

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

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Date: 09.01.2026

Application No: PL/2025/09486

Proposal: Reserved Matters Application for a) The scale of the development; b) The layout of the development; c) The access road and the 'foot-cycleway' connecting the housing with the A361: including kerbing, any cutting/embankment/retaining structures, camber, surfacing, drainage and the stream crossing; d) The external appearance of the development; e) The landscaping of the site following outline planning consent 20/00379/OUT.

Site Address: Land South of Trowbridge

Case Officer: Jemma Foster

Reference:

Drawings and documents indexed between the 2nd and 11th December 2025 on application webpage.

Policy and guidance:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy, Core Policy 57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping' (abbreviated CP57)
- Wiltshire Local Plan Review - Pre-Submission Draft 202-2038 (Regulation 19) (September 2023) (abbreviated WLPR)
- 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)
- The Southwick Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018-2036 (Made October 2021) (abbreviated SNDP)

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

Following the refusal of outline application 20/00379/OUT, permission was granted on appeal (APP/Y3940/W/23/3321957) with conditions governing the design of the development. The principal design conditions are as follows:

4. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

- Dwg Ref: 150202 PP 01 Rev E Location Plan
- Dwg Ref: 150202 PP 02 Rev Q Access, land use and building heights
- Dwg Ref: 150202 PP 03 Rev U Green Infrastructure Plan
- Dwg Ref: 150202 PP 04 Rev R Lighting
- Dwg Ref: 37912/5501/005 Rev A Emergency Access

and

5. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in general accordance with the design and layout principles in the following:

- Dwg Ref: 150202 PP05 Rev B Design Principles
- Dwg Ref: 150202 R01 Rev P Design and Access Statement
- Dwg Ref: 37912/5501/010 Rev G Proposed Internal Access Road

Objection

The development proposals would not meet the high quality design and place shaping requirements of CP57 nor would they meet the high quality locally relevant design requirements of the SNDP for the following reasons:

a) The scale of the development

1. The approved Access, Land Use and Building Heights Plan limits development heights to a maximum of 2.5 storeys (9.5 m). The Statement of Compliance proposes a three-storey apartment block (Block A) to create a focal building, but this exceeds the approved parameter and introduces a design that does not reflect local character.

Recommendation: Incorporating a 'room in the roof' approach with dormers and additional architectural features (refer to the general appearance comments below) would reduce perceived massing and improve contextual fit.

2. Additionally, several house types exceed permitted heights:
 - Greendale and Oakrise (approx. 10.6 m) and Hillgrove (approx. 9.8 m) exceed the 9.5 m limit for 2.5 storeys.
 - Woodmount (approx. 8.8 m) and Willowcrest (approx. 8.9 m) exceed the 8.5 m limit for two-storey areas.

Recommendation: These variations conflict with approved parameters and should be revised to ensure compliance and maintain design quality.

3. The Design and Access Statement (DAS) identifies locations where 1½-storey development would be most appropriate, particularly in the southwestern corner, to respect the setting of Southwick Court Farm. This cluster includes:
 - **Southwick Court Farmhouse:** A two-storey, late 16th/17th-century 'L'-shaped building constructed from rubble stone and dressed limestone with a slate roof.
 - **Gatehouse and Outbuildings:** Single-storey structures with rubble stone and dressed limestone elevations and clay tile roofs.

Recommendation: The applicant should incorporate design responses that reflect this historic context, such as:

- Introducing 1½-storey building forms in the southwestern corner.
- Using locally distinctive materials (rubble stone, limestone, clay tiles).
- Applying roof forms and proportions that reduce visual massing and complement the farmhouse setting.
- Incorporate building clusters that emulate traditional rural farmstead forms to reinforce local character and contextual fit.

Doing so will strengthen local character, enhance visual quality, and ensure compliance with Condition 5.

4. The Outline design proposals as described in the DAS were shaped by an analysis of the local context, particularly the form and massing of buildings around key areas such as the entrance, arrival zone, primary road, and parkland edge. It promotes design features that reflect local character, including:
 - Groups of short terraces at the entrance (minimum of four dwellings per terrace)
 - Agricultural barn forms to create a transitional edge
 - Courtyard clusters of dwellings, including opportunities for 1.5-storey units
 - Higher-density development along the primary road, with short terraces and semi-detached clusters with apartments turning corners.

In contrast, the RM Application relies predominantly on semi-detached and detached house types, with only a small number of short terraces – comprising three units each - and a single apartment block. This approach does not align with the aspirations of the DAS or the Design Principles Plan (DPP) and risks producing a layout that lacks local distinctiveness.

Recommendation: To comply with the WDG and BfHL principles, the scheme should incorporate a greater variety of building forms and arrangements that reinforce the local massing, character and sense of place.

5. The DAS and DPP identify a continuous development line as a defining feature of Character Area 4 (Parkland Edge), creating a distinctive rhythm of detached, gable-fronted dwellings.

The RM Application does not achieve this. Buildings - including detached, semi-detached, and short terraces - are positioned inconsistently, stepping forward and backward without a clear development line. This irregular spacing, largely influenced by parking arrangements, disrupts the intended rhythm and visual coherence.

Similarly, Character Areas 2 (Entrance and Arrival) and 3 (Neighbourhood Core) lack the strong sense of enclosure and continuous built form illustrated in the DAS and DPP.

Recommendation: To align with the DAS and DPP, the RM Application should establish:

- A continuous development line in Character Area 4, composed of lower-density detached dwellings with a clear rhythm of gable frontages.
- Strong, continuous frontages in Character Areas 2 and 3 to reinforce enclosure and sense of place.

Doing so will enhance legibility, visual quality, and compliance with design principles.

b) The layout of the development

6. Although the development proposals include attenuation basins and swales, to accord with BfHL and WDG Green and Blue Infrastructure principles, 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.

Recommendation: Revise the drainage strategy to ensure full compliance with DEFRA SuDS National Standards (June 2025) and align with WDG expectations for green and blue infrastructure. Incorporate BfHL principles by introducing naturalistic features such as rain gardens, swales, and wetlands at the plot and street level to enhance visual quality, biodiversity, and site character.

7. The gas main and associated easements in the DAS and DPP are located within the extent of the adopted highway. This approach enables the creation of a continuous 'Green Spine' through the neighbourhood core, enhancing connectivity and visual quality.

In contrast, the Reserved Matters (RM) Application positions the gas main beneath a footpath and the easement beneath front gardens and parking spaces. This configuration may lead to future conflicts between residents and the utilities provider and limits opportunities for integrated green infrastructure.

Recommendation: To align with the DPP, DAS and WDG expectations, relocate the gas main and easements within the public realm/adopted highway and set building frontages further back. This will facilitate enhanced Green and Blue Infrastructure along the main street, supporting biodiversity, sustainable drainage, and compliance with BfHL principles.

It is noted that a water main, which includes a 10.4m easement, is currently positioned beneath front gardens and parking spaces in the eastern part of the site. To prevent future conflicts and ensure a consistent high quality, attractive main street, the water main and its easement should be relocated within the adopted highway, following the same design approach applied to the gas main.

8. The DPP identifies several north–south Green Links, including swales within verges that connect both sides of the primary road (see note 7 on the DPP), as well as similar features along secondary roads.

In contrast, the RM Application provides only one Green Link within the Public Open Space (POS) and omits such connections from secondary and tertiary streets or shared spaces. Many secondary and tertiary streets or shared spaces are instead dominated by frontage parking, which reduces opportunities for integrated green infrastructure.

Recommendation: Incorporate Green Links within secondary and tertiary streets and shared spaces in accordance with the DPP. This will enhance connectivity, support sustainable drainage, and improve the visual and ecological quality of the development.

9. The RM Application layout follows a similar a loose grid arrangement as shown in the DPP, which suggests potential for connectivity. The main street includes a short loop via a secondary street approximately halfway along the main street, relying on branching cul-de-sacs with communal driveways that terminate in dead ends to the east of the site. This approach limits permeability and may create operational challenges for residents and service vehicles.

According to WDG (para 5.2.1), cul-de-sacs should be short, with their turning head visible from the junction with a through road. The proposed layout does not meet this expectation and

conflicts with Core Policy 57 (vii and ix) regarding legibility and accessibility. It also reflects BfHL red indicators (pages 18–19) rather than green indicators (pages 16–17), which advocate connected streets along development edges.

Recommendation: Introduce a looped primary road or secondary road connections towards the east of the site and introduce a connected edge lane along the south of the site to reduce reliance on dead-end communal drives, improve legibility, and support future adaptability.

10. Car parking in the DAS is illustrated as a primary space on-plot at the front of properties, complemented by a secondary space in a rear courtyard. This arrangement facilitates convenient access for residents while meeting Wiltshire County standards and avoiding a streetscape dominated by vehicles. Parking courts, where required, should be well-overlooked to ensure high levels of natural surveillance.

In contrast, the RM Application relies predominantly on on-plot parking to the side or front, resulting in extensive frontage parking. Despite some landscaping, this approach creates views along streets that are visually dominated by parked vehicles and irregular building lines caused by mixed parking arrangements.

Recommendation: Introduce a broader range of parking solutions consistent with the DAS, including small, well-overlooked courtyards, as advocated by BfHL and the WDG. This will reduce the visual impact of parking, enhance street character, and align with Core Policy 57's principles of high-quality design and place shaping.

d) The external appearance of the development

11. The Outline DAS and DPP set out a clear aspiration to create “a positive edge to Trowbridge to the south,” incorporating design components such as:
 - Large chimney stacks and projecting window features to reflect local character and distinctiveness.
 - Agricultural barn forms to provide a transitional edge.
 - Courtyard clusters of dwellings forming barn-like arrangements.
 - A clear hierarchy of building forms.

In contrast, the RM Application predominantly uses standard developer house types that lack reference to these local characteristics. The Statement of Compliance does not demonstrate how the proposed architecture responds to contextual analysis, resulting in a design approach that appears generic and fails to meet the expectations of the DAS, DPP, WDG, BfHL principles, or CP57 requirements for high-quality design and place shaping.

Recommendation: Reconsider the building arrangement and architectural design to align with the aspirations of the DAS and DPP. This could include:

- Introducing barn-inspired forms and courtyard clusters at key edges.
- Incorporating locally distinctive features such as prominent chimneys, varied rooflines, and projecting windows.
- Using materials and detailing that reflect the rural context, as outlined in the WDG and CP57.

Doing so will strengthen local character, enhance visual quality, and ensure compliance with Condition 5.

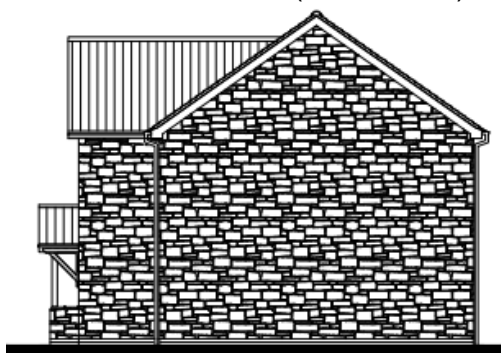
12. The DAS sets out an aspiration for “modern family homes,” referring not only to compliance with current building standards but also to a contemporary architectural character. This is supported by numerous precedent images of distinctive, modern designs included within the DAS.

In contrast, the RM Application proposes predominantly traditional house types, which does not align with the DAS vision or the intended character for this site. This inconsistency extends to ancillary elements such as bin and cycle stores.

Recommendation: To deliver the high-quality, locally distinctive design envisaged in the DAS and to create a positive southern edge to Trowbridge, the RM Application should adopt a more contemporary architectural approach. This could include modern detailing, varied rooflines, and materials that reflect current design principles while respecting local context, in accordance with CP57 and the WDG.

13. Street/street corner return elevations and street/open space corner return elevations have largely attractively placed and proportioned windows utilising house types that are consciously designed for this purpose, but there are the following exceptions below in locations - some marked as 'Key corner turning buildings' on the DPP. These would represent 'what red looks like' BfHL (pp 54-55) rather than the preferred 'what green looks like' (pp 52-53), and WDG expectation 4.2.8. *'Where buildings are on a corner both public elevations should be designed as 'frontages' and have windows from habitable rooms in them'.*

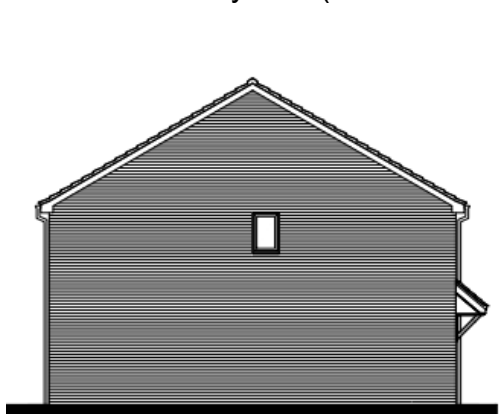
Plot 27 etc. Elmhurst (no windows)



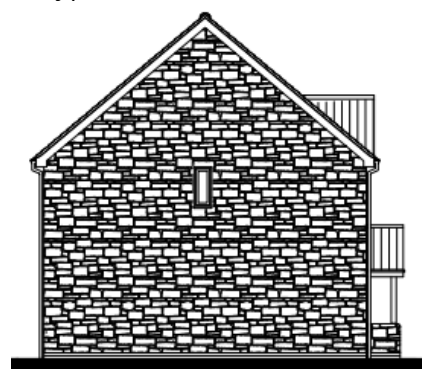
Plot 19 Coppice (WC window only)



Plot 32 etc. Hollyview (WC window only)

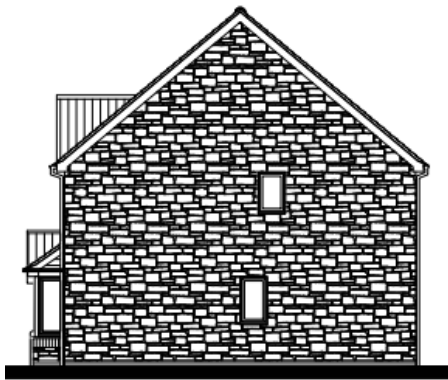


Plot 107 etc. Woodmount (WC window only)



Plot 116 etc. Willowcrest
(symmetry/proportion)

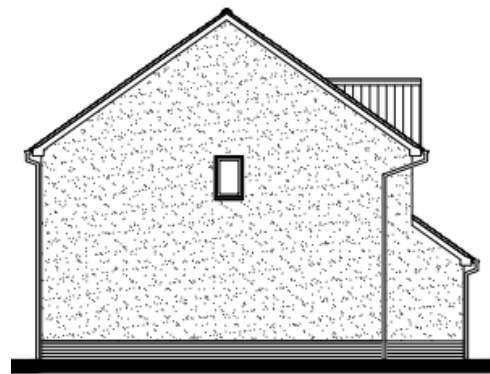
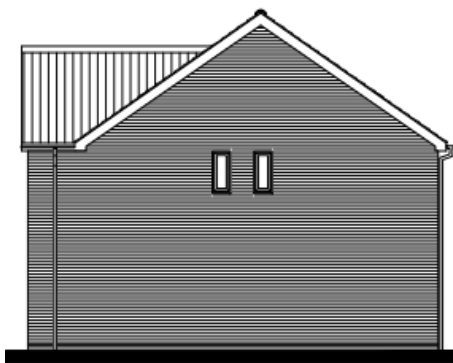
Plot 89/91 etc. Greendale (WC Window only)



Plot 174 Alderwood (WC windows only)



Plot 180 Birchview (WC window only)



Recommendation: Ensure all key corner-turning buildings have side elevations designed as active frontages, incorporating windows from habitable rooms to enhance natural surveillance, visual quality, and compliance with the DPP and WDG.

e) The landscaping of the site

14. All Current frontage treatments rely on hedges or lawns, which do not fully reflect local identity or character. The DAS and DPP identify low stone walls - sometimes with plinths - combined with railings and hedgerows as characteristic features of the area.

For Character Area 2 (Entrance and Arrival), the DPP requires defined front garden boundaries for terraced properties, using low walls with railings and soft landscaping. In addition, street tree planting is shown along this frontage.

Recommendation: Incorporate low stone walls with railings and hedges behind to define front boundaries in key character areas, particularly Character Area 2. This approach will reinforce local distinctiveness, comply with DAS and WDG guidance, and enhance the visual quality of the streetscape.

15. The DPP requires sensitively designed fencing – estate railings or timber post and rail fencing lining the parkland edge to the access road throughout Character Areas 1 and 2. There is no evidence on the Materials Plan or on the Planting Plans that this is being provided, and no supporting evidence in the Statement of Compliance why it is not.

16. The DAS and DPP identify incidental green spaces as key features for public meeting places and play, including areas south of the primary route - and within the eastern part of the site - and wider verges above the gas main.

The RM Application reduces these spaces by introducing private gardens and parking above the gas main, and reducing the size and number of incidental spaces south of the main street and in the eastern part of the site, removing opportunities for communal areas.

Recommendation:

- Reinstatement of incidental green spaces along the primary route and to the east of the site.
- Incorporate wider verges as a continuous green spine to enhance connectivity and biodiversity.

Applying these changes will create a more distinctive and legible streetscape, enhance residents' quality of life, and align the scheme with the DAS and DPP principles.

Conclusion

The Statement of Compliance acknowledges that the Outline proposals were shaped through extensive consultation to establish parameter plans aligned with the DAS and DPP, aiming to create a high-quality southern edge to Trowbridge in accordance with Core Policy 57. However, Condition 5 requires the RM Application to follow these principles, and the analysis above demonstrates that the current proposals fail to achieve this alignment. As a result, the RM Application does not comply with Condition 5 or the design objectives set out in the DAS and DPP.

Further detailed feedback on the house type pack and site layout will be provided following the incorporation of the recommendations outlined above.