

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Abi Gazzard
Date:	19/12/2025
Application number:	PL/2025/08987
Proposal:	Outline planning application with all matters reserved except for access for the erection of 2 No. self-build plots and associated works.
Site address:	Land at First Lane, Whitley, SN12 8RL
Case officer:	Isobella Wise

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)
	No net loss of local biodiversity resource and ecological networks	CP50, NPPS	19/12/2025 Ecological Parameters Plan.	
	BNG	Environment Act 2021	19/12/2025 Confirmation of site area. If not exempt, BNG metric is required.	

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, 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 Impact Assessment, Bengrove Ltd, October 2025
- Parameter Plan, Ashford Homes, February 2021
- Planning, Design & Access Statement, planningspehre, undated

The site comprises an area of grazed pasture where it is proposed to erect 2 dwellings. Previous outline applications for the erection of up to 9 dwellings (20/05766/OUT) and 4 dwellings (PL/2021/06922) were withdrawn and refused, respectively.

COMMENTS:

Ecological Parameters Plan

It is noted that a Parameter Plan has been submitted, and the inclusion of “ecology zones” is welcomed. However, details of habitats to be created in these areas, or enhancements to existing features, are not provided. An Ecological Parameters Plan must clearly identify those areas of the site which are unconstrained, those areas where sensitive design or restrictions may be required, and any areas of the site which are to be retained, remain undeveloped, enhanced, form part of the landscaping for the purposes of protecting and enhancing biodiversity and any areas to be used as compensatory habitat in line with the submitted ecology documents. The EPP will become an ‘approved document’ of any outline permission granted and any reserved matters application must be in compliance with the plan.

The EPP must include:

1. A scaled drawing showing existing ecological features, distinguishing between those to be retained and those which will be lost e.g. hedgerows, trees, water features, badger setts etc
2. Specify the minimum distance from each feature to the footprint of development e.g. to curtilage of properties, car parks, roads.
3. Specify the buffer distance from light sensitive ecological features where the increase in lux levels will be zero or, if lux contours have been modelled, show contour lines for 1, 0.5 or 0.1 lux depending on the sensitivity of ecological features
4. Identify where new habitats will be created on site, include minimum area in hectares or length in metres and habitat type
5. Identify areas where habitat enhancement will be undertaken, include minimum area in hectares or length in metres and habitat type, e.g. defunct hedgerow to be grubbed up and replanted
6. Provide stand-off distances to the footprint of development e.g. curtilage to properties, car parks, roads for each tree to be retained, sufficient to ensure the tree will survive throughout the operational phase without risk of it being removed for health and safety, loss of amenity or liability reasons.
7. Provide cross-sectional drawing to show profile of SuDs, ponds or wetland features to demonstrate there is adequate room for these features to have gently profiled sides and thereby maximise their biodiversity potential.

Protected and notable habitats

The ecology report states that most of the site comprises grazed pasture of low species-richness. Scrub and hedgerow (Priority Habitat) are present at the northern and western site boundaries, respectively, connecting to further boundary habitat of the wider field and surrounding area. A ditch runs through the centre of the site, flowing into South Brook (Priority Habitat) to the south of the wider field (and ~40m south of the application site boundary). There is one outbuilding present, but it is derelict and the roof is missing.

It is not clearly shown in the Parameter Plan whether the boundary hedgerow or scrub will be retained/enhanced. As well as further details shown on an Ecological Parameters Plan (above), a Construction Method Statement (CMS) will be required to ensure that sensitive habitats, such as the hedgerow, wet ditch and South Brook, are not adversely affected during the works. This should be secured via a planning condition.

Protected and notable species

Amphibians and reptiles

There are four ponds within 500m of the application site which are considered to be of poor suitability for great crested newts (GCN). The ponds are all separated from the site by Corsham Road. Three of these ponds fall within 250m of the site and were subject to GCN surveys (making use of bottle trapping, torchlight surveys and egg searches) during May 2019, in association with application 20/05766/OUT. No GCN were recorded. On site, the wet ditch contains slow-running water but it is shallow, and is concluded to be unsuitable for use by breeding GCN. It is therefore considered unlikely that the site is of high significance for GCN. However, the hedgerow and scrub at the boundaries could provide terrestrial habitat for amphibians, as well as reptiles. Details of precautionary measures for amphibians and reptiles should be included within the CMS.

Badgers

Badger signs were observed on site, including mammal runs, hairs and snuffle holes. In 2021, an outlier sett was observed adjacent to the southwest boundary, but it was not found to be present in 2025. Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, it is an offence to harm badgers or damage or destroy their setts or disturb badgers within their setts. Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under these legislations. A pre-commencement badger survey should be undertaken to confirm that there are no setts on-site, or close to the site. Details of this, as well as other precautionary measures relating to badgers (such as covering open excavations overnight), must be included within the CMS.

Bats

The derelict outbuilding has negligible potential to host roosting bats. The pasture, scrub, hedgerow, wet ditch and South Brook likely provide good bat foraging and commuting habitat, though some areas will already be subject to noise, light and human disturbance. It appears that the ditch will be retained, but as above, it is not clear what extent of hedgerow or scrub will be retained and/or enhanced.

In line with NPPF and with CP50, applications that do not fall into the category where Biodiversity Net Gain is required must still ensure that no net loss of functional habitat for the benefit of wildlife in the local area will occur as a result of the proposed development. In addition, enhancements for biodiversity, relevant to local habitats and wildlife populations, should form part of the proposed development.

As such, further details should be provided within an Ecological Parameters Plan to demonstrate that suitable bat foraging habitat and connectivity with the wider landscape is retained.

The ecology report also recommends implementation of a sensitive lighting scheme. Given a record of a lesser horseshoe roost ~590m northwest, the existing lack of lighting on site, as well as the proximity of the site to relevant features such as South Brook, a lighting condition is recommended to manage any residual risk to light-sensitive species.

Birds

The adults, young, eggs and nests of all species of birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) while they are breeding. Please be advised that works should not take place that will harm nesting birds (such as vegetation clearance or building demolition) from March to August inclusive. The applicant is advised to check any structure or vegetation capable of supporting breeding birds and delay removing or altering such features until after young birds have fledged – precautionary measures for nesting birds should be included within the CMS.

Riparian mammals

There is a water vole record associated with South Brook, ~590m southeast of the site. In May 2019, ecologists noted old burrows were present in the ditch on-site, though these may not have been made/used by water vole. No other evidence was reported. Similarly, the more recent ecology report states that there were no new signs or burrows, and the shallow water and poor food supply indicates that the site is unlikely to be of significance for water vole. In any case, the ditch is to be retained. A pre-commencement check for water vole signs should be undertaken, and full details of protective measures for water voles, the ditch on-site and South Brook off-site, must be provided in the CMS.

Enhancements

In line with NPPF and with CP50, gains for biodiversity, relevant to local habitats and wildlife populations, should form part of the proposed development. Details of biodiversity enhancements – such as bat roosting and bird nesting opportunities, enhancements for water vole/ditch habitat, hibernacula – should be shown on a plan. These could be incorporated into the Ecological Parameters Plan, or secured via a separate condition.

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). The applicant is seeking to apply the self and Custom Build Development, which is for development which:

- consists of no more than 9 dwellings;
- is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares; and
- consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding (as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015).

However, the site area is unclear. It is noted that the application form reports a site area of 0.49 hectares, but the red line boundary on our mapping system appears to contain 0.52 hectares. A previous ecology report using a very similar red line boundary states an area of 0.6 hectares. Further information is needed to demonstrate that the site falls below the 0.5 hectare threshold, such as a detailed and scaled map with site dimensions annotated, and/or raw shapefile.

IN SUMMARY: Insufficient information has been submitted. In carrying out its statutory function, the LPA must be reasonably sure that the proposal will not result in significant adverse effects on protected habitats or species. The information outlined above must therefore be submitted and reviewed by the LPA's ecology team prior to determination of the application. I therefore maintain a holding objection until all the issues listed above have been suitably addressed.

CONDITIONS: wording to be provided once above issues resolved.

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

Ecologist	Date
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