

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Abi Gazzard
Date:	17/09/2025, 12/01/2026, 04/03/2026
Application number:	PL/2025/06704
Proposal:	Proposed Creation of Private Lake & Associated Landscaping
Site address:	Land North of Boundary Farm, Berryfield Lane, Melksham, SN12 6EF
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

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:

- Planning, Design and Access Statement, A Harlow & Son
- Proposed Block Plan, A Harlow & Son, July 2025
- Revised Block Plan, A Harlow & Son, November 2025
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Arbtech, July 2025
- Biodiversity Net Gain Report, Arbtech, August 2025 February 2026
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Laurence Wills, August 2025 February 2026

The site comprises part of an agricultural field where it is proposed to add a lake. It is surrounding by further fields bordered by hedges and trees, with farm buildings to the south.

Revised site plans have been submitted. Whilst there is no ecology objection to these revisions in principle, the BNG metric will need to be re-confirmed. Please can the applicant provide updated BNG information that reflects the revised scheme?

Thank you for the submission of updated BNG documents. My third comments are shown in red.

COMMENTS:

Protected species and habitats

The ecology report confirms that the site is dominated by modified grassland currently used as pastoral land for cattle, though previously was arable land. It is considered to be of low ecological value and unsuitable for use by, e.g., reptiles and great crested newts, given the short sward height, patchy bare ground and lack of refuge. There are no buildings or trees present with features suitable for use by roosting bats, but the grassland may be of some value to commuting or foraging bats, with records of Greater Horseshoe, Whiskered, Soprano Pipistrelle, Noctule and

Serotine bats within 370m. In any case, no lighting is proposed, and the habitat changes will improve foraging opportunities for species such as bats.

Should any lighting be considered in the future, the applicant should note that an increase in artificial lux levels can deter bats which could result in roost abandonment and/or the severance of key foraging areas. As such, any new lighting at the site 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.

The surrounding habitats of hedgerow, deciduous woodland (190m northeast) and Bristol Avon River County Wildlife Site (480m west), provide good opportunities for wildlife, and there are records of badger, otter and water vole near the river. In line with NPPF and with CP50, enhancements for biodiversity, relevant to local habitats and wildlife populations, should form part of the proposed development. **As such, ecological enhancements, whether achieved via BNG or otherwise, should be secured via a condition.** The ecology report's recommendation of a bird box is welcomed.

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 (Biodiversity Net Gain Report, Arbtech, August 2025; Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Laurence Wills, August 2025) confirming the baseline and predicted post-development biodiversity units of Site has been submitted (including the condition assessment sheet and map).~~

~~Information in the completed on-site baseline habitat tabs is accepted as accurate based on the information submitted. The pre-development (baseline) situation is summarised below.~~

On-site pre-development (baseline) biodiversity value	1.04 Habitat units
	0.00 Hedgerow units
	0.00 Watercourse units
Are there any <u>irreplaceable</u> habitats on-site?	No
Has any habitat <u>degradation</u> of occurred?	No (the grassland appears to have been used as pastoral land since at least 2020)

~~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 proposed habitat creation and habitat enhancements are welcomed and will provide notable biodiversity gains equating to a >300% increase in habitat units. Since the required delivery of biodiversity units is relatively low (and not considered significant), a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan as well as BNG monitoring contribution is not necessary in this case.~~

Revised site plans have been submitted. Whilst there is no ecology objection to these revisions in principle, the BNG metric will need to be re-confirmed. Please can the applicant provide updated BNG information that reflects the revised scheme?

An updated BNG metric and report have been provided. Information in the completed on-site baseline habitat tabs is accepted as accurate based on the information submitted. The pre-development (baseline) situation is summarised below.

On-site pre-development (baseline) biodiversity value	0.85 Habitat units
	0.00 Hedgerow units
	0.00 Watercourse units
Are there any <u>irreplaceable</u> habitats on-site?	No
Has any habitat <u>degradation</u> of occurred?	No (the grassland appears to have been used as pastoral land since at least 2020)

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 proposed habitat creation and habitat enhancements are welcomed and will provide notable biodiversity gains equating to a ~300% increase in habitat units. Since the required delivery of biodiversity units is relatively low (0.09 increase) and not considered significant, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan as well as BNG monitoring contribution is not necessary in this case.

CONDITIONS:

1. Enhancements for Biodiversity

Prior to the commencement of any works, including vegetation removal and demolition, details of the number, design and locations of ecological enhancements – such as bat roosts and nesting opportunities for birds – 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.

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

Ecologist Abi Gazzard	Date 04/03/2026
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