

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Jessica Cracknell
Date:	28/07/2026
Application Number:	PL/2026/03307
Proposal:	Demolition of existing stables, change of use of land to mixed agricultural and equestrian, and the erection of stable block with associated works
Site Address:	Willow Tree Farm, Ford Lane, Ford, Salisbury, SP4 6DJ
Case Officer:	Hayley Clark

Recommendations:

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

Further Information Required:

	Issue	Policy/Legislative Compliance	Date information requested & Further information required	Satisfactorily addressed (Document & Date submitted)
1	Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)	Habs Regs, WCA, NPPF, CP50	28/07/2026 An updated PEA/Ecological Assessment must be undertaken to determine potential impacts on the habitats and protected species within the whole of the site boundary.	NO
2	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021)	28/07/2026 Submission of statutory metric calculation with associated baseline habitat plans and condition assessments (see comments in main text) Surveys to be undertaken within optimal vegetation survey season, habitat typically between April to September.	NO

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 your consultation on the above application. I have reviewed the submitted documents against OS maps, aerial photographs of the site and surrounding area, together with GIS layers of statutory and non-statutory designated sites and existing records of protected species.

The following submitted documentation was reviewed to inform this response:

- Ecological Assessment. 21 January 2026. Pro Vision. Ref. 9033 Willow Tree Farm;
- Small Sites Metric (The Statutory Biodiversity Metric). 01 July 2026;
- Proposed Location & Site Plan. 01 July 2026. Larkham Design Ltd. Drawing Ref. 1039/Ex/01. Rev. B;
- Proposed Plan & Elevations. Larkham Design Ltd. Drawing Ref. 1037/Pr/01;
- Existing Location & Site Plan. 01 July 2026. Larkham Design Ltd. Drawing Ref. 1037/Ex/01. Rev. B;
- Existing Stable Plan & Elevations. Larkham Design Ltd. Drawing Ref. 1037/Ex/02;
- Planning Statement. May 2026. Atlas Planning Group.

New Forest Protected Sites

The proposed development site lies within the 13.8km zone of influence for the New Forest internationally protected sites, which comprises the New Forest SPA, New Forest SAC and New Forest Ramsar site. Therefore, the application is screened into appropriate assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) on account of its potential to cause adverse effects on the New Forest protected sites through increased recreational pressure which may occur alone and in-combination with other plans and projects.

A test of likely significance has been carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (Wiltshire Council) as required by Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This concluded that given the nature of the development and with no net increase in dwellings, there would be no recreational impact on the New Forest, therefore there is no mechanism for adverse effect. The Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) has concluded that the application is not likely to have significant impacts on the New Forest SPA, New Forest SAC and New Forest Ramsar site and subsequently the application is screened out of Appropriate Assessment.

Habitat Regulations Assessment: 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 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.

A test of likely significance has been carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (Wiltshire Council) as required by Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This concluded that given the scale and nature of the development, with no increase in dwelling and the lack of any increase in water supply, drainage installation within this development, there will be no mechanism for effect on the River Avon SAC. The Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) has concluded that the application is not likely to have significant impacts on the River Avon SAC and subsequently the application is screened out of Appropriate Assessment.

Laverstock and Ford Neighbourhood Plan

Policy 2 of the Laverstock and Ford Communities Neighbourhood Plan 2021 to 2036 (October 2022) seeks to provide an overall improvement to wild life habitats, whereby any development shall replace any loss in hedgerows and woodland with at least the equivalent area planted with native species in an equivalent location.

Priority Habitat Coastal Floodplain Grazing Marsh

Priority Habitat Coastal Floodplain Grazing Marsh lies within the site boundary. In accordance with Core Policy 50, development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. There is an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term. Where it has been demonstrated that such features cannot be retained, removal or damage shall only be acceptable in circumstances where the anticipated ecological impacts have been mitigated as

far as possible and appropriate compensatory measures can be secured to ensure no net loss of the local biodiversity resource. Given the proximity of the development to sensitive receptors, there is potential for adverse effects arising from construction-related activities.

Protected Species

An Ecological Assessment Report has been submitted in support of this application. However, the ecological assessment and survey results are identical to those submitted in support of the previous application, '*Erection of stable block with associated works, at Willow Tree Farm, Ford Lane, Ford, Salisbury, SP4 6DJ*' (Planning Ref: PL/2026/00463), despite the current application having a different red line boundary. Therefore, the ecological surveys do not cover the entirety of the current application site. Furthermore, the assessment has not been updated to reflect the current development proposals.

An updated ecological assessment is required that provides sufficient information to identify and assess any potential impacts on habitats and protected species within the current application boundary. In carrying out its statutory functions, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must be reasonably certain that the proposed development 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.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

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 (Small Sites Metric (The Statutory Biodiversity Metric). 01 July 2026) confirming the baseline and predicted post- development biodiversity units of the site has been submitted.

Priority habitat in the form of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh is identified as comprising the whole of the application site. In accordance with Core Policy 50, development proposals must demonstrate how features of nature conservation value are protected as part of the design rationale. There is a clear expectation that such features are retained, appropriately buffered and managed favourably to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and long-term functionality. Where retention is not possible, any loss or damage must be robustly justified, with impacts mitigated as far as possible and appropriate compensatory measures secured to ensure no net loss of biodiversity.

The following issues must be addressed in the baseline prior to determination:

- **All habitats within the application site's red line boundary must be included within the statutory Biodiversity Metric. A review of aerial photography indicates the presence of a hedgerow along the eastern site boundary, together with several trees located within the application site. To ensure accuracy and consistency in the BNG assessment, the baseline habitat types within the statutory metric and the supporting plans/documentation must be reviewed and amended to reflect all the habitats present on site.**
- **A submitted Ecological Assessment identifies a single ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) 'inside the northwestern site boundary', this habitat is not recorded within the baseline habitats of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. All submitted documentation must align, with the same recorded baseline habitat area reflected across all documentation.**
- **The submitted Statutory Biodiversity Metric and accompanying Ecological Assessment identify the baseline habitat as 'Modified Grassland', based on a survey undertaken on 23rd December 2025. This survey falls outside the optimal vegetation survey season (typically April to September), when habitat classification can be undertaken reliably. Given that the site is identified as priority habitat, the baseline classification must be robust and supported by appropriate seasonal survey data.**
- **The baseline habitat maps have not been submitted. This information is a minimum requirement set out in Article 7 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and must therefore be submitted for review by the ecology team prior to determination.**

The baseline habitat surveys must be reviewed and updated during the optimal survey season to establish an accurate baseline for the purposes of the Biodiversity Net Gain assessment. Alternatively, suitable and robust justification, supported by clear evidence, must be provided to demonstrate that the habitat classification is accurate despite being undertaken outside the optimal survey period. The information outlined above must therefore be submitted and reviewed by the LPA's ecology team prior to determination of the application.

Please see Wiltshire Council website for further information on this issue: [Writing ecological surveys to inform the planning - Wiltshire Council](#)

Core Policy 50

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 186 d). It is anticipated that all developments will deliver no net loss of biodiversity. For this application, biodiversity measures should focus on delivering continued ecological functionality for birds, bats, and hedgehogs.

Integrated features are generally maintenance-free and seek to benefit a target species/s or group/s and should demonstrate viability in terms of position on the building, location and clustering in accordance with relevant guidance and the additional features. Locations should be chosen in consultation with a professional ecologist to ensure they are appropriately positioned, and the following details must be provided: location, number, type (include make/model, if appropriate) and positioning (height, aspect, surrounding habitat, as applicable). Ecological enhancements are provided through the installation of swallow nest cups, within the Technical Note – Willow Tree Farm. The location of ecological/biodiversity enhancements must be included in the site plan drawings (Appendix B: Ecological Enhancements. Ecological Assessment. 21 January 2026. Pro Vision. Ref. 9033 Willow Tree Farm) and will become an enforceable part of the planning permission. Bird/bat boxes will continue to be available for bats/birds for the lifetime of the development.

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.

CONDITIONS: these will be added once the issues above have been addressed

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

Ecologist	Date