

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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Application No: PL/2026/00855
**Erection of 4 dwellings, two semi-detached dwellings, gardens and parking
Land between 83/91 Bath Road , Melksham, SN12 8AD**

Please find following comments in respect of the above application(s).

Recommendations:

☒	Comment
☐	Support in principle subject to amendments to the scheme (as set out below)
☐	Support subject to conditions (as set out below)
☐	Object (for reasons set out below)
☐	No objections

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

Policy: From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66 requires that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 214-216 of the NPPF require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved. Paragraph 210 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that "designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance."

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.

Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making changes to Heritage Assets illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for PP and LBC.

Site and assets considered: The site affects the setting of a number of neighbouring listed buildings which are Grade II listed buildings.

Proposal: The proposal seeks the erection of 4 dwellings, two semi-detached dwellings, gardens and parking

Relevant planning history: W/1/01577/OUT – Residential development

Issues: impact on the setting of neighbouring listed buildings.

Information considered/provided: Paragraph 207 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This should include sufficient information to provide a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting and the potential impact of any proposals on that significance. In this case, whilst the application is accompanied by a "Planning Statement" the document provides no assessment of the impact of the proposal on the heritage assets and, as a result, it fails to meet the requirements of the NPPF.

However, paragraph 208 also provides for the local planning authority to make its own assessment of impact and the following heritage recommendations are offered on this basis.

Significance of assets and contribution of setting: The NPPF defines significance as the "value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be **archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic**. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting." Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.

In this case the significance of the buildings affected by this proposal lies largely with their historic fabric and architecture - form, layout and architectural expression/detailing and use of high-quality design materials which have significant aesthetic and architectural interest.

Assessment: This is my second consultation response and follows on from the submission of amended plans.

This proposal is for development of the land adjacent to 83 Bath Road Melksham. The development comprises the erection of four dwellinghouses, two semi-detached, three-bedroom homes with room-in-the-roof arranged over three floors, with parking and amenity space. The land has benefit from an outline planning consent to erect dwellinghouses under planning approval reference W/01/01577 /OUT.

The site is hard surfaced in tarmacadam and served as surface parking/ overspill parking for the former Cooper Tire factory which is directly opposite to the site (Cooper Tire) and is no longer in use.

The adjacent buildings are almost all residential dwellings except for the Former Cooper Tire factory site opposite.

Layout:

In conservation terms the proposed amended layout has changed little and remain unsatisfactory. The layout would be unduly dominated by the proposed parking to the front of the dwellings which are pushed back from the road frontage. The street is characterised by stone boundary walls which give a sense of visual enclosure to the street scene. The strong preference would be to retain the existing historic natural stone front wall and piers which is an established feature and encloses the street scene in a positive manner. The preference would be to have car parking for the development to the rear of the dwellings, as shown in the approved outline application.

The current proposed scheme is seen as a watering down of the design quality of the approved outline scheme which had a stone boundary wall to the frontage and a terrace of town houses with car park screened at the rear of the site.

Whilst car parking at the rear would probably see a reduction of one house to the frontage, a FOG over parking spaces could probably be achieved at the rear. Or alternatively this could be achieved as shown in the outline permission.

House Types:

The amended house types are slightly less suburban however they remain unconvincing as classical formal building with top opening UPVC windows, badly proportioned mock sash windows to the front elevation (lack of symmetry between ground and first floor) and ill matching windows to the front and rear elevations, a dumpy poorly detailed chimney, concrete tiled roof and what appears to be a mix of buff brick and stone.

I fail to see how the design of the proposed house types would add to the identity of the place. Yet local character is so important as it makes places distinctive and memorable and helps people to find their way around. Well-designed, sustainable places with a strong identity give their users, occupiers and owners a sense of pride, helping to create and sustain communities and neighbourhoods.

I am therefore seeking a well detailed and considered formal architectural concept for the house types with a clearer materials palette for the buildings (natural slate roofs, sliding sash windows on all elevations, stone elevations to ground floor, larger corbelled chimneys).

Summary & conclusion: The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

Whilst the principle of residential is supported, a higher quality design is needed, one which is less 'anywhere suburban' without parking dominating the street scene. The currently proposal is seen as watering down the design quality previously approved at outline.