

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

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Application No: PL/2025/09845

Proposal: Wiltshire Council R3 application for the partial deconstruction, extension, refurbishment and change of use of an unlisted former care home (C2) to 20no. Affordable Housing independent living apartments (C3) for older people, with communal facilities.

Site Address: Fives Court, Angel Lane, Mere, Warminster, BA12 6DH

Case Officer: Joe Richardson

Reference:

Drawings and documents indexed 17th 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 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).

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

I note the Conservation Officer's comments, that '*The proposed development adds height to the current arrangement. The form of the roofs, materials palette and external balconies/walkways, result in a much more contemporary-looking building. As such, the design and detailing, as well as the landscaping (soft and hard) need to be carefully considered to ensure a high quality development. I would recommend the Urban Design Team are consulted*'. I set out my comments below.

The comprehensive Design and Access Statement clearly sets out the evolution of the design through pre-application discussions and demonstrates how the applicant has responded to public consultation and officer recommendations. The document illustrates how the remodelling of the former care home and its associated landscaping have together informed a sensitive, context-led design approach. This provides a credible basis for intensifying a sustainable site within a conservation area. The scheme would deliver much-needed affordable independent-living apartments for older residents, within close proximity to the existing town centre.

The design proposals demonstrate positive intent, particularly in the modelling of the built form, the articulation of the elevations, and the integration of existing features and pedestrian connections. These elements indicate a generally well-considered design approach to date.

However, some aspects of the scheme require further clarification or revision to ensure full compliance with relevant design policies and guidance, including CP57 and the Wiltshire Design Guide. The following comments identify the key matters that the applicant should address.

Comments

- 1) Although the design incorporates mitigation measures for first-floor windows and balconies on most elevations, I remain concerned that equivalent mitigation for first-floor windows on the south elevation - particularly those serving Apartments 13 and 14 - has not been fully considered.

According to the DAS, Nos. 1-4 Angel Lane sit approximately 3 metres above the ground level of the Fives Court site, which reduces many potential overlooking issues. An existing 1.8-metre-high close-boarded fence is also retained along the boundary with No. 1 Angel Lane. However, the south-facing bedroom/kitchen/living room windows to Apartments 13 and 14 would extend above the height of this boundary fence. These windows are approximately 5.5 metres from the fence and rear garden of No. 1, and around 8.4 metres from the side elevation of 1 Angel Lane.

Given these distances and the relative window heights, additional mitigation should be incorporated to prevent direct overlooking. This could be achieved through the use of obscured glazing or by applying the window orientation controls illustrated in the top-right diagram on page 19 of the DAS

- 2) The Roof Plan shows a transparent edge to the canopy roof, a detail that is prone to staining and algae growth and would therefore require regular maintenance. To ensure long-term durability and reduce upkeep, a standing seam metal edge - consistent with the rendered visualisation in the DAS page 35 - would be a more suitable and robust solution.
- 3) Details of the design of the bin store should be provided.
- 4) The proposed use of timber cladding to the first-floor external walls introduces a material that is typically associated with a more rural architectural character. Given the site's context and the contemporary design approach elsewhere within the scheme, a material with a more urban or industrial expression may provide a better fit.

I recommend that the applicant consider alternative cladding options - such as corten or another high-quality metal sheeting - which would offer improved long-term durability, reduced maintenance requirements, and a visual language that aligns more closely with the intended character of the development.

Although a materials schedule has been submitted, this should be accompanied by physical material samples. These samples should ideally be presented within a coordinated on-site materials panel to allow proper assessment of colour, texture, and quality. This should include

samples for the proposed external hard surfaces, windows, doors and balcony elements. This can be appropriately conditioned.

- 5) With regard to the Conservation Officer's concerns about the scale and massing of the building facing Angel Lane, in particular that the existing single-storey structure reflects the historic pattern of development along the lane. Single-storey buildings are located to the north of the site and on the opposite side of the lane, while from the stone barn on the northern corner southwards, the surrounding buildings are predominantly two storeys (or equivalent) and sit at a higher topography. In this context, the proposed two-storey building would provide an appropriate transition along the lane and contribute to improved natural surveillance.

However, the Proposed West Elevation includes a railing running south from the access gate, positioned either in front of or behind the existing hedge. This feature does not appear on the Landscape Plan, and the discrepancy should be clarified to ensure consistency between the submitted drawings.

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