

Climate Team consultation response

Reference: PL/2023/10331

Address: Land south of The Forty and North of Chelworth Road, Cricklade, Wiltshire

Proposal: Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except access reserved) for up to 49 dwellings and associated works and provision of a cemetery together with access and associated works.

Overall: Objection.

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.”

Furthermore, the policy requires all proposals for major development to submit a *“Sustainable Energy Strategy alongside the planning application outlining the low-carbon strategy for the proposal”*.

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.

Finally, the **Cricklade Neighbourhood Plan 2026** forms a part of the development since it was made in March 2018.

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 been 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 (December 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.

Extant policy CP41 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires that major development such as this include a *“Sustainable Energy Strategy alongside the planning application outlining the low-carbon strategy for the proposal”*. This presents the developer with an opportunity to overcome the clear location policy conflict under CP1 and CP2.

When taken as a whole the development plan must provide policies designed to secure development that contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. The policies (CP1 and CP2) in the Wiltshire Core Strategy that steer the location of development are one of the key tools to this end. So, conflict with these needs to be mitigated if the proposal is to comply with s19 and s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. I would suggest that an ambitious approach to sustainable transport and sustainable construction provide a clear means of doing this and ensuring that the proposal complies with the development plan as a whole. The vehicle to demonstrate this positive and ambitious approach is the Sustainable Energy Strategy.

The Sustainable Energy Strategy could be structured to address sustainable transport, operational carbon, embodied carbon and climate change adaptation.

Sustainable transport:

The principles to be applied should be to look to Avoid, Shift and Improve.

Avoid - To support avoiding journeys on a development such as this it is necessary to ensure that the scheme is built with excellent telecommunication facilities. This might include suitable space for home working and high-quality internet/telecommunications provision. The developer should set out the existing coverage and if lacking then commit to enhancing this through obligations.

Shift – This is about trying to provide a development that encourages the occupiers of the homes to shift their travel behaviour to including more public transport use, active travel, and car sharing. I note that the site is located in reasonable proximity to Cricklade centre and so there seems to be a strong opportunity here. I would defer to highway colleagues for more comment, but both highways and the developer should be encouraged to be ambitious.

Improve – The focus here should be the provision of an electric vehicle strategy that commits to providing every home with EVC points – regardless of the various exemptions at Part S of the building regulations. The illustrative layout indicates in curtilage parking across the whole scheme. If maintained this arrangement is likely to ensure 100% EVC coverage but should be confirmed by the developer in the Sustainable Energy Strategy.

Operational carbon:

The development industry is now well versed in what is required to achieve net zero development in operation. So, an ambitious scheme should commit to net zero in operation. A fabric first approach that exceeds building regulations should be targeted to reduce the energy demand from the homes. Then electrifying the homes, so that there is no fossil fuel burning at the properties is the next step to decarbonisation. This is likely to mean the use of heat pumps here.

Next, and most critical from a planning perspective is ensuring that the design and orientation of the homes provides opportunities to maximise the potential for roof-mounted solar PV. Broadly speaking orientating homes so that they have a clear, obstruction-free roof slope within 30 degrees of south should be targeted, and the developer should commit to an array such as to ensure that the scheme over the course of a year would be at least net zero allowing for both regulated and unregulated energy.

Whilst the illustrative site plan shows very few properties orientated due south, it actually appears to show a high proportion within a 30 degree tolerance. There are a number of problematic plots to the north-west block, but I suspect with further design work in any future reserved matters that this can be addressed. In tandem with the Sustainable Energy Strategy a revised illustrative site plan should be sought to show that the scheme is truly looking to address climate change through the orientation of the built form (probably only needs tweaking).

Finally, in terms of water efficiency the recent letter to local authorities from Minister Double highlights that in water stressed locations such as this that a higher water efficiency standard can be secured of 110l/p/d. When conditioned this higher standard can then be imposed through building regulations Part G. This would improve the sustainability of the development. However, the developer should look to be ambitious and volunteer even higher standards.

Embodied carbon:

This is accepted as being an area where the building industry still have a lot of work to do. However, an ambitious approach at this time would be to include an Embodied Carbon Assessment as part of the proposal identifying the types of benchmarking that the scheme will target at later design stages, such as RIBA's Climate Challenge 2030. Using this the scheme can set out what type of measures will be incorporated into the design, such as use of timber and low-carbon concrete, as well as more passive approaches. More passive approaches would include attempting to reduce the need for building materials in the first place through use of garden stores rather than oversized garages (which are unlikely to be used for parking) and avoiding hard standing. This all relates to the scheme layout, but indications can be provided now through the strategy and the illustrative site plan.

Climate change adaptation:

Taking climate action in development can have significant co-benefits, especially when nature-based solutions are adopted. Nature-based solutions include Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), Street trees and SuDS enabled street trees, provision of open space, green roofs and green walls.

Nature-based solutions like these can mitigate climate change through:

- Reducing energy use by insulating and reducing surrounding temperatures; and
- Carbon sequestration

Nature-based solutions like these can help adapt to climate change by:

- Managing and storing water from increased rainfall to avoid flooding;
- Reducing surrounding air temperatures to prevent overheating; and
- Address issues of water scarcity.

The co-benefits of these approaches can include improved air quality, better physical and mental health, reduced burden on NHS resources, and support biodiversity.

The Illustrative Site Plan shows good nature / green spaces to help with climate adaptation, so there is some hope here. The detail will be critical and more will follow at reserved matters stages, but the strategy can set a scope and perimeters to ensure that positive climate action is taken through the development. Further explanation of the strategy is required to demonstrate that the scheme is truly looking to be ambitious in addressing overheating, flood and water scarcity risks.

Summary and conclusion:

Currently I raise objection to this proposal due to the policy conflict I have set out above. This scheme is not demonstrably taking the opportunities to provide a development that, when considered against the policies of the development plan as a whole, addresses and mitigates the impacts of climate change. However, I have been positive and proactive in my comments which show a means to overcome these issues, supports the transition to a low carbon future, and provides a means to radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the existing status quo. My comments are based in a Wiltshire context and recognise the need to meet other spatial planning objectives including housing supply.

However, 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: 3 January 2024

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