

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Abi Gazzard
Date:	05/08/2026
Application number:	PL/2026/03357
Proposal:	Reserved matters planning application for the erection of 2No. dwellings with all matters reserved apart from appearance, landscaping and scale.
Site address:	Home Farm, Shaw Hill, Shaw, Melksham, SN12 8EW
Case officer:	Isobella Wise

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:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment, Arbtech, 22/08/2024
- Emergence Surveys, BatCraft, 13/07/2025 (submitted with outline app)
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, Arbtech, April 2026
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Katie Whitfield, April 2026
- Proposed Site Plan, Poulson, May 2024, revision g

The site comprises an area of land used for storage, containing two existing buildings, as well as hardstanding, hedgerow, scattered trees and grassland. The wider area contains grassland fields, residential properties and lines of trees/hedges. It is proposed to remove the buildings and construct two dwellings.

This application concerns the reserved matters associated with outline application PL/2025/00965.

COMMENTS:

Protected species and habitats

Bats

Surveys recorded no bat emergences, but droppings were found in both buildings prior to this. As such, the applicant is reminded that under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 it is an offence to damage or destroy bat resting places (including when bats are not present), and a mitigation licence will be required as the proposed works will result in the destruction of at least two bat roosts. An informative was added to the outline consent.

The bat tubes agreed under the outline application are shown on the plans submitted for this reserved matters application, as appropriate. **Compliance with the proposed site plan should be secured via condition.**

The habitat within and surrounding the site is suitable for roosting, foraging, and commuting bats, as demonstrated in the Emergence Survey report. Artificial light at night can have a substantial adverse effect on biodiversity. An increase in artificial lux levels can deter bats which could result in roost abandonment and/or the severance of key foraging areas. New lighting should therefore 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 GN08-23 "Bats and artificial lighting at night", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals. **Condition 9 of the outline consent ensures that no new external lighting will be installed unless plans are submitted to and approved by the council.**

Nesting birds

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 from March to August inclusive. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal noted the presence of several old bird nests within the buildings' interiors. **The applicant is advised to check the buildings prior to demolition, as well as vegetation prior to removal.**

Other species and habitats

There are some habitats on site suitable for use by reptiles, amphibians and badgers, including native hedgerows, ruderal vegetation and a tall sward. The surrounding land also provides suitable refuge and habitat for these species to disperse into. **The precautionary methods outlined in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal must be adhered to, as per Condition 5 of the outline consent.**

The Ecology comments on the outline application stated:

Habitats created as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) within the site should seek to improve primary connectivity within the site and into other habitat areas, with particular focus on retaining and improving functionality of the habitats within the site for wildlife species within the local area.

At present, the only greenspace indicated on the proposed plans appears to comprise enclosed private gardens, and the plans do not detail any habitat enhancements that will help to maintain connectivity within and beyond the site. The Reserved Matters application for this site should demonstrate how the site will remain permeable to wildlife (e.g., through the addition of hedgerow rather than fencing) and continue to provide functional habitat for nesting birds, foraging bats and other wildlife, in conjunction with the improvements that will be achieved via BNG.

The proposed site plan shows that gaps for hedgehogs/other ground-dwelling wildlife will be added at three locations, and that a scrub corridor will connect the site from the north to south. As such, the above point has been sufficiently addressed, **and the site plan should be secured via condition.**

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 (Statutory Biodiversity Metric, Katie Whitfield, April 2026), map and habitat condition assessments (Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, Arbtech, April 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	0.43 Habitat units
	1.52 Hedgerow units
	0.00 Watercourse units
Are there any <u>irreplaceable</u> habitats on-site?	No
Has any habitat <u>degradation</u> of occurred?	No

The baseline habitat units have decreased from that accepted under the outline application, from 0.52 to 0.43 presently. This is because the area of bare ground (and developed land) are now reported to be less in the baseline than previously calculated; it appears that the previous baseline included an area of land that is outside of the development site (but within a blue line boundary). Since no enhancements are proposed in this area and it is not being used for off-site BNG, it is reasonable to exclude it from the BNG baseline. The above values are therefore accepted as accurate.

Confirmation of how the development will achieve BNG is a post-determination matter, though consideration should be given to how any proposed BNG will be secured. The proposed BNG is shown within the redline boundary and includes scrub, garden and grassland creation.

CONDITIONS:

1. Compliance with submitted documents

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

- Proposed Site Plan, Poulson, May 2024, revision g
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, Arbtech, April 2026

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

INFORMATIVE – bats

There is evidence that the site is used by roosting bats. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), 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 European Protected Species Licence will be required before any work is undertaken that will damage or destroy roosts. If bats or evidence of bats is found during the works, the applicant is advised to stop work and follow advice from an independent ecologist.

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

Ecologist Abi Gazzard	Date 05/08/2026
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