

APPLICATION FOR RESERVED MATTERS CONSENT CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2025/09056
APPLICATION TYPE:	Approval of reserved matters
SITE ADDRESS:	Land to the south east of Trowbridge, Phase 1, Ashton Park, Leap Gate Road
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Application for the approval of reserved matters (appearance, landscaping, scale and layout) pursuant to planning permission 15/04736/OUT for the development of an ecological visitor centre, associated maintenance compound and parking provisions.
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

This application follows approval of the above-mentioned outline planning permission, with detailed access, for 2,500 houses and 13.6ha of employment, along with two primary schools, a secondary school, two local centres and public open space on an allocated site within the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Extensive mitigation measures were secured at outline approval stage, mainly due to ecology.

PROPOSAL

This report considers a Reserved Matters application submitted pursuant to outline planning permission 15/04736/OUT granted on 2 September 2025 and is a bespoke REM seeking approval for the development of an ecological visitor centre, associated maintenance compound and parking provisions on part of the strategic allocation site at land to the south east of Trowbridge, and forms part of Phase 1, Ashton Park, at Leap Gate Road.

The outline permission was granted as described above with the current application seeking to address the specific reserved matters as required by the outline permission.

The proposed ecological visitor centre is required by the s106 legal agreement as part of the highly bespoke ecological mitigation package that has been secured.

Fig. 1: Existing site:

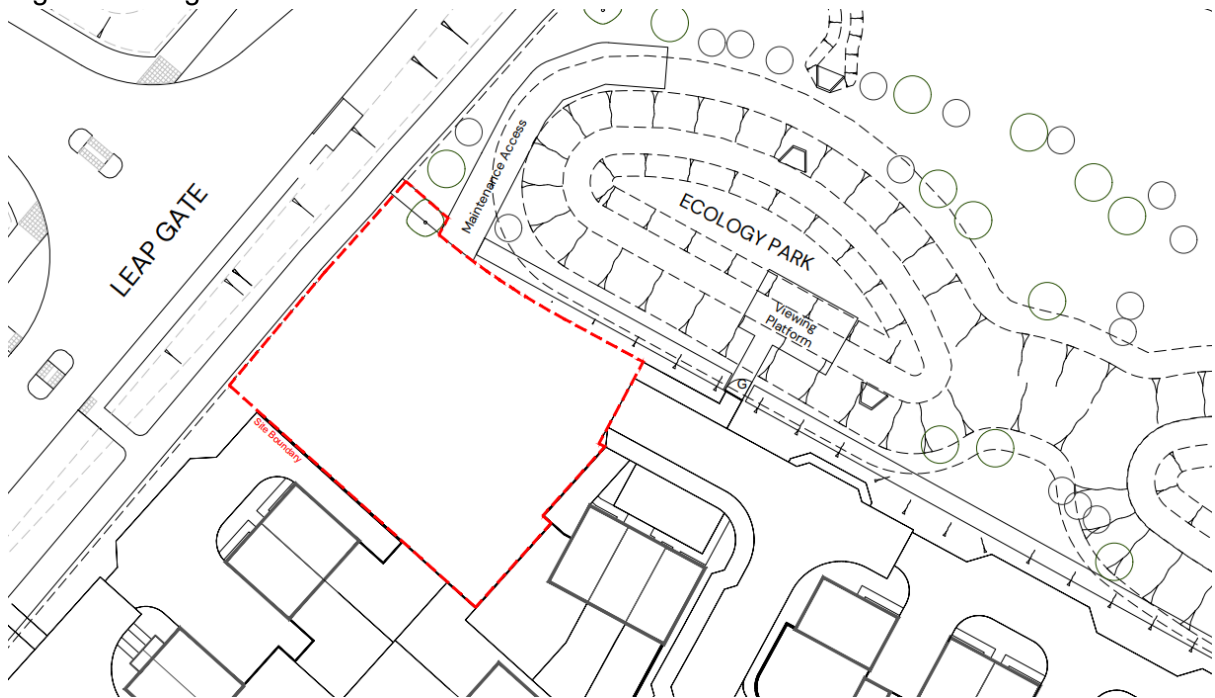


Fig. 2: Proposed site:

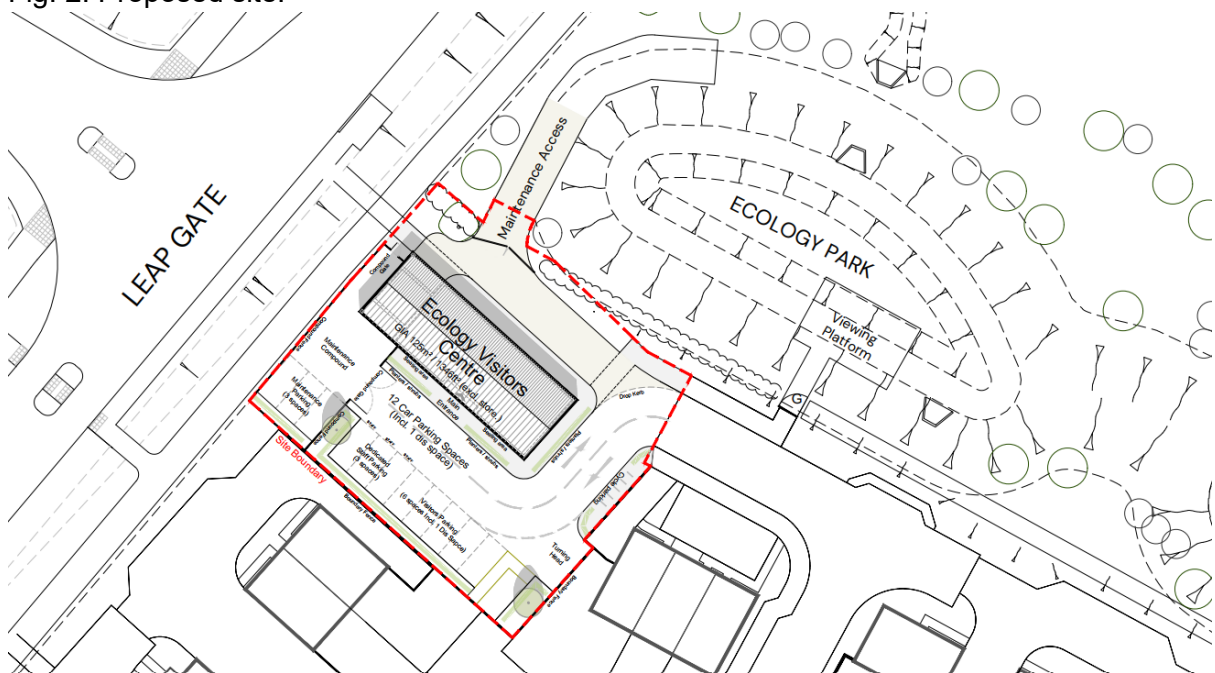


Fig. 3: Proposed elevations (revised):



The outline permission is bound by a Section 106 agreement.

The application is supported by a range of technical documents including the following:

- Planning, Design and Access Statement (Covering Letter)
- Site Location Plan
- Block Plans
- Existing and Proposed Plans, Elevations, Sections and Roof Plans
- Tree Protection Plan
- Vehicle tracking for refuse, fire tender and private vehicles

The design, materials and landscaping have been revised, and enhanced, following consultee comments and negotiations.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

15/04736/OUT - Outline planning application for mixed use development comprising: residential (up to 2,500 dwellings - Classes C3 & C2); employment (Class E ('Business' only), B2, and B8); two local centres (Classes E, C2, and C3); two primary schools, one secondary school, ecological visitor facility, public open space, landscaping and associated highway works including for the 'Yarnbrook / West Ashton Relief Road' and the access junctions. – Approved subject to conditions and legal agreements 02/09/2025

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Statutory Legislation:

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended): Under Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, outline planning permission grants permission in principle for the development, with reserved matters being determined at a later stage. The reserved matters must be in accordance with the principles and conditions set out in the outline permission.

National Planning Policy:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- National Design Guide

Development Plan:

The development plan for Wiltshire comprises the *Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)* (adopted January 2015) and any made neighbourhood plans, which remains the principal statutory planning document guiding development across the county. In line with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Though the development plan is considered as a whole, those parts deemed to be particularly relevant to this application are listed below:

The adopted *Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)*, with particular regard to:

- Core Policy 1 Settlement Strategy;
- Core Policy 2 Delivery Strategy;
- Core Policy 3 Infrastructure Requirements;
- Core Policy 29 Trowbridge Community Area
- Core Policy 41 Sustainable Construction and Low-Carbon Energy;
- Core Policy 45 Meeting Wiltshire's Housing Needs;
- Core Policy 46 Meeting the Needs of Wiltshire's Vulnerable and Older People;
- Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Core Policy 51 Landscape
- Core Policy 55 Air Quality;
- Core Policy 56 Contaminated Land;
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping;
- Core Policy 58 Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment;
- Core Policy 60 Sustainable Transport;
- Core Policy 61 Transport & Development;
- Core Policy 62 Development Impacts on the Transport Network;
- Core Policy 64 Demand Management
- Core Policy 67 Flood Risk;
- Core Policy 68 Water Resources;

Draft Wiltshire Local Plan

The Council's emerging Local Plan has reached Regulation 24 stage, although at the time of writing, this report, the examination has been paused by the examining inspectors. The most relevant emerging policies to this REM have little material weight

at this stage in recognition that the emerging plan has not been subject to any hearing sessions that consider the natural environment or matters of direct relevance to this application.

Nevertheless, officers have considered the following emerging draft WLP policies

- Policy 1: Settlement Strategy
- Policy 2: Delivery Strategy
- Policy 3: Reserve sites and broad locations for growth
- Policy 4: Addressing climate change
- Policy 5: Securing infrastructure provision from new development
- Policies 52 – 63: Trowbridge Area Strategy
- Policies 76 – 84: Social, housing, community, public open space and wellbeing
- Policies 85 – 101: Sustainability, ecology, water and landscape, heritage, air quality

Supplementary Planning Documents and other Guidance:

- Wiltshire Design Guide (adopted April 2024)
- A Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Wiltshire: Wiltshire's Natural Environment Plan 2022-2030
- Air Quality SPD (July 2023)
- Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan, adopted 25 February 2020

ISSUES

The key considerations in the assessment of this Reserved Matters application are as follows:

- Compliance with Outline Planning Permission
- Access
- Layout
- Scale
- Appearance
- Landscaping
- Other relevant issues

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Trowbridge Town Council: “No objection”

WC Highways: *“I note that the proposed ecological visitor centre, which is to be accessed from the adjacent residential parcel. I am satisfied with the level of car parking proposed, however, the plans are unclear in respect to pedestrian access from Leapgate. The plans seem to imply there is a pedestrian access but I cannot be certain one is proposed. A pedestrian access should certainly be provided from Leapgate, as this will encourage trips on foot and cycle from other nearby residential areas.”*

WC Ecology: No objection – full comments can be read on the file. The comments explain that the ecological visitor centre is required by the legal agreement that binds the outline permission. The ecologist's comments conclude:

"Annex 7 of the S106 between the Council and the developer(s) sets out the Ecology Visitors Facility Specifications. The drawing in the Annex shows 16 car parking spaces. The current application shows 12 car parking spaces and we feel this reduction in numbers is appropriate given the need to reduce recreational disturbance to the adjacent woodlands.

"The purpose of the centre is not to attract visitors but to provide a base for the warden, rangers and equipment and a meeting place for schools doing activities. Currently the woodlands are not resilient enough to be a destination for visitors. We recommend that the facility is re-named Ranger Office.

"In relation to the delivery of the Advanced Ecological Mitigation (AEM, addressed partly by RM 07856), we note that under the terms of the S106 agreement, the applicant needs to notify the LPA 16 weeks before commencement of the AEM works and pay 25% of the ecology Compliance Officer fees before commencement of works."

Urban Design: Informal verbal comments across several meetings – The revised proposed design and materials have been improved through the use of stone, especially for the compound wall that would address Leap Gate.

REPRESENTATIONS

No third party comments have been received through the public consultation process.

ASSESSMENT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

In accordance with this statutory requirement, this application has been assessed against the relevant policies of the Development Plan, including the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and, where applicable, any made Neighbourhood Plans. Consideration has also been given to the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a material consideration in the assessment.

Principle of Development

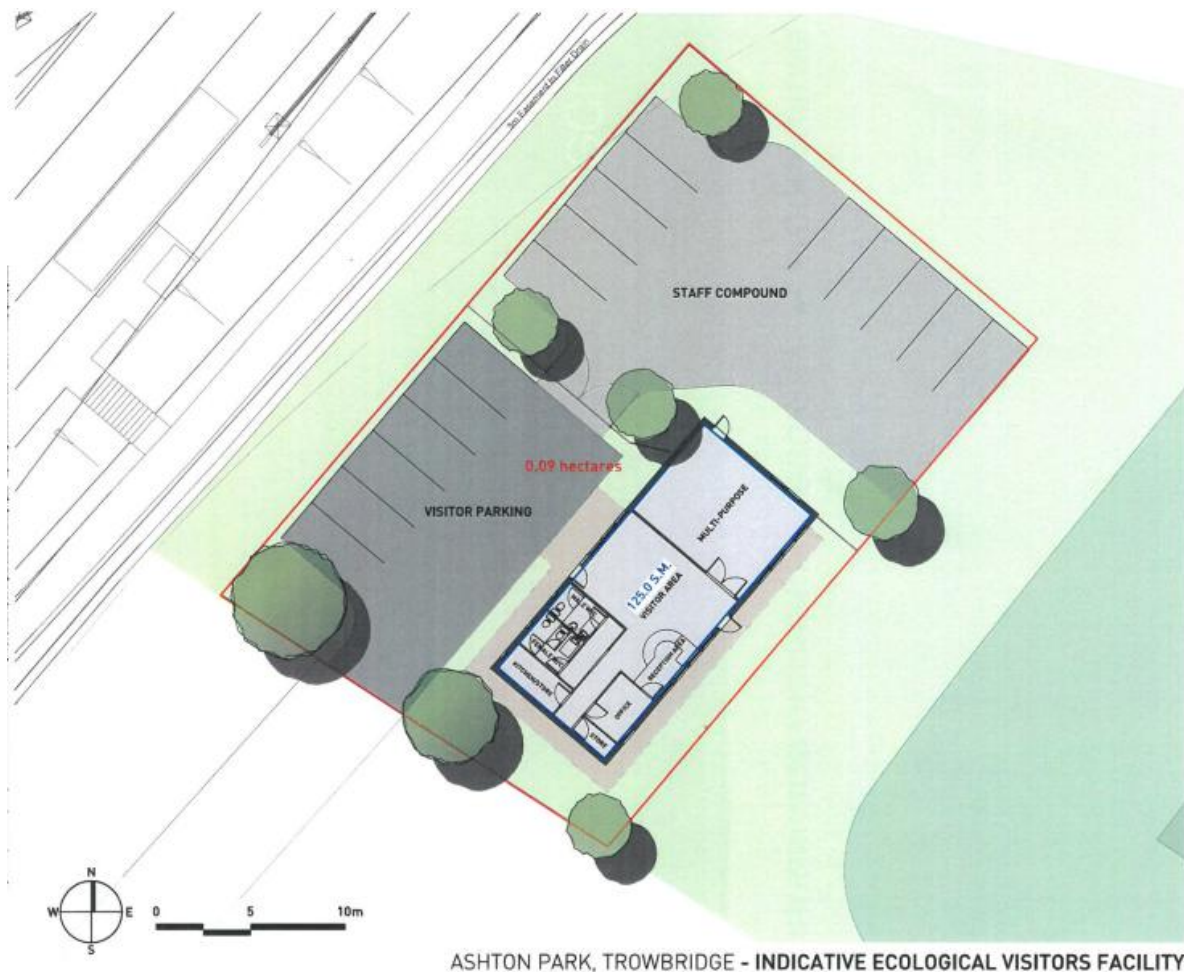
The principle of the development at the site has been established through the grant of outline planning permission.

Compliance with Outline Permission

The outline planning permission includes a number of planning conditions that establish the parameters for the built form across the site. Annex 7 of the main s106 agreement also

contains an indicative plan for delivering the visitor centre specify the information that must be submitted as part of any reserved matters application.

Fig. 4: Indicative plan from Annex 7 of s106:



The REM application has been submitted within the timeframe specified in the outline consent.

The proposed plans broadly align with the above indicative plan approved at outline stage. The arrangements on site are different, but the site contains the relevant infrastructure and level of provision that is required (contrast with Fig. 2).

This application seeks to fulfil the s106 requirement for the ecological visitor centre to form part of the overall ecological mitigation package.

In addition to the reserved matters, the outline planning permission includes a number of conditions that require separate discharge. Where relevant, this report considers the extent to which the submitted reserved matters scheme aligns with the requirements of those conditions. However, it remains the applicant's responsibility to formally discharge these conditions through separate applications under the outline consent.

Means of Access

Access Refers to the "accessibility to and within the site, for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians in

terms of the positioning and treatment of access and circulation routes and how these fit into the surrounding access network.” (Planning Practice Guidance: Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 14-006-20140306)

The ecological visitor centre would be accessible by vehicles and pedestrians alike from within the wider site, accessed through the housing. It would not be readily accessible from Leap Gate (the main road to the north west). This is a requirement due to the ecological mitigation package, that the public are not to be encouraged to access the ecological park area to the north. So whilst the Highways request is understood under normal circumstances, the particulars of this wider scheme dictate that public access is restricted at this point.

Vehicle tracking for larger vehicles (waste and fire engines etc) and adequate access is shown as being achievable.

The proposed numbers of parking spaces has been reduced from 16 to 12. However, both the highway officer and the ecology officer confirm that this reduction is appropriate and acceptable given the intended use of the centre.

There are no objections regarding the proposed access arrangements.

Layout of the Development

Layout refers to *“the way in which buildings, routes and open spaces within the development are provided, situated and orientated in relation to each other and to buildings and spaces outside the development.”* (Planning Practice Guidance: Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 14-006-20140306).

As per the above compliance section, the centre would meet the requirements in terms of the functional provision – as a base for the rangers with an office, reception and storage. There would also be a classroom, with a small kitchen, for school and other groups to visit and learn about the ecology of the area.

The layout would suit the functional basis of the building. Parking would be provided for visitors, and for maintenance vehicles in the inner yard.

Appearance of the Development

Appearance refers to *“the aspects of a building or place within the development which determine the visual impression the building or place makes, including the external built form of the development, its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture.”* (Planning Practice Guidance: Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 14-006-20140306)

The proposed building would present an attractive and rational design. This is a functional building that has been designed to cater for the operation of the ecological mitigation measures, yet it has been designed with care, especially given the revisions to the design and materials.

The elevations would be red brick and stone with timber gables. The single storey would have a tall roof with a steep angle. This would relate to the heights of the proposed dwellings

adjacent on the wider site. The building would also address the Leap Gate junction immediately to the north west. Being so tall the building would have a positive impact visually to anchor the junction.

The originally proposed timber boundary fence that would enclose the maintenance yard was not suitable as it would present as a lower quality material given the high visibility of the boundary. This has been revised as a higher quality reconstituted stone wall. This would address Leap Gate satisfactorily and provide better protection for the maintenance compound.

Scale of the Development

Scale refers to *“the height, width and length of each building proposed within the development in relation to its surroundings.”* (Planning Practice Guidance: Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 14-006-20140306)

As noted in the above section, the tall nature of the single storey building would adequately relate to the surroundings. It would not appear as a diminutive building, rather it would be a statement and focal point of the area.

Landscaping

Landscaping is referred to as *“the treatment of land (other than buildings) for the purpose of enhancing or protecting the amenities of the site and the area in which it is situated and includes: (a) screening by fences, walls or other means; (b) the planting of trees, hedges, shrubs or grass; (c) the formation of banks, terraces or other earthworks; (d) the laying out or provision of gardens, courts, squares, water features, sculpture or public art; and (e) the provision of other amenity features;”* (Planning Practice Guidance: Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 14-006-20140306)

This application relates to a primarily hard landscaped site, given that this is a utilitarian functional building to serve the wider interests of the ecology of the wider site. However, several long planters are shown to accommodate shrubs etc, as well as boundary hedging with native planting. This is considered to be acceptable. The soft landscaping is controlled throughout the wider development by conditions.

CONCLUSION

The submitted reserved matters application has been assessed against the outline planning permission, including the approved parameter plans, design codes, and relevant planning conditions.

The reserved matters for the ecological visitor centre are considered to be acceptable and in accordance with the outline planning permission and parameters therein, and the proposed development would be acceptable in terms of access, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping. It is therefore recommended that the reserved matters application be approved.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Reserved Matter(s) be APPROVED.