

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Abi Gazzard
Date:	09/01/2026
Application number:	PL/2025/08329
Proposal:	Development for 9 dwellings and associated works.
Site address:	Land south of Lewis Court, Goose Street, Southwick, BA14 9RQ
Case officer:	Verity Giles-Franklin

Recommendations:

☐	No Comment
☐	Support
☐	No objection
☐	Condition (no objection subject to conditions)
☒	Objection - further information required
☐	Objection in principle
☒	HRA required

Further Information Required:

	Issue	Policy/Legislative Compliance	Date information requested & Further information required	Satisfactorily addressed (Document & Date)
1.	Bats and protected sites (Bath and Bradford on Avon Bat SAC)	Habitat Regulations, CP50, NPPF	09/01/2026 -Amendment of layout to demonstrate no net loss of SAC bat foraging and commuting functionality -Amendment of layout that seeks to achieve no net loss of biodiversity (and updated BNG metric) -Confirmation of financial contributions for grey and yellow zones -Confirmation of external lighting strategy, and lighting plan, if required	
2.	Mitigation	CP50, NPPF	09/01/2026 -Further to/in combination with plans demonstrating retention of functionality for bats, a plan is needed to show mitigation for other species, including: -Habitat creation and enhancement for dormice -The location, number and specification of features for nesting birds such as house sparrows -The location, number and specification of features for reptiles	
3.	BNG	Town and Country Planning	09/01/2026 -Amendment and resubmission of metric	

		Act	addressing the issues raised.	
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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:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Ecological Impact Assessment Report, Stark Ecology, November 2025
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Georgie Starkie, November 2025
- Habitat Map (BNG Baseline), Stark Ecology
- Site Plan – Proposed, Tea Architects, October 2025
- Elevations, Tea Architects, October 2025

COMMENTS:

The site comprises a grassland field with a section of dense scrub, native species hedgerow and a single apple tree. The site is immediately neighboured by residential properties to the north and south, with grassland fields and a line of trees adjoining at the east, and further agricultural fields in the wider landscape. It is proposed to construct 9 dwellings.

The ecology report details the results of a range of surveys for bats, dormice, reptiles and breeding birds, and also acknowledges that the site falls within Trowbridge & Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy zones. These matters are discussed in further detail below.

Bath and Bradford on Avon Bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

The application site is located within the **grey** and **yellow** zones of the Trowbridge & Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy (TWBMS), associated with the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and therefore has potential to result in significant adverse impact on the special features of the SAC. The application must be considered under the Habitats Regulations.

The grey medium risk zone represents an area where new residential development is likely to result in increased recreational use of important woodland bat sites. In order to conclude the AA favourably, new residential development proposals for 49 dwellings or less within the grey hatched medium recreational risk zone will be expected to provide a financial contribution of £925 per dwelling towards the council's strategic recreational pressure mitigation scheme detailed in section 9.2 of the TWBMS. This is to be secured via section 106 agreement (s106), a section 111 (s111) agreement or unilateral undertaking (UU) (legal fees will apply).

The mitigation is required prior to the commencement of development and must be secured by planning obligations. Where a Section 106 agreement is not in place, mitigation can alternatively be secured under Section 111. Where the applicant elects to use a S111, the strategic mitigation must be secured upon the granting of planning permission by completion of S111 process.

The yellow medium risk zone represents areas where habitat has been shown to be of importance, and in particular takes into consideration the foraging areas and flightlines of horseshoe and Bechstein's bats and is anticipated to be able to accept a degree of development

pressure provided applications are designed in accordance with the principles in the TWBMS. Impacts will arise on individual sites and in-combination with other sites as a result of loss and/degradation of habitat of importance to the qualifying bats. In order to conclude the AA favourably, applications impacting greenfield land and bat habitat (such as the present application) are expected to provide a S106 contribution prior to commencement of £972.03 per dwelling towards habitat mitigation detailed in Section 9.1 of the TWBMS.

As required by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) an Appropriate Assessment must be carried out by the LPA, and in this case, against the TWBMS criteria (see below). Insufficient information has so far been submitted to enable the AA to be completed successfully, which must be completed and the conclusion agreed with Natural England prior to the application being determined. Please see the table below for details of the matters that need to be resolved (issues are highlighted in red).

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT FOR APPLICATIONS FALLING WITHIN THE YELLOW ZONE AND GREY ZONE OF The Trowbridge and Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy

Item	TWBMS criteria	Details provided for Application
1	Did the application seek pre-application advice to establish the extent to which the TWBMS will drive layout and design of the development. Note this is not crucial to a favorable AA.	Pre-application advice has not been sought.
	<u>Greenfield sites in Yellow Zone</u>	
2	Surveys should be completed: • In accordance with Council pre-application advice if provided • In accordance with BCT Good Practice Guidelines and the specifications described in Section 6 of the TWBMS	The ecology report states that the site contains other neutral grassland, hedgerow, scrub and a tree. There are no potential roosting opportunities on-site. The surrounding land is dominated by a mosaic of arable and pasture fields with connected hedgerow and patches of woodland, therefore, it was considered likely that qualifying bat species use the application site to some extent for foraging and commuting. As such, across April-October 2025, the site was subject to a series of passive acoustic monitoring surveys, as well as three transect surveys. The acoustic monitoring surveys recorded a range of species, including Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats, as well as Barbastelle bats, all of which are qualifying species of the associated Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
3	Masterplan to be provided which covers entire allocation or large application	This is a minor application and a masterplan is not required.

4	<u>Outline applications on green field sites in Yellow Zone</u>, Ecological Parameters Plan (para 161) to be provided	This is a full planning application and an EPP is not required.
5	<u>Greenfield Sites in the Yellow Zone</u>. Statutory Biodiversity Metric demonstrating no net loss. The calculation is supported by pre and post development maps. The post development maps align with other plans and drawings.	A Statutory Biodiversity Metric has been provided and predicts a considerable loss of - 67.31% in habitat units. Development in the yellow zone is expected to mitigate for habitat loss <u>on site</u> (see paragraph 146 of the TWBMS). Whilst it is recognised that this is a minor development, this level of loss is not acceptable. It is recommended changes to the layout that seek to deliver no net loss are made.
6	<u>For reserved matters and full applications on green field sites in Yellow Zone</u>, an Ecological Mitigation Plan to be submitted containing (para 162): (i) Scaled drawing to show • Details of replacement roosts. • Core bat habitat (foraging and commuting) to be retained, created and enhanced. • Location/extent and full landscape specifications for tree and shrub planting, wildflower grassland etc. (iv) proposals are in accordance with the standards for habitat mitigation and management as described at section 8.2 and Figure 6 in the TWBMS. (v) Wide swathes of unlit bat habitat with associated buffer zones ensuring landscape permeable to commuting bats. (vi) Retained core bat habitat connects to the wider habitat network.	An Ecological Mitigation Plan (EMP) has not been provided. The retention of the scrub border at the northeast boundary is welcomed, however, the proposals will result in the significant urbanisation of the site, and the retention of the scrub is considered insufficient to demonstrate the site's functionality to bats will not be adversely affected. This is because it is not just the scrub area that was found to be used by bats, with the report starting "<i>The grassland, scrub and hedgerow habitats within the site provide high quality habitat for bats when commuting and foraging through the surrounding landscape</i>". Further, Lesser Horseshoe bats were more frequently recorded in the southwest of the site (away from the scrub border to the east), which will be built over. At present, the habitat retention appears to be inadequate, because: • The current provision does not demonstrate bat foraging and commuting functionality will be maintained. • The new dwellings will introduce light spill onto the site, including the boundary hedgerow to the north, south and west, and scrub border to the east. • A significant proportion of the proposed trees are positioned in close

		proximity to residential dwellings. This is likely to result in future conflict with homeowners, creating a high risk of pressure for pruning or removal. As a consequence, the long-term delivery of any intended ecological and amenity benefits from these trees is uncertain and cannot be relied upon. - Proposed rear elevations of Plots 8 and 9 (facing the scrub) appear to include a considerable amount of glazing, increasing the potential light spill from internal fixtures. - The other plots (excluding Plot 3) are located very close to the hedgerow boundaries; light spill and human disturbance here would increase notably. Overall, the proposed site plan does not sufficiently address this criterion of the TWBMS and the current proposals are considered likely to result in the loss of functionality of habitat potentially used by SAC bats.
7	<u>Applications on green field sites in Yellow Zone.</u> Lighting Impact Assessment, including lux contour plots, in line with Section 8.3 of TWBMS.	It is not known whether any new external lighting will be installed. If new external lighting is proposed, then a lighting plan will be required to demonstrate: - Location, type, number, and specification of all external light sources - A lux contour plan covering internal and external light spill - Demonstration that roost entrances and commuting/foraging corridors will remain unlit (≤ 0.5 lux) The approach to lighting for new development, including lighting survey, should be undertaken in accordance with Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night (Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals, 2023)
8	<u>Reserved Matters and Full applications on green field sites in Yellow Zone</u> CEMP to set out: Location of temporary work areas.	A CEMP will be required by condition.

	• Schedule of works covering removal, enhancement and creation of habitat features in relation to construction works. • Details of compliance arrangements and how staff will interface with Council TWBMS Project Officer. • Management of habitats during the construction phase.	
9	Application to demonstrate measures to ensure core bat habitat will remain relatively undisturbed by the effects of urbanisation.	Not achieved.
10	<u>Reserved Matters and Full application on green field sites in Yellow Zone</u>, LEMP to set out: • Plan showing extent of habitats which the Management Company will be responsible for • Management objectives for each habitat • 1 and 5 year schedules of management activities including replacement /restoration works where damage occurs. • Review mechanism	This is a minor application and a LEMP would not be proportionate to the proposals.
12	The applicant agrees that a financial Strategic Habitat Mitigation Contribution (yellow medium risk bat sensitivity zone) of £972.03/ dwelling or £29,137.50 per hectare will be secured by S106.	For this greenfield residential application within the yellow zone, the cost of mitigation via the Council's strategic TWBMS would be £8,748.27 (£972.03 per new dwelling; in this case, there is a gain of 9 dwellings). The applicant should confirm agreement with this.
<u>Grey hatched recreational pressure zone</u>		
13	New residential development proposals in the grey hatched medium recreational risk zone will be expected to contribute towards the council's strategic recreational pressure mitigation scheme or Deliver sufficient natural recreational focused space/ Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) [depending on the number of	For this residential application within the grey zone, the cost of mitigation via the Council's strategic TWBMS would be £8,325 (£925 per new dwelling; in this case, there is a gain of 9 dwellings). The applicant should confirm agreement with this.

	residential dwellings proposed]. Major developments (≥50 dwellings) must now <u>deliver Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) on site</u>	
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Dormice

The Hazel Dormouse is a European Protected Species afforded protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and as such is a material consideration within the planning consultation process. Sufficient and appropriate mitigation measures to ensure that dormice are not adversely affected as a result of the proposed development must be submitted as part of the proposal.

Dormice nest tubes were installed for surveys in April 2025, and checked monthly through to October 2025. Evidence of nesting was observed in the eastern boundary scrub and, therefore, the species is assumed to be present throughout the site's boundary hedgerows and scrub. **A European Protected Species (EPS) dormice Mitigation Licence will need to be obtained for the lawful construction of this development.**

The western boundary hedgerow will be removed. The remaining hedgerow and scrub, whilst bordering the site on all other sides, will be separated from each plot via fencing, providing some degree of protection from human disturbance, though it is not clear how disturbance from, e.g., light spill, will be minimised. The ecology report states that gaps in the hedgerow and scrub will be planted up. It is also not clear whether this infilling will be sufficient compensation for the loss of the western hedgerow (i.e., no planting plans have been provided). **Dormouse mitigation (i.e., retention and improvement of habitat for dormice) will need to be shown on an enforceable plan, to be submitted prior to determination of the application.**

Breeding birds

Breeding bird surveys were conducted between April-July 2025, including five dawn and one dusk survey, across a transect. The ecology report summarises that six Red- and eight Amber-Listed species were recorded, seven of which were recorded on-site rather than adjacent to it (wood pigeon, greenfinch, wren, whitethroat, dunnock, song thrush, and house sparrow). The latter three species are listed as species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (they are considered a Priority Species) and must be considered within the planning process. Furthermore, in farmland adjacent to the development area, skylark, linnet and yellowhammer were heard, also declining Priority Species.

The house sparrows were observed nesting in boxes and buildings (on adjacent properties) but utilising the site's rough grassland, hedgerow and scrub for foraging and social activity. Also on-site, wood pigeon, wren, dunnock, song thrush and whitethroat were breeding in the hedgerows and scrub habitat. A number of secondary species (not Red- or Amber-listed) were also noted to be breeding on-site.

The applicant should be mindful of the potential for breeding birds to be displaced by the development. The ecology report concludes that loss of foraging habitat for house sparrow ([Red-listed species of conservation concern](#), and a Priority Species) would have a "*major negative effect at the local level*". Considering the comments above (advising layout adjustments to demonstrate no net loss of bat SAC foraging/commuting habitat), layout adjustments should also consider sufficient retention of habitat (and connectivity) for declining breeding birds such as house sparrow.

The scheme should also incorporate enhancements for breeding birds, to be denoted on a plan. The ecology report's recommendations of house sparrow and swift nest boxes are welcomed.

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. **Precautionary mitigation for breeding birds – including consideration for the potential impacts on off-site skylarks – must be included within the CEMP.** This must include sensitive timing of any vegetation removal to avoid the bird nesting season, or supervision by a suitably qualified ecologist.

Reptiles

Native reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), with smooth snakes and sand lizards considered European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The site contains habitat suitable for use by reptiles (rough grassland, scrub and hedgerow bases), and therefore, reptile surveys were undertaken through April-September 2025.

The surveys identified a population of breeding slow worm on-site. As such, and as recommended in the ecology report, **the CEMP should include measures to ensure that reptiles are not harmed during the construction phase** (e.g., sensitive site clearance). The retention of the scrub area will continue to provide suitable reptile habitat. Hibernacula are proposed, but not shown on any plans. **As above, this mitigation/enhancement should be included in a plan to be provided prior to determination.**

Other species

In line with the NPPF and with CP50, applications must 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. Further, gains for biodiversity, relevant to local habitats and wildlife populations, should form part of the proposed development.

Precautionary measures for badgers and hedgehogs should also be outlined within the CEMP. The ecology report also recommends the addition of gaps at the base of boundary fences to permit access/connectivity for hedgehogs (though also benefitting other wildlife, such as reptiles). Ideally, these should be shown on an ecological mitigation plan alongside all other aforementioned features (functional bat habitat, dormouse habitat, new planting, reptile and bird enhancements).

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, map and condition assessments (*Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Ecological Impact Assessment Report, Stark Ecology, November 2025; Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Georgie Starkie, November 2025; Habitat Map (BNG Baseline), Stark Ecology*) stating the baseline and predicted post-development biodiversity units of the site have been submitted.

The pre-development (baseline) situation is summarised below.

On-site pre-development (baseline) biodiversity value	2.3 Habitat units
	0.81 Hedgerow units

	0.00 Watercourse units
Are there any irreplaceable habitats on-site?	No
Has any habitat degradation of occurred?	No

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.

The submitted metric indicates 1.78 habitat units are required to meet the 10% BNG requirement, further to 0.75 units that will be provided on-site BNG. However, as per the TWBMS, development in the yellow zone is expected to mitigate for habitat loss on site, “*to be demonstrated by use of an established metric (preferably the Statutory Biodiversity Metric)*” [Paragraph 146]. Therefore, as advised above, alterations to the plans will be required to ensure that no net loss can be delivered on-site.

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 sites 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 all issues addressed.

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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