

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Abi Gazzard
Date:	16/07/2026
Application number:	PL/2026/03394
Proposal:	Proposed construction and operation of a ground mounted solar PV array together with all associated works, ancillary infrastructure and equipment, landscaping, biodiversity improvements and access
Site address:	National Trust, High Street, Stourton, Warminster, BA12 6QD
Case officer:	Kate Clements

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:

- Planning Statement, Aardvark EM Ltd, May 2026
- Design & Access Statement, Aardvark EM Ltd, May 2026
- Existing Site Layout Plan, UTU, AEM053 PL-00
- Proposed Site Layout Plan, UTU, AEM053 PL-01
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Joseph Small and Anthony Hiscocks, May 2026
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, Tyler Grange, May 2026
- Ecological Impact Assessment, Tyler Grange, May 2026

The site comprises xx where it is proposed to install a ground-mounted solar array to support Stourhead to the north. The works will involve the installation of infrastructure cabinets, substation and underground cabling. Approximately 150m to the north of the proposed solar array, Stourhead contains extensive woodland (including Ancient Woodland) and lakes, though the application site itself is immediately surrounded by agricultural land.

COMMENTS:

County Wildlife Sites

The site does not fall within any designated sites or associated consultation zones. However, there are a number of County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) within the vicinity – Bonham Hanging 310m west, Garden Lake 300m northwest, Stourhead Woods 525m northwest and Top Wood 760m west. Overall, there are 12 such sites within 2km.

Wiltshire Core Policy 50 requires that CWSs are protected from the effects of development and should be enhanced where possible. Details of precautionary measures regarding the CWSs should be included within a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), to be secured via condition.

Protected species and habitats

The site primarily comprises modified grassland with evidence of recent grazing and hedgerow, with some areas of unsealed surface (access track). There is a lack of suitable waterbodies nearby and the site is therefore considered unlikely to support great crested newts. Similarly, the site provides limited habitats suitable for use by reptiles (i.e., hedgerow), and there should be ample opportunity for dispersal into the surrounding habitats, if present.

No trees with potential roosting features for bats were recorded close to or within the site boundaries. Nonetheless, it is likely that the site is used by commuting and foraging bats, but impacts on these species will be limited as no new lighting is proposed, and the hedgerow will be retained (with further hedgerow planted). The ecology report proposes the installation of two bat boxes. This recommendation is welcomed, and biodiversity enhancements (including bat boxes and more) should be secured via a planning condition.

There are records of dormice in the wider Stourhead estate. The hedgerow on-site offers some potential dormice habitat. However, the hedgerow will be retained with any underground cabling to be installed outside of root protection areas, and therefore the risk posed to this species is considered manageable, provided precautionary measures are implemented (as detailed within a CEMP).

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. Structures or vegetation capable of supporting breeding birds should be checked prior to commencement, and any removal or altering of such features should be delayed until after young birds have fledged.

As part of the development, it is proposed to add new hedgerow and overseed the grassland sward. The Design and Access Statement makes reference to a "Landscape and Ecological Enhancement Plan". However, I cannot see that this file has been submitted. It is therefore recommended that a Landscape Ecological Management Plan is secured via condition, to cover the appropriate management of the habitats on-site, as well as any associated considerations of protected wildlife.

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 (Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Joseph Small and Anthony Hiscocks, May 2026; Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, Tyler Grange, May 202) stating the baseline and predicted post-development biodiversity units of the site have been submitted with the following values:

On-site pre-development (baseline) biodiversity value	2.67 Habitat units
	2.50 Hedgerow units
	0.00 Watercourse units

Are there any irreplaceable habitats on-site?	No
Has any habitat degradation of occurred?	No

It is proposed that BNG will be achieved on-site via the planting of a new hedgerow, and grassland enhancements. 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.

CONDITIONS:

1. Compliance with submitted documents

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

- Section 3 (mitigation) of 'Ecological Impact Assessment, Tyler Grange, May 2026'
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, Tyler Grange, May 2026

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

2. 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.

3. 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 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.

4. 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 and habitats, including County Wildlife Sites, dormice, bats, nesting birds 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.

5. Enhancements for Biodiversity

Prior to the commencement of any works, including vegetation removal and demolition, details of the number, design and locations of ecological enhancement features including bat boxes shall be submitted to the Local Authority for approval. The approved details shall be implemented for the lifetime of the development and before completion 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 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 16/07/2026
---------------------------------	---------------------------