

THE WILTSHIRE DESIGN GUIDE:

21st March 2023, Wiltshire Council published their version 7, final draft report, The Wiltshire Design Guide.

This is a lengthy document, that took a great deal of time and thought to produce, this being the 7th version. The Guide goes into great detail explaining what Wiltshire Council expect of the designs being put forward for planning consent in the area.

It is a widely respected document that is used by most designers in Wiltshire. Compliance with the requirements of this document has led to a consistency of design quality throughout the area and must be considered to be one of the most successful documents produced by Wiltshire Council.

There is also 'The National Design Guide' where the 'Ten Characteristics' are set out. The Wilts Design Guide uses these ten characteristics as a basis for their own guide thus giving their document significance and authority.

There is also the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan which was adopted on November 15th 2019. This is another document that helps to define what is expected of design in the Corsham area, and this includes Westwells. It is now part of planning policy after being adopted and is used when assessing planning applications in the area.

The Corsham Neighbourhood Plan has a supporting document known as the Corsham Design Guide, a more detailed document.

The 'Land south of Westwells' site is situated in area 20 of the Corsham Design Guide and is known as WESTWELLS AND WADSWICK GREEN.

The initial statement reads: Westwells is an old village to the south of Corsham, now also containing a substantial proportion of newer development.

This document confirms that Westwells is an old 'village' and thus should be treated as one with particular reference to the Policies contained in the adopted 'Wiltshire Core Strategy'.

Amongst many paragraphs of note:

Green Infrastructure and Batscape

- The woodland in the centre of Westwells is considered likely to constitute part of the railway line strategic flyway as a lesser horseshoe roost and flight lines for both lesser and greater horseshoe bats have been recorded previously in this area. However, the suitability of the central area of Westwells may have been altered by the new development. Suitable connective habitat is still present in this area so it has been included as one of the route options in this area;
- Additional suitable connective habitats that could facilitate bat movement through this area to the railway line are also present along the southern boundary of Moor Green, connecting with the hedgerow running north along the eastern edge of Greenhill and also through the mature trees that form the boundary between the rear of the residential properties at the western end of Westwells and the boundary of MOD Corsham Information Systems and Services;
- Greater horseshoe bats have been recorded using the northern boundary of the area of scrub/woodland that lies either side of Rowan Lane and this area is likely to be an important foraging and connective habitat for Bechstein's, greater and lesser horseshoe bats as they have been recorded in this area;
- The hedgerows and woodland surrounding Wadswick Green are likely to be important habitats, potentially for Bechstein's, greater and lesser horseshoe bats;
- The area of rough grassland to the north of Wadswick Green is likely to be an important foraging area for greater horseshoe bats;
- The Wadswick Green Retirement Villages contains two large bat houses which were constructed around 2015 to accommodate bats displaced from the former building on the Royal Arthur Naval training base.

The design guide goes on to state:

SPECIFIC DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR REFURBISHMENT, EXTENSIONS AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

Building mass and height

- Building height of 2-storeys to be favoured; avoid 3-storey high buildings, except at Wadswick Green; avoid bungalows in the more historic areas; only allow any additional large footprint buildings where these are hidden from view and well integrated into the landscape.

Materials

- Favour local limestone, rubble stone and dressed with or without white/ cream/yellow render; reconstituted stone can be considered if its appearance fits in with the natural limestone; other building and cladding materials, such as timber, can be also considered, if sustainable and high quality design principles are followed and the proposals fit well within their surroundings.

Roofs

- Favour dark grey, brown or red tiles as roofing material;
- Favour gable roofs 40 to 60 degrees to match existing.

Windows and doors

- Favour casement windows;

Other specific building features

- Consider designs picking up specific building features nearby, but care should be taken to design these carefully, so they don't look contrived.

These are the design guidelines required for all buildings in the village of Westwells by Wiltshire Council. These have been developed over many years by Wiltshire Council, in conjunction with Corsham Town Council, to produce a coherent design philosophy for the village of Westwells. These are policies that are now adopted by, and woven into, The Wiltshire Core Strategy.

These policies should not be ignored; they should be taken into account when designing a building for this area, they should be respected.

And the applicant for the data centre proposed for the 'land south of Westwells Road' has submitted this design:



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VIEW POINT



Studio #03 - #04
Sanchi Tower 5/1
HSC, Bore
C.G. Road Ahmedabad
380001
India

External rendering of proposed data centre			
Project	Sanchi Quarry, Westwells	Scale	
View	View 1	File	
Project No.	17645/1	Date	May 29
Revision		By	



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VIEW



Studio #03 - #04
Sanchi Tower 5/1
HSC, Bore
C.G. Road Ahmedabad
380001
India

External rendering of proposed data centre			
Project	Sanchi Quarry, Westwells	Scale	
View	View 2	File	
Project No.	17645/2	Date	May 25
Revision		By	



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VIEW POINT



VANTRAM ANIMATION STUDIO		Studio #03 - 604 Somesh Tower B/1 HSC Bank C.G. Road Ahmedabad 380001 India
Project: External rendering of proposed data centre		
Address: Sandi Quarry, Westwells		
Design Title: View 3		
Design No: 17645/3	Scale:	
Revision:	Date: May 25	Drawn:



VIEW POINT



VANTRAM ANIMATION STUDIO		Studio #03 - 604 Somesh Tower B/1 HSC Bank C.G. Road Ahmedabad 380001 India
Project: External rendering of proposed data centre		
Address: Sandi Quarry, Westwells		
Design Title: View 4		
Design No: 17645/4	Scale:	
Revision:	Date: May 25	Drawn:



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It is hard to understand how any of those design standards, that have been so carefully worked out, and agreed and adopted by Wiltshire Council, have been taken into consideration at all. The designers have completely ignored those design requirements and are suggesting a 20m tall industrial box, finished in metal cladding. How much more conflicting could this design be?

The site is in the centre of our village, it is not part of the adjacent Sands Business Park, it is an entirely inappropriate design and use for this site.

The proposed building is completely contrary to almost every design standard listed. It is as if they looked through the design standards and considered how they could avoid complying with every single one of them, and then submitted their design.

And they succeeded. They have not bothered to consider any of them.

One would have to ask: why go to the trouble of spending so much time and effort producing these design guides when they are completely and utterly ignored.

Isn't it odd that local residents must comply with these design codes when planning their extensions, but outsiders do not? Why?