

Impact on the Local Economy

Objection:

The applicant is ascribing “significant benefit” to an entirely unsubstantiated boost to the local economy if his plans are approved. The numbers are based on out-of-date, generalised data which, when compared with the situation on the ground in Warminster, is demonstrably wrong.

There is no evidence at all that any benefit will accrue to Warminster if these houses are built.

There is evidence that the opposite is true.

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I. Economic benefit

The applicant would like you to ascribe “significant benefit” to the economic uplift it claims will be derived from local spend once the houses are completed.

They suggest the value of that “local spend” will be £1,025,000. This is a round sum calculation based on the assumption that each of the 205 houses they will build will spend £5,000 to personalise them. Details such as there are, can be found on p42 of the applicant’s Planning Statement and refer to: *“the report 'Economic Footprint of House Building in England and Wales' HBF, July 2018”*

Please note that this is clear evidence that the applicant has no intention of building “up to 205” houses. They intend to build 205 houses.

This £1,025,000 number is based on research which is:

- General
- Out of date (the research was undertaken in 2018)
- Does not account for the dominance of online retailing since the pandemic
- Bears no resemblance to the situation in Warminster

The applicant would like you to believe that the simple act of putting up houses, any new houses, anywhere in England will magically generate a very significant injection of wealth to the local economy.

To be taken seriously in the planning balance, this assertion has to bear some resemblance to reality. And that reality in Warminster is plain and easy to evidence without resorting to irrelevant generalisation.

Between 2021 and 2025 a total of 400 new houses have been built in Warminster. Based on the statement by the applicant, that should have benefited local traders to the tune of over £2m.

That should have had a direct impact on shops such as hardware businesses, carpet, flooring and soft furnishing supplier, and via the multiplier effect, on other businesses in town as people directly benefiting start to spend their own extra funds on other local stores.

a) Closures

The reality is of course very different. The local hardware shop, Corden & Sons closed down in 2025 (after over 140 years of trading). The main carpet supplier, Wiltshire Carpets closed down in 2024.

All the branches of our high street banks have closed down, leaving just the Nationwide Building Society.

The most significant clothing store, M & Co ceased trading in Warminster in 2023. Other businesses that might have expected to benefit have also closed, including the pet shop on the High Street, the Original Factory Shop (branded clothing products), local private school Bishopstrowe College closed in 2025 and the local paid-for newspaper went out of business also in 2025.

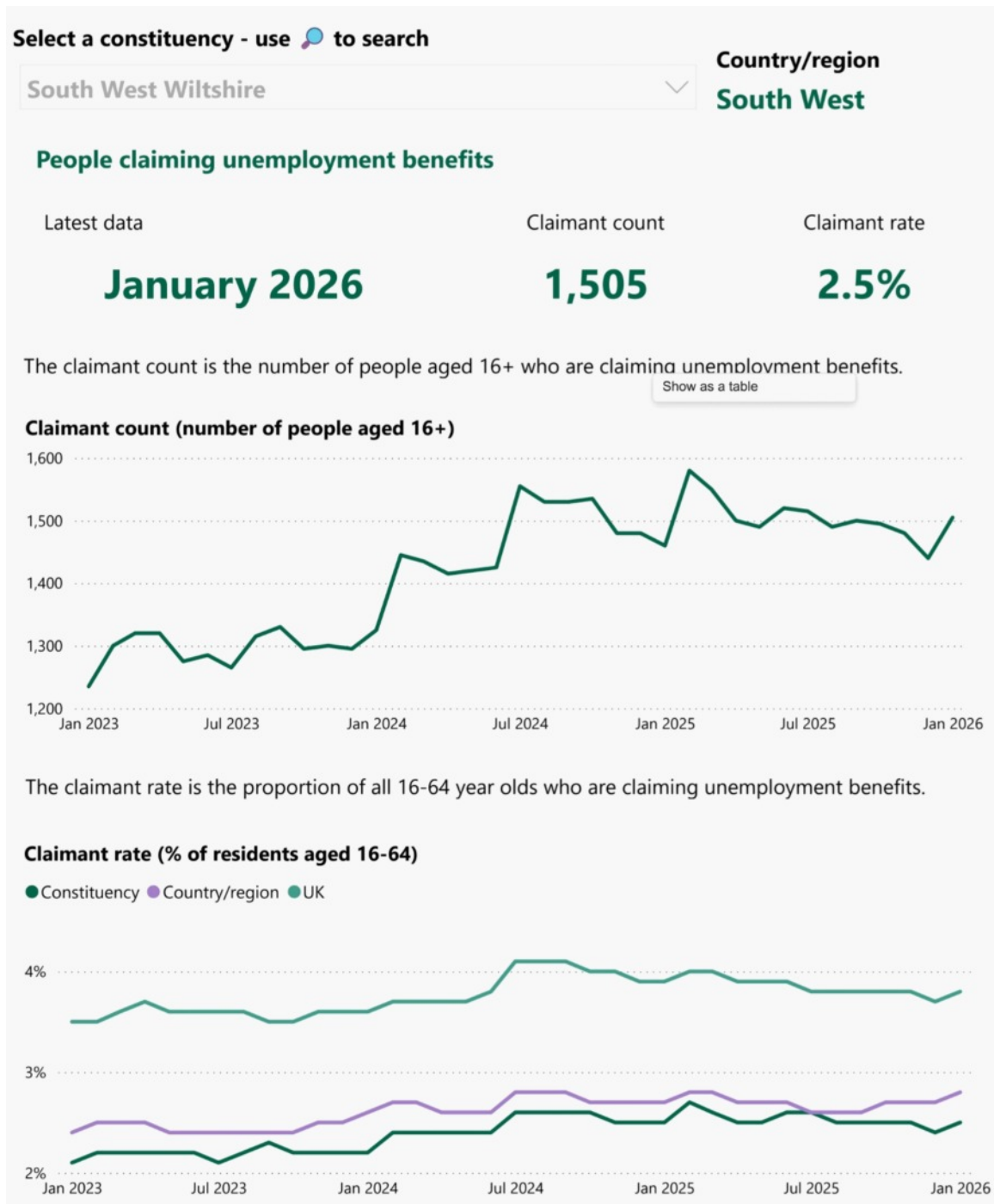
The reality is, that far from being a benefit to the local economy, the building of twice as many new homes as the applicant is offering, has seen the very opposite. The town centre has been hollowed out, the local economy has demonstrably suffered and the high street is filling up with charity shops.

There is other data that demonstrates that building new houses in the area has not in fact benefited the local economy.

b) unemployment

If we look at unemployment rates using House of Commons data published on 21 January 2026, you can see that far from unemployment falling as the economy expands with the influx of new purchasing power, the opposite is true.

In January 2022 the number of unemployed in South West Wiltshire constituency (Westbury Warminster and Trowbridge) was 1,230. As of December 2025 that figure was 1,490. The unemployment figure has actually GONE UP in the period despite housebuilding programs being underway in all three major towns in the constituency. Similarly, the rate of unemployment has risen from 2.1% to 2.5% over the same period.



c) online

We can of course speculate on why the local economy has not benefited. New residents are shopping on Amazon, benefiting perhaps the residents of Seattle (where Amazon is based) but not those in Warminster.

What you cannot justify is using the applicant's uninformed, out of date speculation to assess a "significant benefit" for the impact new housing will have on the local economy. Here is what we do know:

2020–2021: The Pandemic Boom: Lockdowns caused a dramatic surge in online sales. Online retail grew by roughly 47% in 2020.

2022–2024: Post-Pandemic Normalization: As physical stores reopened, online sales dipped from their 2020 peak but did not return to pre-pandemic levels (21.6% in 2019). They settled at around 28%.

2025–2026: Maturity & AI Integration: The market is stabilizing, with online sales reaching £127.41 billion in 2024. By 2026, roughly 30% of all UK retail sales are expected to be digital.

None of this is accounted for in the figures used by the applicant. So no, the economic benefit will not accrue locally in the way it might have done in 2018.

Given the actual evidence, the facts pertaining to Warminster, **you can only conclude that there has actually been no economic benefit at all** to the local economy from the process of building new houses.

If anything, there has been economic detriment.

2. The building process

The applicant further suggests that the building process itself will generate wealth for the local economy through the employment of builders and use of local suppliers.

Let's start with local supplies. The simple fact is that Barratt actually boast (when talking to shareholders, not to planning departments) that they do not buy locally but procure goods centrally. Examples are the opening of two factories to make timber A frames and other wood supplies. In 2023 A new wholly owned factory was opened in Derby to expand their existing supplies (<https://www.barrattredrowcommercialsupport.co.uk/news/2023/12/last-week-we-hosted-the-first-tour-of-our-new-45-million-pound-timber-frame-factory-in-derby>).

In a similar way, the company has created a utility framework which means they only ever choose from 20 pre-approved utility companies for gas, electric water etc.

As part of their statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Barratt, on their own website and in their own words say this: “We have a centralised procurement team that procures 95% of our housebuilding materials through 160 Group construction materials agreements.”



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4. Stakeholder engagement

We continue to engage widely across the Group as we develop and embed our policies and processes to address modern slavery.

In addition to regular internal engagement via the Human Rights Steering Committee, specific teams and individuals interact on a daily basis in their work to manage the risk of modern slavery, including Procurement, Commercial, and Safety Health and Environment (SHE).

We also engage externally in order to deepen our understanding of modern slavery risk in our industry, and to share good practice. We are a partner of the **Supply Chain Sustainability School** – an industry-led organisation for driving the improvement of sustainability knowledge and skills throughout the built environment sector.

We have been actively involved in its Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Group since 2023, including in the development and dissemination of a Solar PV Due Diligence Guidance launched in 2024. In addition, this year we participated in the Institute for Human Rights and Business Just Transition and Built Environment Accelerator. We attended the launch of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Just Transition in the Construction Industry, spearheaded by Baroness Young of Hornsey, and have provided input to her initial engagement across the industry. We have also presented updates to investors, banks and lenders throughout the year.

5. About our supply chain

Our direct supply chain includes contractors and agencies providing onsite labour, suppliers of products and materials used in housebuilding, and suppliers of products and materials for non-housebuilding purposes.

We have a centralised procurement team that procures 95% of our housebuild products and materials through 160 Group construction materials agreements². Our divisions locally source the remaining 5% of materials. 98% of our direct suppliers are located in the UK, and 2% are located in Europe.

We have a diverse subcontractor labour force (supporting over 6,000 companies across our divisions), the majority of trades being labourers, groundworkers and bricklayers.

None of our directly employed or contracted workers is involved in seasonal work.

Further information on our business and our supply chain management is available in our **2025 Annual Report and Accounts**.

² Barratt Developments only.

In their 2025 annual accounts (you can download them here:

<https://www.barrattredrow.co.uk/investors/annual-report-2025>)

they say on p12: “As well as divisional office closures and restructuring of our Group support functions, procurement savings and de-duplication of overheads have also contributed to confirmed cost synergies of £69m at the end of the financial year, well on the way to our ultimate cost synergies target which we increased from £90m to at least £100m at the time of our half-year results.”

On page 84 they add this: “Key supplier audit programme, centralised procurement and longstanding relationships ensure continuity of supply. Robust cost control through well monitored build programmes.”

In summary, Barratt do not contribute significantly to the local economy during the housebuilding phase. They purchase all their materials through purchase contracts with major national suppliers, or else manufacture the supplies in their own plants.

As to local employment. Barratt claim that they use local labour during the construction phase. Again we have to look at the unemployment figures referenced above to see that even any short-term benefit to local employment is invisible in the unemployment figures – all of which are heading in the wrong direction. Again referencing the House of Commons figures for employment by industry, we see that the construction trade is not a major employer in South West Wiltshire engaging just 4.6% of the local workforce.

Once again despite the vague suggestions and unsupported statements that the applicant will somehow boost the local economy during the construction phase, all the evidence, the facts, say otherwise.

You cannot ascribe any short-term benefit and certainly not “significant benefit” when the evidence directly contradicts the applicant's assertions.

3. Conclusion

You are asked to place “significant benefit” on facts and figures that are untrue, out of date and do not reflect local circumstances in Warminster.

In a period of house building that has seen more new units than the 205 proposed by the applicant:

- Warminster shop closures are up
- Warminster unemployment is up
- Online shopping is taking a significantly higher proportion of sales.

Furthermore, the applicant’s own website shows very clearly that they will not be taking housebuilding supplies from Warminster. Remember 96% of supplies, according to the applicant, are sourced through national contracts with major suppliers.

There is no evidence to support “significant benefit” as asserted by the applicant. I object to these made-up figures and assert that if anything, the building of 400 new houses to date has resulted in economic decline.