

Landscape Consultation Response

Comments by: Mark Goodwin CMLI – Senior landscape Officer, Wiltshire Council.

Date: 20/02/2026

Application Ref: **PL/2025/09623**

Site Address: **Land off High Street, Sutton Benger, Wiltshire**

Development Proposal: **Application for the Approval of Reserved Matters (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale) for the Erection of 60 Dwellings, Public Open Space, Landscaping and Associated Infrastructure following Outline Planning Permission PL/2023/06204.**

Landscape Comments

This reserved matters application for 60 dwelling departs from the approved outline development framework plan and design intent conveyed within the outline design and access statement for the approved development for up to 60 dwellings in following important key areas and ways.

1. The ‘central green’ space was promoted as a key feature and means to provide a focal point to the new development and its new residential community. The size of this central place shaping feature has been substantially reduced in area/size from that illustrated within outline development parameters. The outline ‘Central Green’ area was larger and incorporated a centrally located ‘Local Equipped Area of Play’ (LEAP) surrounded by trees. The submitted RM submission has in effect reduced this to just an area for a LEAP surrounded by trees. As a consequence, this raises relevant issues around nuisance from noise arising from play activity for residents in adjacent dwellings (i.e. outline layout Illustrated a 15m buffer was achievable, while RM layout does not provide for this).

[While Wiltshire does not have a minimum stand-off distance between equipped play areas and residential plot boundaries, a number of UK councils and play-space standards reference a **15 m minimum separation** between play areas and nearby housing to prevent noise nuisance, and which is accepted as a **reasonable standard of separation**].

In addition, the ‘central green’ should provide more than just an equipped play area. The design intent was to provide a heart to the scheme, act as a green verdant focal point for the new development, to support opportunities for community cohesion / social interaction for all residents, not just children.

2. Materials - I fully endorse the comments of this council’s urban designer in relation to a reasonable expectation that materials used within dwellings and boundary treatments better support the existing primary character of the village. This is considered particularly important fronting onto listed buildings, the conservation area, and high street frontage and transitioning with open countryside, especially along road approaches and views into the

development along the primary access. The use of natural stone within key frontage boundary treatments and as unifying frontage boundary enclosures has been consistently requested and secured for other recent development within the village. This should be viewed as a key character supporting design response for development at this site. The use of recon stone in the proposed garden screen walls and dwarf walls is not supported especially where this is being proposed to front onto the views from the high street or fronting the listed buildings / conservation area.

3. Garden sizes

- Plot 44 doesn't appear to have any amenity garden space.
- The rear garden of Plot 26 is terrible shape, dominated by garage incursions.
- Rear garden of Plot 39 appears to be unacceptably small.

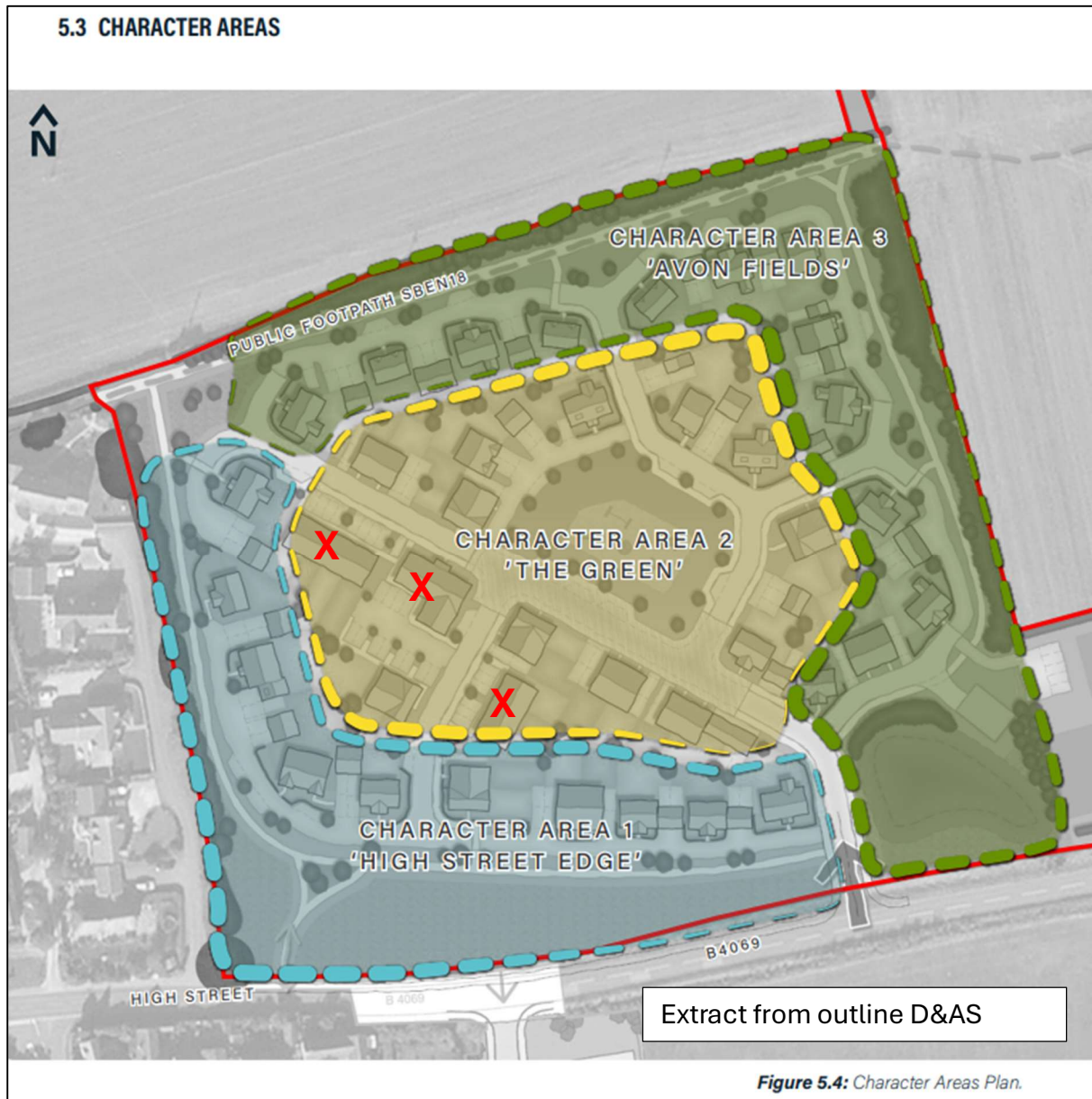
4. Footpath surfacing - Concern is raised as to the suitability of mown amenity grass paths to achieve 'access for all' standards through POS areas, including to seating areas. It is not clear on the submitted landscape plans what surface treatment is being proposed for the retained northern public footpath route, or whether improvements to the existing footpath route continuing northwest of the site are still proposed.

5. Landscape edge / transition with High Street - There is a notable difference between the levels of the site and the level of the adjoining High Street, which will be exacerbated by the excavation to cut back this bank further to create required safety visibility splays from the new access onto the High Street. I request further detail in the form of additional cross section/s illustrating how the development proposal responds to this level change including the relationship with any resulting boundary treatment/s along the southern edge of the site. The outline illustrative application material illustrated a low natural stone wall, identified to be characteristic roadside features at approaches to limestone villages from open countryside, as highlighted within landscape character assessments and in this instance a consistent unifying feature running along Sutton Benger's High Street are low natural stone retaining walls, of which this application site is an extension of.

There is also a notable departure from the illustrated outline treatment of building frontage (facing the high street west of the vehicular access point) overlooking the conservation area / listed building green open space at the southwest corner of the site. The RM layout introduces long bays of frontage side-by-side / perpendicular parking to serve the larger housing units (plots 43-49), in arguably the most sensitive part of the site in design terms.

Frontage parking arrangements such as this have no place fronting onto the village High Street and POS buffer to Conservation Area and Listed Buildings. This parking arrangement will detract from the views over the new open space towards the listed buildings and conservation edge approaching the village from the east. I would suggest relocation of units that have attached long lines of side-by-side / perpendicular frontage parking requirements away from the High Street frontage, Conservation Area or Listed Buildings to better respond to the design intent conveyed within the outline Design & Access Statement.

It appears similar size units with side-by-side/perpendicular parking were originally proposed much deeper into the new development (see below marked up drawing extract taken from the illustrative Outline Design & Access Statement. The annotated **X** illustrates the original locations for units with this type of envisaged parking arrangement, clearly set well back from the high street and its new associated frontage landscape buffer area).



6. Visitor Parking - It is observed that some visitor parking spaces (x 6 no.) are being proposed within unadopted cul-de-sac road spurs, typically not accepted in principle by highways officers. These visitor spaces are likely to be required to be relocated within adopted roads. The relocation of these spaces and knock on effect to street lighting will impact the current layout and potentially impacting upon the currently proposed street tree planting locations. Every effort should be made within layout revisions to maximise street tree planting.

7. Disparity between various plans submitted - The planning layouts and detailed landscape proposals do not illustrate a consistent southern boundary treatment fronting on to the new footpath link to the High Street. In the interests of planning certainty and future planning governance, revised plans submitted for approval must align.

8. Tree planting

Street trees - No Street tree planting locations are demonstrated to be feasible until internal street visibility splays from private drives, road junctions and road bends are included on landscape plans to demonstrate there will be no locational conflict with the required line of sight. As well as details of restrictive tree planting easements for the recently laid sewer, the landscape proposals plan should additionally include details of other main utility services (existing or proposed) routes alongside any associated easement corridors that restrict tree planting. This is necessary to check that planting locations for street trees are feasible, and not at risk of requiring subsequent removal by any adopting utility company.

Eastern Site Boundary - The currently proposed use of *Betula pendula* (Silver Birch) as hedgerow trees is not appropriate or supported within a native hedgerow bordering open countryside to the east. The currently proposed silver birch hedgerow trees should be substituted with a more characteristic medium-large native hedgerow tree species found in the local hedgerow network to assist characteristic countryside transition, given this will be a forever settlement edge fronting onto the adjoining lower floodplain farmland. Small native pollinating hedgerow trees should also be introduced (randomly spaced) into the eastern and northern allotment boundaries to help the boundary transition with adjoining open countryside, without unacceptably shading allotment plots etc.

Northern Site Boundary - The originally envisaged northern edge woodland planting (as illustrated on the outline application's 'Fig 7.1 Green Infrastructure Plan') proposed to help screen and integrate new urban development edge with countryside is not incorporated into the RM submission. I appreciate that new hedgerow tree planting will not be possible to achieve along the site's existing retained northern boundary hedgerow due to overhead cables following its line. However, some additional tree planting might be possible where space permits within this green northern perimeter corridor. Further consideration should be given to strategic placement of feature trees, potentially at ends of roads or to frame an end of street, or path view.

Conclusion

A landscape holding objection is advised pending receipt and evaluation of further information and revised proposals, to suitably address the issues highlighted.

End.