

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name: Mary Holmes MCIEEM

Date: 15/04/2026; **04/06/2026; 28/07/2026**

Application No: PL/2026/02025
PL/2026/01841

Proposal: Proposed internal and external alterations to hotel to include demolition of single storey toilets and associated works

Site Address: 47 The Bell House Hotel, Bell House Hotel, High Street, Sutton Benger, SN15 4RH

Case Officer: Peter Crozier

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)
1.	Ecological Impact Assessment	CP50; W&CA; NPPF; Habs Regs	15/04/2026. Updated ecology assessment based on development description as submitted for planning. In particular: Impacts/disturbance to bats Impacts on Swifts	Details to be secured via planning condition – see below
2.	Biodiversity Net Gain	Environment Act	15/04/2026 Assessment of whether BNG is applicable.	Statement received via email dated 15/06/2026

The outstanding document(s) listed above are needed to enable the council's ecology team to consider all the 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: Any changes to the documents previously submitted must be highlighted, otherwise they will not be considered.

Matters Considered:

Thank you for consulting me on the above application in relation to ecology. I have reviewed the relevant submitted information as listed below and looked at the scheme against various mapping (OS and aerial) of the surrounding areas together with a review of designated sites and existing records of protected/notable species.

Ecology & Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (BNGA) Report (ABR Ecology, 12th February, 2025).
Planning Design & Access Statement (LP Planning, March 2026).
Site Plan. Drwg.11. (Artel 31, October 2025).

The Ecology & Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (BNGA) Report detailed above has been prepared in support of a different development scheme which includes new dwellings and habitat loss. The current development proposal submitted for planning relates solely to internal and external alterations to existing buildings, with demolition limited to a single-storey building, no habitat loss and no change of use.

The applicant's ecologist will therefore need to revisit the proposals and submit an updated ecology report. In addition, the ecologist will also need to assess whether mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain is applicable, and if necessary, submit the relevant Biodiversity Net Gain Metric and associated information.

Please note, the Council has records of Swift nesting in the building so this will also need to be addressed.

Bats are afforded stringent protection under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Bats and their roosts 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, and shown on development drawings, where bats are present, or likely to be present.

Biodiversity Net Gain

To be assessed if necessary.

28/07/2026

With respect to the outstanding ecology information as detailed above, an email was received from LP Planning to the case officer on 15th June 2026 detailing the following:

- *Any scaffolding required for the works will be constructed and removed as a tower scaffold, which can be lowered and removed at the end of each working day. The tower would have a base footprint of approximately 2.4m x 2.4m and would be capable of reaching a height of up to 4m. The applicant is willing to accept a condition restricting any scaffolding to this arrangement.*
- *Any external construction works will take place outside the bird nesting season and will not be undertaken between February and August inclusive. The applicant is willing to accept a condition securing this restriction.*
- *In relation to BNG, as set out in Paragraph 7.17 of the Planning Statement, I confirm that: "As the application proposes demolition of existing parts of the building and there is no change of use of existing floorspace, the site is below the minimum threshold criteria for BNG and is therefore exempt."*
- *The applicant is willing to accept a condition requiring the installation of two integrated swift boxes within the building as a mitigation measure. The precise details and specification can be agreed through the discharge of conditions process.*

In response to the above, we are satisfied that the proposal is exempt from the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, as the works are confined to the existing building footprint and fall below the relevant threshold criteria.

However, insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that impacts to swifts will be adequately avoided or mitigated during construction. Moreover, the Ecology & Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (BNGA) Report (ABR Ecology, 12th February, 2025) submitted for planning mentioned bird nesting but did not identify the species.

Therefore, a Construction Ecological Method Statement can be secured via a planning condition as detailed below.

The following planning condition is therefore required to secure mitigation on Swifts and bats

ECO. 1

Construction Ecological Method Statement for Swifts and Bats

Prior to the commencement of works, a Construction Ecological Method Statement for Swifts and bats should be prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist and submitted to the LPA for approval.

The method statement shall include, but not necessarily limited to:

- The location and status of all confirmed and/or potential swift nesting features and bat roosts within the building (marked up on a plan).
- Details of how existing Swift nest sites and access points and bat access points will be protected during the works.
- A timetable for works, including justification for seasonal restrictions.
- Mitigation measures to avoid disturbance to breeding birds and bats, if necessary.
- Details of measures and contingency measures should nesting swifts or roosting bats be found during construction.
- Details, location (on a plan) and specification of enhancement nesting provision for Swifts and bats.

The approved Construction Ecological Method Statement shall be implemented in full throughout the construction period.

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

Final sign off – all matters addressed:

Ecologist	Date
Mary Holmes	30/07/2026