

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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Application No: PL/2025/08985
Erection of 1 no. dwelling with associated access, parking, landscaping and private amenity space
Land in East Grafton, East Grafton, SN8 3DB

Please find following comments in respect of the above application(s).

Recommendations:

	Comment
	Support in principle subject to amendments to the scheme (as set out below)
	Support subject to conditions (as set out below)
X	Object (for reasons set out below)
	No objections

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

Policy: From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory test is set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 214-216 of the NPPF require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved. Paragraph 210 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that "designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance."

The Council's Core Strategy CP 57: Ensuring high quality design requires a high quality of design in all new developments. Proposals are required to "demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through (amongst other things) "enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development" and "responding positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting."

Site and assets considered: The site is an area of open pasture land. The site is located on the boundary of East Grafton Conservation Area.

Proposal: The proposal seeks the erection of 1 no. dwelling with associated access, parking, landscaping and private amenity space.

Relevant planning history: ENQ/2024/01201

Issues: impact on the setting of the conservation area.

Information considered/provided: Paragraph 207 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This should include sufficient information to provide a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting and the potential impact of any proposals on that significance. In this case, the applications are accompanied by a "Heritage Statement" which provides sufficient information to understand the impact of the proposals and is proportionate to their scope. The requirements of the NPPF are therefore met in this respect.

However, paragraph 208 also provides for the local planning authority to make its own assessment of impact and the following heritage recommendations are offered on this basis.

Significance of assets and contribution of setting: The NPPF defines significance as the "value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be **archaeological, architectural, artistic** or **historic**. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting." Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.

In this case the significance of the site lies largely with its historic pasture which forms part of the rural character of the village and is akin to its agricultural farming origins. These areas of open meadow and green spaces contribute to rural character of the conservation area.

Assessment: East Grafton is a collection of residential properties in the surviving environment of an historic farming village.

The site is a small field of agricultural/grazing use located to the north of the A338 and is on the approach, but outside of East Grafton Conservation Area on the north western side. It does affect

the setting of this designated heritage asset, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

The proposal is for the development of one detached houses with a double garage set forward of the dwelling on the plot.

The development of this rural site has the potential to cause visual harm to the approach to the conservation area through development eroding the rural backdrop. Although it is recognised that on entering the conservation area that the north-western approach takes in mainly 20th century houses, most of which have no architectural interest, and a former pair of 19th century cottages.

The conservation concerns also relate to the size of the design of the proposed house which is somewhat oversized and stretched in appearance. Concerns also related to the poor architectural detailing such as the unduly horizontal casement windows and the awkward proportion or brickwork to windows. The building is somewhat 'anywhere development' and would be much larger in scale than the traditional vernacular form of building usually found in the village. Both the house and its standard 3 bay triple garage/carport (again untypical of traditional outbuildings in the conservation area) would further reinforce suburban development which is having a detrimental impact to the rural agricultural character of the village.

As such the proposed application represents suburban development set on an open green space on the edge of the village. As such there is potential for harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area and I conclude that the design of the scheme does not go far enough to mitigate the visual harm.

However, a smaller, more cottage style dwelling, with accurate vernacular detailing with a garage to the side or at the rear of the house would be much better in terms of scale and architectural treatment and would better reflect the neighbouring dwelling Park Cottage (in that it would be one house in a larger plot).

Summary & conclusion: The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

The proposal has the potential to result in harm to the historic agricultural landscape setting of the conservation area and would further erode the preservation of this identity with a suburban largescale building and garage of 'anywhere' design. The proposals involve the setting of the conservation area and could therefore be considered as causing 'less than substantial harm' for the purposes of interpreting the NPPF, but this involves the loss of an area of open green space and should not be seen as being of lesser consequence. Indeed, the wording of the NPPF and the Act requires that any level harm caused should be taken seriously.

The design of the current proposal does not go far enough to mitigate the visual harm. However, a smaller, more cottage style dwelling, with accurate vernacular detailing with a garage to the side or at the rear of the house would be much better in terms of scale and architectural treatment and may be considered a neutral impact.