

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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Application No: PL/2023/03359
Construction and operation of anaerobic digestion facility, ancillary infrastructure and construction of new access from Ashton Road Land West of Ashton Road, Ashton Keynes, Wilts, SN6 6QT

Please find following comments in respect of the above application(s).

Recommendations:

☐	No Comment
☐	Support
☐	Support subject to conditions (please set out below)
☐	Object (for reasons set out below)
☒	No objections

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

Policy: From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 (LBC) and 66 (PP) require that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 201-3 of the NPPF require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved. Paragraph 197 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The Council's Core Strategy 'Core Policy 58: Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved and where possible enhanced. It is also required that distinctive elements of Wiltshire's historic environment, including non-designated heritage assets, which contribute to a sense of local character and identity will be conserved, and where possible enhanced.

The Council's Core Strategy CP 57: Ensuring high quality design requires a high quality of design in all new developments. Proposals are required to "demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through:

- i. enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development...
- ii. the retention and enhancement of existing important landscaping and natural features...
- iii. responding positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting.

Site: The application site consists of a broadly rectangular field located immediately west of Ashton Road in an agricultural area, approximately 2km north of the village of Ashton Keynes. The Site is formed of one complete field and a portion of a second field immediately to the south, which are bound to the east by Ashton Road. Both fields which form the site are in arable use, and the fields are divided by an intermittent hedge and low trees. A shallow drainage ditch lies on the northern side of the divide between the two fields. The Site is bound by hedges on all sides except the southern boundary which bisects the southern field. Further shallow drainage ditches are present outside the north and eastern boundaries. An unsurfaced access track runs along the outside of the western boundary.

Proposal: The construction and operation of an anaerobic digestion facility, ancillary infrastructure and the construction of a new access road and access from Ashton Road, Ashton Keynes

Relevant planning history: N/A

Issues: Setting of listed buildings

Assessment: Paragraph 194 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This should include sufficient information to provide a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting and the potential impact of any proposals on that significance. In this case, the application is accompanied by a "Heritage Statement" which provides sufficient information to understand the impact of the proposal and is proportionate to the scope. The requirements of the NPPF are therefore met in this respect.

There are several Listed Buildings within a 2 km radius of the Site with a number clustered in South Cerney to the northeast and Ashton Keynes to the south / southeast. The closest Listed Buildings include:

- Four Grade II properties forming part of Cotswolds Community and including Ashtonfields Community Hall and Chapel, Reception Offices, attached staff rooms and Ashtonfields farmhouse lying circa 0.58 km to the southwest of the Site; and
- Walnut Tree Farm (Grade II) circa 0.65 km to the northeast.

The key components of the proposed development include: 5 large digester tanks with the storage capacity of 35,000m with 6 smaller tanks, pump building and 3 feed hoppers; 2 digestate lagoons; 2 silage clamps; rainwater harvesting lagoon; chicken shed; straw building; buried propane tank; separator building; 2 offices; HGV Trailer bays; gas flare; boiler; chiller; pump unit; trailer earth

system and filling dispenser; CO2 tank; biogas upgrade plant; heat exchanger; tech container; weighbridge; and earth bunds.

There would be a change in the setting of the grade II listed buildings at Ashtonfields Community Hall as a result of some screened intervisibility between the upper storey of the building and the top of the silage clamps. This would result in minor adverse change that would erode the setting to a slight extent, however this would not amount to harm to the listed buildings, as the elements of their setting which contribute to the significance would be preserved.

Summary & conclusion: The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

The impact of the proposals on heritage assets will be neutral and the requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance are considered to be met and there is therefore no objection to the approval of the application.