

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Abi Gazzard
Date:	20/04/2026
Application number:	PL/2025/09355
Proposal:	Changes after approval for Barn 1 (residential conversion to units 1-5), Barn 2 (residential conversion to unit 6). Proposed boundary change to external areas for units 1-6. Proposed roof alteration to units 1-5 to include solar panels. Proposed brickwork finish to unit 6 to match units 1-5. Proposed bin store area and sheds added for units 1-6.
Site address:	Pickers Palmers Farm, Capps Lane, Heywood, Westbury, BA13 4NE
Case officer:	Steven Sims

Recommendations:

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

The applicant is advised that they should consult with Natural England, and that the conversion to dwellings (under prior approval) may need to be subject to an application under Regulation 77 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). This is with regard to the Bath & Bradford-on-Avon Bat SAC, and the Trowbridge & Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy.

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 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, Herdwick Ecology, March 2026
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Ceri Griffiths, March 2026
- Condition assessment sheets
- Proposed Block/Roof Plan Units 1-6, Vardent Developments Ltd, November 2025, Revision P4
- Proposed Elevations and Site Section Units 1-6, Vardent Developments Ltd, November 2025

The site comprises two barn buildings, hardstanding and minimal area of modified grassland, where prior approval for the conversion to dwellings has been granted (PL/2023/06122; PL/2025/06077). The current application (full application) concerns roof alterations, outbuildings (sheds and bin storage), brickwork finishes and boundary changes. It is understood that 6 dwellings are proposed within Barns 1 and 2, as approved.

COMMENTS:

Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area (SPA) 6.4km buffer

This application lies within the 6.4km zone of influence of the Salisbury Plain SPA and in light of the HRA for the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the HRA for the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan it is screened into Appropriate Assessment due to the potential impact of recreational pressure on stone curlew in combination with other plans and projects.

A strategic Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been prepared pertaining to development within the 6.4km zone of influence that could result in a likely significant effect on the SPA as a result of an increase in recreational / visitor pressure. The AA reached a conclusion of no adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA or its qualifying features provided that the council's mitigation strategy continues to be implemented. Annual stone curlew monitoring and protection measures continue to be secured by the Council.

In January 2026 Natural England (NE) confirmed that the 2026 strategic AA for Salisbury Plain SPA continues to be supported by NE.

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

The application site is located within the yellow and grey zones of the Trowbridge & Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy (TWBMS), and is close to the boundary of a Bechstein's bat core roost buffer, and therefore has potential to result in significant adverse impact on the special features of the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The application must therefore be considered under the Habitats Regulations.

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 this case, no works are proposed to a greenfield site, no new lighting or impacts on core bat habitat is anticipated, and there are no roosting opportunities within the barns. Therefore, no strategic habitat mitigation contribution is required, and the yellow zone is not considered further.

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. 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. However, this application does not concern the conversion of the barns into dwellings (which have been permitted under prior approval) and thus the above contribution does not apply.

The applicant is advised that they should consult with Natural England, and that the conversion to dwellings (under prior approval) may need to be subject to an application under Regulation 77 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). The permitted development should not lawfully commence until the local planning authority, along with the appropriate nature conservation body (Natural England), has made Appropriate Assessment of the implications on the designated sites (bat SAC).

With regard to the present application, a test of likely significance (screening assessment) has been carried out by Wiltshire Council as required under Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). No loss of green habitat is proposed, with the works to primarily impact areas of hardstanding and result in the creation of vegetated gardens. Further, no new dwellings are proposed as part of this application. As such, the proposal – which is for new gardens and external alterations – is not considered likely to

adversely affect roosting bats, or foraging or commuting habitat, and the principles of the TWBMS are not considered further. This application is screened out of Appropriate Assessment with respect to the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bat SAC.

Protected species

The preliminary ecological appraisal notes that the site offers limited opportunities for badgers, nesting birds, great crested newts and reptiles, given that it largely comprises hardstanding. The bat roosting potential of the barns is reported as “negligible” owing to their open constructions, corrugated metal roof and lack of any potential roosting features. However, these taxa could be present in the wider landscape, as the site is surrounded by grassland fields with trees and hedgerows, a large lake 60m southeast and pond 120m northeast. As such, the precautionary mitigation detailed in the ecology report must be adhered to, and **secured via condition**.

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. Details of enhancements should be shown on a biodiversity enhancement plan and implemented as approved, **to be secured via a condition**. The report’s recommendations of habitat piles and integral bat boxes are welcomed.

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). 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 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, Herdwick Ecology, March 2026; Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Ceri Griffiths, March 2026*) stating the baseline and predicted post-development biodiversity units of the site have been submitted.

The baseline relies on a habitat survey undertaken by Herdwick Ecology in March 2025. As per aerial imagery, in 2022, the site previously contained green habitat surrounding the barns, likely comprising ruderal vegetation and grassland. It is assumed that any site clearance had been undertaken in association with the prior approval works, and prior approval development is typically outside the scope of mandatory BNG (as it is not a grant of planning permission). Nonetheless, the baseline metric has incorporated an area of grassland that has been removed to facilitate site access in recent years, and it is assessed as being in a condition comparable to that of the remaining grassland. I accept this approach.

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

On-site pre-development (baseline) biodiversity value	0.18 Habitat units
	0.00 Hedgerow units
	0.00 Watercourse units
Are there any irreplaceable habitats on-site?	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 ecology report and metric show that the creation of vegetated garden(s) on-site will result in a gain of 51.98%, meeting the trading rules.

CONDITIONS:

1. Compliance with submitted documents

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

- Section 6 'Avoidance, Mitigation and Enhancement Measures' of the 'Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, Herdwick Ecology, March 2026'

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

2. 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 (e.g. bat and bird 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.

Informative – Artificial Lighting

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. 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 20/04/2026
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