegetation removal and demolition, details of the number, design and locations of bat roosts and nesting opportunities for birds (e.g. bat and bird boxes) shall be submitted to the local authority for approval. The approved details shall be implemented before occupation of the final works.

REASON: To provide mitigation /enhancement for biodiversity.

4. Lighting

Prior to commencement of development, a lighting plan that includes a Lux Plot, shall be submitted to the LPA for approval. The plan will demonstrate that bat habitat (trees, scrub and hedgerows) on the perimeter of the site will remain below 0.5 lux.

All lighting provided on site shall be 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.

REASON: In the interests of the amenities of the area and to minimize impacts on biodiversity caused by light spillage to areas above and outside the development site.

INFORMATIVES:

Bat Species

The roof space of (Building at Seagry House, Off Henn Lane and Startley Road, Upper Seagry, Chippenham, SN15 5HD) is used as a bat roost. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), it is an offence to harm or disturb bats or damage or destroy their roosts. Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation. The applicant is advised that a European Protected Species Licence will be required before any work is undertaken to implement this planning permission. Future conversion of the roof space to living accommodation or replacing the roof could also breach this legislation and advice should be obtained from a professional bat ecologist before proceeding with work of this nature.

Final sign off – all matters addressed:

Ecologist	Date
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