

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Abi Gazzard
Date:	19/03/2026
Application number:	PL/2026/00795
Proposal:	Installation of a solar farm with ancillary structures supporting the energy demand of the adjacent approved Chicklade (EV) service station.
Site address:	Land north of A303, and northwest of approved EV hub, Chicklade, SP3 5ST
Case officer:	Sarah Hill

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)
	Chilmark Quarries Special Area for Conservation	Habitat Regulations, CP50	19/03/2026 -Lighting details	

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:

- Planning, Design and Access Statement, Enviromena, January 2026
- Site Location Plan, Environmena, January 2026
- Landscape Framework Plan, Ich design, January 2026
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Biodiversity Metric Assessment, EcoLogic, January 2026
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Rebeka Pajo-Papai, January 2025
- Condition assessment sheets

The site comprises an arable field where it is proposed to install a solar farm to support the adjacent service station with electric vehicle charging facilities (PL/2022/06298).

COMMENTS:

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.

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 (i.e., not residential, nor any other type that would significantly increase nutrient burden), there would be no overall mechanism for adverse effect. The HRA has concluded that the application is not likely to have significant impacts on the SAC and subsequently the application is screened out of Appropriate Assessment.

Chilmark Quarries Special Area for Conservation (SAC)

The site lies within three roost parcel buffers for Barbastelle bats associated with the Chilmark Quarries Bats SAC. It therefore has the potential to result in significant adverse impact on the special features of the SAC. Appropriate Assessment (AA) under Section 63 of the Habitats Regulations 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.

To undertake the AA, sufficient information regarding potential impacts and mitigation is required. The Design and Access Statement indicates that the overall site will not be lit, but a light “might” be installed on the transformer station, which will be sited close to the proposed boundary hedgerow. Clarification is needed regarding the location, type, number, and specification of all external lighting and light sources, and whether the transformer station will be the only location of new lighting. Additionally, measures of approximate buffer widths between the development area and boundary vegetation would be helpful, if possible, please.

Breeding birds

The cropland, hedgerow and field margins may be suitable for use by breeding birds, including declining Red- or Amber-listed birds and Priority Species such as skylark and yellowhammer. There are one skylark and two barn owl records within the vicinity (<120m east). 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, and some species such as barn owl are afforded additional protection (e.g., under schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981).

The ecology report does not provide a clear assessment of the site’s suitability for use by breeding birds (with particular reference to ground-nesting birds). In the absence of any survey data, though considering the provision of habitat improvements to the north of the solar array, a mitigation and enhancement plan for breeding birds must be included within a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan, to be secured through a planning condition.

Other protected species

The field margins and hedgerows offer habitat potentially suitable for use by amphibians and reptiles. However, no ponds are mapped within 1km, and works impacting the field margins and hedgerow will be relatively minimal. No signs of badgers were observed, though it is possible that

badgers could use the site and wider area. In line with the recommendations of the ecology report, precautionary mitigation should be implemented to reduce the risk posed to such species – in addition to bats and nesting birds – during the construction phase. A Construction Environmental Management Plan should be secured via a condition.

The proposed habitat gains to the north of the development area include other neutral grassland, hedgerows with trees, and an orchard. Provided that the Landscape officer is satisfied with these proposals, the proposed habitat creation and maps should be included within a compliance condition.

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.

It is noted that the proposed access for this site bisects the previous site plan for PL/2022/06298. However, the access will not bisect any area of BNG habitat creation/enhancement associated with that application, and it is interpreted that the current plan does not conflict with the BNG secured for the adjacent site.

A completed statutory metric calculation, maps and condition assessment sheets (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Biodiversity Metric Assessment, EcoLogic, January 2026; Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Rebeka Pajo-Papai, January 2025) stating the baseline and predicted post-development biodiversity units of the site have been submitted. The proposed solar array has been entered as “modified grassland” rather than an artificial surface/habitat, though this appears to align with advice issued by Natural England (e.g. [here](#)). The pre-development baseline is summarised below:

On-site pre-development (baseline) biodiversity value	25.88 Habitat units
	5.92 Hedgerow units
	0.00 Watercourse units
Are there any irreplaceable habitats on-site?	No
Has any habitat degradation of occurred?	No

The proposed BNG is considered ‘significant’ due to:

- (i) the scale and nature of the application (major);
- (ii) units required (a net gain of 2.59 to deliver 28.47 units overall), and
- (iii) the BNG proposed (including medium and high distinctiveness habitats such as traditional orchards, other neutral grassland, woodland and hedgerows).

A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be required, and should be secured via condition.

In order for the council to fulfil its BNG monitoring responsibilities, a Biodiversity Net Gain On-site 30-year Monitoring Fee must be paid prior to commencement of development and secured via S106. In the absence of a S106, the fee can be paid by a section 111 agreement. Where the applicant elects to use the S111 process, the fee must be paid and S111 signed by both the applicant and the council on the granting of planning permission. The BNG monitoring contribution fee for major applications is £11,165.00 to monitor on-site BNG obligations for said 30-year period.

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. 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:

1. Compliance with submitted documents

The development will be carried out in strict accordance with the following documents:

- Landscape Framework Plan, Ich design, January 2026
- Section 6 (recommendations) and Appendix 4 (BNG maps) of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Biodiversity Metric Assessment, EcoLogic, January 2026

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

2. Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP)

Prior to the start of construction, a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The LEMP will include long term objectives and targets, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for each ecological feature (including nesting birds) within the development, together with a mechanism for monitoring success of the management prescriptions, incorporating review and necessary adaptive management in order to attain targets. The LEMP shall be implemented in full and for the lifetime of the development in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure the long-term management of landscape and ecological features retained and created by the development, for the benefit of visual amenity and biodiversity for the lifetime of the scheme.

3. Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

Prior to the commencement of works, including demolition, ground works/excavation, site clearance, vegetation clearance and boundary treatment works, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval in writing. The Plan shall provide details of the avoidance, mitigation and protective measures to be implemented before and during the construction phase, including but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- i) Identification of ecological protection areas/buffer zones and tree root protection areas and details of physical means of protection, e.g. exclusion fencing.
- ii) Working method statements for protected/priority species, including nesting birds, bats, and herpetofauna.
- iii) Work schedules for activities with specific timing requirements in order to avoid/reduce potential harm to ecological receptors; including details of when a licensed ecologist and/or ecological clerk of works (ECoW) shall be present on site.
- iv) Key personnel, responsibilities and contact details (including Site Manager and ecologist/ECoW).

Development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved CEMP.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection and mitigation for ecological receptors prior to and during construction, and that works are undertaken in line with current best practice and industry standards and are supervised by a suitably licensed and competent professional ecological consultant where applicable.

4. Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP)

No development shall commence on site until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP), prepared in accordance with the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan and including:

- i) a non-technical summary;
- ii) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
- iii) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan and schedule for implementation;
- iv) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
- v) the monitoring methodology and specification of a Monitoring Pack (to include but not exclusively up to date Management Actions Logs, Habitat Condition Assessment Reports, metric calculation; and corresponding post intervention Habitat Map) which shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority in years 2 (two) 5 (five) 10 (ten) 15 (fifteen) 20 (twenty) and 30 (thirty) of the Maintenance Period,

has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The created and/or enhanced habitat shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the statutory HMMP at all times thereafter.

REASON: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

5. Solar farm decommissioning scheme

Not later than 12 months before planned decommissioning of the solar farm a scheme for decommissioning and the restoration of the site must be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing. The scheme will be based on update ecological surveys and must make provision for the removal of the solar arrays and the associated above ground structures, equipment and foundations, to a depth of at least one metre below finished ground level. The scheme must include the management and timing of any works; a traffic management plan; an environmental management plan including measures to protect wildlife.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection and mitigation for ecological receptors during the decommissioning phase and to ensure compliance with legislation in respect of protected habitats and species, planning policy and best practice.

Further conditions may also be necessary, depending on the response to the above comments.

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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