

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Abi Gazzard
Date:	30/10/2025
Application number:	PL/2025/07349
Proposal:	Variation of condition 3 (Layout changes), condition 14 (Changes to noise condition) and conditions 4, 5 and 7 (Minor wording changes) relating to application PL/2021/08690.
Site address:	Land at Studley Farm, Atworth, Melksham
Case officer:	Gen Collins

Recommendations:

☐	No Comment
☐	Support
☒	No objection
☐	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, aerial photography of the site and surrounding area, together with GIS layers of statutory and non-statutory designated sites and existing records of protected species.

Information considered:

- Ecological Constraints Report, Antea Group, August 2025
- Pre-application advice (ENQ/2025/00717)
- Planting Plan (PL/2021/08690)
- Landscaping Layout BLA 034 Rev G 06/02/2025

The site comprises agricultural land with permission for the construction of a solar farm (PL/2021/08690). This proposal concerns a variation of conditions primarily seeking changes to the approved layout and noise mitigation, and changes to wording of several other conditions.

COMMENTS:

The proposed layout alterations do not appear to be major from an ecological perspective, and include additional sections of access roads, some sections of ballasted foundations, repositioning of some panels and terracing of the battery storage facility compound, among other amendments. The alterations require the amendment of other plans, e.g., landscaping plans, which are referred to in ecology-related conditions 5 (Landscape and Ecological Management Plan; LEMP) and 7 (Construction Ecology Management Plan; CEMP). The applicant therefore proposes that said conditions are updated to refer to the new landscaping plans.

The amended landscaping plan is consistent with that previously approved, though one of the suggested hedgehog nest boxes has been removed from the plans on the southeastern corner of the site. Whilst this is not ideal, it is acknowledged that mammal access points are proposed, and there are areas of suitable habitat on site (e.g. hedgerow). The provision of five hedgehog nest boxes is also described in the submitted LEMP, details of which can be approved at the discharge of condition stage.

To inform the current application, a walkover survey was conducted by the applicant's ecologists in July 2024, with a further site visit undertaken in September 2024. The report states that the habitats and conditions observed were consistent with those reported in the 2021 ecological assessment (associated with application PL/2021/08690). As such, no additional bird, herpetofauna or bat surveys are considered necessary. In contrast to 2021, no evidence of water voles was found in the most recent survey.

The 2021 surveys did note a disused badger sett off-site, between the two main parcels of proposed development. The sett is over 30m from the site boundaries, and showed signs of collapse at the time of survey. Additionally, a disused two-hole outlier sett was recorded at the eastern site boundary. Details of updated surveys, and protective measures, will remain required under Condition 7 (CEMP) of planning permission PL/2021/08690.

Biodiversity Net Gain

From 12 February 2024 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Based on the information available the biodiversity gain planning condition is not considered to apply to this application as the application is for a variation of conditions, i.e., it relates to section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the original planning permission to which the section 73 planning permission relates was granted before 12 February 2024.

Overall, I have no objections to the proposed amended layout, nor the minor changes to the wording of ecology-related Conditions 5 and 7 to refer to the updated landscaping plans.

Sign off by WC Ecologist will only be given once ALL outstanding information has been submitted and agreed sufficient.

Ecologist	Date
Abi Gazzard	30/10/2025