

## Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

### ECOLOGY

|                            |                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Officer name:</b>       | Abi Gazzard                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Date:</b>               | 01/06/2026                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Application number:</b> | PL/2026/02443                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Proposal:</b>           | Erection of 47 dwellings with associated access, internal roads, parking, public open space, landscaping, drainage and associated infrastructure. |
| <b>Site address:</b>       | Land at White Street, West Lavington, Wiltshire SN10 4HR                                                                                          |
| <b>Case officer:</b>       | Helena Carney                                                                                                                                     |

### Recommendations:

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | No Comment                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Support                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | No objection                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Condition (no objection subject to conditions)                                                                                                                                                |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Objection - further information required                                                                                                                                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Objection in principle                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>HRA completed.</b> Appropriate Assessment with a positive conclusion has been sent to Natural England must agree the conclusion (within 21 days) prior to the application being permitted. |

### Further Information Required:

|     | Issue    | Policy/Legislative Compliance | Date information requested & Further information required                                                                                                                                       | Satisfactorily addressed (Document & Date) |
|-----|----------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| (a) | GCN      | Habs Regs, CP50               | <b>01/06/2026</b><br>-Great crested newt survey results and mitigation plan OR signed and countersigned Impact Assessment Conservation Payment Certificate (IACPC) for District Level Licencing |                                            |
| (b) | Reptiles | CP50                          | <b>01/06/2026</b><br>-Please include the reptile enhancements on the 'Ecology Features' plan                                                                                                    |                                            |

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 Statement, Planning Sphere, April 2026
- Design and Access Statement, CG Fry & Son Builders, March 2026
- Site Layout – Ecology Features, CG Fry & Son Builders, December 2025
- Site Layout, CG Fry & Son Builders, December 2025
- External Lighting Strategy, The Lighting Bee, March 2026, P02

- Lighting specifications (GL “Outdoor & Security Lighting”)
- Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA), Andrew McCarthy Ecology, March 2026
- BNG Supporting Technical Report, Andrew McCarthy Ecology, March 2026
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric, AJ McCarthy, March 2026

The site comprises two parcels of agricultural land where it is proposed to construct 47 dwellings. The site contains two species-poor grassland fields with hedgerow and scrub along its western border and a belt of woodland to the south. It is surrounded by agricultural land to the west and partially south, and residential properties in all other directions with woodland, fields and a brook further beyond.

## **COMMENTS:**

### **Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area (SPA) 6.4km**

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 (AA) due to the potential impact of recreational pressure on stone curlew in combination with other plans and projects.

Appropriate Assessment has been completed by the LPA with a favourable conclusion. The AA has been sent to Natural England (01/06/2026) and the application must not be determined until they have agreed with the LPA's conclusion.

## **Protected species**

### *Background*

The site was subject to a preliminary ecological appraisal in July 2024 and an update survey in November 2025, with a number of intervening species surveys undertaken for, e.g., bats and dormice. Given the scale of the proposed works, species and habitats present on-site and in the vicinity, both a **Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) and Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) must be required via planning conditions.**

### *Bats*

The site contains habitats suitable for use by commuting, foraging and potentially roosting bats, and there are records of Serotine, Great Horseshoe and Brown Long-eared bat roosts within 200m of the site boundaries. Habitats within the local area are also very favourable for bats. Accordingly, three transect surveys were conducted in August-October 2025, with three static detectors deployed between August-October 2024, and April-July 2025.

Bat activity was greatest along the southern woodland belt. The most frequently recorded species was common pipistrelle (>1,200 passes). Low levels of activity of Annex II species including barbastelle (total 25 passes) and horseshoe bats (no more than 50 passes) were also noted.

The plans show the retention of the southern woodland belt, and replacement of the western hedge/scrub border with grassland and scattered trees. Parallel hedgerow that runs along the western boundary will also be infilled/enhanced. The external lighting scheme shows no direct illumination on the southern woodland area nor the proposed western hedgerow, with some minor encroachment of 0.2 lux on the green space area to the southwest. The lighting is restricted to security lighting only (on dwellings) and no street lighting is proposed. **Overall, the proposed scheme is considered acceptable with regard to bat mitigation, and the relevant plans must be secured via a compliance condition.**

No notable bat roosting features were noted during the ground-based tree assessments. Half of the proposed dwellings will include integrated bat roosting features (as per the Ecology Features plan and ecology report – **both of which must be secured via condition**). The enhancements and habitat creation are welcomed.

#### *Dormice*

Nest tube surveys were undertaken from August 2024-August 2025, deploying 50 nest tubes along the hedgerow/scrub belt and woodland at the west and south boundaries, respectively. No evidence of dormouse was observed; therefore, this species is not considered to be a constraint to the proposal.

#### *Nesting birds*

Six breeding bird surveys were conducted between April-July 2025. Four of the observed species – dunnock (probable breeding), house sparrow (probable breeding), herring gull and song thrush – are listed as a species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (they are considered a Priority Species) and must be considered within the planning process. These species, and a further nine that were recorded, are Red- or Amber-listed birds of conservation concern. 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.

The ecology report concludes that the site is of importance to breeding and foraging birds at site level only. The report's recommended mitigation for breeding birds consists of the avoidance of vegetation clearance during nesting season (or detailed survey beforehand). Integrated swift boxes will also be provided, and the habitat creation in general will provide improvements for birds. There are similar opportunities surrounding the site for nesting birds, including the fields, hedgerow and woodland patches to the south and southwest. **As such, the mitigation is considered sufficient, provided it is secured via condition, and full details included within the CEMP.**

#### *Reptiles*

Reptile surveys were carried out in August-October 2024. A 'good' population of common lizard was recorded in the northern half of the site, almost exclusively along the site margins.

Suitable areas of reptile-appropriate habitat will be retained within the scheme, with connectivity to the surrounding habitats (e.g., scrub and hedgerow boundaries of connecting fields) maintained. As an enhancement, ten reptile refugia are proposed along the western boundary, as per the ecology report, which will be managed as a species-rich sward. However, these refugia are not included on the 'Ecology Features' site plan, nor any other enforceable plan. **Please could these be detailed on a plan, or the 'Ecology Features' plan updated to include the reptile refugia features?**

The reptile mitigation outlined in Section 6.8 of the ecology report must be adhered to **and secured via condition**. Further details should be included within the CEMP and LEMP.

#### *Great Crested Newts (GCN)*

There are two waterbodies mapped within 500m of the site, though neither have been surveyed. One of these ponds is located 50m southeast of the site boundary. The ecology report states that the presence of GCN on site is considered unlikely and the risk to GCN is "negligible". Whilst

there are no known records of GCN in West Lavington, absence should not be assumed, particularly given the proximity of a pond to the proposed development area as well as the habitats available on-site.

GCN are a 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 GCN are not adversely affected as a result of the proposed development must be submitted as part of the proposal. However, no surveys have been undertaken, nor has Natural England's 'rapid risk assessment tool' been used to determine whether an offence is likely.

The applicant may wish to consider District Level Licensing (DLL). Instead of carrying out site-specific mitigation and compensation, the applicant can apply to Natural England to determine whether the scheme is eligible for DLL. Once the scheme is accepted under the District Level Licensing Scheme for Great Crested Newts, the Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate (IACPC), which must be signed by the applicant and countersigned by Natural England is submitted to the LPA.

Section 6.9.1 of the ecology report states "efforts are underway to access the off-site ponds for survey work". **Please can the applicant confirm whether GCN surveys will be undertaken to inform site-specific mitigation, or whether they intend to apply for the DLL scheme?**

#### *Other*

No evidence of badger or harvest mouse has been observed, though there are badger records locally. Precautions for badgers must be outlined within the CEMP.

The proposed connectivity points/access for hedgehogs are welcomed. Full enhancement details (including, e.g., the dimensions of the mammal access points, heights of the bat and swift boxes, ongoing habitat management) can be provided within the LEMP.

#### **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).

A completed statutory metric calculation, condition assessments and map ('*BNG Supporting Technical Report, Andrew McCarthy Ecology, March 2026; Statutory Biodiversity Metric, AJ McCarthy, March 2026*') confirming 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         | 5.30 Habitat units     |
|                                                               | 1.50 Hedgerow units    |
|                                                               | 0.00 Watercourse units |
| Are there any <a href="#">irreplaceable</a> habitats on-site? | No                     |
| Has any habitat <a href="#">degradation</a> of occurred?      | No                     |

#### *On site gains*

It is proposed to achieve some gains via enhancement of modified grassland, scrub, hedgerow and woodland, as well as the creation of further scrub, hedgerow, other neutral grassland and 78 individual trees. Some of the gains would be considered significant given the scale of the proposals and habitats to be created (e.g., “good condition” other neutral grassland, which is of medium distinctiveness).

The LPA is required to monitor significant on site BNG. In order for the council to fulfil its BNG monitoring responsibilities, the **Biodiversity Net Gain On-site 30-year Monitoring Fee of £6,200.00** will be required and secured via a separate legal agreement. 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.

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

#### *Off-site gains*

The ecology report states that the required gains cannot be wholly achieved on site, and that the applicant will seek to buy off-site biodiversity units on the market to achieve a 10% gain.

All land located outside the redline application boundary of the development site is considered off-site. All off-site biodiversity gains sites must be registered on the national biodiversity gains site register. Guidance on how to register a biodiversity gains site including a list of items required to apply can be found here - [Register a biodiversity gain site - GOV.UK](#). In order for the Biodiversity Gain Plan condition to be discharged, all off-site gains must be shown on the Biodiversity Gain Plan as allocated to this development on the national biodiversity gains site register.

***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 habitats 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.***

#### **DRAFT CONDITIONS:**

##### **1. Compliance with submitted documents**

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

- Site Layout – Ecology Features, CG Fry & Son Builders, December 2025 (**to be updated to show reptile refugia/mitigation area**)
- External Lighting Strategy, The Lighting Bee, March 2026, P02
- Section 6 (mitigation) of the Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA), Andrew McCarthy Ecology, March 2026
- BNG Supporting Technical Report, Andrew McCarthy Ecology, March 2026

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

##### **2. Construction Environment 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:

- a) Identification of ecological protection areas/buffer zones and tree root protection areas and details of physical means of protection, e.g. exclusion fencing.
- b) Working method statements for protected/priority species, including nesting birds, reptiles and badgers.
- c) 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.
- d) 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.

### **3. Landscape and Ecological 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 within the development, together with a mechanism for monitoring success of the management prescriptions, incorporating review and necessary adaptive management 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.

### **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: a non-technical summary;

- the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
- 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;
- 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
- 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.

**As well as legal agreement securing on-site BNG monitoring.**

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

| <b>Ecologist</b> | <b>Date</b> |
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