

Council Planning Consultation Response

ECOLOGY

Officer name:	Elizabeth Burrows
Date:	11/09/2026
Application No:	PL/2026/02458
Proposal:	Full application for the construction of a new food store (Class E) with associated parking, landscaping, drainage and servicing. The proposed development incorporates: • A single storey building with a total floor space of 2184m2 (GIA) including a net sales area of 1529m2. • 132 car parking spaces including 6 disabled bays, 9 parent and child spaces and 2 electric vehicle charging spaces. • Comprehensive landscaping scheme. • SUDS drainage scheme.
Site Address:	Land East of Eastern Way, Melksham
Case Officer:	Russell Brown

Recommendations:

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

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.

Information considered:

- Tree Constraints Plan. Drawing No: 3074-TCP-JP. (GE, 02/10/2025).
- Landscape Proposals Tree, Hedgerows. Drawing No: CA-2025-MLK-05 Rev A. (Corscadden Associates, December 2025).
- Existing Features and Overlay. Drawing No: CA-2025-MLK-02. (Corscadden Associates, 18 Dec 2025).
- Landscape Planting Methodology and Landscape management Plan. (Corscadden Associates, 14 January 2026).
- Ecological Impact Assessment. Report reference: 3074-EcIA-AG. (CE, 26th January 2026).
- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Date 07.01.2026.
- Biodiversity Net Gain Statement and Assessment. (GE, 9th January 2026).

COMMENTS:

The Site largely comprises a field of species-poor modified grassland, an area of roadside grassland verge, and species-poor native hedgerows, including sections with mature trees along the site boundary. The hedgerows and trees provide habitat for dormice, nesting birds, and foraging and commuting bats, including the light-sensitive lesser horseshoe bat, greater horseshoe bat, and barbastelle bat. These species use the hedgerows and associated features as north-south and east-west wildlife corridors to cross the site and access the wider landscape.

A European Protected Species (EPS) Dormouse Mitigation Licence will be required to enable the lawful implementation of the development. Sufficient ecological information has been submitted to demonstrate that the favourable conservation status of dormice can be maintained should planning permission be granted.

The development will primarily result in the loss of low-value modified grassland which does not give rise to significant ecological concern. It must be noted that the hedge to the south lies outside the red line boundary is not impacted by the development reducing the impact on functionality in an east west direction. The development will also however result in the loss and degradation of hedgerow and scrub habitats. The provision of measures as outlined within Section 5 of the Ecological Impact Assessment, and listed below, will ensure functionality is maintained:

- Planting approximately 420 m of new species-rich native hedgerow.
- Enhancement of approximately 100 m of retained hedgerow through gap infilling and wildflower seeding at the hedgerow base.
- Grassland creation and enhancement.
- Planting of individual trees.
- Provision of new nesting and dormouse features.
- Implementation of a sensitive lighting strategy.
- Adoption of sensitive working practices during construction.

These habitat enhancements are shown on the submitted Landscape Proposals Tree, Hedgerows drawing. Required construction working methods and the lighting strategy must be secured through planning conditions.

Subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures, either through the approved plans or planning conditions, significant adverse effects on biodiversity are not anticipated.

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 (The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Date 07.01.2026) confirming the baseline and predicted post- development biodiversity units of the site has been submitted (further details are provided in the Biodiversity Net Gain Statement and Assessment. (GE, 9th January 2026).

Information in the completed on-site baseline habitat tabs is accepted as accurate based on the information submitted. The pre-development (baseline) situation is summarised below.

On-site pre-development (baseline) biodiversity value	8.63 Habitat units
	3.12 Hedgerow units
	0.00 Watercourse units
Are there any irreplaceable habitats on-site?	No
Has any habitat degradation of occurred?	No

The biodiversity metric indicates that the proposal would deliver a substantial gain in hedgerow units, alongside a loss of habitat units. This loss is primarily attributable to the removal of low-value modified grassland and is not considered to give rise to significant ecological concern. The proposed habitat creation and enhancement measures required to contribute towards the delivery of the scheme's proposed BNG are shown on the *Landscape Proposals Trees and Hedgerows Drawing No. CA-2025-MLK-05 Rev A* (Corscadden Associates, December 2025)

It is unclear whether all the predicted gains in hedgerow units are achievable in practice. The proposals identify hedgerow enhancement and creation within areas where existing hedgerows are already present, and there appears to be limited space available to accommodate the proposed double hedgerows.

Consequently, the projected hedgerow unit gains may be overstated and should be reviewed and justified prior to submission of the biodiversity gain plan.

The indicative assessment indicates that the minimum 10% net gain requirement will not be achievable on-site. It is anticipated that a habitat bank will be used to gain the required habitat units

CONDITIONS:

The following, or similarly worded, conditions are recommend:

COMPLIANCE WITH SUBMITTED DOCUMENTS

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

- Landscape Proposals Tree, Hedgerows. Drawing No: CA-2025-MLK-05 Rev A. (Corscadden Associates, December 2025).
- Landscape Planting Methodology and Landscape management Plan. (Corscadden Associates, 14 January 2026).
- Section 5 of the Ecological Impact Assessment. Report reference: 3074-EclA-AG. (CE, 26th January 2026).

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

CONSTRUCTION METHOD STATEMENT (CMS)

No development shall commence on site (including any vegetation removal or works to existing structures), until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Construction Method Statement shall include all precautionary measures to be implemented during the construction period, for the protection of sensitive habitats and species known to be present within or adjacent the site, with particular reference to:

Bats
Birds
Badgers
Dormice
Reptiles
Hedgerows and Trees

The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved Construction Method Statement.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection, mitigation and compensation for protected species and priority habitats throughout the construction period.

LIGHTING

No external light fixture or fitting will be installed within the application site unless details of existing and proposed new lighting have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. The submitted details will demonstrate how the proposed lighting will impact on bat habitat compared to the existing situation.

The plans will be in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Notes on the Avoidance of Obtrusive Light (GN 01/2021) and Guidance note GN08/23 "Bats and artificial lighting at night", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

REASON: To minimize impacts on biodiversity caused by light spillage.

Informative

The applicant should note that under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) it is an offence to disturb or harm any protected species including for example, breeding birds and reptiles. The hedgerows and scrub on site are used by dormice for nesting. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), it is an offence to harm or disturb dormice or damage or destroy their resting places including

nests. 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 to implement this planning permission.

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

Ecologist	Date
Elizabeth Burrows	11/09/2026