CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2023/10028
Application Type:	Permission in Principle
Site Inspection:	
Consultation ends:	05 January 2024
Case officer:	Jonathan James

Site Address:	Land to the north of Newtown Road, Ramsbury, Wiltshire.
Proposal:	Permission in Principle for the erection of a minimum of 7 dwellings and a maximum of 9 dwellings.
Recommendation:	Refuse

POLICIES

Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) (2015)
- CP1 Settlement strategy
- CP2 Delivery strategy
- CP3 Infrastructure requirements
- CP14 Marlborough Area Strategy
- CP41 Sustainable construction and low carbon energy
- CP43 Providing affordable homes
- CP44 Rrural exception sites
- CP45 Meeting Wiltshire’s housing needs
- CP50 Biodiversity
- CP51 Landscape
- CP52 Green infrastructure
- CP55 Air Quality;
- CP56 Contaminated Land
- CP57 Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
- CP58 Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment
- CP60 Sustainable Transport
- CP61 Ensuring that development does not have a detrimental impact on highway safety
- CP64 Demand management
- CP67 Flood risk
- CP68 Water resources
- CP69 Protection of the River Avon SAC

Saved Policies from the Kennett Local Plan
- HC34 Recreation Provision on Large Housing Sites (Appendix D saved Kennet Local Plan policy);
- HC37 Demand for Education (Appendix D saved Kennet Local Plan policy).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Supplementary Planning Guidance:
• Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 Car Parking Strategy (March 2011) – minimum residential parking standards

Kennet Landscape Character Assessment (1998); Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005); Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy (2005);

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2002); North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan (2014);

Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy 2006 – 2026 (July 2009).

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Town/Parish Council – Object; Ramsbury and Axford Parish Council object to this application for the following reasons-
1 –appropriate visibility from junction not achievable, although highways in 2014 accepted it as ok, hedges etc have grown considerably since then.
2- Local plan recommends 'housing in large villages should address needs for employment' they are disputing this as Wilts do not have the appropriate housing needs and new plan is not finished, this should not be detrimental to villages whilst the consultation is in progress.
3- no footpath necessary – Core Policy 60 states means should be provided to reduce the need to travel by car. All residents should be encouraged to walk to village for school and shops but it would not be safe on a narrow road with a 30 mph speed limit and cars would be used. Highways have stated the access would require connecting footpath and informal crossing
4- outside the settlement boundary. Site is in a National Landscape area.
5- PIP is a poor submission route, not having to be detailed enough on the type/size of house intended. They have shown 9 detached family houses, which we really do not need – we have more than enough already.
6- Core Policy 43 states sites with 5 or more dwellings should have at least 40% of affordable housing but (a) given average house price in the village is high, so affordable would imply a higher cost than those actually needed. (b) para 6.15 last sentence of their Planning Statement states 'It is not a major development and Ramsbury is not a designated rural area and as such affordable housing is not required,' - says it all.
7 - the provision of recreation space – they have counteracted with the fact that CIL money is due and is used for infrastructure so they have left a space in front of house 3 for play??? There are many other things necessary to a development besides childrens play areas the CIL is responsible for.
9- They quote many appeals in other areas, but none of these are relevant as all should be treated on their own merit, not by other examples.
10 - There is a very short turn around to this application 16.11.23 - 6.12 23 and none of the surrounding properties have been consulted, this seems somewhat unusual and a bias in favour of the application?

REPRESENTATIONS

WC Highways – Comments; The proposal for dwellings at this location has been considered via historic applications, albeit with larger unit numbers. Ramsbury is a village with some amenities and a bus service , though in reality any residential units will be reliant mostly on the use of the private vehicle. As such I do believe that there is a policy objection in relation to policies promoting a more sustainable pattern of development.

The access will be required to provide a connecting footway and informal crossing point along with visibility splays to meet statutory requirements. I would be expecting any development to meet the access requirements outlined and accepted by the Highway Officer under application PL/15/07232.

As the number of plots is a relatively small number I am minded to accept the associated vehicle numbers on the adjacent highway/road network.

Due to the lower number of units I would not insist upon the estate being offered for adoption but any design must meets the minimum parking standards (to include at least 1 EV charging point per unit and minimum garage widths) and provide a suitable access for refuse vehicles and emergency vehicles.

I am assuming that as this is a PIP application if planning is required the applicant will be able to provide a more detailed set of design drawings for approval.

Arboricultural Officer – Comments; The Tree Officer is unable to make informed comments as there is insufficient information regarding the impact the proposals will have on the protected group of trees to the East of the site, as well as the trees to the South. Further information is required at this stage of planning to ensure that sufficient consideration has been given to protect the trees.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment, with Arboricultural method statement, tree survey, tree constraints plan and tree protection plan, prepared by a qualified Arboriculturalist and in accordance with BS5837:2012, is required prior to determination, to ascertain the impact and the feasibility of the development in relation to the trees on and off site.

Archaeology – Comments; This site is located at the south end of an area that was the subject of a previous planning application (15/07232/OUT) in 2015. In response to this application the site was made the subject of a geophysical survey that identified a number of potential archaeological features and a recommendation was made at the time by the assistant county archaeologist for this survey to be followed up by a trial trench evaluation in order to ground-truth its results. This evaluation was never carried out however, due to the fact that the application was refused on appeal.

In light of these past events, I would advise that a trial trench evaluation of this reduced area is carried out prior to the determination of the current application. This advice is based on the archaeological potential identified by the geophysical survey of 2015, together with the fact that the southern edge of the site borders the projected route of the former Roman road that ran between Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum) and Bath (Aquae Sulis).

Once this evaluation has been completed and a report has been prepared on the results that has been submitted to Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service (WCAS) for review and approval, I will then be in a position to offer you a fully-informed opinion on the true archaeological potential of the

site and the likely impact of the proposed development upon that potential. If no significant pre-modern archaeology is identified by the evaluation, I would have no further issues to raise in regard to this application. Finds of local and regional significance would require further investigation via open area excavation. This work would be secured via a condition to be attached to any planning permission that may be issued. In the event that archaeological finds of national importance are made, then I would maintain my objection to the proposal as archaeology would then have become an overriding constraint to development.

The evaluation is to be carried out by qualified archaeologists following the standards and guidelines for such work as set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). The costs of this work are to be borne by the applicant.

Ecology – Informal comments; no HRA / AA required, but the site is within the Kennet SSSI Impact Risk Zone and may require consultation with NE.

Natural England – Objection, lack of information; the application site lies within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (formerly AONB) and thus a landscape assessment is required to ensure no significant impacts on the designated landscape. Paragraph 182 of the NPPF highlights the need to conserve and enhance designated landscapes and that the scale of development should be limited and designed to avoid adverse impacts.

We note the justification for housing need in the local area and reference to previous planning applications and appeals. However, in light of the latest government advice, we have a new legal duty to protect designated landscapes and to ensure that any development supports the aims and objectives of the respective NL management plan.

Section 245 (Protected Landscapes) of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 places a duty on relevant authorities in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (“National Landscape”) in England, to seek to further the statutory purposes of the area. The duty applies to local planning authorities and other decision makers in making planning decisions on development and infrastructure proposals, as well as to other public bodies and statutory undertakers.

In the meantime, and without prejudicing that guidance, Natural England advises that:
• The duty to ‘seek to further’ is an active duty, not a passive one. Any relevant authority must take all reasonable steps to explore how the statutory purposes of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape can be furthered;
• The new duty underlines the importance of avoiding harm to the statutory purposes of protected landscapes but also to seek to further the conservation and enhancement of a protected landscape. That goes beyond mitigation and like for like measures and replacement. A relevant authority must be able to demonstrate with reasoned evidence what measures can be taken to further the statutory purpose;
• The proposed measures to further the statutory purposes of a protected landscape, should explore what is possible in addition to avoiding and mitigating the effects of the development, and should be appropriate, proportionate to the type and scale of the development and its implications for the area and effectively secured. Natural England’s view is that the proposed measures should align with and help to deliver the aims and objectives of the designated landscape’s statutory

management plan. The advice of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Team should be sought. If any significant concerns are raised, please re-consult Natural England.

It is anticipated that the government will provide guidance on how the duty should be applied in due course.

The proposed development site is in close proximity to the River Kennet SSSI which includes high quality bat habitat along the riparian corridor. In the vicinity of the site, there are pockets of woodland, including priority habitat woodland, which may provide foraging and roost potential for bat species. In addition, a sewage treatment works is located to the east of the site, which is likely to provide foraging opportunities for the local bat population. We would expect an assessment of foraging and commuting potential within the site and along the boundaries to understand the nature of bat activity in the locality.

Please note that if your authority is minded to grant planning permission contrary to the advice in this letter, you are required under Section 28I (6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to notify Natural England of the permission, the terms on which it is proposed to grant it and how, if at all, your authority has taken account of Natural England's advice. You must also allow a further period of 21 days before the operation can commence.

We note that the site is agricultural land and would welcome a botanical assessment of the site to understand the quality of the baseline habitat. This information is required to ensure that valuable habitat or priority habitat would not be lost.

Development should provide net gains for biodiversity in line with the NPPF paragraphs 180(d), 185 and 186. It is anticipated that major development (defined in the NPPF glossary) will be required by law to deliver a biodiversity gain of at least 10% from January 2024 and that this requirement will be extended to smaller scale development in April 2024. For nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) it is anticipated that the requirement for biodiversity net gain will be implemented from 2025.

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service – Comments; In the event the planning permission is granted for this development, the development would need to be designed and built to meet current Building Regulations requirements. The Authority raises the profile of these future requirements through this early opportunity and requests the comments made under B5 of Approved Document B, The Building Regulations 2010 be made available to the applicant/planning agent as appropriate.

The assessment of this development proposal in respect of Building Control matters will be made during formal consultation, however early recommendations are identified on the attached schedules and relate to the following areas:

• Recommendations identified under B5 of Approved Document B relating to The Building Regulations 2010
• Recommendations to improve safety and reduce property loss in the event of fire

CPRE – Object; Two applications for development in the field that contains the current proposal site have been refused previously in principle and in practice. The fundamental character of the

current proposal does not differ significantly from the character of those applications. It should therefore be rejected for the same reasons: principle of development and character.

The current site is part of a south-facing sloping field overlooking the River Kennet Valley within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The development would change adversely the attractive landscape of the area; it would be urbanisation of the countryside. The site is outside the existing settlement limits for Ramsbury. It thereby conflicts with Wiltshire Core Strategy ("WCS") CP2. We believe a small estate of 9 dwellings on the site proposed would be highly visible, particularly, from viewpoints on Whittonditch Road and Newtown Road.

This application is contrary to WCS Policy CP1: "Development at Large and Small Villages will be limited to that needed to help meet the housing needs of settlements and to improve employment opportunities, services, and facilities" (our emphasis). After construction, the development would bring no employment benefits to the village. There are few, if any, employment opportunities in the village for the occupiers of 9 additional households, which would increase the high current levels of out-commuting. In other words, this application conflicts with the 2023 NPPF – 2 Achieving Sustainable Development, paragraphs 8 and 9, which call for new developments to be sustainable -- to play mutually interdependent economic, social and environmental roles. This application provides no evidence that what is proposed would bring economic, environmental, and social gains.

Supply of housing land
Wiltshire Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land in the East Housing Market Area, but that does not negate automatically Core Policy 2's rule against development outside settlement boundaries. National and local planning policies are to be interpreted in the light of specific local circumstances.

The applicants have not offered any exceptional circumstances to support this proposal, pursuant to Core Policy 44, and/or that it would be more in the Ramsbury community's interest than development of all or part of the other sites on the Council's SHLAA sites map for the village, or of any other site available in the Ramsbury area.

In conclusion, we ask the Council to refuse the development.

The following is a summary of third-party comments that have been received at the time of drafting this report.
Object
• Contrary to development plan policies
• Development should be genuinely plan led
• Site lies outside of limits of development
• Impact on AONB
• Inacceptable landscape and visual impacts
• Building on greenfield land
• Development leaves no access to the northern fields
• Piecemeal attempt at development
• Unacceptable urbanisation of the country
• No provision of affordable housing
• No requirement for large detached housing
• No requirement to deliver 35 dwellings for the area

• If approved, sets a precedent for similar development outside of LoD
• Highway safety implications
• Poor access into/out of site
• Poor visibility
• Increase in traffic along a poor access road
• Increase in traffic resulting in in carbon pollutants
• Newtown Road is very narrow and in places only allows access for one vehicle
• On street parking in village will be made more difficult if scheme approved
• Conflict between vehicle and pedestrian users
• No footpath for over 250m
• To create a footpath would involve the removal of the embanment along Newtown Road and also the removal of the existing foliage
• Bus stop over 280m away (along unpaved road)
• Loss of wildlife
• 7 – 9 homes of limited value to the economy
• Increased demand on local services and facilities, including schools
• Lack of publicity of the application
• Field drainage is poor
• Proposal would result in flooding
• Sewage would end up in the River Kennet, a SSSI

SITE HISTORY

• K/11795/O - Residential Development of 84 Dwellings, Including Public Open Space and Access – Refused – Appealed; appeal withdrawn.
• K/12542/O - Residential Development of 25 Dwellings, Including Public Open Space and Access – Refused – on impact to the AONB and highway safety and traffic congestion.
• 14/09660/OUT - Outline residential development for 51 dwellings, including landscaping, public open space and highways works – Withdrawn.
• 15/07232/OUT - Outline residential development for 25 dwellings, including layout and access (Resubmission of 14/09660/OUT) – Refused – contrary to policy, harm to AONB, impact on heritage, no affordable housing or public open space provision - Dismissed at appeal.
• 14/06922/SCR - Screening Opinion request as to requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment on the potential residential development of land between Whittonditch Road and Newtown Ramsbury – EIA not required.

ASSESSMENT

Site description and proposal

The site comprises part of an agricultural field and is located within the ‘countryside’ on the eastern side of Ramsbury, outside of the existing Limits of Development. The proposed site, surrounding countryside and the settlement of Ramsbury itself, are all contained within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (formerly AONB) designation, which is an indicator of nationally important and highly valued countryside. The site also falls within the Countryside Character Areas BERKSHIRE

AND MARLBOROUGH DOWNS (code 116) and the Landscape Character Assessment County: Chalk River Valley:
Condition good
Strength strong
Strategy conserve

Access is onto a narrow Lane, which runs along the southern boundary of the site. The lane is considered to be narrow and the existing access point has very poor visibility splays that would require significant cutting back in order to make them safe for vehicles and pedestrians to access safely.

From the Councils records the site is recognised as Grade 3 agricultural land. Along the sites eastern boundary are an existing row of trees included within a Tree Preservation Order (TPO: 2014/00008/MIXED). The topography of the land slopes down from north to south. The River Kennet (Site of Special Scientific Interest - SSSI) passes close to the site, just south of the narrow access lane. The site's eastern and western boundaries adjoin some residential properties. To the south and southeast of the site are Grade II Listed buildings (dwellings), which form a part of the sites context.

The application seeks Permission in Principle for seven to nine dwellings on the site. This is a process introduced in 2018 as an alternative to full or outline planning permission for small housing sites, which separates the consideration of matters of principle (this first stage) from the technical details (a later second stage).

The scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land-use and the amount of development. Other matters fall to be considered at the technical details consent stage. Planning conditions cannot be imposed on Permission in Principle; no details of the proposed houses are required for such applications.

Principle

The scope of Permission in Principle is limited to the location, land use and amount of development. Issues relevant to these 'in principle' matters alone can be considered. In the event of permission in principle being granted, other matters such as the design, layout, access and landscaping would fall to be considered at a later date in an application for 'technical details' approval.

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that the determination of the application must be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site lies near to Ramsbury, a settlement identified as a large village within the development plan of the area, however the site is wholly located within open countryside outside of the limits of development, in what is construed an unsustainable location. The Spatial Strategy for the Marlborough Community Area (Core Policy 14) thus places the site outside the Limits of Development, where rural policies therefore apply.

The Spatial Vision of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (Core Policy 1 & 2) prohibits new residential development outside recognised Limits of Development unless the development meets the criteria

for infill development within designated small villages, or unless it is supported by one of the ‘exception policies’ outlined in para. 4.25 of the Strategy (e.g. agricultural worker accommodation). None of these exceptions apply in this instance. The principle of development for between 7 to 9 new dwellings outside any recognised settlement is thus contrary to the development plan.

National Planning Policy Framework and Housing Land Supply

The NPPF is a material consideration in the decision-taking process. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policy for England and places sustainable development at the heart of the decision-taking process incorporating objectives for economic, social and environmental protection. These objectives seek to balance growth and local community needs against protection of the natural, built and historic environment.

Changes to the NPPF (Dec 2023) are pertinent to the determination of this application, these changes came into effect as of the 20th December 2023, which include amongst other areas a change in the requirements on five year housing land supply for Council’s and also of particular importance for this site an emphasis on supporting beauty and placemaking.

For the purposes of the revised NPPF Wiltshire Council is a ‘paragraph 77 authority’; and, because Wiltshire Council has an emerging local plan that has now passed the Regulation 19 stage of the plan-making process – with both a policies map and proposed allocations towards meeting housing need – it is now ‘only’ required to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of four years’ worth of housing, which the Council can demonstrate. This means that the relevant policies of the WCS are now once again up-to-date and that the planning balance is ‘level’ rather than ‘tilted’.

The scheme is located outside of the limits of development where development would not be supported, substantial weight is now to be attributed to Core Polices 1, 2 and 14 of the WCS (2015) and on this basis the development is considered contrary to the delivery strategy and the application rejected in terms of the principle of development.

However, even if the Council were found to not have the prerequisite housing land supply, it is considered that the tilted balance would not apply in this instance as the development is considered to have a detrimental impact on the character of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape to which great weight must be afforded with no clear benefits to justify the harm. There are therefore clear reasons for refusing the application against the policies of the Framework that protect areas/assets such as National Landscapes of particular importance and so it is argued that the tilted balance would not engage.

Visual impact on the area, including the impact on the character and appearance of the area

Core Policy 57 ‘Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping’ seeks to secure good design. Core Policy 51 ‘Landscape’ seeks to ensure that development protects, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures.

The site is located within a rural location within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, a protected designated landscape. The design, layout, appearance and landscaping of the proposed dwellings are not known at this stage, but impacts on the character of the area can be a valid consideration in relation to the principle of development. It is considered that the proposed development would have an urbanizing impact on the rural character of this area, that would be permanent and irreversible.

Concerns have been raised by CPRE and NE at the potential for impact on the character of the area. Paragraph 182 of the NPPF highlights the need to conserve and enhance designated landscapes and that the scale of development should be limited and designed to avoid adverse impacts.

The proposed urban development of this site will result in a permanent change in land use and to the character of the site and its immediate environs, resulting in a change from agricultural use and character to that of urban development. The proposed development would therefore result in harm to the character of this part of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (AONB) and there are no exceptional circumstances that would outweigh the harm to the landscape character. The scheme would therefore conflict with Core Policies 51 and 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and with the NPPF (2023).

Impact on highway safety

Core Policy 60 Sustainable Transport supports the premise for development within sustainable locations. Core Policy 61 Transport and new development, amongst other criteria aims to ensure that the proposal is capable of being served by safe access to the highway network.

Ramsbury is a village with some amenities and a bus service; however, the site is located in a location away from the limited amenities of the village with no pedestrian access along its frontage. Pedestrians accessing the site would therefore be in conflict with vehicular traffic. The conclusions reached by the highway officer are therefore agreed with in that any residential units will be reliant mostly on the use of the private vehicle for accessing day to day services, facilities and employment.

In order to create the required visibility splays and also the footpaths to units H1 and H2 there would be a need to remove a swathe of vegetation within these locations.

The highway officer does not raise an objection on highway safety grounds on the provision that swathes of vegetation are removed to accommodate amongst other things, visibility splays - which conflicts with landscape issues.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

This is an issue that would fall to be assessed at the later technical stage; however, with regard to the sites location it is considered that some form of development could reasonably be designed to sit within the site without necessarily creating a significant impact on the amenity of any nearby properties.

Conclusion/planning balance

In determining this application the local planning authority is fully aware that if development accords with an up-to-date Local Plan it should be approved, and that proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. It is considered that the overall strategy of the Core Strategy to direct development to the most sustainable settlements remains desirable and accords with the objectives of the NPPF. The degree of weight to be given to each issue will be weighed in the planning balance.

The main issues are whether the location, the proposed land use and the amount of development is suitable with particular regard to the local housing strategy, local and national policy relating to accessibility to services and facilities, and the character and appearance of the area.

For the purposes of the revised NPPF Wiltshire Council is a 'paragraph 77 authority'; and, because Wiltshire Council has an emerging local plan that has now passed the Regulation 19 stage of the plan-making process – with both a policies map and proposed allocations towards meeting housing need – it is now 'only' required to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of four years' worth of housing, which the Council can demonstrate. This means that the relevant policies of the WCS are now once again up-to-date and that the planning balance is 'level' rather than 'tilted'.

The site lies outside of the limits of development of Ramsbury and the proposed development does not comply with the relevant policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy in the provision of housing. There is a general presumption against development outside the defined limits, with it being strictly controlled and only permitted in line with exceptions under other policies, which this scheme does not meet. As the scheme is located outside of the limits of development where development would not be supported, substantial weight is now to be attributed to Core Polices 1, 2 and 14 of the WCS (2015) and on this basis the development is considered contrary to the delivery strategy and the application rejected in terms of the principle of development.

Core Policy 61 of the WCS (2015) requires new development to be located and designed to reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives. The site is located outside of a rural village within what is construed as countryside, with poor pedestrian access to local facilities, services or employment opportunities. There is no nearby pavement and the generation of further housing will place the occupiers in conflict with the existing highway movements along the adjoining highway. On balance it is considered likely that end users will be heavily reliant on the private motor vehicle for day to day access and the proposed location and land use do not promote a sustainable pattern of development.

The applicant argues that the two properties set within large curtilages support the proposed development of the site with an urban cul-de-sac within the rural open countryside adjoining Ramsbury as an appropriate land use in this instance. In addition, the scheme would be for detached market housing that would be beyond the ability of a local work force to be able to afford. In terms of providing a socially sustainable development the scheme equally fails on this count as well. The applicant argues that Ramsbury is not a designated rural area and therefore there is no need to supply affordable housing on a scheme that is kept below the catchment of 10 units for a small major.

It is acknowledged that there is a partial exemption to the 10-unit affordable housing threshold for 'designated' rural areas. The National Planning Policy framework defines designated rural areas as

“National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now known as National Landscapes) and areas designated as ‘rural’ under s157 of the Housing Act 1985”. In these areas, local authorities may seek affordable housing contributions on developments of between six and nine units, though these may only be in the form of a financial contribution. It is therefore argued that as the site and Ramsbury is located within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (former AONB) that it is a ‘designated rural area’ and therefore should provide for affordable housing contributions. The scheme therefore again fails on the social sustainability arguments as supported by the NPPF.

It is acknowledged that on face value the ‘indicative site plan’ suggests a way in which the site may be developed; however, the plan fails to address the significant changes in levels across the site and how development would rise up the slope and the likely necessary retaining features to accommodate the development and also the additional harmful impacts this would result in on the rural character of the area. Further is it considered that the amount of development conflicts with the pattern of the properties to the east and west, of large dwellings set within large curtilages. The scheme is considered overdevelopment, when viewed in the context within which it is proposed and would create a higher density urban development which would have a detrimental impact on the rural character of the area.

Although matters of layout would be considered at the technical details stage, it is clear that seven to nine homes would be an overdevelopment of the land, such that an objection on grounds of the amount of development is a legitimate concern. This overintensity of development would contribute to the above identified landscape harm.

It is considered in this instance, that the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh any limited benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. On the basis of the individual merits of this scheme, the material considerations indicate that permission in principle should be refused.

RECOMMENDATION:
Refuse

Refusal Reason(s): (1)

1 The application site is located in an unsustainable location in the open countryside, where the development of new homes is strictly controlled. The development of seven to nine market homes is not acceptable in principle, such that the proposal conflicts with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policies 1, 2 and 14 and is within an unsustainable location thereby conflicting with Core Polices 60 and 61. The harm arising from the proposal is not significantly and demonstrably outweighed by any benefits, including to housing land supply.

The site is located within a rural location and designated landscape, the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. The site is set within a very strong rural character, supported by the mature hedge and tree boundary that robustly defines the boundary features of this area, against the rising agricultural fields. The proposed urban development of seven to nine new homes in this rural location with associated infrastructure, retaining features and domestic paraphernalia would read as an overdevelopment of the site, out of character with the very low-density character of the locality. The result would create an urban development that would be a permanent and irreversible change in land use and detrimental to the character of the site and its immediate environs. Development would therefore cause demonstrable harm to the local rural character and the landscape setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, in conflict with Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policies 51 and 57; and paragraph 135 and section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Dec, 2023). There are clear reasons for refusing the application against the policies of the Framework that protect areas/assets such as National Landscapes of particular importance and so it is argued that the tilted balance would not engage and does not support the principle of development.

The scheme would therefore conflict with Core Policies 1, 2, 14, 51, 57, 60 and 61 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and with the National Planning Policy Framework (Dec, 2023).