Climate Team consultation response

Reference: PL/2023/08739
Address: 12 Victory Road, West Wilts Trading Estate, Westbury BA13 4JL
Proposal: Extension to existing commercial unit and construction of new commercial unit.

Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the relevant policies of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (ref: Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004). Section 19 of this Act places a legal duty on development plan documents, taken as a whole, to include policies designed to secure development that contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

Development Plan:

At paragraph 1.3 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) key principles that underpin the strategy to help build more resilient communities are identified including:

- *"Providing for the most sustainable pattern of development that minimises the need to travel and maximises the potential to use sustainable transport."*
- *"Managing development to ensure that jobs and the right infrastructure are delivered at the right time to ensure that out commuting, in particular to areas outside of Wiltshire, is not increased"*
- *"Working towards lowering Wiltshire's carbon footprint through the appropriate location of development, and through renewable energy and sustainable construction."*

Paragraph 1.10 states: *"**The overarching priorities are to help build and protect resilient communities through….. tackling the causes and effects of climate change**"*

Paragraph 2.10 states: *"**Climate change is a central issue to be addressed by the WCS**….. The basis of this strategy is to achieve sustainable patterns of development in order to reduce carbon emissions."*

The WCS sets out that addressing climate change as a strategic objective stating at paragraph 3.5 that: ***"Climate change is possibly the greatest long-term challenge facing the world today."***

Paragraph 6.32 sets out that the strategy will contribute to tackling climate change through a number of different areas of policy, such as:

- focusing growth at the larger settlements to help minimise the need for travel,
- ensure new development can withstand future changes in climate and add minimally to carbon emissions,
- provide a network of green infrastructure; and
- ensure more sustainable forms of transport.

Core Policy 41 seeks to help to reduce Wiltshire's contribution to climate change through improved design and construction methods. The policy states that: *"New development, building conversions, refurbishments and extensions will be encouraged to incorporate design measures to reduce energy demand. Development will be well insulated and designed to take advantage of natural light and heat from the sun and use natural air movement for ventilation, whilst maximising cooling in the summer."*

Moreover, *"all non-residential development will be required to achieve the relevant BREEAM "Excellent" standard"*. Furthermore, *"all proposals for major development will be required to*

submit a Sustainable Energy Strategy alongside the planning application outlining the low-carbon strategy for the proposal". The policy is also clear that in all cases the impact of these requirements on the viability of the development will be taken into consideration.

Core Policy 60 sets out that *"the council will use its planning and transport powers to help reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and support and encourage the sustainable, safe and efficient movement of people and goods."* It sets out a number of means to achieve this including planning development in accessible locations, and promoting alternatives to the private car. These aims are further supported by CP61, CP62, CP63, CP64, CP65 and CP66.

In addition, the Wiltshire Core Strategy contains specific policies in relation to **biodiversity (CP50), green infrastructure (CP52), high quality design (CP57), flood risk (CP67)** and **water resources (CP68)**. These all relate to reducing Wiltshire's contribution to climate change and/or adaptation. To be compliant with these policies regard should be had to the implications of the development on climate change. As set out previously climate change is the central issue to be addressed by the development plan.

Other material considerations:

As set out above planning legislation establishes that **other material considerations** should be taken into account in the determination of planning applications. As such, these need to be kept in mind as developments are planned and formulated. Other material considerations may include other local planning policy and guidance, the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Review, UK government legislation or Written Ministerial Statements and national planning policy and guidance such as the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Council is carrying out a **Local Plan Review**. A draft version has was approved by cabinet and full council so proceeded to the Regulation 19 stage of public consultation. The consultation has recently closed and comments are being assessed. A suite of ambitious new and replacement policies to further reduce Wiltshire's contribution to climate change and foster better community resilience to impacts from climate change are now emerging. The direction of travel is reflective of wider strategic policy already adopted by Wiltshire Council, such as the **Wiltshire Climate Strategy, adopted February 2022**. This builds on the Council's February 2019 resolution to acknowledge a **climate emergency and subsequent commitment to seek to make the county carbon neutral by 2030**.

To further underline this the **Climate change act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019** raised the **duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that the net UK carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 100% lower than the 1990 baseline** (previously 80%).

The **National Planning Policy Framework (September 2023)** (NPPF) sets out the UK government's position on planning in England.

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states: *"The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development"* and paragraph 8 makes it clear that **mitigating and adapting to climate change is a core planning objective**.

Paragraph 152 states: *"The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate…. It should* ***help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions****, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure."*

Paragraph 154 states that: *"****New development should be planned for in ways that:***

a) ***avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change.*** *When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure; and*
b) ***can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design****. Any local requirements for the sustainability of buildings should reflect the Government's policy for national technical standards."*

Paragraph 157 goes on: *"In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should* ***expect new development to…… take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption****"*

In terms of transport paragraph 104 states that "transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that….. opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued".

In terms of the future national direction of travel the **10 Point Plan**, **Net Zero Strategy**, **Heat and Buildings Strategy**, the **Sixth Carbon Budget, Timber in Construction Roadmap,** and **Powering Up Britain** are very clear. The intentions include:

- More journeys by public transport, walking and cycling;
- More electric cars;
- More sustainable (safe) construction practices; and
- More renewable energy and storage technologies.

Comments on the submission:

The climate team actively and strongly encourages developers of all scales to put the mitigation of and adaption to climate change as a golden theme to run through their development project. This will mean different things depending on the scale of the project, but to support the transition to a low carbon future, radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions over the existing status quo will be required.

To support this goal, it is important that the Wiltshire Core Strategy and National Planning Policy Framework spatial planning objectives of addressing climate change are considered, including the application of CP41 on sustainable construction.

I recognise that the proposal is located within a well-established employment site and so in planning terms it is deemed to be a sustainable location. Concentration of employment growth in this area can support sustainable travel objectives through accessibility by means other than the private car. Similarly it is important to consider that providing employment opportunities here could support the aim of reducing out commuting from our settlements and county. These are the positives of locating the proposal here.

Being over 1,000sqm the proposal is deemed to be a major development and as such there is a requirement for a Sustainable Energy Strategy to be provided as part of the application in order to comply with CP41 of the development plan. Furthermore, as a non-residential development there is a requirement to meet relevant BREEAM "Excellent" standards too.

In terms of the Sustainable Energy Strategy, I would encourage this to be set out addressing 4 themes that outline the low-carbon strategy for the proposal:

Sustainable Transport: This needs to address the principles of Avoid, Shift and Improve. An explanation of how the proposal will support avoiding journeys through measures like enhanced broadband use and batching trips/deliveries would be encouraged. How journeys

will be shifted away from private vehicle use needs to be explored. For example, I note the provision of cycle parking. This must at least meet our minimum standards but providing spaces for staff to shower/change would also encourage walking and cycling options. A travel plan to encourage car sharing and public transport information would also be positive. There is also the opportunity to improve private vehicle use, such as having alternative fuels for any associated HGVs, and providing EV charging points within the car park. At the least the developer needs to meet Building Regulations Part S. This compliance should be indicated within planning drawings so you can see and assess the suitability of the chargers, space sizes and turning facilities.

Operational Energy: I would encourage the developer to be far more ambitious here than just meeting current Building Regulations Part L. They will understand their operational requirements and the best way to reduce their energy demand cost effectively. Shifting to an all-electric approach would have clear carbon benefits. Given the south-west orientation of the buildings I would also encourage the installation of generous solar arrays on these slopes. This will have an impact on the external appearance of the building and the location of rooflights, so this needs to be considered at application stage. But it would also offset energy use at the site, reducing operational running costs.

Embodied carbon: This is a more challenging issue for the construction industry. However, I would encourage the developer to explain how they have considered recording and/or reducing their embodied carbon impact through their approach to the substructure, superstructure and finishes of the building. For example, choosing lower carbon materials for construction and ensuring that joins in the steel frames are bolted rather than welded (to enable recycling at the end of life) might be considered.

Climate change adaptation: Our climate is changing and even if we radically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, we will still have to do more than mitigate climate change and will have to adapt. The main issues we are likely to experience are increased temperatures, water scarcity and ironically flooding. The developer should be encouraged to consider nature-based solutions through for example planting of natural vegetation. In terms of technical detail on addressing flood risk, I would defer to our drainage colleagues.

This proposal should also meet *the relevant BREEAM "Excellent" standard".* The policy allows for the impact of these requirements on the viability of the development to be taken into consideration. The planning department has for some time applied a rule of thumb that anything below a 1,000sqm is unlikely to require more information because the costs associated with demonstrating compliance are prohibitive. This scheme sits slightly above that threshold and so based on the information available I consider that at least a BREEAM Pre-Assessment should be submitted to show that the scheme is targeting "Excellent" in the final submission.

Climate change is the central issue to be addressed by the development plan. The direction of travel since its adoption in 2015 is very clear with the Council's adopted Climate Strategy in 2022 setting a framework for reducing carbon emissions in Wiltshire and for making the county resilient to climate change. Furthermore, the NPPF states that planning needs to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Date: 18 December 2023

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