

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Abi Gazzard
Date:	14/04/2026
Application number:	PL/2026/01034
Proposal:	Change of use of units on first floor of Block D from Use Class Sui Generis to Use Class C3 (4 residential dwellings)
Site address:	Avonside Enterprise Park, New Broughton Road, Melksham, SN12 8AD
Case officer:	James Taylor

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:

- Proposed Site Plan, BGY, July 2025
- Existing Site Plan, BGY, July 2025
- Blocks A-G, Proposed First Floor Plan, BGY, July 2025
- Ecological Impact Assessment Report, Wildwood Ecology, September 2025
- Cover letter/planning statement, Turley, March 2026

The site comprises the first and second floors of a vacant commercial building (Block D) within an industrial estate, proposed for redevelopment into four dwellings. The conversion of the ground floor is subject to a separate application for permitted development. There is also an active full application for external alterations and landscaping (PL/2026/01035) relating to the redevelopment of the wider site.

COMMENTS:

Protected species and habitats

Habitats

The site does not fall within any protected sites or consultation zones. It is, however, approximately 35m northwest of the Bristol Avon/River Avon, which comprises a Priority Habitat and County Wildlife Site. This river ultimately connects to the extent of the River Avon that is statutorily designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The development area is separated from the river by continuous buildings to the east and south, as well as a car parking area and brick wall. Nonetheless, as recommended by the ecology report, precautionary measures during construction will be appropriate to ensure this habitat is

not adversely affected. A Construction Method Statement should be secured via condition, and this (or similar) will also likely be required for other relevant proposals in the wider site.

There are no important habitats on-site that will be lost as part of the current proposal.

Bats

Block D was found to have negligible suitability for use by roosting bats, with no suitable features noted. As such, no further bat surveys are required.

The site is in an urban location and already subject to light spill. The site comprises hardstanding in its entirety and, therefore, is unlikely to be of any significant value to foraging bats. However, as it is adjacent to a river corridor, bats likely use the connecting habitats for foraging and commuting. Species recorded using this corridor (during emergence surveys of building/s in the wider site) include pipistrelles, brown long-eared bats, noctules, but also rarer species (and Annex II species) such as greater and lesser horseshoes. It will therefore be appropriate to ensure any new lighting – of the wider site – is wildlife-sensitive. As this application does not concern the sections of the site abutting the river, a lighting condition is not required.

Other

Although no evidence of otter, water vole, or beaver was identified on-site, these species may be using the nearby River Avon. Precautionary measures, to ensure the risk posed to them remains minimal, should be outlined in the aforementioned CMS.

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.

Biodiversity enhancements

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 193d). It is understood that the majority of works will be internal with the redline boundary comprising the existing building only, though new openings will be required (to accommodate new windows). If possible, the installation of swift bricks or bat bricks would be welcomed. It is expected that the wider development will also need to deliver gains for biodiversity (see consultation response to PL/2026/01035).

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). Based on the information available the biodiversity gain planning condition is not considered to apply to this application as the development meets the following criteria and is therefore below the de minimis threshold, meaning the development:

- o does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and

- o impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

Note to case officer: you should be satisfied that the proposals meet the above criteria and act accordingly. Further information will be required from the applicant prior to determination in the event the application is considered to be subject to mandatory biodiversity net gain.

CONDITIONS:

1. Construction Method Statement

No development shall commence on site until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Construction Method Statement shall include measures for the protection of the natural environment, stating how adverse impacts upon the River Avon and protected species will be prevented during construction works. The development shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the approved construction method statement.

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.

2. Biodiversity Enhancements

Prior to the commencement of any works, details of the number, design and locations of ecological enhancements – such as nest boxes – 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.

Note to case officer: It is recognised that it might not be possible to deliver biodiversity enhancements within the redline boundary. As such, this condition may not be appropriate in this case, and should be discussed with the applicant.

Informative – Artificial Lighting

The habitat within 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. Artificial light at night can have a substantial adverse effect on biodiversity. 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 GN08-18 "Bats and artificial lighting in the UK", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

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

Ecologist Abi Gazzard	Date 14/04/2026
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