

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Jessica Cracknell
Date:	23/02/2026
Application Number:	PL/2026/00463
Proposal:	Erection of stable block with associated works
Site Address:	Willow Tree Farm, Ford Lane, Ford, Salisbury, SP4 6DJ
Case Officer:	Hayley Clark

Recommendations:

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

Further Information Required:

	Issue	Policy/Legislative Compliance	Date information requested & Further information required	Satisfactorily addressed (Document & Date submitted)
1	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021)	23/02/2026 Submission of statutory metric calculation with associated baseline habitat plans and condition assessments (see comments in main text) Surveys to be undertaken within optimal vegetation habitat survey season, typically between April to September.	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 your consultation on the above application. I have reviewed the submitted documents against OS maps, aerial photographs of the site and surrounding area, together with GIS layers of statutory and non-statutory designated sites and existing records of protected species.

The following submitted documentation was reviewed to inform this response:

- Technical Note – Willow Tree Farm. 21 January 2026. Pro Vision. Ref, 9033 Willow Tree Farm;
- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. 21 January 2026. v1;
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. January 2026. Pro Vision. Ecology 9033. Version 01;

- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric -Technical Annex 1: Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology. 23 December 2025;
- Existing Location & Site Plan. Larkham Design Ltd. Drawing Ref. 1037/Ex/01;
- Proposed Plan & Elevations. Larkham Design Ltd. Drawing Ref. 1037/Pr/01;
- Planning Statement. January 2026. Atlas Planning Group;

New Forest Protected Sites

The proposed development site lies within the 13.8km zone of influence for the New Forest internationally protected sites, which comprises the New Forest SPA, New Forest SAC and New Forest Ramsar site. Therefore, the application is screened into appropriate assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) on account of its potential to cause adverse effects on the New Forest protected sites through increased recreational pressure which may occur alone and in-combination with other plans and projects. Many of the special features of the New Forest protected sites afforded protection are vulnerable to adverse effects associated with an increase in recreation as demonstrated in Natural England's supplementary advice issued for the SPA on 19 March 2019 and for the SAC on 18 March 2019.

A test of likely significance has been carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (Wiltshire Council) as required by Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This concluded that given the nature of the development and with no net increase in dwellings, there would be no recreational impact on the New Forest, therefore there is no mechanism for adverse effect. The Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) has concluded that the application is not likely to have significant impacts on the New Forest SPA, New Forest SAC and New Forest Ramsar site and subsequently the application is screened out of Appropriate Assessment.

Habitat Regulations Assessment: River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Hampshire Catchment

This development falls within the catchment of the River Avon SAC and has potential to cause adverse effects alone or in combination with other developments through discharge of phosphorus in wastewater. Appropriate Assessment must be carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (the LPA) to determine the potential significant effects and the suitability of any measures proposed to avoid or mitigate those effects.

A test of likely significance has been carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (Wiltshire Council) as required by Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This concluded that given the scale and nature of the development, with no increase in dwelling and the lack of any increase in water supply, drainage installation within this development, there will be no mechanism for effect on the River Avon SAC. The Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) has concluded that the application is not likely to have significant impacts on the River Avon SAC and subsequently the application is screened out of Appropriate Assessment.

Laverstock and Ford Neighbourhood Plan

Policy 2 of the Laverstock and Ford Communities Neighbourhood Plan 2021 to 2036 (October 2022) seeks to provide an overall improvement to wild life habitats, whereby any development shall replace any loss in hedgerows and woodland with at least the equivalent area planted with native species in an equivalent location.

Protected Species

Although the surveys were undertaken outside of the optimal survey season, they provide a broad indication of the habitats present on site and their potential to support protected species. The site is assessed to offering limited suitability for foraging and commuting bats, due to a lack of boundary vegetation. The ash tree identified within the site was assessed as offering negligible potential for roosting bats. The Erection of stable block will not require the removal of vegetation considered to be functionally important for bat foraging or commuting. No new lighting has been proposed as part of the development and in the absence of such, it is very likely that the functionality of habitats and their availability to bats will not be adversely affected.

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. 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.

All British birds, their nests and eggs are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 while birds are nesting, building nests and sitting on eggs. 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. Damage to extensive areas that could contain nests/breeding birds should be undertaken outside the breeding season. This season is usually taken to be the period between 1st March and 31st August but some species are known to breed outside these limits.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

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 (21 January 2026. v1) confirming the baseline and predicted post-development biodiversity units of the site has been submitted (including the condition assessment sheets and maps).

Priority habitat in the form of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh is identified as comprising the whole of the application site. In accordance with Core Policy 50, development proposals must demonstrate how features of nature conservation value are protected as part of the design rationale. There is a clear expectation that such features are retained, appropriately buffered and managed favourably to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and long-term functionality. Where retention is not possible, any loss or damage must be robustly justified, with impacts mitigated as far as possible and appropriate compensatory measures secured to ensure no net loss of biodiversity.

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

- The submitted Statutory Biodiversity Metric and accompanying Technical Note (Willow Tree Farm) identify the baseline habitat as 'Poor Condition Modified Grassland', based on a survey undertaken on 23rd December 2025. This survey falls outside the optimal vegetation survey season (typically April to September), when habitat classification and condition assessments can be undertaken reliably. Given that the site is identified as priority habitat, the baseline classification must be robust and supported by appropriate seasonal survey data.

The baseline habitat surveys must be reviewed and updated during the optimal survey season to establish an accurate baseline for the purposes of the Biodiversity Net Gain assessment. Alternatively, suitable and robust justification, supported by clear evidence, must be provided to demonstrate that the habitat classification is accurate despite being undertaken outside the optimal survey period. The current information must therefore be reassessed and submitted for review by the ecology team prior to determination of the application.

Please see Wiltshire Council website for further information on this issue: [Writing ecological surveys to inform the planning - Wiltshire Council](#)

Core Policy 50

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires all development to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity and to seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. The NPPF also encourages applications to deliver measurable net gains (para 186 d).

While it is not expected that this development will result in significant loss of habitat, both CP50 and NPPF requires the inclusion of biodiversity enhancements, such as bird and bat boxes. Ecological enhancements are provided through the installation of swallow nest cups, within the Technical Note – Willow Tree Farm. The location of ecological/biodiversity enhancements must be included in the site plan drawings (Appendix C: Ecological Enhancements. Technical Note – Willow Tree Farm. 21 January 2026. Pro Vision. Ref, 9033 Willow Tree Farm) and will become an enforceable part of the planning permission. Bird/bat boxes will continue to be available for bats/birds for the lifetime of the development.

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.

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:

- TBC

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

2. Lighting

No external light fixture or fitting will be installed within the application site unless details of existing and proposed new lighting have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. The submitted details will demonstrate how the proposed lighting will impact on bat habitat compared to the existing situation.

The plans will be in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Notes on the Avoidance of Obtrusive Light (GN 01/2021) and Guidance note GN08/23 "Bats and artificial lighting at night", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

REASON: To avoid illumination of habitat used by bats.

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

Ecologist	Date