

APPLICATION FOR FULL-PLANNING PERMISSION CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2025/09373
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Wiltshire School of Gymnastics, Lysander Road, Bowerhill, Melksham, SN12 6SP
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Demolition of existing entrance and construction of a new entrance lobby and internal refurbishment of the reception area.
RECOMMENDATION:	That Planning Permission be GRANTED

SITE CONTEXT

Wiltshire School of Gymnastics (the 'site') is a gymnasium with ancillary facilities (Use Class D2 – now Use Class E(d) following the 2020 update of the Use Classes Order). The site is situated in the Bowerhill Industrial Estate in the southeastern area of Melksham and Bowerhill (designated a Market Town in the Core Strategy).

The site is occupied by the modern gymnasium building together with its associated parking area and boundary landscaping. The gym is a large rectilinear structure approved in 1998 and extended following the 2013 consent (see planning history below). It comprises three alternating mono-pitch ranges; the original primary yellow brick range, the original secondary red brick range and the dark grey metal range approved in 2013. The proposal specifically relates to the foyer of the primary range which comprises a very small porch and canopy constructed of a dark green metal structure and dark green metal framed glazing.

The site is surrounded by the following uses:

- North: Lysander Road (a marked two-way link road with adjoining footpaths) with 31 Lancaster Road beyond (a large commercial/industrial/storage depot).
- East: Lysander Road (the primary element of the road, accompanied by footpaths and green verges) with 1 Pegasus Way beyond (a medium storage unit).
- South: 24 Lysander Road (a medium commercial/industrial/storage unit) and 33 Lancaster Road (a smaller single-storey pre-fabrication building).
- West: Lancaster Road (a marked two-way road with adjoining footpaths and green verges) with a temporary highway depot beyond.

The application site is subject to the following planning policy designations/constraints:

- Designated as a high quality/value site in the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD.
- Designated as a community facility in the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2.
- Within Melksham and Bowerhill Market Town.
- Within Bowerhill Industrial Estate Principal Employment Area.
- Within former Bowerhill RAF Camp (archaeological designation).

- Contains small area at low-high risk of flooding from surface water sources.

PROPOSAL

The proposal seeks permission for the replacement of the existing entrance with a new lobby, plus the internal reconfiguration of the reception area. The new lobby is a rectangular flat roof structure measuring circa 2.9m long by 4.4m wide and is 2.5m tall. It features short 0.6m overhangs on either side. The external materials of the lobby includes yellow brick walling (to match the existing brickwork), a significant portion of full height dark green aluminium framed doors and windows and a single ply membrane roof.

PLANNING HISTORY

Relevant Planning Records			
Reference	Description	Decision	Date
W/98/00215/OUT	Erect gymnasium with ancillary office	Approved	19/03/1998
W/98/00937/REM	Gymnasium and ancillary accommodation	Approved	06/08/1998
W/12/02014/FUL	Extension to create new Gymnastics Hall, equipment store, office and meeting room for coaches	Approved	03/01/2013

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Planning Legislation:

- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Development Plan:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015):
 - Core Policy 41: Sustainable construction and low-carbon energy
 - Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
- West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD (adopted January 2009):
 - Policy LP1: Protection and enhancement of existing open space or sport and recreation provision
- Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 2020-2038 (made August 2025):
 - Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction
 - Policy 15: Community Facilities
 - Policy 20: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design

Material Considerations (Policy):

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024
 - Section 2. Achieving sustainable development

- Section 12. Achieving well-designed places
- Wiltshire Local Plan Submission Draft 2020-2038 (Regulation 24):
 - Policy 4: Addressing climate change
 - Policy 85: Sustainable construction and low carbon energy
 - Policy 98: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping

Material Considerations (Guidance):

- National Planning Practice Guidance
- National Design Guide (January 2021)
- Wiltshire Design Guide (March 2024)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Melksham Without Parish Council: No objection.

REPRESENTATIONS

No comments were received.

ASSESSMENT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In accordance with this requirement, this application has been assessed against the relevant policies of the development plan and the material considerations listed above.

Having regard to the planning context and nature of the proposal, the following key matters are considered pertinent to the assessment of the proposal and are addressed in turn:

- Principle
- Design
- Neighbouring amenity

Principle

While the proposal is located within the Bowerhill Industrial Estate, it relates to the very minor expansion of a long-established leisure use within the estate. In this regard, the provisions of Core Policies 35 (Existing Employment Land) and 38 (Retail and Leisure) and Neighbourhood Plan Policy 10 (Employment Sites) which control the principle of development in this estate and of leisure developments in excess of 200sqm are not relevant in this case.

Policy LP1 of the Leisure and Recreation DPD states that high value and/or high-quality recreation provision (which includes the Wiltshire School of Gymnastics) will be protected and, wherever possible, enhanced to meet identified local needs.

Policy 15 of the Neighbourhood Plan broadly relates to new or replacement community facilities (which includes the Wiltshire School of Gymnastics), though the policy and supporting text expresses general support for the enhancement of existing facilities.

The proposed lobby and internal reconfiguration improve the functionality of an existing high value/high quality leisure site which is also a designated community facility. In this capacity, the proposal is acceptable in principle and accords with Policy LP1 of the Leisure and Recreation DPD and Policy 15 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Design

Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires that all development be of high design quality, create a strong sense of place and complement its context, including through enhancing local distinctiveness and responding positively to local characteristics. This requirement is carried forward in draft Policy 98 of the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan.

Policy 20 of the Neighbourhood Plan requires that proposals contribute positively to the conservation, enhancement and extension of the quality and local distinctiveness of the plan area. Proposals are required to demonstrate how they are informed by Melksham Design Guidelines and Codes.

The proposed lobby replaces the deteriorating entrance and canopy which are deteriorating. The new lobby is proportionate to the host building and its dimensions align with the frontage fenestration which is appropriate. Furthermore, its contemporary architectural form, style and external materials palette harmonises with the host building and is appropriate to the wider street scene. The proposal therefore complies with the design principles set out in Core Policy 57, draft Policy 98, Neighbourhood Plan Policy 20 and the Design Guide.

Neighbouring Amenity

Core Policy 57(vii) requires that development be compatible with the adjoining uses and protect the residential amenity of existing and future users of the site and its surroundings, including in respect of natural lighting, privacy, outlook and pollution sources. This requirement is carried forward in draft Policy 98.

The proposal maintains the existing site use and does not result in any change to the intensity of use. In addition, the lobby is a small-scale addition that is sited a good distance anyway from the neighbouring buildings. The proposal is therefore compatible with the surrounding uses and achieves an acceptable standard of neighbouring amenity in accordance with Core Policy 57(vii) and the Wiltshire Design Guide.

CONCLUSION

The proposal supports and enhances the quality and functionality of an existing high value leisure and recreation community facility. By virtue of its use, appropriate siting, modest scale and sympathetic architectural form, style and materials palette, the new lobby is considered to be acceptable in respect of principle, design and neighbouring amenity.

It therefore complies with the aforementioned sections and policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, emerging Wiltshire Local Plan, Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2, NPPF and the Wiltshire Design Guide. As such, the application is recommended for approval, subject to the conditions set out below.

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning Permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

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

- Location Plan, ref: PP-14411354v1
- Proposed Site Plan, ref: 3922.P.105
- Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations, ref: 3922.P.103 Rev A

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match in material, colour and texture those used in the existing building unless otherwise stated on the approved plans.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.