

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

James Weddell RIBA
Senior Urban Design Officer
Wiltshire Council

Date: 04.02.2026

Application No: PL/2025/09736

Proposal: Outline planning application for up to 48 dwellings, a village shop (use class F2(a)) and associated green infrastructure (all matters reserved other than access).

Site Address: Land west of Semington Turnpike, Semington

Case Officer: Gen Collins

Reference:

Drawings and documents indexed 12th December 2025 on application webpage, including:

- 2829-URB-XX-XX-DR-UD-9001 Rev 05 Illustrative Masterplan
- 2483-URB-XX-XX-DR-UD-9002 Rev 05 Parameter Plan
- Design and Access Statement revision A November 2025

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 2020-2038 (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)
- Semington Parish Neighbourhood Plan (Made March 2025) (abbreviated SPNP)
- Semington Design Codes and Masterplanning (Final Report July 2024) (abbreviated SDCM)

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

Policy SEM10 of the Semington Parish Neighbourhood Plan allocates land to the west of Turnpike Close (the Auction Field) for approximately 40 dwellings and a village shop. The policy is supported by Map 13, which includes a Site Features and Constraints plan, reproduced from the Concept Masterplanning Framework within the Semington Design Codes and Masterplanning Report (AECOM, 2024), and which establishes the intended disposition and structure of development.

The submitted outline application, which seeks consent for up to 48 dwellings, is located within this allocation but exceeds the indicative residential quantum set out in Policy SEM10, raising concerns regarding alignment with the policy's spatial and design-led objectives.

The Planning Statement indicates that the proposals reflect positive engagement with the community of Semington, the Parish Council and Parish Council Neighbourhood Steering Group, that the application proposals comply with the development plan and therefore that the application should be approved without delay. The site and its development would represent a logical extension to the existing urban edge, particularly given the recent development to the north, however, the development proposals would not comply with CP57 requirements for high quality design and place shaping for the following reasons:

Objection

- 1) The site access is constrained by the close proximity of the proposed shop, with customer parking located to the side/rear. This arrangement is likely to result in conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians, and residential users. Parking is proposed in front of the dwellings facing the access and as side parking associated with a detached dwelling overlooking the customer parking area. This layout increases the likelihood of customer parking overspill into residential spaces, undermining residential amenity and creating confusion over parking ownership and use.

Parallel on-street parking on both sides of the access road would further constrain pedestrian movement and undermine legibility. This arrangement is likely to increase the risk of conflict between vehicles and pedestrians, particularly where customers are required to cross the access road to access the shop. As such, the layout reflects *Building for a Healthy Life* "what red looks like" outcomes (pages 30-31), namely local centres that are not easily accessible or attractive to pedestrians and cyclists, rather than the preferred "green" approach set out on pages 28-29.

Recommendation: Relocate the shop further into the site and provide clearly defined and well-segregated customer parking, distinct from residential parking. The layout should prioritise safe and convenient movement for pedestrians and cyclists, with clear desire lines and crossing points. A landscaped site entrance should be introduced, incorporating planting, street trees, and blue infrastructure, to create a high-quality and legible arrival sequence in accordance with BfHL and WDG principles.

- 2) Although indicative at this stage, the proposed layout lacks the return loop shown in Map13, with the internal street pattern comprising a single long cul-de-sac serving communal driveways that collectively accommodate a significant number of dwellings. The reliance on private communal drives terminating in dead ends limits permeability and connectivity. This would not accord with WDG para 5.2.1 which states that '*Cul-de-sac development should be short with their turning head/far end visible from the junction with a through road*'.

The proposed layout would also not accord with Core Policy 57 (vii) and (ix) particularly regarding legibility and accessibility. 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. This would represent BfHL what red looks like pages 18/19 and not 'what green looks like' pages 16/17 – 'connected streets along the edges of a development'. The use of a continuous edge lane would be preferable, as private drives by their nature limit public access and connectivity afforded to cyclists and pedestrians.

Recommendation: Provide a return loop as identified in Map 13 and ensure that foot and cycle connections are integrated from the ends of communal driveways into the wider site network. This is necessary to improve permeability, support active travel, and deliver a legible and connected movement framework in line with adopted design guidance.

- 3) The proposed attenuation basin appears as a simple grassed depression 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.

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 to enhance visual quality, biodiversity, and site character.

- 4) One of the BfHL Natural Connections responses shown as green within the DAS states: *"Where retained, keeping hedgerows within the public realm, safeguarding their future retention and management"* (page 41).

Clearly, the hedgerows along the northern and eastern boundaries are proposed to be retained; however, they are located within private garden areas rather than the public realm. While this approach aligns with Map 13, it contrasts with the consented development to the north of the site (PL/2022/01367), which incorporates a designated wildlife corridor along the shared boundary with dwellings partly fronting onto this edge. Advice from the Ecology Officer should be sought to determine whether the presence and function of this proposed wildlife corridor should influence the layout, boundary treatment, and disposition of development in this location, including opportunities for public-facing development, ecological connectivity, and long-term management.

The retained hedgerow and trees along the eastern boundary are not shown on the Illustrative Masterplan. This omission has the potential to constrain garden depths and lengths in this location, resulting in a layout that may conflict with WDG Expectation 9.2 in relation to residential amenity and landscape integration. In addition, existing hedgerows are not shown on the Parameter Plan. This information is required to enable effective urban design assessment and should be included in accordance with the requirements set out in Appendix C of the WDG.

The development appears to encroach particularly on hedgerows G24 and G27, where dwellings are shown in close proximity to the retained hedgerows. The absence of an appropriate offset would also limit the ability of the proposals to meet a key design principle of the DAS, namely *"the retention of existing hedgerows, with new planting where necessary to strengthen and bolster any gaps"* (page 29).

Recommendation: Overlay the Illustrative Masterplan onto the Tree Constraints Plan to ensure that dwellings are located outside the root protection areas of retained trees and hedgerows, and that garden areas and lengths are not unduly constrained.

- 5) Wiltshire is part of the recently created Western Forest which is a new National Forest for the nation whose aims and objectives are to substantially increase canopy cover across its geographical area. The aims and objectives of National Forests are planning consideration under para 152 of the NPPF (2024).

Additional planting is proposed along the western boundary to strengthen and bolster any gaps. To achieve full compliance with CCNP Policy NE4 and strengthen integration with the wider landscape, woodland planting should be introduced along the western boundary. This will soften the settlement edge, enhance biodiversity, and create a more natural transition to the surrounding countryside.