

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Abi Gazzard
Date:	07/05/2026
Application number:	PL/2026/01607
Proposal:	Change of use of Eastleigh Court from offices to short-stay accommodation; repair, restoration and enhancement of Eastleigh Court including demolition of existing single storey extension and construction of replacement single storey extension; exterior alterations and repairs; roof repairs; installation of new dormers and replacement rooflights; change of use of the former Eastleigh Court Stables from a dwelling to short-stay accommodation; erection of ancillary building for use as an event space and pool house; new swimming pool, demolition of an outbuilding; landscaping; vehicle parking, new electricity substation; installation of new automatic gates to north and south entrances and associated works.
Site address:	Eastleigh Court, Bishopstrow, Warminster, BA12 9HW
Case officer:	Julie Mitchell

Recommendations:

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

Further Information Required:

	Issue	Policy/Legislative Compliance	Date information requested & Further information required	Satisfactorily addressed (Document & Date)
1	Phosphorus neutrality	Habitat Regs, Wiltshire CP50	07/05/2026 -Evidence supporting proposed average occupancy rate	
2	Protected species – bats	Habitat Regs, Wiltshire CP50	07/05/2026 -Results of further survey of trees with potential bat roosting features -Clarification of bat roosting potential of stables, and/or whether any physical works are proposed/have been undertaken -Inclusion of bat access tiles in elevation plans	

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:

- Design and Access Statement, studioshaw, March 2026
- Existing Site Plan, studioshaw, February 2026
- Proposed Site Plan, studioshaw, February 2026
- Proposed Court & Pavilion Elevations, studioshaw, February 2026
- Statement of Community Involvement, Kindred Living Project
- Landscape plan, Olley & Saunders Garden Design, February 2026
- Nutrient Statement, Holbury Consultancy Service, February 2026
- Natural England Nutrient Neutrality budget calculator for the River Avon SAC
- Ecological Impact Assessment, Ecology By Design, February 2026
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Olivia Walton, January 2026
- Arboricultural Method Statement & Tree Protection Plan, NB Tree Management, February 2026

The site comprises a large, detached house, stables and grounds (~5 ha) proposed for change of use from offices to accommodation for up to 56 people, with the possibility of hosting celebrations with additional day guests. The proposal also includes refurbishments and additions, such as the replacement of a single-storey extension, erection of a pavilion and a new substation. In recent years, various applications for the demolition and replacement of single-storey extensions have been approved (e.g., PL/2023/08458 and PL/2023/08405) but not implemented.

The grounds include modified grassland (maintained as a short sward), three woodland parcels, mixed scrub, hedgerows and the building(s). The site is connected to agricultural fields to the west and south, woodland to the west and north, and residential dwellings to the east.

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.

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 (AA) 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.

The submitted nutrient calculation calculated a net negative total phosphorus burden of -0.43 kg TP/year. This is because 0.37 ha of the 'residential urban' land use type changes post-development to 0.16 ha 'greenspace' (grassland managed for BNG), 0.09 ha 'water' (a proposed wildlife pond at the southwest corner of the site), and 0.07 ha of additional 'shrub'. These land use types are in line with the definitions provided by Natural England, which state that gardens (such as the existing lawn areas) should be categorised as 'residential urban land', and that 'greenspace' includes semi-natural outdoor spaces provided for recreational use. These figures also align with the figures used in the BNG metric.

However, insufficient justification has been provided for the occupancy figure of 15.34. The nutrient statement notes that "*bookings are expected to fall in line with school holidays*", comprising 91 days per year, and, as a buffer, rounded up to 100 days (therefore, assuming 100% occupancy on school holidays by 56 people, the average daily occupancy figure is 15.34). However, it is unclear why the school holidays are used to guide the occupancy figure. No further information has been provided regarding the availability of the site for use as accommodation, but, presumably, this will be year-round and not restricted to school holidays, particularly given that the statement of community involvement notes "*bookings would be taken regularly*" and that the site would be open up to six days a week. The nutrient budget also excludes day visitors which, as per the design and access statement, could comprise a further 78 guests. No evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that such visitors would be staying within the catchment already (and thus excluded from nutrient considerations). **As such, please could the applicant expand on the evidence provided, to support/inform the proposed average occupancy rate?**

The calculation must be approved by the council to enable the AA to be undertaken, which must be completed, and the conclusion agreed with Natural England prior to the application being determined. Guidance on completing the phosphorus budget is available on our website ([Phosphorus and nitrogen mitigation - Wiltshire Council](#)).

Protected and notable wildlife

Bats

In 2022, ecology surveys identified the main dwelling as a bat roost due to the presence of droppings in the loft void. In 2023, emergence surveys confirmed the presence of roosting brown long-eared, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, serotine and whiskered bats. Any previous survey results of the stables are not mentioned. An update preliminary bat roost assessment was undertaken in February 2025, and two update emergence surveys undertaken in September 2024 and June 2025. Comments for each structure are shown below.

Main building

The update emergence surveys recorded day roosts used by brown long-eared, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and serotine bats. Under the Conservation of Species and Habitat Regulations 2017, it is an offence to harm or disturb bats or damage or destroy their roosts. Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation. The applicant is advised that a mitigation licence will be required before any work is undertaken to implement this planning permission.

It is understood that although works to the roof are proposed, the loft voids will ultimately be retained and can function as bat roosts post-development. The bat survey report recommends the addition of at least four bat boxes, as well as measures such as presence of an ecologist during works that will impact the roosts. It is noted that bat access tiles are no longer proposed, yet were approved under previous plans (PL/2023/08405 and PL/2023/08458). **The elevation plans should be revised to include these bat access tiles.** Further, a plan showing the locations and specifications of the proposed bat boxes would be welcomed, or this could be secured via a biodiversity enhancements condition.

NB. This building was assessed as having “low” hibernation potential. Whilst it does possess a basement, it is inaccessible to bats.

Garage

This building has low suitability for use by roosting bats, possessing only one potential roosting features. No bats have been recorded emerging from it.

Stables

The ecology report states “*Although Eastleigh Court Stables lies within the site’s redline boundary, the associated buildings have not been re-inspected, as all ecology-related matters (including bats) have already been addressed through separate planning applications*”. It is not clear which planning applications the report is making reference to, as recent applications have excluded the stables from the redline boundary (e.g., PL/2023/08458 and PL/2023/08405). **If impacts to the stables are proposed with this application, clarification of the bat roost status/potential of the stables is required, as well as an assessment of the impacts upon bats.**

Trees

Eight of the trees proposed for removal were noted to have potential roosting features, and the report states that further assessment is required. It is unclear whether further assessment (e.g., aerial inspection) has been undertaken – **clarification of the roost status within these trees is required.**

Bats are European Protected Species afforded stringent protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and as such are a material consideration within the planning consultation process. Sufficient and appropriate mitigation measures to ensure that bats are not adversely affected as a result of the proposed development must be submitted as part of the proposal. **Therefore, further information regarding the bat roosting suitability of the stables and trees (and potential impacts) is required prior to determination of the application. Further, please can the plans be amended to show bat access tiles (in line with what was previously approved)?**

Other species

The woodland may be suitable for use by species such as nesting birds, badgers, amphibians and reptiles. However, limited works are proposed to the wooded areas. The grassland across the site is actively managed as short and likely to be of little value to such species. Further, the nearest waterbody that could support great crested newts is located 200m to the south and returned negative eDNA results in 2017 and 2019. As such, considering the lack of impacts on relevant habitats, the risk posed to these taxa can be suitably managed through a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), to be secured via condition.

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.

Any new lighting should be wildlife-sensitive and avoid directly illuminating bat roost features and other key habitats (e.g., the hedgerow, woodland and proposed pond). A lighting condition is recommended.

In line with NPPF and with CP50, gains 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 report's recommendations of bird boxes and additional bat boxes are welcomed.

Habitats

The woodland in the north and east is considered to comprise Priority Habitat as per the ecology report's assessment. The native hedgerow may also provide an example of Priority Habitat. The NPPF and CP50 encourage the retention and conservation of such habitats.

Whilst 0.03 km of native species hedgerow will be lost, the BNG metric proposes the addition of 0.75 km of native hedgerow. Further, it is understood that no woodland is proposed for removal. Protective measures for these habitats, and other key habitats such as individual trees, should be detailed within the CEMP. The CEMP should also consider precautionary measures with regard to habitats in the wider landscape (e.g., there is a patch of woodland immediately to the west, and a stream connecting to the River Wylfe ~300m east).

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, condition assessments and map (*Ecological Impact Assessment, Ecology By Design, February 2026; Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Olivia Walton, January 2026*) stating the baseline and predicted post-development biodiversity units of the site have been submitted.

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

On-site pre-development (baseline) biodiversity value	95.95 Habitat units
	0.28 Hedgerow units
	0.00 Watercourse units
Are there any irreplaceable habitats on-site?	No
Has any habitat degradation occurred?	No

Although this application type is 'major' and a large quantity of BNG units is required (i.e., 9.59 habitat units), the proposed BNG is not considered 'significant' in this case, and a monitoring contribution will not be necessary. This is because the only proposed habitat of high distinctiveness is the pond (and this is not technically needed to achieve the required 10% gain).

In any case, the proposed habitat creation and enhancements are welcomed and will provide notable biodiversity gains equating to a ~20% increase in habitat units, and >100% increase in hedgerow units. All habitat management details should be included within a Landscape Ecological Management Plan, to be secured via condition.

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 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.

CONDITIONS: wording to be provided once all issues addressed, but recommended conditions are likely to include (i) compliance with ecology documents, (ii) CEMP, (iii) LEMP, (iv) Hampshire Avon phosphorus mitigation and water efficiency (iv) lighting, (v) biodiversity enhancement.

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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