

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

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Application No: PL/2025/09780

Proposal: Outline planning application for the construction of 295 homes; public open space including formal play space and allotments; sustainable drainage systems and associated infrastructure; a 100 place nursery and access points for pedestrians and cyclists. All matters are reserved except for access, the principal point of access is to be provided from a new northern arm onto an improved arrangement of the Eastern Way/A3102 roundabout junction and an emergency access onto the A3102.

Site Address: Land to the north of the A3102, Melksham, Wiltshire

Case Officer: Ruaridh O'Donoghue

Reference:

Drawings and documents indexed 21st to the 23rd January 2026 on the 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)
- Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 Referendum Version (abbreviated JMNP2)
- Draft Melksham Guidelines and Codes (abbreviated MGC).

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

The site lies beyond the adopted 2020 settlement boundary for Melksham. While it had been promoted for potential allocation through the Wiltshire Local Plan Review (WLPR) under Site-Specific Policy 20,

progress on the WLPR is currently paused. In the absence of an emerging allocation and with the adopted boundary remaining in force, the proposal is therefore regarded as speculative at this stage.

Notwithstanding the above, should the principle of development on this site be accepted, I offer the following comments on the proposals. At this outline stage no specific house designs have been submitted, and my observations therefore relate primarily to the site layout.

The site is currently the subject of a 'full' application (PL/2024/10345). The current proposals are similar in location, form, and layout to that scheme. Consequently, most of the urban design concerns raised during the full application process remain applicable and are not repeated here.

Objections

- 1) The Illustrative Masterplan which accompanies this application - dated 15.10.2025 - shows no detail for the Nursery Land site. As a result, it remains unclear whether the space allocated is sufficient for its intended use, or how access will be achieved without the loss of trees and landscaping along the Primary Street.
- 2) Building for a Healthy Life (BfHL) advises against the extensive use of private drives (p.19, *What Red Looks Like*), and supports connected street patterns and continuous streets along development edges (p.17, *What Green Looks Like*). In line with this, the Wiltshire Design Guide (WDG) expectation 5.1.8 states that cul-de-sacs should be short, with their turning head or far end visible from the junction with a through road.

The current outline layout does not meet these principles. Several development parcels on the eastern side of the proposed Primary Street (which is also identified as having potential future connections) comprise a series of long, branching cul-de-sacs - contrary to guidance in BfHL *What Red Looks Like* (pp.18-19). These arrangements weaken street connectivity and reduce legibility.

We previously provided supportive comments on 16 January regarding the WIP Loop Road drawing (SW164 PD 1001L - Planning Layout) as part of the full application consultation response. The positive elements referenced there should be incorporated into the outline proposals to address the issues identified above.

- 3) The Illustrative Masterplan includes turning heads that intrude into the designated open spaces, reducing their usability. This feature could be eliminated by allowing vehicles to continue along an edge lane, which would improve connectivity and maintain the integrity of the open space.
- 4) A surface change feature has been added at the southern Secondary Street junction with the Primary Street to define the arrival point, enhance place identity, and provide a clear visual cue for drivers about the change in priority. To strengthen wayfinding and create a cohesive streetscape, replicate the surface material change at the opposite end of the Secondary Street adjacent to the open space.
- 5) The justification for the 'Restricted Green Space' shown on the Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan is not clearly articulated. Instead of introducing buffer zones between existing and proposed back gardens - which can undermine integration - the layout should promote a more

outward-facing and connected street and block structure in line with BfHL *Distinctive Places* principles.

Orienting new homes so their frontages address the adjoining open space would create stronger connections and increase the space's value. Similarly, using interlocking back-garden arrangements where existing gardens meet the boundary would support a more coherent and distinctive neighbourhood character.

- 6) The development proposals include attenuation basins. In line with BfHL and WDG Green and Blue Infrastructure principles, these features should be designed to integrate naturally with the landscape, avoiding the appearance of engineered or artificial depressions. A more effective approach would distribute water across the site through a varied mix of wetlands, rain gardens, small ponds, and permeable surfaces.

Integrating SuDS at both the plot and street level would enhance the development's visual quality, reinforce local character, and ensure the drainage strategy aligns with local design guidance.

The submitted drainage plans rely mainly on conventional piped infrastructure within the street network. We recommend revisiting the strategy to confirm compliance with the DEFRA SuDS National Standards (June 2025) and to meet WDG expectations for nature-based green and blue infrastructure. Incorporating naturalistic SuDS - such as rain gardens, swales, and wetlands - would support BfHL principles while delivering benefits for site character, biodiversity, and visual amenity.

- 7) The Land Use Parameter Plan identifies key locations for 2½-storey dwellings using an asterisk. If these locations are to be highlighted, they would be more appropriately placed at strategic locations - such as site entrances, focal points, and along primary routes - to reinforce legibility and character. However, removing the asterisk altogether would simplify the plan and allow the precise placement of taller units to be determined at the reserved matters stage.
- 8) The Green Infrastructure Plan should incorporate primary and secondary streets as strategic green/blue infrastructure corridors, recognising their function as integral components of the green network and as spaces designed to support street trees, verges, rainwater gardens, and other SuDS interventions.

The plan shows narrower landscape buffers along the site boundaries compared with the Illustrative Masterplan and the Section 6 Concept plans within the DAS, particularly along the north-eastern boundary. It would be helpful for this plan to show minimum offset distances. These offsets should then be applied consistently across all parameter plans.