

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

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Application No: PL/2025/08648

Proposal: Reserved Matters Application for appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for 55 Residential Dwellings following Outline Planning permission ref PL/2024/05435

Site Address: Land North of Melksham Road, Holt

Case Officer: Jemma Foster

Reference:

Drawings and documents indexed on the 30th October and the 11th November 2025 on Wiltshire Council planning application webpage.

Policy and guidance:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy, Core Policy 57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping' (Abbreviated CP57)
- Wiltshire Design Guide – Wiltshire Council Supplementary Planning Document adopted 25th March 2024 (abbreviated WDG)
- National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG December 2024) (abbreviated NPPF)
- National Design Guide (MHCLG January 2021) (abbreviated NDG)
- Building for a Healthy Life (Homes England June 2020) (referenced in the NPPF) (abbreviated BfHL)
- Streets for a Healthy Life: A companion guide to Building for a Healthy Life (Homes England) (abbreviated SFHL)
- Holt Neighbourhood Plan 2026 (Made January 2017) (abbreviated HNP)

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping': A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.

Observations

Wiltshire Council granted outline planning permission on 17th October 2025, following approval by the Strategic Planning Committee on 15th April 2025. The consent allows up to 55 residential dwellings, with all matters reserved except for access to the site (Ref: PL/2024/05435).

Objection

The current proposals would not meet the high-quality design and place shaping expectations of CP57 for the following reasons:

- 1) The proposed layout lacks a return loop and instead features a series of branching cul-de-sacs serving private driveways. The reliance on dead-end private drives conflicts with WDG paragraph 5.2.1, which advises that cul-de-sac development should be short, with the turning head clearly visible from its junction with a through road; and CP57 (ix) particularly regarding legibility and accessibility. To improve legibility and movement, the layout should incorporate a connected internal loop or edge lane, for example around the north-eastern block, enhancing access for pedestrians, cyclists, and service vehicles.

The design necessitates reversing and turning movements at the ends of cul-de-sacs for both domestic and refuse vehicles and relies on numerous bin collection points. These features may lead to operational inefficiencies and potential inconvenience and source of conflict for residents. These would represent 'what red looks like BfHL (pp 18-19) rather than the preferred 'what green looks like' (pp 16-17) - 'connected streets along the edges of a development'. The use of a continuous edge lane along around the north-eastern block would, therefore, be preferable, as private drives by their nature limit public access and connectivity afforded to cyclists and pedestrians.

- 2) WDG expectation 9.2.2 requires garden areas to be at least equal to the footprint of the house. Several plots - such as 8, 22, 40, 50, 52, and 59 - fall short of this standard. To ensure adequate private amenity space and compliance with design guidance, these plots should be redesigned to increase garden size, for example by adjusting building footprints or reconfiguring plot boundaries.
- 3) Corner elevations generally feature well-proportioned windows that complement the house types and enhance visual interest. However, certain key plots identified on Illustrative Masterplan - A (Design and Access Statement Rev A) and others as listed below, would benefit from an additional bay window on their secondary street-facing elevation. This enhancement would reinforce their prominence within the layout and improve streetscape articulation. This approach aligns with the principles set out in BfHL and the WDG. Plot numbers 4, 7, 15, 30, 40 and 53.

The side elevations for plots 40, 41 and 52 appear to be incorrectly drawn, with the upper single window shown to the rear of the house and not the front. Whereas plot 42 has been drawn correctly. For clarity, please could the applicant amend the relevant house type drawings.

- 4) The current location of the pumping station restricts the potential for future highway and footpath connections, which conflicts with WDG paragraph 5.1.9 requiring layouts to safeguard opportunities for connectivity. To address this, it is recommended that the pumping station be repositioned, thereby enabling future linkages and supporting a more integrated and accessible development.
- 5) The proposed attenuation basins appear as simple grassed depressions with an engineered character, lacking the naturalistic qualities expected of integrated landscape features. This design presents a poor visual impression and does not meet the expectations of CP57 (ii).

In accordance with WDG expectations 6.3 and 6.5, attenuation features should be designed to blend into the landscape, avoiding the appearance of artificial depressions. A more appropriate approach would distribute water volumes across the site using a combination of wetlands, rain gardens, small ponds, and permeable surfaces.

Incorporating these elements at the plot and street level would not only enhance the visual quality of the development but also ensure the drainage strategy aligns with local design guidance and contributes positively to the site's character.

- 6) The two parking courts serving plots 11 - 14 and 47 - 52 must incorporate enhanced landscaping to meet WDG and BfHL standards. In line with BfHL guidance (pp. 16 - 17), allocate an area equivalent to one parking space for green relief every four bays. This space should accommodate tree planting or rain gardens within the parking court, reducing reliance on adjacent private gardens. Additional trees in green spaces should also be introduced along the frontage of plots 47 - 52 to strengthen green infrastructure and improve visual quality.
- 7) The central street corridor currently features only amenity grass, which provides limited ecological and visual value. In accordance with WDG expectations and BfHL Healthy Streets principles, the landscaping strategy should incorporate greater diversity, pollinator-friendly shrubs, rain gardens and smaller native tree species (if possible). These enhancements would improve biodiversity, create seasonal interest, and contribute to sustainable drainage. Opportunities for such planting should be explored both within the water mains easement and in adjacent areas to maximize ecological and aesthetic benefits. Similar should be considered for the easements within the eastern corridor. However, any landscape mitigation and proposals should follow the advice of the Landscape Officer, and I will likely defer to them.
- 8) To maintain visual continuity and comply with WDG Expectation 9.3.2, the boundary between the parking court serving plots 11 - 14 and the adjacent private rear gardens should be defined by a 1.8 m high stone wall incorporating piers, tile creasing, and header coping, matching the treatment used behind plot 16. For consistency, the rear boundaries of plots 2, 3, 5, and 6 should preferably adopt the same specification. This approach will reinforce a coherent streetscape and reflect local vernacular detailing.
- 9) The Refuse Collection Layout indicates kerbside collection for plots 47- 52 between parking plots which would not align with the Waste storage and Collection SPD para 5.2.3. Whereas the Landscape Masterplan shows a bin collection point on the opposite side of the parking court, and his location appears to exceed the 30m maximum carry distance recommended for occupants. The applicant should clarify the intended arrangement and ensure alignment between the plans and the SPD.

BfHL assessment

The DAS includes a BfHL assessment. This represents an initial step in reviewing the design proposals, and the following section - using the red, amber and green traffic light system - provides preliminary responses for further consideration.

- ✓ Natural connections – the current layout provides only a single point of access for vehicles from Melksham Road, resulting in a cul-de-sac arrangement that limits permeability and future connectivity. To align with Wiltshire Design Guide principles for legibility and movement, opportunities for additional highway and footpath links should be safeguarded. Relocating the pumping station away from its current position is recommended to enable potential future connections and support a more integrated street network.

- ✓ Walking cycling and public transport - the current street layout results in a cul-de-sac design with a prominent turning head. This approach conflicts with BfHL principles. Consider redesigning the main route to improve place shaping to better align with BfHL guidance and the comments in 'Well defined streets and spaces' below.
- ✓ Facilities and services - the site is located on the edge of Holt and beyond the 800 metres walking distance to key local facilities recommended by the Urban Design Compendium Volume 1, and where '*accessibility should be measured as distances that are actually travelled rather than 'as the crow flies'.*' (FiT). However, it is within acceptable walking distance of Holt Primary School (circa 660 metres).
- ✓ Homes for everyone - the development will deliver 40% affordable housing, in line with local policy, providing a mix of tenures including social rent, shared ownership, and market sale. Homes range from one-bedroom maisonettes to four-bedroom houses, with most meeting at least 85% of the Nationally Described Space Standards. This approach supports housing choice and addresses local needs for both affordable and family-sized homes.
- ✓ Making the most of what's there - the development proposals retain and strengthen existing boundary vegetation through additional tree and shrub planting, enhancing the site's ecological and visual character. The layout integrates these features by orienting development blocks outward, creating active frontages that reinforce connectivity with the surrounding landscape. To address the site's topography, the northern blocks incorporate gently contoured retaining banks and extended rear gardens, eliminating the need for visually intrusive retaining structures while maintaining a natural transition in levels.
- ✓ A memorable character - the site layout successfully integrates the underground water main and easements into a 'Central Green' corridor that enhances connectivity and provides a focal point for the development. The proposed 'Gateway' introduces a landscaped village street character, using native planting and traditional boundary treatments to reinforce a sense of arrival. Building designs draw on local vernacular through the use of stone detailing, varied rooflines, and proportionate window arrangements, ensuring consistency with Wiltshire Design Guide principles.
- ✓ Well defined streets and spaces - the development proposals include outward facing blocks with active frontages and dual aspect corner turning buildings. Prominent front boundaries feature low stone walls to reinforce a distinctive sense of place and continuity with the surrounding context, as recommended in the WDG.
- ✓ Easy to find your way around - The development adopts a relaxed grid layout, organized into distinctive areas such as the 'Gateway', 'Central Green', and 'Orchard Edge'. These character zones are designed to help residents and visitors form a clear mental map of the site.
- ✓ Healthy streets - the main streets incorporate tree-lined verges and incidental spaces designed to encourage social interaction and informal recreation. With regard to points 5) and 7) above, to strengthen ecological value and visual interest, the 'Central Green' should include a more diverse planting palette - such as native shrubs, pollinator-friendly species, and seasonal groundcover - alongside integrated rain gardens to support sustainable drainage and enhance biodiversity.
- ✓ Cycle and car parking - the development includes a range of parking solutions. To strengthen natural surveillance and create a more active and welcoming environment, the parking courts should incorporate properties with ground floor habitable rooms overlooking

the shared space. This arrangement will improve safety, visual interest, and social interaction.

- ✓ Green and blue infrastructure - while the proposal includes a permanent water feature and swales, consideration should be given to distributing water storage across the site through additional features such as rain gardens, permeable surfaces and small ponds. This approach would enhance biodiversity, improve surface water management, and align with the WDG principles for integrated green and blue infrastructure.
- ✓ Back of pavement front of home - in keeping with Wiltshire's vernacular character, boundary treatments incorporate stone, reflecting traditional detailing and proportions. Prominent front boundaries feature low stone walls to reinforce a distinctive sense of place and continuity with the surrounding context, as recommended in the WDG.