

MEMORANDUM

From:	Louise Aparo Ecology Officer		
Service	WBC Ecology	App No:	260139
Address:	Riseley Farm, Part Lane, Swallowfield, Wokingham, RG7 1TB.		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed erection of a barn following demolition of existing barn.		
Type of Development:	Minor All other developments		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☒ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) stated below
- ☐ Request further information before determination as stated below
- ☐ Objection due to the reason(s) stated below

Comments On Proposal

The documents reviewed for this proposed application are as follows:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, January 2026 by Crossland Ecology.
- Small Barn Site Plan, Drawing no E22 by Heritage Fusion.
- Proposed site and Landscaping Plan, Drawing no: P20 by Heritage Fusion

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The application form states that the development is exempt from the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement, as it falls under the *de minimis* exemption by affecting less than 25 m² of habitat. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal confirms that the barn is situated on hardstanding and that no vegetation will be impacted by the proposed works. On this basis, I agree that the development qualifies for exemption from the BNG obligation.

Thames Basin Heath, Special Protection Area (SPA).

This development is located within the 5km linear mitigation zone for the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA), a nationally designated site. However, the development is for a replacement barn, no net increase in dwellings and no increase in recreational use and therefore neutral impact to the SPA.

Bats

All bats and their roosts are legally protected by national and European legislation including Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Additionally, several species of bats are a priority

species under the NERC Act 2016. These legislations make it illegal to deliberately disturb a bay, capture/kill or injure a bat or disturb a breeding or resting site.

I agree with the application ecologist's assessment that the barn and surrounding fields have negligible potential to support roosting or foraging bats. This conclusion is supported by the photographic evidence and the detailed site description provided. The ecologist does, however, note that the wider site may still be used by commuting bats, particularly along the linear features to the west, adjacent to the application boundary. In response, a sensitive lighting strategy has been recommended, specifying that any lighting installed should comply with Bat Conservation Trust Guidance Note 08/18, including the use of lighting below 2700 K, downward-directed fittings, and motion sensors. I support these mitigation measures and recommend that they are secured through a lighting scheme condition.

All other protected species

As the development footprint contains no vegetation and the surrounding horse grazed fields offer limited ecological value due to the absence of linear features, the open nature of the landscape, and the short, intensively grazed sward, I am satisfied that the site holds little potential for protected species. I therefore have no concerns regarding ecological impacts arising from the proposed development.

Biodiversity enhancements

To comply with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Wokingham Borough Development Plan, all developments are to provide opportunities for biodiversity through design, layout or landscaping.

To comply with national and local legislation, the applicant ecologist has suggested the provision of one bat box and one bird box, to either be implemented into the dwelling of the barn or retained trees west of the site. I agree with these enhancements, and the locations are suitable suggestions. I recommend securing the details with a compliance condition.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Lighting design strategy for light-sensitive biodiversity – Condition

Prior to occupation, a "lighting design strategy for biodiversity" for bats, birds and hedgehogs should specify buildings, features or areas to be lit shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:

- a) identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and
- b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under

no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

Reason: To policy compliance with national legislation Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Wokingham Core Strategy, Policy CP7.

Compliance with existing detailed biodiversity method statements, strategies, plans and schemes – Condition

Works are to be carried out in full accordance with the recommendations and biodiversity enhancements given in paragraph 5.16 to paragraph 5.25 in the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, January 2026 by Crossland Ecology unless otherwise agreed in writing by the council. Within one month of substantial completion a short closing-out report demonstrating that the ecological mitigation and enhancement measures have been implemented to the satisfaction of the Owner's Ecologist is to be issued to the council.

Reason: To ensure that biodiversity, protected (as per the NPPF), and priority species are not adversely affected by the proposals. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 and CP7 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB23.

Date:

Signed: