

Formal Objection to the Design and Access Statement

Planning Reference: PL/2026/00390

Proposal: Change of Use from Single Dwelling to 5-Person HMO

1. Material Change in Use and Residential Amenity

The Design and Access Statement asserts that the proposal would cause no material change to the external appearance of the building. This assertion fails to address the fundamental planning issue: the **intensification of residential occupation**.

A dwelling occupied by a single household differs materially from occupation by five unrelated individuals. Even where no external alterations are proposed, the **nature and intensity of use** can generate distinct planning impacts.

Typical characteristics associated with Houses in Multiple Occupation include:

- Increased comings and goings at varying times of day
- Higher visitor frequency
- Increased refuse generation
- Greater vehicle ownership and associated parking demand
- Altered noise patterns due to independent lifestyles

These impacts are particularly significant in the context of the site, which is located within a **small, gated residential enclave served by a private single-track access road**. The constrained nature of the setting magnifies the effects of intensified occupation.

Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with **Core Policy 57**, which requires development to safeguard residential amenity. It is also inconsistent with **paragraph 135(f) of the National Planning Policy Framework**, which seeks to ensure a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Planning case law consistently confirms that **material planning impacts may arise from the characteristics of use**, not merely from changes to building fabric.

2. Failure to Provide Required Technical Evidence

The Design and Access Statement provides only generalised assertions and does not include the technical evidence necessary to demonstrate the acceptability of the proposal.

Notably absent are:

- A Noise Impact Assessment
- A Transport Statement
- A Parking Stress Survey
- An Ecological Appraisal
- A Heritage Impact Assessment

Under national planning policy, planning decisions must be **evidence-based**. The burden of proof rests with the application to demonstrate that the proposal would be acceptable.

In the absence of these assessments, it cannot reasonably be concluded that impacts on amenity, highways, ecology, or heritage assets are acceptable.

This represents a **failure by the application to discharge the evidential burden required to justify the proposed change of use**.

3. Parking and Highway Impacts

The Design and Access Statement suggests that parking standards are satisfied on site. However, parking provision must be assessed in **real-world behavioural terms**, not merely through theoretical layout capacity.

A five-person HMO is significantly more likely to generate multiple vehicle ownership because occupants are unrelated individuals with independent travel needs.

Furthermore:

- HMOs typically generate increased visitor activity.
- No parking stress survey has been submitted.
- The existing parking area and surrounding highway environment already operate close to capacity.
- Access is via a **private single-track road**, increasing the risk of vehicle conflict and obstruction.

The proposal therefore raises clear concerns under:

- **Core Policy 64**, which seeks to manage transport demand; and
- **Core Policy 61**, which requires safe and suitable access for all users.

Under **NPPF paragraph 115**, development should only be refused on highway grounds if the cumulative impacts are severe. However, without supporting transport evidence, it cannot be concluded that cumulative impacts would not reach this threshold.

4. Housing Supply and Affordability Claims

The Design and Access Statement implies that the proposal would contribute positively to housing supply and affordability.

However, the submission provides **no evidence demonstrating that this HMO would deliver genuinely affordable housing** or meet any identified local need.

Moreover:

- The proposal would result in the **loss of an existing family dwelling**, affecting the balance of the housing mix.
- The Wiltshire Core Strategy emphasises the importance of **sustainable and balanced communities**.

Under **paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework**, sustainable development requires an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental considerations. In this case, the claimed housing benefit is **limited, unquantified, and unsupported by evidence**, and does not outweigh the identified policy concerns.

5. Heritage Considerations

The Design and Access Statement asserts that no heritage harm would arise because no external alterations are proposed. This conclusion is unsupported and does not satisfy statutory heritage duties.

Heritage impacts are not limited to physical alterations. Changes in **use intensity** can place pressure on historic fabric through:

- Additional servicing requirements
- Waste storage demands
- Fire safety upgrading
- Increased wear and internal alteration

No **Heritage Impact Assessment** has been submitted to evaluate these issues.

Under **Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**, decision-makers must give **special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their setting**.

Furthermore, **paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework** requires great weight to be given to the conservation of heritage assets.

In the absence of a heritage assessment, it **cannot be concluded that the statutory duty to preserve heritage significance would be met**.

6. Site-Specific Context

The Design and Access Statement refers generally to the existence of HMOs elsewhere within the wider town.

However, planning decisions must be **site-specific**.

This location is particularly sensitive due to:

- Its position within a **small gated residential enclave**
- Access via a **private single-track road**
- The absence of footways
- Limited lighting infrastructure
- The presence of **heritage assets**

These contextual factors distinguish the site from typical urban locations where HMOs may be more appropriate.

7. Intensity of Occupation

The assertion that the proposal would generate impacts typical of normal residential use does not reflect the realities of HMO occupation.

A comparison illustrates the material difference in occupancy patterns:

Single Household	Five-Person HMO
Shared routines	Independent schedules
Shared visitors	Multiple visitor streams
Limited vehicle ownership	Higher likelihood of multiple vehicles
Stable occupation	Potential for higher turnover

It is frequently recognised that HMOs can alter neighbourhood character and amenity through **intensified patterns of use**, even without external building works.

8. Limitations of Planning Conditions

The suggestion that planning conditions could address any potential impacts is not realistic.

Planning conditions cannot:

- Compensate for the absence of required technical assessments
- Substitute for a Heritage Impact Assessment
- Replace ecological survey requirements

- Resolve fundamental uncertainty regarding infrastructure capacity

Under **NPPF paragraph 56**, conditions must meet the six tests of necessity, relevance, precision, enforceability, reasonableness and planning purpose. They **cannot be used to remedy fundamental evidential deficiencies** in an application.

9. Conclusion

The Design and Access Statement fails to demonstrate that the proposed change of use would comply with the Development Plan or national planning policy.

In particular, the application has not demonstrated that:

- Residential amenity would be preserved
- Highway impacts would be acceptable
- Heritage significance would be protected
- Ecological duties can be lawfully discharged
- Infrastructure capacity is adequate

The proposal therefore conflicts with the Development Plan and does not represent sustainable development.

Under **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.

In this case, **public benefits are limited and unsubstantiated**, while the policy conflicts and evidential deficiencies are clear.

For these reasons, the proposal should be **refused**.